

# Improving Usability for All Visitors

A Guide to Assist Adirondack North Country Tourism and Recreation Amenities



Inclusive Recreation Resource Center and  
Adirondack North Country Association

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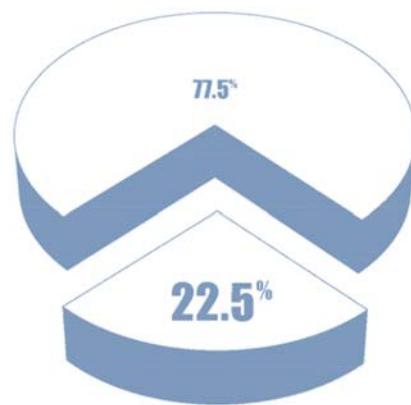


## Why is Usability Important?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 1 in 5 people in the United States have a disability.

Tourism and recreation are major industries in the state of New York. Not only does tourism generate billions in state and local taxes, it also adds jobs to a community. Given the significant economic and social impact of tourism and recreation, it is important for businesses to be welcoming, accessible, and usable to all people, including people with disabilities. When it comes to tourism, usability matters.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 1 in 5 people in the United States have a disability. In New York State, around 23% of the population has a disability. And since nearly every person with a disability travels or visits with friends and family, the impact of inaccessible or unwelcoming recreation and tourism amenities is significant. When one person cannot enter a restaurant or museum due to his or her wheelchair, neither can the people traveling with that person. By turning away customers with disabilities, a business or venue is in essence turning away \$220 billion in discretionary income.



Another important demographic shift in the U.S. that impacts inclusion is the large aging population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the 65 and older population grew at a faster rate than the total population. Disability often accompanies aging, with over 50% of adults over age 65 reporting a disability.



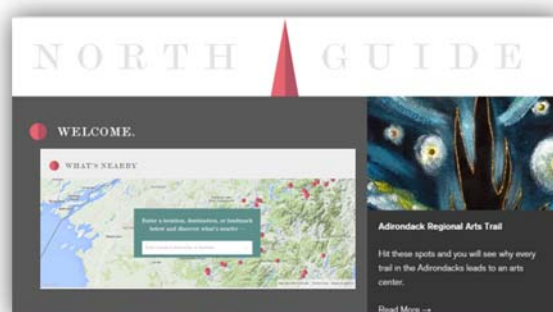
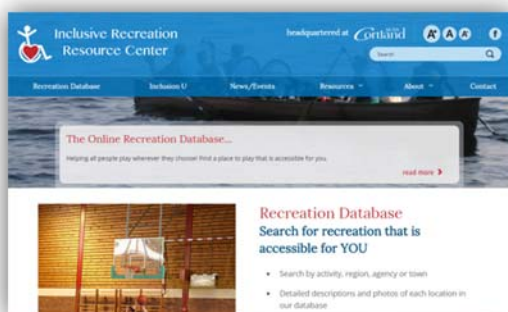
Communities benefit in many ways from being more inclusive and accessible, not just economically. When a community is inclusive, diversity increases, which helps a community thrive. Inclusive businesses are able to more readily meet the legal mandates of the Americans with Disabilities Act. But most important, we can achieve our ideals of a just and free society. Given the large demographic shifts in the U.S. as well as the social, economic, and legal benefits, it is imperative that recreation providers examine their practices and environments to ensure that all people can visit and play.



## Partnering for Usability

### Accessibility in the North Country

- According to annual visitor studies conducted by the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST), the number one reason visitors come to our area is to engage in outdoor activities and view our natural assets. ANCA and the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center are committed to improving access for those who have disabilities that limit their ability to get outdoors while touring our scenic byways and our region.
- The Inclusive Recreation Resource Center at SUNY Cortland, working in partnership with ANCA, conducted inclusivity assessments throughout 12 counties along the Adirondack Trail, the Central Adirondack Trail and the Olympic Scenic Byways, resulting in over 400 assessments. The tourism and recreation amenities that were assessed received feedback on ways to increase usability for people with disabilities.
- The accessibility information gathered in the inclusivity assessments is now available online in both ANCA's North Guide ([www.northguide.org](http://www.northguide.org)) and the Inclusive Recreation Resource Center's Online Recreation Database ([www.InclusiveRec.org](http://www.InclusiveRec.org)). Now visitors of all abilities can better plan their North Country adventures!









