

The Definitive ADA Mobility Guide for Meeting and Event Planners

No matter what type of public event or meeting you are planning, *every* single attendee should feel welcome and be able to enjoy the function to its fullest. That's why all functions must be accessible to people with disabilities in compliance with **American with Disabilities Act (ADA)** requirements and guidelines.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **approximately 61 million Americans live with a disability**. A federal civil rights law passed in 1990, the ADA guarantees to persons with disabilities equal access to all programs, services and activities. The ADA defines disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment."

In regard to public facilities, the ADA § 36.203(a) states, "A public accommodation shall afford goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations to an individual with a disability in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the individual." This means that, under the ADA, "reasonable modifications" must be made to any temporary public event to allow full participation for people with disabilities.

Through the ADA's **Standards of Accessible Design** (which was revised in 2010), event organizers must comply with certain requirements that guarantee accessibility in such areas as parking, routes throughout the venue, public areas, seating areas and restrooms, among others. Therefore, when planning an upcoming public event or meeting, it's essential for meeting and event planners to ensure attendees with disabilities can participate fully in all scheduled activities.

It's important to note that accessibility standards issued under the ADA apply to more than just meeting minimum standards for parking, building layouts, elevators and the like. A truly inclusive temporary event needs to provide "full and equal enjoyment" for all attendees, including those people with disabilities.

This means that every aspect of your upcoming event - including registration processes, pre-event communications and even website design - should be organized with accessibility for people with disabilities and mobility issues in mind. In addition, it is essential to enlist trained staff who fully understand disability laws and etiquette to enhance the event experience for people with disabilities.

This handy, highly informative guide offers an essential and thorough overview for meeting and event planners to ensure that your next temporary event or meeting adheres to ADA mobility requirements and guidelines. This will ensure that people with disabilities or mobility issues enjoy full participation in your next event or meeting.

WHAT TYPES OF EVENTS ARE APPLICABLE TO ADA MOBILITY GUIDELINES?

Every type of indoor or outdoor public event or meeting is legally obligated to meet ADA guidelines. Examples include:

- **Sports Events**
- **Concerts**
- **Music Festivals**
- **Craft Fairs**
- **Home Shows**
- **Conferences**
- **Trade Shows**
- **Parties**
- **Graduations**
- **Street Festivals**

ESSENTIAL EVENT PRE-PLANNING TO SOLVE MOBILITY CHALLENGES

In order to pull off a successful ADA compliant event, you need to build accessibility into your pre-planning efforts. Begin by incorporating ADA compliance measures and venue accessibility into your standard event planning checklist.

Site selection is one of the most important factors when determining the accessibility of your event. Inaccessible architectural features may be among the most difficult barriers to remove in order to ensure ADA compliance. If more than one site is under consideration for your event or meeting, accessibility should be a primary consideration when making your ultimate choice.

Make sure to inspect the site thoroughly before making your decision on hosting your event there. Look for any issues related to accessibility such as parking options, entrances and pathways, registration areas, stages, seating and restrooms. Walk the entire site and identify the most accessible routes and recommend any necessary modifications. If possible, negotiate with the owners and/or managers of the facility to encourage them to improve access for people with disabilities.

Keep in mind that when planning for mobility challenges at your next event, you need to consider more than wheelchair access. For example, some attendees may use walkers, canes, crutches or scooters to assist with mobility instead of wheelchairs. Also keep in mind that people with disabilities should be able to use the same route as every other attendee as often as possible during the course of the event.

In addition, not all mobility challenges at events can be solved by wheelchair ramps. In many cases, ADA compliant wheelchair lifts provide better access for individuals with disabilities. [ADA lift rentals](#) take up much less space at events, involve less effort, provide a safer alternative, and require less assembly and installation time. In addition, offering a separate ADA lift offers a better experience for those attendees who need it and serves to reduce congestion.

Make sure to communicate information about the accessibility of the event to potential attendees through pre-event emails, website FAQs, social media and onsite signage. People with disabilities need to know in advance what types of accommodations will be offered so they can decide whether they will be able to successfully navigate the event venue. Remind attendees to submit accessibility requests in the pre-event communications leading up to the event and ask for their feedback on how to improve the event experience for those people with disabilities.

Last but not least, educate your staff members and venue partners on the importance of achieving ADA guidelines to guarantee the inclusion of people with disabilities at the event. Consider assigning a specific employee to coordinate event accessibility planning and policies. Reach out to disability organizations such as the **ADA National Network** for planning solutions and resources. After the event, seek out feedback from attendees related to accessibility so you can make any necessary adjustments for subsequent events.

SPECIAL ADA MOBILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDOOR EVENTS

The ADA stipulates ALL buildings and facilities that are open to the public to be accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes temporary structures like tents or pavilions that are used for public use for events and/or meetings. Some points to consider for ADA mobility when planning inside events include:

Parking: Ensure that designated parking spaces are provided for people with disabilities. If your venue does not feature ADA parking, temporary parking spaces are acceptable if they fulfill ADA requirements. In general, the ADA requires one accessible parking spot for every 25 total parking spots provided. In addition, one of six accessible parking spaces, but always at least one, must be van accessible. According to ADA guidelines, parking spaces must be 96" wide with a 96" adjacent access lane. Make sure accessible parking spaces are as close as possible to the main event site or building entrance.

