



# Guide to Accessible Events

For the City of Ottawa

# Table of Contents

<b>THE GUIDE</b> .....	1
<b>THE LAW AND DEFINITIONS</b> .....	2
<b>CONSIDERATIONS</b> .....	2
Signs .....	2
Access Maps .....	2
Parking .....	2
Service Animals .....	3
Detectable Warning Devices .....	3
Lighting .....	3
Public Address Systems .....	4
Emergency Response Area.....	4
Written/Copied Materials .....	4
Visual Information.....	4
Departure Arrangements .....	4
<b>ACCESSIBLE VENUES CHECKLIST</b> .....	5
<b>ADDITIONAL INFORMATION</b> .....	7

# CITY OF OTTAWA, KANSAS GUIDE FOR PLANNING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

## THE GUIDE

***Please note this guide does not authorize the event. Authorization must be obtained from the City of Ottawa.***

This GUIDE FOR PLANNING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS:

- is designed to help those persons responsible for organizing events in the city of Ottawa, Kansas ensure accessibility for all individuals participating, including those people with disabilities.
- aims to help make events more accessible for people with disabilities who may be attending as presenters, participants or event organizers.
- gives information and guidance on best practice that will open up a section of potential market that is often overlooked, and help meet existing legal responsibilities.
- does not attempt to list everything that will need to be done for every type of event.
- is not designed as a technical checklist covering detailed specifications.
- outlines principles which will lead to the development of best practice and increase access for people with disabilities to a range of events.
- is useful to anybody who is involved in organizing events, whatever the nature

This GUIDE FOR PLANNING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS aims to:

- assist event organizers in thinking about access and participation when planning an event;
- identify features that make it impossible or difficult for people with disabilities to access events;
- ensure the best possible access;
- provide contact information for additional questions/comments.

This GUIDE FOR PLANNING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS uses the term 'event(s)' to cover a broad range of functions such as

- indoor conferences, meetings, exhibitions, shows or concerts,
- street/city parks festivals, and fairs, such as art festivals, school events, crafts fairs, etc.
- fundraiser booths, food/drinks booths, etc.
- outdoor events such as concerts, celebratory events, parades, circuses, car/tractor shows, community street fairs, sidewalk sales days, etc.

The City of Ottawa, Kansas does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities, in accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

All events on City of Ottawa property are required to comply with all City, State and Federal Disability Requirements. There must be reasonable modifications to the programs, services and activities of the proposed event to ensure accessibility to all individuals, including persons with disabilities.

## **THE LAW AND DEFINITIONS**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services

Disabilities result when physical and mental impairments interact with the environment to cause barriers. For example, impaired walking becomes a disability when stairs or long distances must be negotiated; impaired hearing becomes a disability when there is a high level of ambient noise and all information is presented verbally; impaired vision becomes a disability when all information is presented in standard-sized print.

Disabilities present themselves in many forms. Some disabilities are visible, others invisible. They may be permanent or temporary, psychological or physical, severe or mild, or based on a combination of impairments. A person can be young or old, be born with an impairment, or acquire one as a result of an injury or chronic illness.

The term 'event organizer' describes the person or organization hosting the event. The event organizer, acting as a service provider, is the person responsible for making sure the event is accessible.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Signs**

Good signage is often a critical communication component at an event, and can be even more important for people with disabilities, who may need to use alternate routes or find accessible elements. If a venue does not have good general signage in place, consider adding some temporary signs (e.g., "Elevators" with a directional arrow). "Event-specific" signs may be needed as well (e.g., "Festival Parking / ACCESSIBLE PARKING ONLY IN THIS LOT). Signs should be easy to see and read, with non-glare finishes, simple lettering, and good contrast between characters and background.

### **Access Maps**

Prior to the event, consider printing and circulating/publishing a map showing accessibility access points. Accessible parking, departure/pick up points, accessible routes, accessible toilets, whether indoors or out, lifts, elevators, quiet rooms or areas, service animal relief areas, arrangements to receive written materials in advance, and other accessible arrangements can be clearly denoted.

### **Parking**

Where accessible parking is inadequate, or simply non-existent, accessible parking spaces can be temporarily designated with appropriate approval. Pavement tape, barricades, or orange traffic cones can serve to define space for parking and access aisles; temporary signs can be posted. Accessible parking should be located on surfaces that are as level and stable as possible, and connect to accessible routes that lead to entrances, transportation stops, or event areas.

## **Service Animals**

Service animals include any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability including, but not limited to, guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds, alerting persons with seizures to potential seizure episode, providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items. People with a variety of disabilities utilize service animals. Be prepared to handle their particular needs and access issues.

