

Madison Festivals and Events Accessibility Guide

Above: All events, including those on the Capital Square will have to think about paths of travel and concessions. There is much you can do to make your event more accessible for everyone.

Photo Courtesy of Destination Madison, Focal Flame Photography

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Madison Festivals and Events Accessibility Guide

PURPOSE

The City of Madison is known for its array of festivals and events each year, and it is one of many things that make this city a desirable place to live, work, and visit. As the city continues to address the inclusion of marginalized communities, it has broadened its effort to ensure people with disabilities have equal access and opportunity to festivals and events. Vibrant and sustainable festivals and events engage the community, enhance the quality of life, and provide opportunities and places for people to connect and celebrate local culture, heritage and talent. Regardless of size, most festivals and events are obligated to provide and maintain accessibility for all attendees with disabilities.

People with disabilities include individuals of any age, type of condition, illness, or disability, regardless of onset or severity.

Did You Know?

A person with a disability can be someone of any age who:

- Has low or no hearing
- Has low or no vision
- Lives with a mental health issue or substance use issue
- Uses a cane, wheelchair or other mobility device
- Has a cognitive, developmental or intellectual disability

The Festivals and Events Accessibility Guide is intended to assist event organizers with creating and implementing a comprehensive accessibility plan for their event. This guide goes beyond the minimum compliance standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While the ADA standards are referenced throughout this guide (listed in red as **must** or **shall**), there are also best practice recommendations (listed in orange as **should** or **consider**) to help make events more inclusive. This guide suggests no-cost or low-cost actions that can help reduce barriers for people with disabilities, and lead to a more inclusive event. It is our hope that organizers gain the understanding that inclusion is an opportunity, and not a burden. Yes, some activities outlined in this guide require additional investment, but these investments can increase overall attendance. Implementing the solutions and strategies in this guide should be seen as an integral part of making events responsive and relevant to the community as a whole.

PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

The Festivals and Events Accessibility and Inclusion Guide was developed in partnership between Downtown Madison Inc (DMI), through its Beyond Compliance Taskforce; Access to Independence; and the City of Madison, through its Disability Rights Commission. In 2021, the City of Madison Parks Department began requiring festival applicants to include an accessibility plan as part of the permit application. This partnership stepped up to support the city, and permit applicants, by creating this guide. The partnership also bridges the public and private interests and obligations that are needed to improve accessibility and inclusion for people with disabilities. This guide was made possible with individual contributions from Jason Beloungy, Wendy Weiler, and Gregg May.





Requirements and Best Practices

Above: Live music is a common feature at many festivals. The location of seating and ramps will have a major impact on the accessibility of your festival. *Photo Courtesy of Destination Madison, Focal Flame Photography*

1. Transportation

How attendees with disabilities arrive to and depart from your event is the first step to creating an inclusive and accessible event.