## Top Ten Tips to Increase Usability

- 1 People First**  
People with disabilities are people first.
- 2 Communicate Clearly**  
Use plain language and alternative forms of communication.
- 3 Make Sure Everyone's Invited**  
Review marketing materials and website for inclusiveness.
- 4 A Clear Path**  
Ensure that people of all sizes and abilities can approach, enter and use.
- 5 Make Space**  
Ensure there is room for people of all abilities to move freely and use amenities.
- 6 Provide Alternatives**  
One size does not fit all – use basic principles of universal design.
- 7 Know Your Business**  
Policies about inclusion and access are developed and shared.
- 8 Bridge the Gap Between Ability and Activity**  
Bridge the gap between customers' needs and satisfying experiences.
- 9 Support Each Customer**  
A best practice to support all people is to provide a quiet space.
- 10 Your Staff are Your Ambassadors**  
Staff must understand what inclusion is and how to make it happen.



# 1 People First

## People with disabilities are people first.

- Humans vary in many ways, from physical appearance to personality. One way we vary is our ability level. Some of us can run fast, some of us can sing beautifully, and some of us can light up a room with our laughter. Disability is really just a variation in the human condition, like eye color or height. In fact, many call for dropping the “dis” and focusing instead on ability.
- People are people first. Our variations make us unique from each other, but also make our individual needs different. These differences are not cause for exclusion, but are factors to consider as we plan and deliver recreation experiences.
- Person-first philosophy is a way of thinking about people’s abilities first and foremost. Remember, people with disabilities are PEOPLE FIRST! Never assume you know about a person with a disability based on a label or diagnosis. Find out what a person’s abilities are, and use them to facilitate full inclusion in recreation. Avoid labels, discover abilities!
- Person-first language is a respectful, sensitive, and accurate way to write and talk about people with disabilities. In person-first language, the person is first, then the disability. In oral and written communication, an inclusive recreation agency will use person-first language and train all staff to do so as well.



**My disability has**  
little to do with  
**my ability**

## Person First Language

### Instead of:

### Say:

The handicapped or disabled

People with disabilities

He's mentally retarded.

He has an intellectual disability.

She's autistic.

She has autism.

Handicapped parking, hotel room, etc.

Accessible parking, hotel room, etc.

He's Down's; mongoloid.

Ryan has Down syndrome.

She's learning disabled.

Sara has a learning disability.

He's a quadriplegic; crippled

Bob has a physical disability.

She's a dwarf/midget.

Mary is of short stature/she's a little person.

He's emotionally disturbed/mentally ill.

Tom has a mental health condition.

She's confined to/is wheelchair bound.

Nora uses a wheelchair/mobility chair.

She's developmentally delayed.

Tonya has a developmental delay.

Normal/healthy/typical children

Children without disabilities

Is non-verbal

Communicates with her eyes/device/etc.

Birth defect

Congenital disability

Brain damaged

Brain injury

The blind

Person with a vision impairment

She has problems/special needs.

She needs ... or she uses ...

Say **NO** to the word **HANDICAPPED**.  
It is outdated and disrespectful of people's abilities.





## 2 Communicate Clearly

Communication is key to reaching all customers, including those with disabilities.

### ● Use plain language

Plain language is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Written material is in plain language if your audience can:

- Find what they need;
- Understand what they find; and
- Use what they find to meet their needs.

There are many writing techniques that can help you achieve this goal.

### ● Ensure accessible signage

Signs should be clear with large raised lettering, Braille, and pictorial information, including the universal symbol of accessibility. Ensure signs are mounted at a height and angle so they are readable by all people.

### ● Use alternative forms of



communication



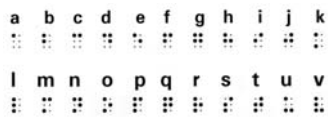








Communication needs can be met in a wide variety of ways, from providing alternative forms of communication to

assistive listening devices to apps on a smart phone that facilitate interaction. The key is to let the public know what forms of communication you have available, how they can be accessed or arranged, and an openness to explore new ways to communicate.

### Plain Language Writing Techniques

- ☑ Use clear and simple text (plain English) with short sentences, simple punctuation and no jargon.
- ☑ Use larger print (at least 12 point), a clear typeface and plenty of spacing.
- ☑ Use bullet points or story boxes and fact boxes to make the main points clear.
- ☑ Use images such as photos, drawings or symbols to support your text.
- ☑ Aim to make the subject of your material clear at a glance, even to a non-reader.
- ☑ Choose one or two simple, pictorial symbols and put them to the side of the words.
- ☑ Make sure there is good contrast between type and paper.