Building Access and Entrances: An accessible entrance must be provided into the event, according to the ADA. This should include level access or a cut curb from the parking area. Note that it may be acceptable to install a temporary wheelchair lift or ramp if the main entrance does not meet standards of accessibility as set forth by the ADA. Building entrances should be wide enough for wheelchairs and scooters to pass through.

Building Corridors: Make sure that building corridors are wide enough (at least 36 inches) for wheelchair and scooter users to navigate free of obstacles. According to the ADA National Network, a "single continuous accessible pedestrian path should be wide, smooth, as level as possible, and without low or overhanging hazards or obstructions." Provide clear signage so wheelchair and scooter users can successfully navigate through the event.

Meeting Rooms/Auditoriums: Aisles should be sufficiently wide to allow wheelchairs and scooters to navigate and gently sloped with no steps or other obstructions.

Stages: A portable wheelchair lift rental can make indoor or outdoor stages of any height easily accessible for people with disabilities or mobility issues.

Restrooms: Entrances must be wide enough (at least 32 inches) to permit wheelchair or scooter access. The interior must be sufficiently large (60 inches minimum diameter) to permit a wheelchair or scooter to enter and turn around. Toilet stalls should be equipped with a grab bar and sinks should be at least 30 inches high for a wheelchair to easily roll under.



Signage: According to ADA guidelines, appropriate event signage must be provided to direct persons with disabilities to accessible parking, entrances, seating areas, restrooms and concession stands. All accessible amenities at the event should be clearly identified with the international accessibility symbol. Make sure to place “Accessible Route” signage at inaccessible routes such as stairs to point to alternative routes for people with disabilities.

SPECIAL ADA MOBILITY CONSIDERATIONS FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS

Just like indoor events, all temporary outdoor events must be accessible to people with disabilities in compliance with ADA requirements and guidelines. Additional considerations must be taken in terms of accessibility if your event or meeting is scheduled to take place at an outdoor venue such as a stadium, public park or any other open area. This includes any temporary outdoor structures such as pop-up tents, festival booths, food stands and temporary restrooms.

Some points to consider for ADA mobility accessibility when planning outdoor events include:

Access and Entrances: Access routes to the outdoor event location should be easily navigable by people with disabilities. As with entrances to closed buildings, entrances to outdoor venues such as parks or stadiums must be accessible to people who use wheelchairs, scooters, walkers or other mobility aids. There should be at least one entrance on a level with the event or that incorporates a wheelchair lift or ramp at parking lot or street level if necessary.

Event Seating: If the event is held at a facility that offers theater or bleacher seating, spaces must be provided for individuals using wheelchairs. These accessible spaces may be either at ground level or accessible via a wheelchair lift or ramp.

Restrooms: A sufficient number of accessible restrooms should be available and located as close as possible to the designated accessible seating area. Make sure the path between the seating area and accessible restroom is completely free of obstructions. Provide adequate signage to direct attendees to the location of accessible restroom facilities.

TOP 3 MOST OVERLOOKED ADA ISSUES AT EVENTS

In order to ensure total ADA compliance at your next event, make sure you address these frequently overlooked ADA accessibility issues:

- 1.** Elevators don't just have to accommodate the size of a wheelchair to achieve ADA compliance, they also must allow enough space for a wheelchair to make a 360-degree turn. (Note that wheelchair lift rentals can provide a safe and reliable alternative for ADA access at events of all sizes.)
- 2.** ADA requirements stipulate that doors should not take more than 5 pounds of force to open. In addition, door handles and levels must not require any tight grasping or twisting in order to operate.
- 3.** Event materials should never use words with negative connotations such as “handicapped” or “disabled persons.” The correct phrases to use are “persons with disabilities” or “people with disabilities,” according to ADA guidelines.

ADDITIONAL ADA MOBILITY RESOURCES

While event planning is not easy, by thoughtfully building accessibility and inclusivity into your pre-planning you can guarantee compliance with all ADA requirements and guidelines. More importantly, addressing accessibility will enhance the experience of all participants at your events.

For more information about achieving ADA mobility compliance for your next event or meeting, consult the following resources:

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

[Complete Text of the 1990 Law and Amendments](#)

ADA Official Website

www.ADA.gov

ADA Information Line

800-514-0301 (Voice)

800-514-0383 (TTY)

24 hours a day to order publications by mail.

M-W, F 9:30 AM - 5:30 PM, TH 12:30 PM - 5:30 PM (EST)

to speak with an ADA specialist.

ADA National Network

1-800-949-4232

<http://adata.org>

Federal ADA and Disability Resources

ADA Reports and Updates

ADA Regulatory Archive