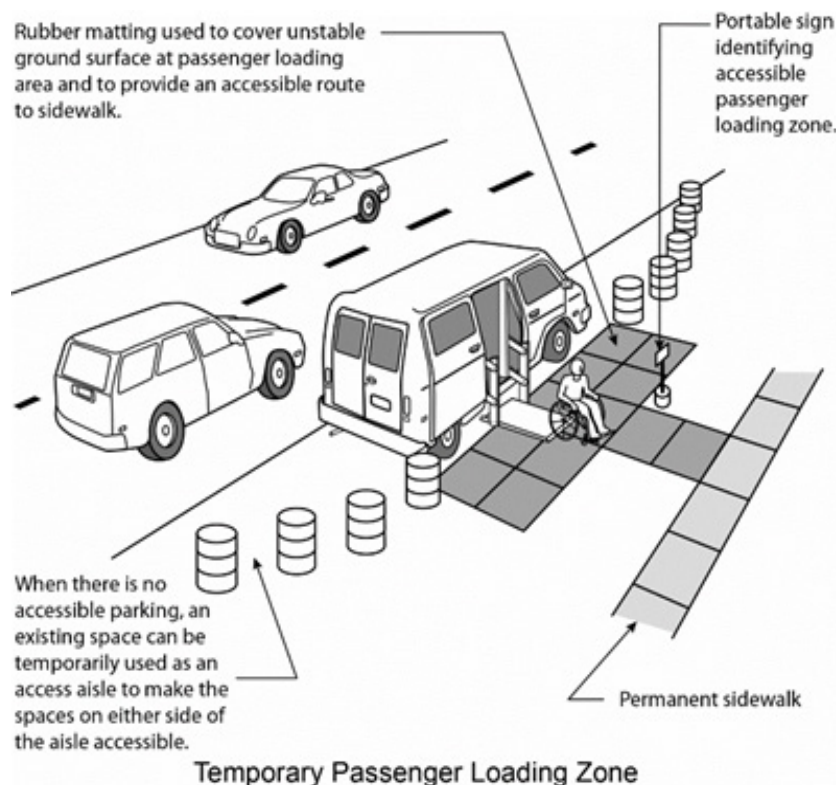
PASSENGER LOADING AND UNLOADING

Provide a designated passenger loading and unloading area that is clearly marked with signs and close to the event entrance. The accessible area **shall** be located safely outside of the flow of traffic and **must** have a vertical clearance of at least 114" for vehicles with raised roofs, as well as buses and paratransit vehicles. If there is not sufficient vertical clearance, **consider** creating temporary loading zones at other locations to accommodate these vehicles. The loading and unloading area **shall** be 20 feet long and at least eight feet wide, with a five-foot-wide access aisle alongside the lane.

A temporary accessible loading and unloading zone **should** be created by blocking off areas along streets and driveways or in parking lots. If the temporary zone is located away from the event entrance, provide directional signage and an accessible route to the closest entrance.

Tip:

It is helpful to use arrival, exit and directional signs that are clear and can be read in all light conditions. The signs **should** start outside the parking area, so festival goers can easily find accessible parking.



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Some attendees with disabilities may arrive and leave by public transportation. **Consider** providing accessible public transportation information for attendees with disabilities wherever you post general transportation information. This information **should** include:

- Schedules of accessible buses, shuttles, or other transportation.
- Information on whether the buses or shuttles on the route are accessible, including the stops and the route to your event.
- Whether shelter is provided at the bus stop nearest the accessible entrance.
- Whether there is a clear accessible route, with curb cuts and directional signs to the nearest accessible entrance.

FESTIVAL-SPECIFIC TRANSPORTATION

It is highly recommended you **consider** using accessible vehicles for festival-specific transportation. This would include shuttle service from a remote parking lot to the event area or between events. Remember to include at least one shuttle equipped with a ramp or lift, along with schedule and contact information.



Left: Accessible information at public transportation locations will help guide people to your festival and will make the entire event more accessible. Consider providing public transit access information just as you would information about parking.

2. Parking

For events that provide parking, providing a sufficient number of accessible parking spaces will allow people with disabilities arriving by car or van to attend your festival. Additionally, one of every eight accessible spaces, but never less than one, **must** be van accessible.

To use parking spaces safely, people with wheelchairs or other mobility aids need more space than available in a typical non-accessible space. Each accessible space **must** include a level access aisle to provide adequate space for fully-open car doors, van lifts and ramps. This space allows users to maneuver, enter and exit their vehicle.

Tip:

Your event location **must** comply with the accessibility requirements of the ADA. Parking **shall** be clearly marked with proper signage, and staff **should** be trained to direct individuals to the designated area and respond to inquiries. It is dangerous for people using wheelchairs to have to travel behind parked cars or cross traffic lanes. If this is unavoidable, the pedestrian route, access aisles and parking spaces **should** be clearly defined.

ACCESSIBLE SPACES SHOULD BE AS CLOSE AS POSSIBLE TO:

- Paths to the nearest accessible entrances and exits.
- Any elevators, lifts, and ramps for people using mobility devices.
- Curb cuts and clearly marked accessible paths.
- Pay stations, ticket booths, and parking kiosks.

Total Number of Parking Spaces Provided	Minimum Number of Required Accessible Spaces
1-25	1
26-50	2
51-75	3
76-100	4
101-150	5
151-200	6
201-300	7
301-400	8
401-500	9
501-1,000	2% of Total
1,000+	20 + 1 for each additional 100 over 1,000

3. Paths of Travel

As you plan your festival, think about the routes people take throughout the venue. Plan for accessible paths across the site that link all attractions and essential services. Accessible routes ensure that everyone can successfully navigate the venue.