Form of Communication	Description	Example
Assistive listening devices	A large variety of devices designed to improve audibility in specific listening situations	 
Braille	Information is provided in raised dots that are equivalent to the alphabet and can be read via the fingertips through touch	
Closed captioning	Closed captioning allows persons with hearing impairments to have access to programming by displaying the audio portion as text on the screen	
Computer screen with reader	Information can be given via a computer monitor or an iPad/tablet; using the accessibility functions built-in to every operating system; information on the screen can be enlarged, magnified, or read by the screen reader	 
Large print	Information is provided in a large font size	Accessible information
Multiple languages	Information is also available in languages common in your area; many word processing programs or free online translation programs will now translate basic information	Many word processing programs will now translate basic information. <i>Beaucoup de mot traitant des programmes traduiront maintenant l'information fondamentale.</i>
Oral communication provided in print	Information that is provided orally to most visitors/participants is also provided as a written script	Tour guide script: <i>"Welcome to the beautiful Adirondacks region of New York. Today we will ....."</i>
Portable communication devices	Taped messages or cell phone apps provide written information in an audible format; often used for mobile tours or in museums	
Pictorial	Information that is given in words or orally is also provided with pictures or photos	
Sign language	Information is provided by a sign language interpreter	thank you 
TDD/TTY	TDD stands for Telecommunications Device for the Deaf. TTY stands for teletypewriter or text phone. Some cell phones are TTY compatible	 

## 3 Make Sure Everyone is Invited

### Who do you invite to your recreation business?

#### Marketing and outreach

Take a critical look at your marketing materials - they should include images of people with disabilities playing alongside others.

The materials should let people with disabilities and their families know what you have available to help them participate.

On your website, have an easily found page that provides detailed information about physical access, safety guidelines, available adaptive equipment, availability of quiet spaces, policies you have that facilitate participation, an invitation to call ahead for individual consultation, and other information you feel will help people enjoy your entities to the fullest.

#### Inclusion point of contact

Appoint someone with expertise and a positive attitude to be the point of contact for inclusion and accessibility to facilitate communication and proactive problem-solving, as well as advocate for improved services.

#### Website accessibility

Ensure your website is usable by all people and meets guidelines for accessibility.



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### An Inclusion Point of Contact

- ☑ **A One-Stop Shop:** An inclusion point of contact provides a single person for people with disabilities who need accommodations to access facilities, services, or programs. Identifying the contact person in public notices and publications allows individuals with disabilities to contact one person with the knowledge and responsibility to handle accommodation requests.
- ☑ **Information Dissemination:** The inclusion point of contact serves as a central resource on disability issues for the agency. The contact person should be familiar with the agency's responsibilities under the law and should have access to the resources needed to respond to inquiries and accommodation requests.
- ☑ **Effective Communication:** The inclusion point of contact knows how to access auxiliary aids and services to promote effective communication.
- ☑ **Support:** The inclusion point of contact provides training and technical assistance for employees in responding to requests for accommodation, instructs employees on disability awareness issues, and takes a leadership role in ensuring the agency is inclusive and welcoming to all.





## Website Accessibility Checklist

### ☒ **Website Organization**

Uses headings, lists, and consistent structure throughout the site. As you move from page to page on the site, the banner and navigation bar stays the same. Navigation should be clear and consistent.

### ☒ **Clean Visual Layout**

Is clear of clutter, uses ample white space, and high contrast.

### ☒ **Images, Graphs, Charts, Tables, and Animations Use Alt Text**

Uses the “alt” attribute to describe the function of each picture, graphic, or visual. When the mouse rolls over the picture or graphic, the text description is displayed.

### ☒ **Links**

Uses text that makes sense when read out of context for links. Avoids “click here” as it provides no information about the link.

### ☒ **No Flickering Words or Images, No Unnecessary Sounds or Animations**

May induce seizures in some users; highly distracting for users with learning or attention differences.

### ☒ **Multimedia**

Provides captioning and/or transcripts for audio content and descriptions of video.

### ☒ **Information for Access Features is Provided**

Example: [Skip Navigation](#) | [Accessibility Information](#) | [AAA](#)

### ☒ **The Website Has Been Checked**

The website indicates that it has been validated by one of the many online accessibility tools. One example is WAVE, available at <http://wave.webaim.org/>.



## 4 A Clear Path

A clear path of travel ensures that people of all sizes and abilities can approach, enter and use your recreation site.

