U.S. ACCESS BOARD ISSUED NEW ACCESSIBILITY STANDARDS FOR MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC EQUIPMENT (MDE) UNDER SECTION 510 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT

"The U.S. Access Board has issued new accessibility standards for medical diagnostic equipment (MDE) under section 510 of the Rehabilitation Act. The standards provide design criteria for examination tables and chairs, weight scales, radiological and mammography equipment, and other diagnostic equipment that are accessible to people with disabilities. They include requirements for equipment that requires transfer from mobility aids and address transfer surfaces, support rails, armrests, and other features. The Board developed the standards in consultation with the Food and Drug Administration.

"The new standards will be instrumental in ensuring access to health care services," states Regina Blye, Vice Chair of the Access Board. "The Board is pleased to fill this gap in accessibility because diagnostic equipment has remained problematic for many people with disabilities due largely to the lack of design specifications for making such equipment accessible."

Barriers to diagnostic equipment include equipment height and other dimensions, the lack of supports and features necessary for transfer, and the characteristics of contact surfaces. The standards address these as well as other features such as operable parts and patient instructions. The provisions are organized based on use position (standing, lying down, or seated) and whether transfer from wheelchairs is necessary. In addition to the final rule, which includes a discussion of the requirements and background on how they were developed, the Board released an assessment of the benefits and impacts of the standards and an overview of the rule.

The Board previously issued the standards in proposed form for public comment. Following the comment period, the Board organized a panel of stakeholders to develop consensus recommendations on how the standards should be finalized according to the comments received. The MDE Accessibility Standards Advisory Committee, whose 24 members included representatives from disability groups, equipment manufacturers, health care providers, and standard-setting organizations, among others, presented its recommendations in a report to the Board. The final standards are based on the

committee's recommendations and the public comments received on the proposed standards.

As issued by the Board, the standards are not mandatory on health care providers and equipment manufacturers. The U.S. Department of Justice, which has issued guidance on access to medical care, may adopt them as mandatory requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Other federal agencies may implement them as well under the Rehabilitation Act which requires access to federally funded programs and services.

Visit the Board's website for further information or contact Earlene Sesker at sesker@access-board.gov, (202) 272-0022 (v), or (202) 272-0091 (TTY)."