Ensure that service animals are welcome. Make registration and event workers/staff aware of the different types of service animals, including guide animals, hearing animals, seizure alert animals, and mobility/balance animals. Not all service animals are dogs. Some, but not all, service animals wear special collars and harnesses and some, but not all, have certification/identification papers. If you are not certain that an animal is a service animal, you may ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. However, they may not be carrying the documentation, thus it may not be required as a condition for providing service.

Instruct event workers/staff on proper service animal etiquette; remind them not to distract or disturb any service animal they may encounter during the event. Designate a service animal relief area outdoors near the accessible entrance, and ensure that sufficient trash receptacles are nearby. Some service animals relieve on grass, and others on concrete or other hard surfaces; try to provide both in the relief area. You may exclude any animal, including service animal, from your facility when that animal's behavior poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others. For example, any service animal that displays vicious behavior towards other guests or customers may be excluded. You may not make assumptions, however, about how a particular animal is likely to behave based on your past experience with other animals.

Accommodate both service animal handlers and people with allergies. If an attendee or staff member is allergic to someone's service animal, offer to seat the allergic person far away from the service animal and out of the way of any ventilation that might expose them to dander or fur. Ask about seating preferences. People with service animals may sit wherever people without service animals are allowed to sit, but may prefer seats with the most space for their service animals, or away from the path of traffic.

## **Detectable Warning Devices**

Detectable warning devices, such as planters or other heavy objects, can be placed on the floor beneath hazardous protruding objects (e.g., wall-mounted fixtures that project more than four inches) so that people who are blind or have low vision will avoid them.

## **Lighting**

Lighting must be appropriate for whoever is sitting in an audience. Particular attention must be paid to people with disabilities to ensure that they can all follow what is happening. For example, a hearing impaired person will be prevented from lip-reading if there is insufficient light on the speaker.

At some events the lights are dimmed as part of the entertainment value of the event. At conferences and seminars lights are sometimes dimmed when speakers are using visual aids such as slides or videos. It may be necessary to dim the lights in these circumstances because any glare on the screen prevents many people in the audience from being able to see the text or

images on the screen. It may be possible to overcome this by closing curtains and blinds and keeping suitable lights on in the room.

If dimming lights is absolutely necessary to see the projected images, then ensure that speakers and any sign language interpreters are suitably spotlighted and there is good light for reading. It is also a good idea to give a copy of the projected images to people with a vision impairment before they come to the event in their chosen format such as large print or Braille.

### **Public Address Systems**

Public Address (PA) systems play an important role at many events, helping to ensure that people can hear what is being said in large venues. Check the quality and the volume of the PA system for clarity and comfort. At conferences and seminars, where members of the audience are invited to ask questions from the floor, it is important to have staff equipped with portable microphones for the audience to use.

### **Emergency Response Area**

Consider adding an area of refuge, also known as safe areas, areas of rescue assistance or areas of evacuation assistance, consist of an accessible space(s), separated from the rest of the event, possibly at the First Aid Station, if close to an exit area or street. Signs showing on the map would help exiting in an emergency event. While this is more typical in buildings, it can be of aid in an outdoor event if located well. If co-located with First Aid station, be sure communication devices are available as well.

### **Written/Copied Materials**

Many people with a vision impairment and other disabilities, including those with brain injuries, will welcome receiving copies of papers or handouts before the event. This provides an opportunity to read the materials and to be able to concentrate on what is being said once they are at the event.

### **Visual Information**

When using presentation tools such as power point or video, be aware that the information presented may need to be communicated in a different form in order to ensure that people with vision impairments can access the information. This may involve a simple description of what other participants are seeing, or it may involve the production of accessible electronic, audio or Braille copies of the material.

### **Departure Arrangements**

If there are likely to be crowds and long lines during departure, it might not be possible for some people with disabilities to stand for long periods of time or to tolerate milling crowds. Seating arrangements or a quiet waiting room may be provided while waiting to board transportation. Attendees who wish the opportunity to leave first may be given that option.

