

Ministry of the People and Social Development
Disability Affairs Unit
Events Planning to Include
Persons with Disabilities

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- The Trinidad and Tobago Chapter of Disabled Peoples' International

Foreword

Planning events for persons with disabilities may require reasonable accommodations or modifications to the environment. These include physical, informational and attitudinal adjustments as well as special considerations for meals, transportation and emergencies. The adjustments facilitate accessibility and encourage participation by persons with disabilities at events. However, information pertaining to planning accessible events is not always available in a complete and standardized format to event planners. As a result, this booklet on events planning to include persons with disabilities has been developed to provide information that is comprehensive and uniform. It is intended that this booklet would be used as reference by Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, hotels and private sector companies for use when planning inclusive events.

The information contained in this booklet was prepared by the Disability Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Social Development in consultation with various non-governmental organizations that provide disability related services to persons with disabilities. The information is intended to provide consideration when planning events to include persons with disabilities. Different areas of event planning are considered and recommendations to ensure accessibility are provided in each area. We hope that this information will give you some ideas on how to improve access and encourage full participation by persons with disabilities at your events.

Physical Accessibility

When you are planning events, you should ensure that the venue you select is accessible to persons with disabilities. Accessible venues would encourage persons with disabilities to attend and participate at your event. Here are some useful tips on accessibility that can guide you when planning events. These tips are ideal recommendations that can be used as standards to work towards when choosing accessible venues. In the event that you are unable to meet all the requirements, alternatives are recommended in each section.

Entrances and Doors

- The main entrance door should be at least 36 inches wide.
- Non-accessible entrances should have signs giving directions to the accessible entrance.
- Doorframes should be contrasting in colour to walls. On glass doors, there should be a contrasting warning strip.
- There should be at least a 5 feet x 5 feet clear space in front of the door for wheelchairs to manoeuvre.
- Where there are two doors close together, there should be a clear space of at least 5 feet plus the width of the door swing. For example, if the arc made by the door is 3 feet, then there should be an 8 feet space.

Suggestion tip

Where there is not proper signage, you can print and stick temporary signs along the walls indicating the way. Alternatively, you can use ushers to provide this service.

Route to Entrances

- Ideally, paths to all entrances should be level. Where there are stairs, wheelchair ramps should be provided as an alternative, with subtle gradients of at least one foot of ramp length for each inch of height.
- Paths to entrances should be tactile
- Ramps should have a flat area of at least 5 feet x 5 feet in front of the door.
- Remember also that ramps should have a surface that provides traction. In addition, ramps should have edge protection curbs of at least 3 inches in height to assist persons using white canes and to prevent wheelchairs from veering off the ramp surface.
- There should be signs leading to all buildings.
- Lighting at night along the route should be evenly distributed and be placed to eliminate glare.

Suggestion tip

If your venue does not have ramps, you could rent ramps from suppliers such as A.A. Laquis or, if you have enough time, you could construct one.

Door Frames and Handles

- Manual door handles should be no higher than 4 feet above the floor and should be operable with a single fist.
- When provided, power-assisted door opening controls should be placed at two levels, one at 3 feet and the other at 9 inches above the floor.
- Levers should be used instead of knobs or latches.
- Levers and handles should be of a contrasting colour to the door.
- Remember that a fully sensor-activated door with no manual controls is preferred.

Suggestion tip

Where automatic doors or doors with proper levers are absent, you can ensure that a member of staff or an usher is available to open doors for guests.

Parking and Pathways

- Ensure that accessible car parking spaces are at least 8 feet 6 inches in width plus an adjacent access aisle width of at least 5 feet to facilitate embarking and disembarking.
- An accessible van parking space should be at least 8 feet 6 inches in width plus an adjacent accessible aisle of at least 8 feet.
- For parking facilities of less than 50 cars, at least two accessible parking spaces should be provided. For parking facilities of 400 spaces, accessible parking spaces should at least be provided in the ratio of 1:25 (one accessible space for every 25 spaces).
- Make sure that the international symbol of accessibility is displayed on the ground of the parking space and on a post or wall in front of the parking space.
- Ensure that only persons with disabilities use accessible parking spaces.
- Accessible parking spaces should be as close as possible to the entrance to the facility.
- Ensure adequate lighting for persons to see the signage, parking spaces and path of travel.
- The path of travel from the parking space to the facility should be separate from vehicular traffic.