A successful accessible route connects arrival points (e.g., parking, drop-off, or public transportation) with all exterior and interior event exhibits and activities, including public amenities.

As much as possible, accessible routes **should** be the same routes used by other participants. Modifications to create accessible routes may be temporary, or as permanent, as resources allow. Once the route has been mapped out, it **must** be identified with signs if it deviates from paths used by the general public.

Tip:

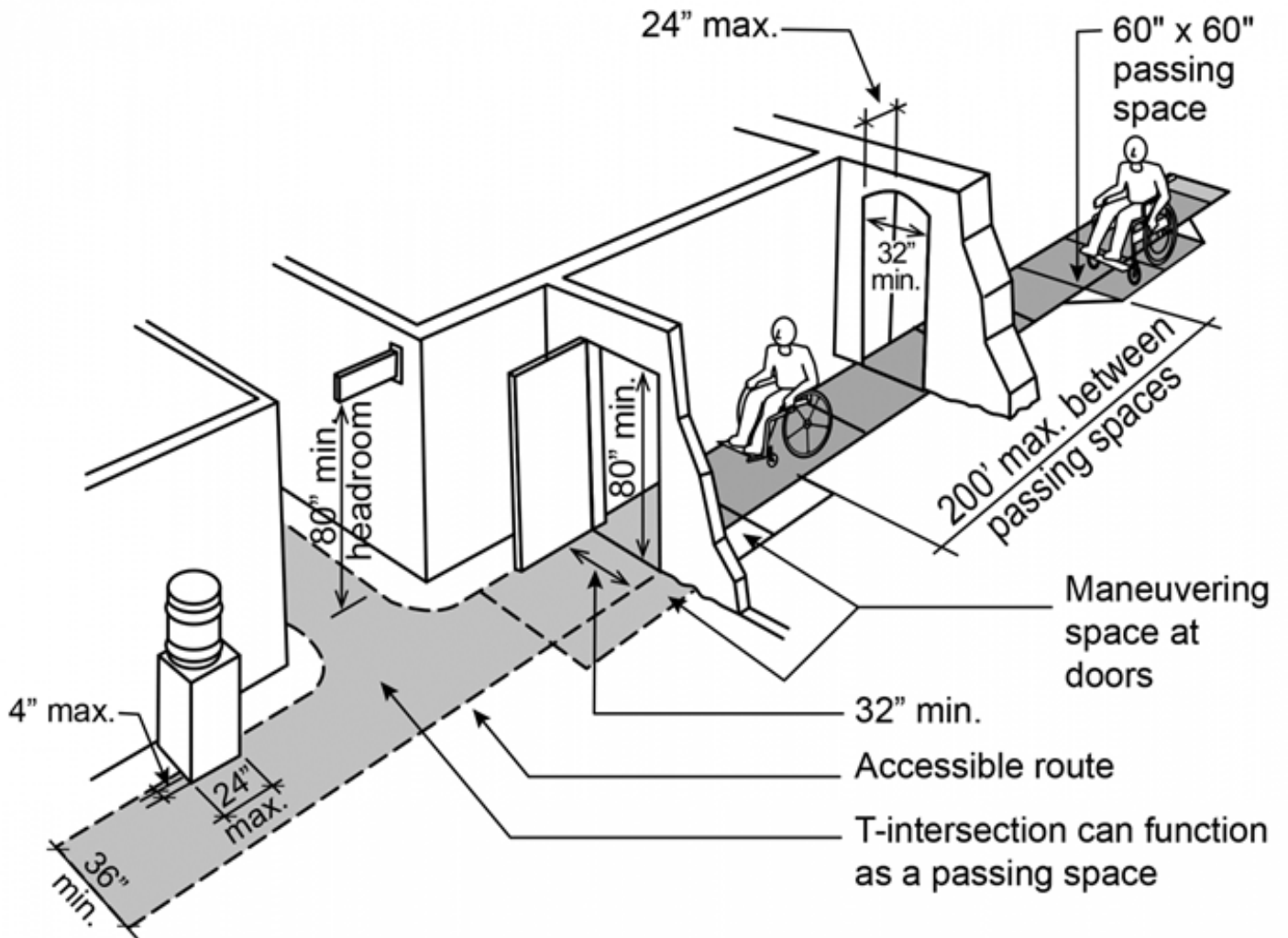
Purchase or rent temporary outdoor flooring to help stabilize paths on uneven surfaces like sand or grass.