- The route of travel should be unobstructed, well-lit, have a firm and stable surface, be wide enough, and have a gradual incline usable by all people.
- Parking is an important aspect of a clear path of travel. Accessible parking includes designated signs, spaces that are 96 inches wide, access aisles for wheelchair lifts on vehicles, a reasonable distance from the entrance, and a continuous route of travel including curb cuts and ramps if needed.
- Entrances also make up part of the clear path of travel. Entrances should be clearly marked as accessible, be wide enough, open easily (e.g., light weight or automatic, handles that are usable without grasping), and have a level ramp landing area that is large enough for wheelchair maneuvering.
- Ask yourself, “Can all people approach, enter, and use this recreation site? How clear is the path of travel?”



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## Checklist for a Clear Path of Travel

☒ **Unobstructed**



There are no barriers in the route of travel and it can be used by a person using a wheelchair or by persons with other disabilities.

For example, the curb cut to the sidewalk provides an unobstructed route of travel from the accessible parking space to the facility entrance. A ramp provides an alternative path of travel where stairs are present.

☒ **Wide Enough**

The path of travel measured at the narrowest point is at least 36 inches. Most of the path of travel should ideally be 60 inches wide so that people can pass each other comfortably.

☒ **Firm**

For the route of travel to be firm, it must not noticeably compress with the passage of a device or give way under foot.

For example, if a person could ride a bicycle with narrow tires across a surface without making ruts, it is probably firm.

☒ **Stable**

For the route of travel to be stable, the surface does not shift from side to side and endures in typical weather conditions. The surface retains its original condition.

Generally, these outdoor surfaces are considered firm and stable: crushed rock or stone dust, engineered wood chips, pavement, and rubberized surfaces. These surfaces are **not** considered firm and stable: sand, pea rock, natural wood chips/mulch, and grass.

☒ **Gradual Incline**

A gradual incline means the slope is usable by all people and is not too steep. Slope is how much a surface rises in elevation, in relation to how long the surface is. It is often described in a ratio, such as 1:12. This means that, for every 12 feet of length, the surface rises 1 foot. It is also described as a percentage, such as 5%.

Generally, inclines or slopes that are 8% or less are considered accessible.

☒ **Well-Lit**

The lighting along a route of travel should be bright enough to sufficiently navigate the area.



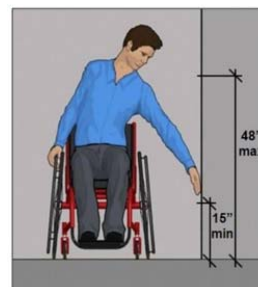
## 5 Make Space

Ensure that there is room for people of all abilities to move freely through a recreation site and use the amenities.

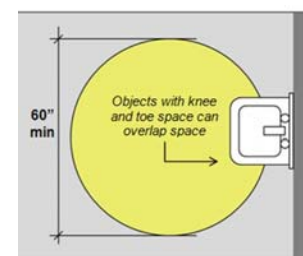
- Use basic dimensions or building blocks to plan recreation spaces so they are usable by all people. The guidelines in the Americans with Disabilities Act are based on typical measurements of the human body to use a space from both sitting and standing. Think about registration areas, bathrooms, seating areas, viewing areas, and the like and see if these basic dimensions are present.



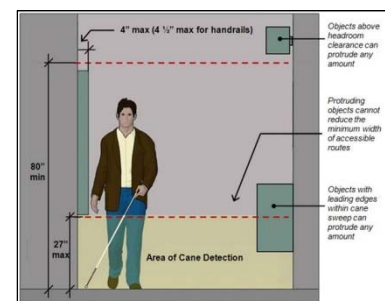
- Typical reach from a seated position is approximately 48 inches maximum to 15 inches minimum. A typical person can usually reach 17 inches over an obstruction. Design elements in the recreation environment to accommodate these typical reach ranges.



- Typical turning space for a wheelchair is 60 inches. As long as there is toe and knee space under an object, an object can overlap into the turning space. Think about turning space as you design or alter registration areas, bathrooms, aisles, ramps, landings, elevators, and other elements in the recreation site.



- People with vision impairments often travel closely along walls which can provide way-finding cues. Objects mounted on walls and other elements along circulation paths can pose hazards unless their projection is limited. Objects within cane sweep (27" high maximum) or which provide minimum headroom clearance (80" minimum) do not pose hazards.