## ACCESSIBLE VENUES CHECKLIST

While the following list is not exhaustive, it will assist in identifying accessible features at a venue:

1. Is there good access with no steps or other barriers from the arrival point at the venue, through the main entrance(s), to all the areas being used by participants?  
 Yes  No  N/A
2. Are parking spaces and signage for people with disabilities adequate in numbers, clearly marked and close to the event?  
 Yes  No  N/A
3. Are areas where cars, taxis and coaches set down passengers as close as possible to the entrance of the venue? Check if there is a curb ramp at the drop off point to allow a person using a wheelchair to get from the road to the entrance.  
 Yes  No  N/A
4. Is an "Access Map" showing accessibility options available for the event, and published in advance for public information? Ensure map is made available to emergency response personnel.  
 Yes  No  N/A
5. Is there clear signage to direct people from the entrance(s) to any information desk and all the facilities being used?  
 Yes  No  N/A
6. Are the surfaces on the paths, inside and outside, smooth and slip-resistant?  
 Yes  No  N/A
7. Are uneven, grassy or sandy areas covered with materials that make mobility easier?  
 Yes  No  N/A
8. Are cables secure or covered so as to not present a trip hazard?  
 Yes  No  N/A
9. If using a reception desk, sign-in location, booths, etc. are they (or part of them) at a height that is accessible for people using wheelchairs? If not, can alternative arrangements be provided for the event?  
 Yes  No  N/A
10. Are there any steps or other barriers to venues being used by participants such as 'breakout' or workshop rooms, dining areas, outside areas and exhibition areas? Can alternative accessible routes be provided?  
 Yes  No  N/A
11. If there is a speaker's or performer's platform, is it accessible if needed?  
 Yes  No  N/A
12. Are the accessible toilets at the same location as other toilets or close by? Check to make sure they are clear and free of storage items such as boxes, unused chairs, etc.

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

13. If the venue is outdoors, make certain there are accessible portable toilets located with the non-accessible portable toilets. It is recommended that the event have one (1) portable toilet for every 150 people anticipated to attend the event during peak time. Ten percent (10%) of the portable toilets must be accessible. If only one portable toilet is deemed needed, it should meet ADA accessibility guidelines.

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

14. If participants have to use lifts to get to facilities, are they large enough for people using wheelchairs to use? Are the control buttons at a height that can be accessed by people using wheelchairs? Do the control buttons have raised buttons and Braille information? Is there audio information or an attendant assisting?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

15. If the venue has fixed seating are there wheelchair-accessible spaces provided at various locations spread throughout the venue along with companion seating?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

16. Is there a choice of seating available that will provide extra support for people with non-mobility types of disabilities (e.g. hearing/vision impairments, service animals, etc.) who might need it?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

17. Are areas close to a stage designated for use by people using wheelchairs, assistive hearing devices, interpreters, etc.?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

18. Is the venue large enough to allow people with disabilities to freely move around when all participants are present?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

19. Does the event layout, for example where stalls are located, provide for the best access and circulation?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

20. Are occasional seating points; i.e. bleachers, benches, etc. supplied throughout the venue?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

21. Is there good air circulation throughout the venue?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

22. Are there good acoustics?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

23. Is there a hearing augmentation system and is it functioning properly?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No \_\_\_N/A

24. Do people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment have access to seats where they have a good view of what is happening on the stage or speakers' platform? Ensuring this

option will assist people who lip read to do so and also ensure that any communication support, such as sign language interpreters, are not obscured.

Yes  No  N/A

25. Are there clear evacuation procedures in place? Do they take account of people with disabilities including people with sensory impairments and mobility impairments?

Yes  No  N/A

26. Is there good maneuverability around exhibits stalls, booths or stands?

Yes  No  N/A

27. Are event organizers aware of the right of people using assistance animals to bring them into the venue?

Yes  No  N/A

28. Is toileting space needed for assistance animals?

Yes  No  N/A

If the event includes a presenter, have the event organizer and presenter discussed:

29. The importance of developing a presentation that will be accessible to all participants?

Yes  No  N/A

30. Making the presentation's key points available on overheads or slides? Be sure they are completely legible, with large print and sharp, contrasting colors. The presenter should also allow adequate time for the audience to read the visual aids.

Yes  No  N/A

31. Providing accompanying materials, including presentations and handouts, with a complete verbal description? The presenter might wish to provide a copy of presentation materials well in advance to allow for large print or Braille transcription.

Yes  No  N/A

32. The importance of using microphones and facing the audience when speaking to assist those who read lips or use assistive listening devices?

Yes  No  N/A

33. The importance of talking clearly and slowly, spelling out unusual names and words for a sign language interpreter, if needed?

Yes  No  N/A

34. The presenter's needs (ramping or podium requests, a reverse interpreter, a sighted guide for a person with limited vision, etc.)?

Yes  No  N/A

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Questions and/or requests for additional information may be directed to the City of Ottawa's ADA Coordinator by contacting City Hall, 101 S. Hickory Street, Ottawa, KS 66067.

Hours: Mon-Fri 8am-5pm, 785.229.3600