AN ACCESSIBLE ROUTE *MUST*:

- Be at least 36" wide, except at doors or short pathways where the accessible route may be reduced to 32" wide for a maximum distance of 24".
- Have a minimum of 60" clear space, at least every 200 ft, so two people using wheelchairs can pass.
- Have a minimum of 80" vertical clearance or headroom along the entire path.
- Be free of any hazardous, protruding objects.
- Be on stable, firm, slip-resistant and compact surfaces.
- Slope no more than 1:20 unless a ramp with handrails and edge protection is installed.
- Ramps are limited to a slope of 1:12 and all cross slopes are limited to 1:48.
- Have no abrupt vertical changes in floor or ground level unless it is limited to ¼" with vertical changes between ¼ and ½" permitted the change is beveled with a slope of 1:2 or less.
- Use a ramp, lift or elevator if there are any level changes greater than ½', such as a step, stairway, or full floor level change.
- Have no cables or electrical wires on paths of travel, or use cable protectors that are wheelchair accessible and are in bright/contrasting colors to alert people with low vision.

Tip:

People with vision-related disabilities often travel closely along walls which can provide wayfinding cues sometime called a “shoreline.” Objects mounted on walls, partitions, columns, trees, poles and other elements along circulation paths can pose hazards unless their projection is limited. Those with leading edges that are within cane sweep (27” high maximum) or that provide minimum headroom clearance (80” minimum) do not pose hazards and can protrude any amount.



Basic Features of an Accessible Route

4. Signage + Maps + Wayfinding

Signage is an important element for creating positive visitor experiences. People need to know where they are going without confusion. Directional signage will ensure amenities, buildings, services and attractions can be easily located.

ACCESS SIGNAGE IS NEEDED:

- To direct the public to the locations of accessible parking spaces, passenger drop-off points and transit stops.
- To direct to entries and gates.
- To direct to venues and amenities.

ACCESSIBLE SIGNAGE *MUST*:

- Include the international symbol of accessibility.
- Include easy-to-read type fonts and large enough to be read at a distance, with characters 5/8 and 2" high or greater.
- Use highly contrasting colors, such as white on black or black on white.
- Be mounted at a height between 42"-60".
- Be placed so that pedestrian flow will not obstruct its visibility.

When possible, include a map to show location of accessible restrooms, parking, phones, drinking fountains and first aid stations.

Tip:

Top four benefits of wayfinding and directional signage:

1. How to get there – People want to know where to go, with clear, easy to follow paths that keep traffic flowing throughout the venue.
2. Visitor familiarity – people want to feel at ease, find what they're looking for, engage in spaces and make the most of their experience.
3. Health and safety – accurate signage helps people disperse safely and quickly, find rest areas, food venues and first aid stations.
4. Promote your festival or event – Incorporate your festival theme into well thought out signage while following ADA guidelines and creating accurate, easy to follow guides.

Tip:

Give people with disabilities access to the emergency and safety information for the event, like maps, evacuation plans, brochures or signs. Before your event, check whether there is anything that would make these items difficult to read, see, hear or understand for someone with a disability.

ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION CENTER

- If an information center is provided at the event, customer service representatives(s) **must** be available to assist individuals, including those with disabilities, by performing functions such as verbalizing visually formatted information and serving as a guide.
- Signage and information in brochures about accessibility **must** be kept current and available upon request.
- Printed brochures and program materials **should** be available in large print versions for visitors with low vision, including materials associated with traveling and other temporary exhibitions.



5. Stage(s) + Seating

If your event is hosting a performance of any type, where attendees will be gathering to view, or even participate, here are ways to ensure that portion of the event is accessible, regardless of how significant it is to the rest of the event.

GETTING ON STAGE

If your event has a stage of any size or height, a ramp **is necessary** for performers, attendees, emcees, or volunteers. Ramps are not only important for people who use mobility devices, but are also helpful to individuals who may struggle with steps due to vision loss, balance, or weakness. Local resources for ramps can be found on page 23.