## Checklist for Accessibility Dimensions


### Route of Travel

Width of route of travel at its narrowest point	36"
Slope of route of travel at its steepest point	8%

### Wheelchair Maneuvering Space

Diameter needed to turn wheelchair	60" circle
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### Parking

Clearly marked with upright signs	
International symbol of accessibility displayed	
Width of accessible parking spots	96"
Width of access aisle	96" in NY

### Ramps

Width of ramp at its narrowest point	36"
Slope of ramp	8% or less
Depth of ramp landing	60" or more

### Doors

Distance between doors in a series	48" or more
Clear open width of door	32" or more
Opening force of interior doors	5 pounds or less
Clear space on pull side of door	18" or more

### Registration/Check-In Area

Registration counter height	36" or less
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### Restroom

Width of the toilet stall	60"
Depth of the toilet stall – varies; see link below for details	varies
Distance of center line of toilet from nearest side wall	16-18"
Toilet seat height	17-19"
Sink height	34" or less
Depth of knee space under sink (from outer edge of sink to pipes under sink)	at least 8"
Soap dispenser and hand dryer/paper towels height	48" or less

### Elevator

Elevator control panel height	48" or less
Elevator door width	36" or more



US Access Board link for restroom dimensions: <http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/ada-standards/chapter-6-plumbing-elements-and-facilities>

## 6 Provide Alternatives

One size does not fit all. Basic principles of universal design help us understand that people come in all shapes and sizes.

- Environments, services, and products that are inclusive of this diversity of functioning reflect an inclusive society and are more usable, efficient, and practical.
- Universal design principles provide useful guidance in how to design or change recreation environments to meet the needs of all people. Also called “Inclusive Design” or “Design for All,” principles of universal design ensure a recreation area or facility is usable by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or circumstance. The principles apply to the design of products, services, and environments.
- Providing alternatives that meet a variety of needs is an important aspect of universal design. Here are some examples.
  - ✓ Alternative routes of travel – provide varying ways to travel through a space; for example, if there are stairs, also provide a ramp.
  - ✓ Alternative formats – provide information in a variety of formats; for example, provide an audio recording of the messages on interpretive trail signs.
  - ✓ Alternative times – provide times in the schedule that are quieter, for specific age groups, or specific interests.
  - ✓ Alternative experiences – provide varying ways to experience a recreation amenity. For example, provide a video tour of the second story of the historic site or of the osprey nesting site in the marsh area.
  - ✓ Flexible spaces – provide for multi-purpose use in a space; for example, provide a single use restroom instead of or in addition to male or female restrooms.




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# Principles of Universal Design Checklist

1	<p><b>Equitable Use</b></p> <p>The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide the same means of use for all users: identical when possible, equivalent when not.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Avoid segregating or stigmatizing any users.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make provisions for privacy, security, and safety equally available to all users.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make the design appealing to users.</li> </ul>
2	<p><b>Flexibility in Use</b></p> <p>The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide choice in methods of use.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilitate the user's accuracy and precision.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide adaptability to the user's pace.</li> </ul> 
3	<p><b>Simple and Intuitive Use</b></p> <p>Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's level of ability.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eliminate unnecessary complexity.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accommodate a wide range of literacy and language skills.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arrange information consistent with its importance.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide effective prompting and feedback during and after task completion.</li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Perceptible Information</b></p> <p>The design communicates information effectively to the user, regardless of abilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use the different modes (pictorial, verbal, tactile) for presentation of information.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maximize "legibility" of essential information.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide compatibility with techniques/devices used by people with sensory limitations.</li> </ul>
5	<p><b>Tolerance for Error</b></p> <p>The design minimizes hazards and adverse consequences of unintended actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Arrange elements to minimize hazards and errors: most used elements are most accessible;</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Hazardous elements eliminated, isolated, or shielded.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide warnings of hazards and errors and fail-safe features.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b>Low Physical Effort</b></p> <p>The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use reasonable operating forces.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minimize repetitive actions.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minimize sustained physical effort.</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Size &amp; Space for Approach and Use</b></p> <p>Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide a clear line of sight to important elements for any seated or standing user.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Make reach to all components comfortable for any seated or standing user.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Accommodate variations in hand and grip size.</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide adequate space for the use of assistive devices or personal assistance.</li> </ul>

## 7 Know Your Business

Policies and procedures, developed to address access and inclusion, are clearly written and shared in staff training.

Three policies are discussed here due to frequent questions about these areas.

