

SECTION 5025-SERVICE AVAILABILITY AND ACCESS

AVAILABILITY	<p>(a) Hours of service shall be appropriate to community needs. Area Agencies shall make comprehensive access system services available during normal business hours. In addition, Area Agencies shall develop a process to meet the needs of callers outside of normal operating hours. Services shall be available:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) During established working hours, at a minimum, by telephone, without a long distance charge to the caller; (2) And through a physically accessible walk-in center; (3) And by other electronic means such as access by Internet to web sites; (4) And shall be accessible to persons who are deaf, hearing impaired (through use of TTD equipment) and/or visually impaired (low vision or legally blind); (5) And shall be accessible to inquirers for whom English is not their first language.
ACCESS	<p>(b) During hours of agency operation, the AAA shall assure that inquirers have timely contact with access system staff. Contacts are to be handled as they are received. Also see §5031 "Standards of Promptness."</p> <p>(c) For calls received outside of established working hours (evenings, weekends, holidays), services shall be provided through a telephone answering service, call forwarding and/or other appropriate resources. Content of messaging services will provide information to callers about regular office hours, access to information via the Georgia ADRC website and the telephone number and office hours of organizations that offer crisis or emergency services. Calls will be returned within the next business day.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Each Area Agency on Aging shall have a written policy for retrieving and assigning calls, emails and faxes after hours and when all counselors are on the telephone and calls go to voice mail. <p>(d) Services shall be made available through paid staff or volunteers with language skills and other special capabilities to</p>

relate to any special needs of the population(s) served.ⁱ
Also see §5027 regarding the use of volunteers.

(e) The Area Agency will either utilize the DHS DAS call center solution or budget for and implement a dedicated, direct telephone line into the access service system, and sufficient numbers of incoming and outgoing lines for the ADRC offices, so that all staff actively engaged in receiving calls, responding inquiries, rescreening waiting lists, and conducting follow-up contacts will have an individual line available.

(f) The AAA will:

(1) Establish a regularly scheduled presence at community facilities where consumers are helped face-to-face.

(2) Participate in local case management, options and benefits counseling, and elder rights collaboratives;

(3) Make all or a portion of its resource database available on an Internet Webpage, including information of interest to people with disabilities;

(4) Provide email access to Access Service staff.

(g) 29 U.S.C. 794d provides for the implementation of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which establishes the standards for accessibility for the use of electronic and information technology, including telecommunications products, by persons with disabilities. For more information, refer to: <http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/standards.htm>

ⁱ Reference: DHS Policies for providing services to persons with limited English proficiency and sensory impairments. The manual and related forms are located at <http://dhs.georgia.gov/language-access> under LEPSI Resources.