SEATING THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

Being able to view a stage or performance location requires a smart seating arrangement. For open area seating arrangements, designating spaces where someone of short stature, or who needs to remain in a seated position, can still see, or participate, **is necessary**. Areas with fixed seating, must provide a range of seating locations so people using mobility devices can choose where to position themselves to view activities or performances. The number of wheelchair locations required is related to seating capacity and, with some exceptions, must be dispersed within conventional seating areas so patrons have a choice of ticket price

Here are some tips to ensure access and inclusion for event performances:

- Designate, and hold open, areas of “accessible seating”, for more than one area so people with disabilities have options that are accessible. Ensure the ground is level, and the view is unobstructed.
- Proper signage designating the areas of accessible seating (check out Section 4: Signage + Maps + Wayfinding on page 11 for more details).
- The location **should** have some chairs set up, and space next to the chairs for someone using a mobility device and companion. When possible, be flexible with the number of companions. The individual with a disability shouldn't have to choose between attending the event or not if they cannot be seated with family members or friends.

Tip:

When choosing accessible seating and viewing areas, be aware that individuals using wheelchairs are not placed behind areas where people will stand for the performance or ovation. When safe, provide a place directly in front of the stage or ramped and raised viewing platforms.



Above: Being able to view a stage or performance location requires a smart seating arrangement. This ramped area will allow individuals using wheelchairs to see the performance, even though the audience is standing.

6. Concessions + Sales + Related Seating

Food, beverages, and other goods are a big draw, if not THE draw, at festivals and events. This section outlines how to ensure that concessions, sales, and their related seating are accessible and inclusive.

CASHIERS AND COUNTERS

- A portion of the main counter **must** be no greater than 34" high.
- A food-ordering counter **should** have a section no more than 34" high. If that is not possible, then a lowered portion of the counter **must** be provided with a maximum height of 34" and a length of at least 60". If not readily achievable, **consider** providing a server for the disabled guest/attendee.
- There **should** be space at the side for passing items to customers who have difficulty reaching.

TABLES AND SEATING

- At least 5% of your seating/tables **must** be accessible.
- Table-top surfaces **should** be 28-34" above the floor with clear space underneath of at least 27" from the floor to the underside of the table.

SELF-SERVE ITEMS

- Items **must** be marked clearly for guests with low vision and assistance **should** be provided.
- When offering a self-serve station for condiments or other items, the tops of the tables or counters **should** be no more than 36" above the floor.
- Food service items are often placed at the back of a table or counter, or on risers or racks above the counter surface, these items **should** be easily reached by a guest using a wheelchair.
- If it is not possible to provide accessible condiments and utensils, please **consider** providing staff as servers for the guests/attendees.



Above: The above scene shows a variety of booth heights that highlight the difficulties people with disabilities face accessing concessions and sales. *Photo Courtesy of Destination Madison, Focal Flame Photography*



Above: At least 5% of your seating/tables **must** be accessible, but also consider that table-top surfaces **should** be 28-34" above the floor with clear space underneath of at least 27" from the floor to the underside of the table, as seen above.

7. Restrooms + Toilets

*Restrooms and toilets are a necessity, and for some people with disabilities, they serve as a place to address other personal or medical care needs in privacy. Ensuring these facilities are accessible is a **must**. Since permanent structures are typically not the responsibility of event organizers, this guidance will focus on portable toilet units.*

ADA Standards require that at least five percent of portable toilet units **must** be accessible, with no less than one (1) unit being accessible. These accessible portable toilets **must** meet the same standards required of restrooms, including clear floor space, grab bars, toilet paper dispensers within reach, etc.

ADA REQUIREMENTS:

- Doors **must** be no less than 32" wide and **should** open at 90 degrees.
- There **must** be a 60" diameter of clear floor space.
- Toilet paper (and feminine hygiene dispensers) **should** be mounted at a height of 15" to 48".
- Grab bars within the stalls are necessary and **must** be able to withstand up to 250 lbs.