Suggestion tips

Where parking is not close to the event, you can provide a drop-off zone so persons with disabilities can embark and disembark close to the event.

Where persons with disabilities are driving, you should try to secure at least two or three parking spots near the venue or provide an accessible shuttle service from the car park to the venue. The shuttle service can benefit all persons attending the function.

Where signs indicating accessible parking are absent, security can be instructed to allow only persons with disabilities to utilize these spots. You can also consider placing temporary signs at these spots.

Meeting Rooms

- Ensure that meeting rooms have accessible routes of travel.
- Doors to meeting rooms should be accessible.
- The stage should have an accessible ramp.
- The room should be well lit for low vision individuals.

Suggestion Tip

If doors to the meeting rooms are not accessible, you can assign an usher to assist persons with disabilities.

In absence of a ramp to the stage, one can be rented for the occasion.

Chair Arrangements

- Wheelchair seating should be appropriate in relation to the total seating capacity of the room. The table below provides further details.
- Make sure that wheelchair locations are *integrated* with other seating areas.
- Remember that persons with hearing impairments should be seated where there is good lighting and where they can see the sign interpreter clearly.
- Be aware that persons with visual impairments should not be seated near loudspeakers as this may cause disorientation and hamper their participation.
- Persons with low vision should be seated near the front.
- Persons with intellectual disabilities should be seated close to wash rooms.

Total Seating Capacity	Required Number of Wheelchair Locations
4 -25	1
26-50	2
51-300	4
301-500	6
over 500	6, plus 1 additional space for each total seating capacity increase of 100

Suggestion Tip

Remember, the table above is only a guide, if the audience you are catering for suggests a greater proportion of persons with disabilities attending, then appropriate accommodations should be made.

Tables, Counters and Reception Desks

- Ensure that tables provide a knee space of at least 27 inches from the floor to the bottom of the table in order to facilitate wheelchairs.
- Ensure also that tables are no higher than 34 inches from the floor to the top of the table.
- The height of an accessible counter or reception desk should be no more than 3 feet. There should also be a minimum clear space of 5 feet x 5 feet in front of the counter space for manoeuvring.

Podiums and Stage access

- There should be wheelchair access to the stage.
- There should be lowered podium to facilitate a wheelchair user.
- Cordless or lapel microphones should be available to facilitate persons with limited mobility and persons with other physical disabilities.

Suggestion Tip

Where a low podium is not available, but a person with disability is present at the head table, you can place a microphone at the head table to accommodate that individual.

Interior Aisles and Circulation Paths

- Aisles and circulation paths should have a clear width of at least 4 feet. A turning diameter space of at least 5 x 5 feet should be located in front of a counter for maneuverability by persons using power wheelchairs and scooters.
- Circulation paths should be well defined (wide, clear and distinguished if possible by a contrasting colour and texture from the surrounding surfaces).
- Make sure that all objects are recessed off the path of travel (drinking fountains, phones etc.). When this is not possible, the floor around the objects must be marked with a detectable warning surface beyond the leading edge of any protruding object.
- Make sure also that objects are not located higher than 4 feet above the floor in order that persons in wheelchairs can reach them.
- Be mindful that street furniture (benches, newspaper boxes, garbage cans) should be placed off the path of travel and should be colour contrasted to the surroundings. Objects should be at least 27 inches off the ground and overhead objects must be higher than 80 inches.

Elevators

- If a building has two or more stories, ensure that there is an elevator with a door at least 3 feet wide.
- Elevators should also have visible and audible opening/closing signals as well as floor indicators.
- Call buttons should not be higher than 42 inches. Remember that inside controls should have raised lettering and Braille signs.
- The emergency intercom should be usable without voice command.

Rest Rooms

- Accessible toilet facilities should be outfitted with handrails, maneuverable space, suitable faucets and lavatories.
- Ensure at least one restroom is fully accessible.
- The clear width of the entrance and stall washroom door openings should be 3 feet.
- There should be a minimum manoeuvring turning diameter of 5 feet, with a turning circle diameter of 7 feet 6 inches between the entrance washroom door and the stalls, at the wash basin and in the accessible washroom stall.
- The accessible stall should have horizontal and vertical grab bars on the wall closest to the toilet as well as behind the toilet (if there is no water tank).
- The handle inside for pulling the stall door should be no less than 5 1/2 inches long. The handle should be located 3 feet above the floor and 4 inches from the hinge edge of the door.
- The faucet should be a single long lever handle or operable using one fist.
- All dispenser controls should be located no higher than 4 ft. above the floor.
- The bottom edge of a mirror above the sink should be no higher than 3 feet 4 inches above the floor and should be suitable for standing or seated users.
- The washroom should be well lit with a minimum of 200 watts.
- The lavatory rim should be no higher than 34 inches.

