

# **GUIDE: HOW TO PLAN ACCESSIBLE OUTDOOR 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 outdoor events such as festivals, concerts, picnics, 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  
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?

**3.0  
PUBLIC  
ENTRANCE:**

- 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?

**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  
WASHROOMS:**

- Have you provided, at a minimum, two accessible outdoor portable washrooms?
- Are they located in accessible areas?
- Are large clear letters, understandable pictures/symbols used on the signs identifying the accessible washroom(s)?
- Do event personnel know where the accessible washrooms are located?

**6.0  
WAY FINDING  
SIGNAGE:**

- Are large clear letters and plain language used on signs directing people to specific areas? Are they free from glare?

**7.0  
ENTERTAINMENT  
SEATING:**

- Has an area been designated for people who use wheelchairs or mobility aids?
- Does this area have an unobstructed view of the entertainment area/stage?

- Are these areas integrated with other seating areas such as at the front, on the aisles or on the sides of the stage while ensuring an unobstructed view?
- Can a companion sit beside the person with the disability?
- Can you accommodate the Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing?

**8.0  
LIGHTING:**

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

**9.0  
CABLES AND  
CORDS:**

- Have you provided covers over electrical cables or cords that cross aisles or pathways? Cable covers should be no more than 1/2" thick so that they do not become a tripping hazard and also, so that wheelchairs can traverse across them.

**10.0 FOOD:**

- Are there event personal 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).

**11.0 TICKETS:**

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

## **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;

Do Not Use	Use Instead	Comments
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