If there are additional units that are not accessible, the accessible units **must** display the international symbol of accessibility. Other factors to address for accessible toilets include:

- If a step or threshold of more than a half-inch exists, a ramp (that meets accessibility guidance), or threshold mat, **must** be utilized. A ramp **must** include a landing that will allow users to safely open the door and enter.
- Ensure the entire path of travel to the door of the toilet is accessible, see guidance in Section 3: Paths of Travel on page 9.
- If there is more than one accessible toilet, disperse toilets at different locations throughout the event area. The further distances to the toilets can be a barrier for people with a variety of disabilities. It is also not appropriate to cluster the accessible toilets in one group, separate from the rest of the toilets.

8. Promotion + Communication

As was mentioned in the beginning of this guide, investing time and resources into accessibility and inclusion will help yield greater attendance, and enjoyment of your event. However, simply providing it doesn't mean that people with disabilities will know about it and attend.

People with disabilities are accustomed to inaccessible events, and may assume your event is as well, even with the steps you've taken. Promotion is important. **Consider** promoting your accessibility features in the same places where you promote your festival in general. This will let potential festival goers know their accessibility needs are being seriously considered. Steps you **should** take to promote accessibility and inclusion measures:

- Include statements about accessibility and accommodations in all promotional materials. If you are offering accommodations, have a specific place or person to contact. If there is an accessible entrance, it is important to note that.
- Adding an accessibility information section to your website
- Utilize the international symbol of accessibility. If there will be specific accommodations provided, make sure to use the proper symbols.
- Images that coincide with text help people who use sign language, or have cognitive or intellectual disabilities.
- Connect with local disability organizations to help promote your event, and the accessibility efforts you have engaged in.
- Don't to forget to make sure the event website is screen reader accessible, as well as has high-contrast, easy to read fonts.

Tip:

Make accessibility information on your site easy to find and ensure volunteers and organizers are prepared to answer accessibility-related questions.

COMMUNICATION

You *should* develop brochures, websites, ads and maps that include a variety of topics such as whether there are accessible toilets, viewing areas, performances with designated seating, American Sign Language offered and location of accessible parking. Most events do not require advance registration, so it is best practice to provide some of these accommodations:

- For event performances, offer sign language interpreters.
- Videos should be captioned.
- Include hearing technology if possible.

Tip:

The Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing may be able to provide assistance for hiring interpreters for events. See Page 23 for more information.

9. Additional Best Practices

QUIET PLACES + SHELTERS + MEDICAL OR REST AREA

While planning your festival, *consider* designating a quiet space for rest, especially if your event attracts large crowds and is longer than a couple of hours. This can be helpful for individuals with different types of disabilities or needs such as people with mental health issues, sensory issues, fatigue and nursing mothers. Allow space for service animals and mobility devices.

PAY ATTENTION TO THE TEMPERATURE

If the event is outdoors and temperatures may be extreme— above 80 degrees or below 50— you *should* arrange for access to facilities with moderate temperatures. For large outdoor events, have at least one accessible outdoor shelter in each major activity area, particularly if access into adjacent buildings is not possible.

Make existing shelters accessible or create new accessible temporary shelters by using tents or tarps. Temporary shelters *should* be located on level ground adjacent to an accessible route. Locate shelters close to existing water fountains or, in areas where this may not be possible, provide water in portable containers.

SUPPORT & SERVICE ANIMALS

Under Wisconsin law, a Service Animal is any animal trained to perform an individualized task in relation to a person's disability. This is different from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) definition, which is limited to dogs and miniature ponies. They do not require any documentation or certification. Only service dogs in training (SDITs) require to be accompanied by a certified trainer.

Emotional Support Animals provide comfort and support to an individual based on their needs. Emotional support animals are not allowed in public places. Therapy Dogs are allowed in public places with the property owners permission and *must* adhere to the same standards as a service dog. Therapy dogs are often requested to be certified through a therapy dog organization, however this certification is not required.

There are only two questions that can be asked of a person with a service animal:

1. Is the animal a service animal needed because of disability?
2. What is the animal trained to do?

Any questions beyond these may constitute a violation.

Under certain circumstances a property owner can ask that an animal be removed. The following conditions **must** apply:

1. The answers to the above-mentioned service animal questions are not provided.
2. The animal is not under the handler's control. This usually means that the animal is not on a leash, however the animal may still be under the handler's control off a leash.
3. The animal does not have vaccinations or registration.
4. The animal poses a public safety or health hazard.