Suggestion tip

You can have an usher available to escort persons with disabilities to and from the washroom. Additionally, you can rent portable accessible toilets when indoor restrooms are not accessible.

Water Fountains

- The water spout should be no higher than 36 inches from the ground and the controls should be operable with one fist.
- The fountain should be cane-detectable, that is, located within 27 inches off the floor or protruding into the circulation space less than 4 inches from the wall.

Outdoor Events

- If outdoor tents and booths are being used, portable ramps should be located at each venue so that wheelchair users can maneuver.
- Make sure the area is accessible and safe including non-skid areas. The surface area should also be firm enough to allow easy movement of a wheel chair or an individual using a walker, crutches or cane.
- Potted plants, shrubs along a pathway, hanging plants, ornaments and lawn decorations can be used but must be positioned without obstruction to paths of travel.

Public Restrooms

- If public restrooms are being used, at least one restroom should be fully accessible.
- Ensure that these restrooms are located along an accessible route of travel.

- There should be signage at inaccessible rest rooms directing people to accessible rest rooms.

Access to Information

Oftentimes, persons with disabilities do not participate in events because they are unaware of the event or unable to access information and other related materials at the event. The following section provides you with some helpful hints to allow persons with disabilities to access information before and during the event.

Conference Material

- Make sure that there are alternative formats of materials such as Braille, audio tapes or large print for persons with visual impairments.
- If overhead projections, easels, or dry erase boards are being used, the same information should be available in accessible hard copy format and Braille.
- If video is part of the presentation, there should be closed captioning for persons with hearing impairments or audio for visually impaired.
- A sign language interpreter should be present to ensure access by the hearing impaired.

Suggestion tip

In instances of a workshop where the material is generated by the participants, you should develop a means of communicating with the participants with disabilities so that you can send the information to them after the workshop has ended. You can send the information by email if the individual has access to assistive computer technology or you can ask the individual, which is the most convenient way of getting the information to them.

Communication and Signage

- A 14 point font or greater should be used for written materials (This is 14 point font, while this is 16 point font).
- Lettering should be in a simple font that is easy to read, such as Arial font.
- Lettering on signs should maximize contrast with the background.
- Websites should be made accessible. There are excellent sources for designing accessible websites. (e.g. Contact the Universal Design Institute for information, Web Site: <http://www.arch.umanitoba.ca/UofM/CIBFD>)
- Paper and pens should always be visible and available for persons with hearing disabilities.
- Background noise should be reduced to a minimum to be more comfortable for persons who are hard of hearing or blind.

Sign-Language Interpreters

- Ensure there is a sign language interpreter or communication assistant for persons with hearing impairments.
- Remember, when you are speaking with Deaf persons, you should address them directly, not the interpreter.
- The sign-language interpreter should be positioned in full view of persons with hearing impairments.
- There should be adequate lighting to see the interpreter.

Suggestion Tip

You should position the sign language interpreter in an area where floral arrangements, flashing lights and hanging decorations do not distract or make it difficult for persons with hearing impairments to focus on the sign language interpreter.

Assistive Aids / Personal Assistants

- Ensure that wheelchairs are available for persons using crutches who may need to walk long distances.
- Trained Personal Assistants or ushers should be available to guide and communicate with persons with disabilities.
- Remember that Trained Eye-dogs assist persons with visual impairments to navigate the environment. These dogs should not be regarded as pets.

Registration at Events

You can use these simple registration tips listed below to facilitate easier, more complete and more accurate registration of persons with disabilities at the event.

- Ensure that the registration booth is accessible. If possible, have more than one.
- Staff at the registration table should be sensitized to ensure that accommodation arrangements are being handled appropriately.
- Alternative formats of copies of the programme, for example, Braille and large print should be available at the registration desk.
- There should be a sign language interpreter at the registration desk or persons trained in sign language.
- If possible and depending on the event, have a pre-registration. This will allow you to gauge the amount of persons with disabilities you will have to cater to as well as those who will be bringing personal assistants.

