

# **GUIDE: HOW TO PLAN ACCESSIBLE INDOOR EVENTS**

Prepared by:  
City of London  
Accessibility Advisory Committee



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

An accessible event is one in which everyone can participate fully regardless of their ability. Accessibility is not only for persons with disabilities but also for parents with young children pushing strollers and for seniors.



None of us are getting younger. As we age it's likely that we will require some form of accommodation to allow us to take part in events within our community.

Become aware of the features that make your venue accessible.

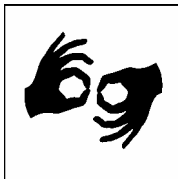


Hold your event at an accessible location or modify the location so that all persons can participate without assistance or with minimal help.

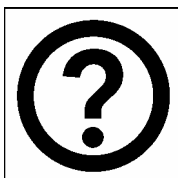
Use this guide when planning indoor events such as meetings, seminars, workshops, conferences, receptions, etc.



Visible disabilities are obvious and readily seen. Examples are physical disabilities that require use of a wheelchair, crutches, cane or other mobility aids, amputation, etc.



Invisible disabilities are not obvious and can't be readily seen. Examples are a person who is blind, deaf, deafened or hard of hearing, or with a visual impairment, speech impediment, developmental disability, mental health or psychiatric disability, intellectual disability, learning disability and cardiac disability.



Please feel free to contact us for clarification or for additional suggestions:

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**2.0  
EVENT PRE-  
REGISTRATION  
INFORMATION:**

- On the pre-registration form ask what accommodations the participant(s) will require.
- Identify the staff or volunteer who will be responsible for arranging these accommodations.
- Identify the date by which this information is required.
- If this event is greater than 1 day in duration, overnight accommodations may be required. Provide a list of accessible accommodations with the pre-registration information.

**3.0  
EVENT  
REGISTRATION**

- Provide registration tables that are at a height appropriate for a mobility aid user (34" is recommended).
- Provide printed material in alternate formats such as large print, Braille or on diskette.

**4.0  
EMERGENCIES:**

- In the event of an emergency are there auditory and visual alarms?
- Do you have an evacuation plan that addresses the evacuation of persons with special needs?
- Have you trained your staff in these evacuation procedures?
- Have you considered offering a free or reduced companion rate on the basis that the companion will assist the person with the disability in the event of an emergency?

**5.0  
PARKING**

- Do you have designated disabled parking places?
- Are they as close to the entrance of the event as possible?
- Are event personnel familiar with the location of these parking spots?

**6.0  
PUBLIC  
ENTRANCES:**

- Is there a level entrance that persons using wheelchairs or mobility aids can pass over and wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through? (Greater than 32" recommended).
- If the main entrance isn't accessible, are there signs directing people to the accessible entrance?
- If the main entrance has steps does it also have a railing?
- If there is not an automatic door opener, can the door be easily opened with one hand?

**7.0  
WAY FINDING  
SIGNAGE:**

- Are large clear letters and plain language used on signs directing people to specific areas? Are they free from glare?
- Are event personnel aware of stair-free pathways to the event?

**8.0  
LIGHTING:**

- Are the areas of travel and the display areas adequately lit?

**9.0  
CORRIDORS:**

- Is there enough room for persons in wheelchairs to safely pass one another? (72" is recommended).
- Are the floors slip resistant and glare free?
- Are changes in floor level (i.e., stairs, ramps, escalators) marked with a textured edge and colour contrasting?

**10.0  
WASHROOMS:**

- Is there an accessible washroom? If not, an accessible 'Johnny on the spot' should be made available in an appropriate location.
- Are large clear letters, understandable pictures/symbols and Braille used on the signs identifying the accessible washroom(s)?
- Do event personnel know where the accessible washrooms are located?
- Do the doors to the washroom and the stall have clearances that allow a wheelchair to pass through and allow for closer of the stall door? (37.5" is recommended).
- Can the stall door be closed and locked with one hand?
- Are grab bars in place on the wall closest to the toilet?
- Can the toilet paper dispenser be easily reached?
- Is there adequate leg clearance under the lavatory counter for persons in wheelchairs to wash their hands?
- Can paper towel dispensers or hand dryers be reached or is assistance available?
- Are there shelves or other projections that could be hazards for persons with a visual disability?
- Do urinals have grab bars installed on each side?

**11.0  
TELEPHONES:**

- Can the available public phones be used by people with mobility, visual or auditory disabilities?
- Is assistance available if public phones are not accessible?
- Is there a phone to which a portable TTY unit can attach?
- Are event personnel aware of its location?

**12.0  
FOOD:**

- Are there event personnel available to assist participants to get their food/beverages?
- Is part of the food counter lowered to allow persons with mobility aids to access it easily? (34" is recommended).
- Is there a clear path between tables for a mobility aid user to manoeuvre? (42" is recommended).
- Are food service lines wide enough to accommodate mobility aids users? (42" is recommended).