For instance, if the animal is not housebroken or has an accident indoors which the owner does not clean up. If an individual is asked to remove a service animal or therapy dog, they **must** be offered the ability to participate without the animal and accommodations **should** be made.

TRAINING AND SUPPORT

Make sure you have someone who is responsible for planning, implementation, execution. Have a plan for staff and volunteer training. All staff and volunteers **should** have a basic awareness of and sensitivity to disability issues. Make it clear to staff and volunteers that people with disabilities expect to be treated like all other event participants. Advise staff as follows:

- View an individual in terms of the whole person and not just the disability.
- Avoid being anxious or overly protective; people will let you know what they need.
- Some people will need extra time to move, speak, perform a task, or participate in an activity. The behavior of some people with developmental or cognitive disabilities may be unsettling to people unfamiliar with these disabilities. There is no need for fear and, as with others, respect and patience is expected. In other words, provide good customer service to everyone.
- Do offer verbal or written information about your event's accessible features.

VENDORS + PARTICIPANTS + PERFORMERS

- **Consider** developing a policy for providing goods and services to individuals with disabilities in accordance with the requirements of Title III of the ADA. You **should** institute a clause in the contract requiring that the shop or booth owners provide access to their goods or services for patrons with disabilities.
- Create training materials on providing access to patrons who have disabilities and distribute them to all shop owners and employees prior to the event. The materials **should** include information about the requirements of the ADA, policies with respect to providing access to the programs, activities, and services at the fair, the location of accessible toilet facilities and telephones, and procedures for contacting professional staff if questions or problems arise pertaining to accessibility for persons with disabilities.

OTHER ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

When planning your festival, **consider** including:

1. Dedicated accessibility volunteers – one of the best ways to make sure that accessibility is a priority is to make accessibility the responsibility of some of your event volunteers or create a diversity, equity and inclusion committee. You **should** consulting an existing accessibility advisory resource.
2. Accessible Equipment – **consider** options for buying or renting accessible festival equipment for long-term usage.
3. Mobility device charging stations – **consider** providing outlets for people with power wheelchairs, scooters and other electronic disability related devices and medical equipment
4. Accessibility information areas – **consider** providing dedicated spot where people with disabilities can get information on the festival's access features. A dedicated information booth that offers accessibility information **should** be located near the accessible entrance. In addition, relevant information about accessibility features **should** be placed on signs or available in pamphlets throughout the venue. Information booth areas **should** have level pathways, wheelchair accessible counter height with easy to reach items, and brochures **should** have large, high-contrast print.

Ask for feedback

- Find out how successful your accessibility features are by asking for feedback. Before the festival, **consider** asking what accessibility features people would like during any pre-festival consultation.
- At the festival, you **should** gather feedback from festival goers. Make sure you have more than one way to collect feedback and let people know what you plan to do with the feedback you receive. If you already have a feedback form, add a question about accessibility. It can be as simple as asking “Were your accessibility needs met? If not, what can we do to improve your experience?”
- After the festival, **consider** the feedback you heard. Are the suggestions or concerns that can be addressed in the planning for next year?

Questions?

We are here to help! Contact the following organizations:



Access to Independence, Inc.

Phone: 608-242-8484

Email: info@accesstoind.org

Website: www.accesstoind.org

Overview: Access to Independence is a local non-profit agency that provides services for people of any type of disability, and for all ages. Access to Independence can be a resource for technical assistance with planning an event, assessing the accessibility of an event, providing assistive technology devices for demonstration or short-term loan, as well as resources on equipment vendors.



City of Madison Disability Rights and Services Program

Phone: 608-266-4910

Email: dcr@cityofmadison.com

Website: <https://www.cityofmadison.com/civil-rights/programs/disability-rights-services-program>

Twitter: @MadisonDCR

Overview: The Disability Rights & Services Program, part of the City's Department of Civil Rights, serves Madison's residents with disabilities. This program coordinates the City's efforts to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.



Great Lakes ADA Center

Phone: 1-800-949-4232

Website: <http://www.adagreatlakes.org/>

Overview: The Center provides information, materials, technical assistance and training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The regional center (located in Chicago) can be contacted for information about how to apply the ADA to festivals and events, as well as request resources specific to the ADA.