Transportation

Lack of accessible transport can prove to be a deterrent to persons with disabilities attending and participating at events. The following are a few pointers you can consider on providing transportation for persons with disabilities at events.

- A wheelchair bus service should be available to transport persons to and from the event.
- The service should allow for personal assistants to accompany persons with disabilities.
- There should be a designated hub of transport.
- The service should be pre-advertised to persons who might require the service on the day.
- Ensure the drop-off point is near the event.

Suggestion tip

When planning events, you should always make considerations for personal assistants who accompany persons with disabilities.

Meals

When planning events, meal considerations should be made for persons with disabilities, especially persons with physical, mobility and visual disabilities.

- Meals and food plates should include items which can be consumed with minimal handling.
- Ushers should be trained to describe positioning of food items on a plate using the clock system to persons with visual impairments.
- When food is being served at an event which does not provide seating, you should ensure that there are arrangements for persons using wheelchairs, crutches and other assistive devices.

Advertising

The following are useful tips when advertising and planning events to include persons with disabilities.

- Make sure that advertising prior to the event includes information in various media and alternative format. This would comprise both electronic and print media, for example a television advertisement could be interpreted or have closed captioning for hearing impaired persons.

Emergency

In the event of an emergency, measures should consider persons with disabilities. The following are some tips to ensure this.

- All exits should be clearly identified.
- Fire and emergency alarms should have both audible and visual signals.
- Telephones should be accessible to persons with hearing and visual impairments
- Exit routes should be accessible to persons with physical disabilities especially wheelchair users and persons using devices such as crutches or walking aids.
- Participants/guests should be informed of security arrangements at the start of any function.

Attitude and Interaction

Persons responsible for hosting an event should treat persons with disabilities with courtesy and respect. The following are some tips you can consider to improve your communication with persons with disabilities.

Suggestions for interaction with the visually impaired:

- When greeting the person identify yourself by name and introduce any one else who might be present. If the person does not extend his hand to shake hands, verbally extend a welcome.
- Offer the use of your arm (at or about the elbow), walking as you normally do. This enables you to guide, rather than steer / lead the individual. When entering a narrow space, move your guiding arm behind your back as a signal that he / she should walk directly behind you. Give verbal instructions as well.
- People with visual impairments have individual needs regarding how they best receive information. Large print is only useful for people who have some vision. Not all visually impaired people use Braille. Many people with visually impairments prefer to receive audio-taped information. Ask in advance to confirm preferences and needs.
- Let the person know if you move your location or if the conversation needs to end. Verbally close a conversation and announce your departure before leaving the room.
- When guiding an individual through a doorway, inform him/her of whether the door opens in or out and to the right to left.

- Before ascending or descending steps, come to a complete stop, inform the person of the direction (up or down) and approximately how many steps there are. If there is a handrail, inform him/her of the location. If there is a choice between an escalator and elevator, ask the person which he/she prefers.
- When giving a description of the surroundings, use descriptive phrases relating to sound, smell and distance. Be as specific as possible and describe obstacles in the path of travel. Give clock clues: “The desk is at 3 o’clock.”
- Give verbal clues when offering seating. Place the individual’s hand on the back of the chair, and he/she will not require further assistance.
- When reading for a person, first describe the information to be read. Using a normal speaking voice, do not skip information unless requested to do so.

Suggestions for interaction with the hearing impaired:

- Choose the best spot to communicate, avoid noisy backgrounds like TV, air conditioners and crowds as well as poorly lit areas.
- Get the person’s attention before you speak. You can do this by tapping the person on the shoulder or waving your hand.
- Speak clearly and naturally, perhaps a little slower than usual.
- Do not shout, it is embarrassing and can cause discomfort and distort speech.
- Do not cover your lips when speaking especially if the person lip-reads. Keep your face and mouth visible and choose an environment that is well lit.
- Give clues when changing the subject.
- Do not be “deadpan”. Body language helps project the meaning of what is being said. Be animated and use lots of facial expressions.
- Write things down if you are not being understood.
- Be patient, positive and relaxed.