### Service Animals

The ADA defines a “service animal” as any dog (or miniature horse) that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Other animals and dogs that are not trained to assist with a disability or who merely provide emotional support are excluded from this definition. The rule also clarifies that individuals with mental disabilities who use service animals that are trained to perform a specific task are protected by the ADA.



Photo used with permission of TheDogKnowledge.com

To determine if an animal is a service animal, a public entity or a private business may ask two questions: 1) Is this animal required because of a disability? 2) What work or task has this animal been trained to perform? A public entity or private business may not ask about the nature or extent of an individual’s disability. It also may not require documentation, such as proof that the animal has been certified, trained or licensed as a service animal, or require the animal to wear an identifying vest.

### Wheelchairs and Other Assistive Mobility Devices

The ADA adopts a two-tiered approach to mobility devices, distinguishing between wheelchairs and “other power-driven mobility devices,” which include a range of devices not specifically designed for individuals with mobility impairments (e.g., Segway products). Wheelchairs and other devices designed for use by people with mobility impairments must be permitted in all areas open to pedestrian use. “Other power-driven mobility devices” must be permitted unless such use would fundamentally alter the entity’s programs, services or activities, create a direct threat, or create a safety hazard.



Photo used with permission of Segway Inc.  
www.segway.com

### Personal Care Attendants

Personal care attendants accompany an individual with a disability for the express purpose of providing assistance in daily living, transferring, and the like. Personal care attendants are often not charged full admission because they are attending a recreation venue solely in their work capacity as an assistant to the person with a disability. Many recreation agencies offer “membership plus one” or “caregiver cards” that allow the personal care attendant to enter the recreation venue without question about fees and charges.

## Example Service Animal Policy

*Service animals (limited to Guide Dogs and Miniature Horses) are welcome at Cedar Point. Service animals must be physically controlled on a leash or harness at all times. Due to the nature of most rides, service animals must remain with a non-riding member of the guest's party. Cedar Point hosts are not permitted to take control of service animals. Guests whose service animals demonstrate aggressive actions toward our guests or employees will be directed to remove the animal from the park. Limit one service animal per guest. A service animal relief station is located near the Power Tower exit.*



## Example Mobility Device Policy

*Wheelchairs are permitted in any areas open to pedestrian use. A wheelchair is defined as a manually operated or power-driven device designed primarily for use by an individual with a mobility disability for the main purpose of indoor and/or outdoor locomotion. The use of other power-driven mobility devices by individuals with mobility disabilities will be allowed in all appropriate locations unless they: a) present a safety hazard to the user or other members of the public using the facility; or b) will result in an adverse impact to natural or historic resources. Permits issued at the facility will be required for certain devices and registration may be required upon arrival at the facility. Reasonable speed limits and other safety related requirements may be established and shall be posted. In some instances, other power-driven mobility devices may be allowed during some periods, but excluded during high use periods. For example, they may be allowed on a specific path during weekdays, but excluded on weekends when high visitation would make operation on the path unsafe.*



## Example Personal Care Attendant Policy

*Caregiver Card information: Cost: \$10; (free for members at the Contributing level or above. The caregiver must present both the Caregiver Card and the family's Membership card at the time of admission. You must have a current Discovery Center membership to participate in the Caregiver Card Program. The caregiver must be at least 16 years old. Each family will receive one Caregiver Card. The Caregiver Card is linked to your membership and is not transferable to other individuals or families. The Caregiver Card is valid up to 12 months and is valid for the duration of your membership. To sign up for your Caregiver Card, please call our Membership Office at (101)123-8661.*



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## 8 Bridge the Gap

Bridge any gap that may exist between the customer's needs and abilities and a satisfying recreation experience.

All people want fun-filled recreation experiences in their lives. Differences in a customer's functional level may make it necessary to change the activity or the place where the activity is done. Find out a customer's abilities in relation to the demands of the recreation activity or environment, and use that information to figure out how to bridge the gap between the two if needed. You can learn about your customers through your registration or check-in process.

### Registration practices

The first point of contact in any kind of recreation experience is often some form of registration or check-in. Whether it is a formal or informal check-in process, it is a chance to start a conversation about what will be needed for a successful and fun-filled experience.

Asking if any additional assistance is needed on your registration or promotional materials is the first step. You are inviting potential customers to dialogue with you about what they need to successfully participate in the recreation program or activity.

"We welcome all people to our event/program. If you have specific needs to participate, please call ahead to let us know how we can help you."