**13.0  
TICKETS:**

- Is the queuing (line-up) area accessible for mobility aid users to manoeuvre?
- Is there colour contrast between barriers?
- Can accessible tickets be ordered in advance of the event by phone?

**14.0  
SEATING:**

- Has an area been designated for people who use wheelchairs or mobility aids?
- Does this area have an unobstructed view of the event?
- Are these areas integrated with other seating areas such as at the front, on the aisles or in the centre of the venue while ensuring an unobstructed view?
- Can a companion sit beside the person with the disability?

**General Information about Accessible Seating**

- The number of spaces designated for people with disabilities will depend on the type of event being held.
- Recommendations for allocation of seating for people with disabilities are: 1 accessible seat for the first 25 regular seats; 6 accessible seats for up to 500 regular seats.
- Provide additional accessible seats if the event is related to a disability issue.

**15.0  
COMMUNICATIONS:**

- Have you accommodated the needs of the deaf, deafened or hard of hearing?
- Have you arranged American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter(s), computerized note taker(s) or real time captioning if requested?
- Is the lighting adequate to clearly see the ASL interpreters?
- Does the venue have assistive listening devices that can be used by the hard of hearing? Examples of these systems include induction loops and FM systems.
- Have you arranged for an amplified audio system complete with microphones and stands? Are the stands adjustable?
- Are handouts or other printed materials available in alternate formats such as large print, Braille or on diskette if requested?

**16.0  
OTHER NEEDS:**

- Have you ensured that all parts of the venue are smoke free and free of strong scents, e.g., floor varnish, fresh paint, etc?

If people with disabilities are speaking at your event, have you:

- Scheduled sufficient number of breaks during the day?
- Ensured podium heights are adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers.
- Ensured microphones can also be adjusted.
- Made sure, if there is an elevated stage, those using mobility aids can access the stage.

## **GENERAL ETIQUETTE:**

- Focus 'on peoples' abilities.
- Be respectful. A wheelchair is an extension of the person's body and in reality their legs. To lean on their wheelchair is the same as leaning on the actual person. Please give their 'personal space' the same respect as you would someone standing in front of you.
- Never touch a 'service animal' without the owner's permission. These animals are 'on the job' when they are wearing their 'harness or service wear'; they do not react the same as when they are not 'on duty'.
- Be patient; let individuals do things at their own pace – do not rush them.
- Be observant; look to see if someone needs help.
- ASK the person if they require any assistance, and then WAIT for the response. If requested, provide assistance.
- Let the person guide you as to what kind of assistance they need.
- Listen carefully and if you do not fully understand what was said, respectfully ask for something to be repeated. If you are speaking at length with someone, place yourself at eye level with the person so that you are not speaking 'down' to them.
- Speak to the person with the disability, not the individual who may accompany them.
- Have a pen and paper handy to assist those who are deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
- DO NOT raise your voice unless requested to do so.
- Be familiar with your location and know the most accessible routes.
- A person with a disability has the same needs as anyone else. Respect the individual as a human being. Treat adults as adults.
- Be yourself; it's OK not to know what to do – consider it as an opportunity to learn something about living with a disability.

## A Way With Words:

A *word list* of appropriate terminology for the portrayal of persons with disabilities;

<b>Do Not Use</b>	<b>Use Instead</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Aged (The) Elderly (The)	Seniors	Adjectives like frail, senile, feeble suggest a negative image of seniors and should not be used
Birth defect	Persons with a disability since birth	
Congenital defect	Person who has a congenital disability	
Visually impaired (The)	Person with a visual impairment	
Blind (The)	Person who is blind	
Confined to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair	For persons with a mobility impairment a wheelchair is a means to get around independently
Wheelchair-bound	Person who uses a wheelchair	
Cripple, crippled, lame	Person with mobility impairment, Person with arthritis, a spinal cord injury, etc.	
Hearing impaired (The)	Person who is Deaf, Deafened or Hard of Hearing	Amplification device, sign language interpreters, paper/pen, LED display, or computerized note taking may assist.
Epileptic (The)	Person who has epilepsy	
Fit, attack, spell	Seizure	
Handicapped (The)	Person with a disability	Unless referring to an environmental or attitudinal barrier. In such instances, "person who is handicapped by" is appropriate.
Insane, lunatic, maniac, crazy, etc.	Person with a mental health disability	
Mental patient Schizophrenic, psychotic, psycho, etc.	Person with a mental health/psychiatric disability; person who has schizophrenia	

Mentally Retarded	Person with an intellectual disability	
Learning disabled, dyslexics	Person with a learning disability	
Physically challenged	Person with a physical disability	
He/she has a problem with	He/she has a need for....	
Suffers from, afflicted by, stricken with	Person with a disability, person who has cerebral palsy, etc	Having a disability is not synonymous with suffering
Victims of MS, CP, etc	Person who has MS, CP, Etc	
Normal	Person who is not disabled	Normal is only acceptable in reference to statistics (I.E. the norm)
Invalid	Person with a disability	The literal sense of the word "invalid" is "not Valid."

Source: Office of disability issues, Human Resources Development Canada, 2002