Suggestions for interaction with persons with a mental or intellectual disability:

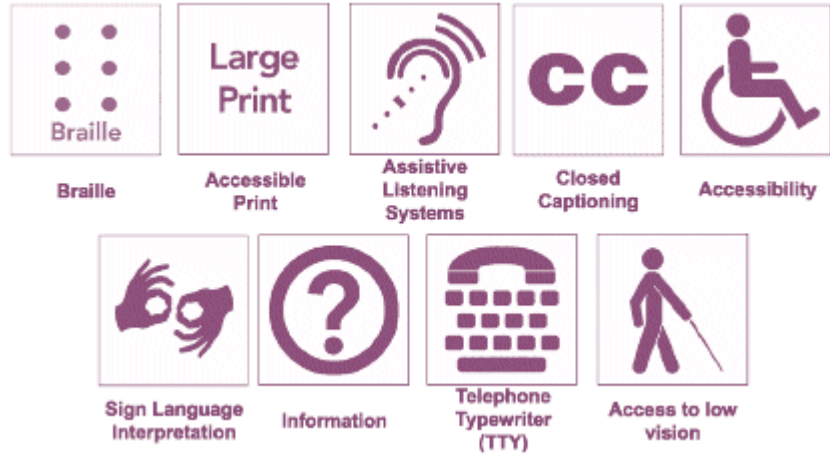
- Keep your communication simple. Rephrase comments or questions for better clarity.
- Stay focused on the person as he she responds to you.
- Allow the person time to tell or show you what he or she wants.
- If someone with a mental or intellectual disability is upset. You should stay calm and offer to get help by contacting a family member, friend or counselor.

General interaction tips:

- When introduced with persons with a disability, offer to shake hands (shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.) For people who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.
- People with disabilities, like all people, are experts on themselves. They know what they can and cannot do. If you are uncertain regarding this, you should ask.
- Assistive devices (canes, wheelchairs, crutches etc.) are the individual's personal property and should be respected. Do not lean or hang on to a person's wheelchair.
- When speaking to a person who uses a wheelchair or a person using crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
- If you offer assistance to someone with a disability, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- Do not be embarrassed if you use accepted common expressions such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?"
- Do not use negative phrases such as "wheelchair bound," "cerebral palsied", or "crippled."

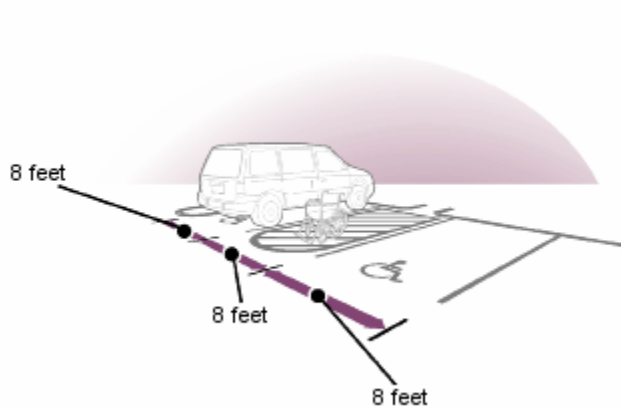
Disability-related Signage

The following are some universal examples of disability –related signage as well as illustrations of accessibility.

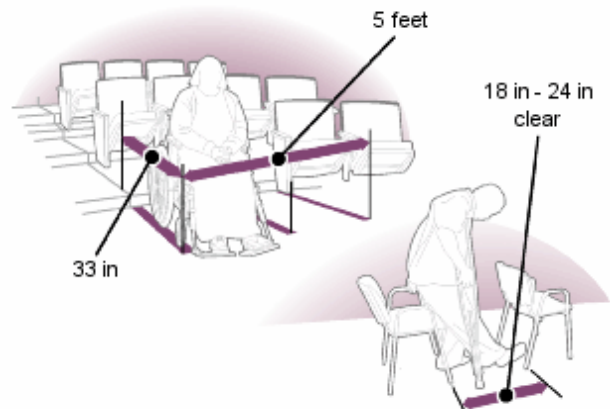


Examples of accessibility

Car Park



Seating



References

1. Universal Design Institute. "*Is your Business Open to all?*," 2000, Website: www.arch.umanitoba.ca
2. Mobility International. Website: www.miusa.org
3. University of California at Berkely. Website: www.accomodations.berkely.edu
4. Canadian Association of Disability Service Providers. Website: www.caucuss.ca

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