### Bridge the gap with accommodations, modifications, and adaptations

There is a wealth of adapted equipment available to help people with disabilities enjoy your services or programs. Equipment ranges from wheelchairs to assisted listening devices, to balance aids. A good source to find adapted equipment is [www.abledata.com](http://www.abledata.com). You can connect with your local independent living center for some additional ideas. Activity adaptation and modifications, like changing the rules, skill level, and the like, allow people with varying abilities to participate more fully.

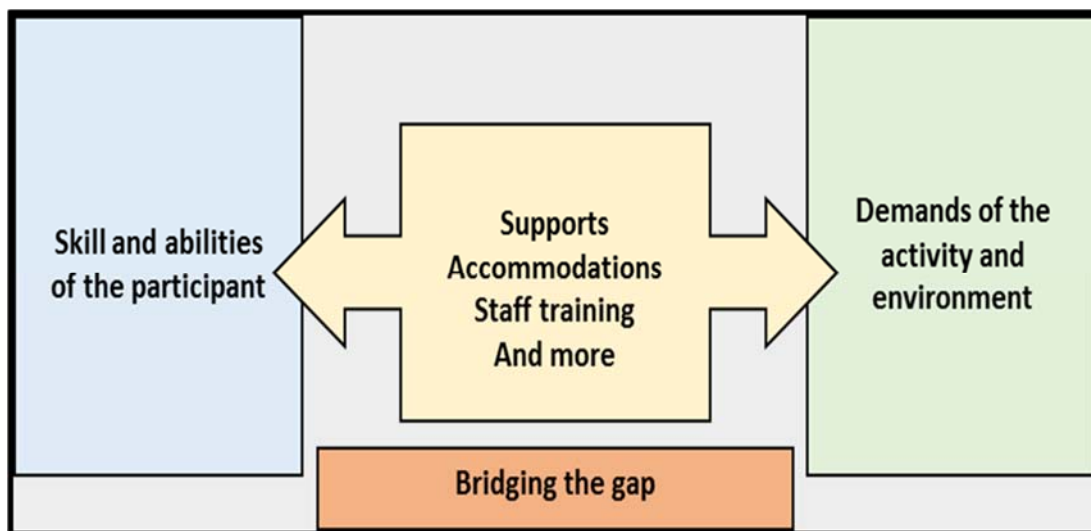



### Bridge the gap with extra staff or volunteers

Supports like extra staff or volunteers allow guests with a significant disability to participate in the parts of the activity they can do, or in a different way.



## Bridging the Gap: A Way of Thinking about Serving All Customers



Bridge the Gap	
What are the goals, ability level and functioning of the customer?	Determine goals and ability level during registration or check-in.
What are the demands of the recreation activity or environment? What does it take to do this activity in this place?	Analyze the demands of the activities you offer and the places you offer them. What functional abilities are needed to participate? Physical? Social? Cognitive?
What is the match between what the customer can do and the demands? Is there a gap between the two?	Compare the demands of the activity to the abilities of the customer. Is participation possible without changing anything? Or do you need to bridge the gap?
What can we do to bridge the gap so the customer has a good experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Adaptive equipment</li> <li>– Skill modification</li> <li>– Rule modification</li> <li>– Space modification</li> <li>– Goal structure</li> <li>– Team/group modifications</li> <li>– Structured social interaction</li> <li>– Partial participation</li> </ul> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><a href="http://www.Handihelp.net">www.Handihelp.net</a>, located in the North Country, provides a wealth of information on making your own adapted equipment.</p>  </div>

## 9 Support Each Customer

A best practice is to provide a quiet or “take a break” space.

- People vary in their ability to handle the noise, stimulation and activity level of a recreation environment.
- A best practice to support all people is to provide a “quiet space,” “quiet room,” or “take a break space.”
- Your calming places might be a separate room in an indoor setting or a cave in an outdoor playground. It can even be the corner of a quiet lounge area or a vacant office you repurpose. It is a place where children or even adults can be apart from the chaos of the recreation environment. For children with sensory integration disorders and autism spectrum disorders, this need can be acute (from [www.Kaboom.org](http://www.Kaboom.org)).



Photo used with permission of WNYC



- You can also offer and advertise “quiet times,” where the noise and activity level is calmer and less busy. Many families will choose to recreate at these times rather than peak times.
- Another best practice is to offer the additional support of extra staff or volunteers who help the main recreation staff provide the additional attention or communication that some customers may need to participate in programs or services.

### Quiet Times

Times when the Museum tends to be less busy include  
Mondays 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
Wednesdays 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.



## Creating a Quiet Space

### ☑ Identify a good quiet space

- Few windows or openings
- Quiet but accessible to the flow of the play or recreation area
- Insulated against outside sound
- Neutral or white colors
- Soft surfaces
- Floor mats and pillows
- Consider including fiber optic lights or calming blue light
- Calming music and nature sounds



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[www.elizabethjarmanttraining.co.uk](http://www.elizabethjarmanttraining.co.uk)



Photo used with permission of Teach.Love.Austim

### ☑ Advertise the quiet space

Cedar Point offers our guests several restful attractions and quiet places that your party can enjoy during the day. The park has Planet Snoopy First Aid and Family Care Center and Frontier Town First Aid near Comfort Station Restrooms. Additionally, air conditioned restaurants provide a nice break from the sensory stimulation.



Photo used with permission of Elsa Mora

## 10 Your Staff are Your Ambassadors

Staff, from permanent to seasonal, must understand what inclusion is and how to make it happen.

### • Staff hiring and training

Be sure that all staff members, from permanent to seasonal, understand what inclusion is and how it can be facilitated.

Advertise for staff with a willingness to provide inclusive recreation experiences. Job descriptions can include the importance of inclusion. Interviews include questions about experience and knowledge of working with people with disabilities.

Staff training on inclusion and accessibility should be conducted for every new staff member, and for each new program session. Staff training should be ongoing, consistent, and comprehensive. Use your local independent living center to help you with staff training.

*"You can have the most beautiful ramps and shiny new automatic doors, but if your staff is not welcoming and friendly, I won't bring my son to your facility."*

*Mom of a child with autism*

### • Staff training topics

Provide routine staff training on disability awareness and inclusion strategies, such as activity and equipment adaptations and positive behavioral supports. Here are some typical staff training topics:

- ✓ Value and benefits of inclusion
- ✓ Disability awareness
- ✓ Person-first language
- ✓ Confidentiality
- ✓ Simulation/experiential activities
- ✓ Scenarios (i.e. "What would you do in this situation?")
- ✓ Roles of the program leader and support staff

*"You have to ramp the human mind or the rest of the ramps won't work."*

*George Covington, former White House adviser on disability*

### • Staff Attitudes

A positive attitude toward inclusion is crucial in all staff!



## A staff member who is welcoming and inclusive.....

- ☒ Has participated in disability awareness training
- ☒ Knows who the inclusion point of contact is at your agency
- ☒ Knows the policy for service animals
- ☒ Knows the policy for power and other mobility devices
- ☒ Knows the plan for safe evacuation of persons with disabilities
- ☒ Knows the policy for personal care attendants
- ☒ Uses person-first language
- ☒ Treats people with respect and in a welcoming manner
- ☒ Seeks out additional training and experience with disability
- ☒ Knows about the agency's adaptive equipment
- ☒ Knows the procedure for extra staff or volunteers when needed
- ☒ Knows the policy on arranging sign language interpreters
- ☒ Uses alternative forms of communication when needed
- ☒ Believes that inclusion of all people is important



The Inclusive Recreation Resource Center sponsors a self-paced online training called *Inclusion U*, which is ideal for staff training. The online training gives all the tips and tools needed to understand inclusion and accessibility as well as how to use the *Inclusivity Assessment Tool*. You can use the *Inclusivity Assessment Tool* to assess your own agency for usability and inclusion. You can access the training at [www.InclusiveRec.org](http://www.InclusiveRec.org).

## Learn More

Inclusive Recreation Resource Center

[www.inclusiverec.org](http://www.inclusiverec.org)

Adirondack North Country Association North Guide

[www.northguide.org](http://www.northguide.org)

ADA.gov – U.S. Department of Justice

[www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)

US Access Board

[www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities](http://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/recreation-facilities)

ADA National Network

[www.adata.org](http://www.adata.org)

National Center on Accessibility

[www.ncaonline.org](http://www.ncaonline.org)

National Council on Independent Living

[www.ncil.org](http://www.ncil.org)

American Trails Accessible Trails

[www.americantrails.org/resources/accessible](http://www.americantrails.org/resources/accessible)

Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality

[www.sath.org/home](http://www.sath.org/home)

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Accessible Recreation

[www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html)

NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Accessibility

[www.parks.ny.gov/accessibility](http://www.parks.ny.gov/accessibility)

NYS Developmental Disabilities Planning Council

[www.ddpc.ny.gov](http://www.ddpc.ny.gov)

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