

Accessibility in Action

September 27, 2007

Tip #14: Access at Programs and Special Events

- All event and program sites, both indoor and outdoor, must be accessible to people with disabilities, or reasonable accommodation made. If any portion of the event cannot be made accessible, an alternative area must be provided with the same activities.
- The Florida Park Service is dedicated to making state parks more accessible to a larger portion of the population. There are three areas to consider when making a particular program or special event more accessible.
 - **Attitude**
 - **Facilities**
 - **Program**
- This guide will break down each of these areas individually and provide you with some strategies for making your programs and special events more accessible.
- This guide will also refer to many other tips in the Florida Park Service Accessibility in Action Notebook, which should be used as a supplement to this guide.

- Our role is to break down **attitudinal**, **architectural**, and **programmatic** barriers for individuals with disabilities who want to take part in our programs. By looking at these main areas and by utilizing the checklists found in this guide, you can create programs and special events that will be made available to more individuals.

Attitude Accessibility

- The first step towards making a program or special event more accessible is to make sure that everyone involved is aware of just what it means to create an accessible environment.

What is inclusion?

- **Inclusion** is people with and without disabilities participating in recreation together! The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that parks and recreation programs and services are provided in the "most integrated setting." Although the term "Integration" is used throughout the ADA, "Inclusion" has become the word which is most commonly associated with the concept of integrating persons with disabilities into general services (school, community, etc.).

- **Integration** is fundamental to the purpose of the ADA. Despite the existence of separate or special programs designed to provide a benefit to persons with disabilities, these programs cannot be used to restrict the participation of persons with disabilities in general activities.
- **Inclusive programs benefit everyone!** In addition to the benefits to those with disabilities, inclusive programs help everyone to become more sensitive to individual differences. This awareness and sensitivity to individual differences will hopefully lead to attitudes of acceptance, which carry over to all areas of life.
- All of our **publications** (brochures, flyers, calendars of events) for the public should **include a statement indicating a willingness to accommodate individuals with disabilities and a process for requesting accommodations**. Including this accommodating statement makes our facilities and programs more inviting to participants with disabilities.

The Florida Park System is dedicated to creating an atmosphere of accessibility in all of the programs and special events we offer to the public. **Be sure to go over the following checklist with all staff, volunteers, Visitor Service Providers, Citizen Support Organizations and other partners of your event or program, so they will be familiar with the ways in which they can contribute to providing access on an individual basis.**

- Review the section on Disability Awareness guidelines, Tip #12 in the Accessibility in Action Notebook.

- Make sure you are familiar with the Division Accessibility and Inclusion policy, including the complaint process. Tip #9 in the Accessibility in Action Notebook contains additional information on accessibility and inclusion.

- Learn where the physical copy of the Division Accessibility and Inclusion is located at your park, so you can direct guests who request to see it.

- Develop professional relationships with other agencies within your community to establish links to provide supports & accommodations to public recreation programs. Develop marketing strategies to communicate and inform potential participants with and without disabilities about services, programs and activities you offer. (See the attached list)

- Review Tips #15-19 in the Accessibility in Action Notebook.
 - Tip #15-Working with Individuals Who are Blind or Visually Impaired.
 - Tip #16- Working with Individuals Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
 - Tip #17-Working with Individuals with Mobility Impairments.
 - Tip #18-Working with Individuals with Speech Impairments.
 - Tip #19-Working with Individuals with Cognitive Impairments.

- Initiate training opportunities for working with people with disabilities and developing a "Yes First" attitude. For many individuals with disabilities, a feeling of acceptance is the most important accommodation. If staff and volunteers demonstrate an attitude of acceptance and welcoming, the experience can be positive for everyone!

Review on Communicating Effectively with People with Disabilities

1. When talking to a person with a disability, speak directly to that person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.
2. When meeting a person with visual impairment, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
3. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.
4. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending that same familiarity to all others present. Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
5. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions that seem to relate to the person's disability, such as "see you later" or "did you hear about this?"
6. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands.

-United Cerebral Policy Association, Inc. Copyright 1990, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

Facility Accessibility

The best planned program or event can be difficult to participate in if there is no way for individuals to get around. **The program or event coordinator should review these items during the planning phase.**

- Check the park transition plan for locations within the park that are compliant with the ADA.
 - Is the parking accessible?
 - For a detailed description on Accessible Parking Regulations, refer to Tips #1-4 in the Accessibility in Action Notebook:
 - Tip #1-Signage for Accessible Parking Spaces
 - Tip #2-Parking Lots-Number of Accessible Parking Spaces
 - Tip #3-Parking Lots-Accessible Parking Space Placement Florida Building Code Reference:11-4.6.2
 - Tip #4-Parking Lots-Accessible Parking Space Design

 - Is the entrance accessible?
 - People with disabilities should be able to arrive on the site, approach the building or event area and enter as freely as any participant, including those without disabilities.

 - Are all paths of travel accessible?

- Refer to Tips #5-8 in the Accessibility in Action Notebook.
 - Tip #5-Exterior Accessible Routes
 - Tip #6-Crosswalks
 - Tip #7-Accessible Design for Curb Ramps
 - Tip #8-Detectable Warnings on Exterior Accessible Routes

- Are all restrooms accessible?
 - Check that signage is in place to ensure guests knowledge of where exactly accessible facilities are located.
 - Make sure that accessible restrooms are free of any obstructions that might hinder a person with disabilities from using them.

- Are vendor/concession areas accessible?
 - Menus are provided in an alternate format.
 - The location, especially transaction areas such as service counters, is accessible (See Tip #5 in Accessibility in Action Notebook).

- Is any provided transportation accessible?
 - Make sure if transportation is provided for group, then accessible transportation is made available as well.

Program Accessibility

One of the key points about providing accessibility is the ability to adapt. Many of us who work outdoors can relate to this. Changes in the environment can require you to change well made plans. If it becomes too hot, more breaks might be necessary. If colder, you might have to move faster and make fewer stops. Applying this same sort of thinking to participants in programs and special events can help you on your way to providing a more accessible atmosphere.

Notwithstanding ADA, state, and local regulations, accessibility begins with those who are conducting the program first hand. Adapting your own style of interpretation is one of the easiest and most effective ways to adapt a program for a particular audience. You can start by looking at three different areas of your program/special event.

- **Step One: Physical Setting**
- **Step Two: Communication/Presentation**
- **Step Three: Program Content**

These three areas can be applied to any event or program you put on, allowing for flexible and adaptive reconfiguring to make them more accessible.

On the following pages are a few specific checklists to help you identify certain areas of a program or special event that expand upon the three main steps.

- **Step One: Physical Setting**

- Physical Site

- Take steps to limit visual and audible distractions.
 - Plan for a second trail option, should the participants require a shorter or gentler route of travel.
 - Provide for sitting opportunities (benches, logs, chairs).

- Spatial Arrangements

- Look for opportunities to seat people in front-facing arrangement. Determining direction of focus can help people with learning disabilities.
 - Identify and invite person with hearing impairment to stand next to the leader.
 - If presentation contains different stations or small activities, make sure there is enough space between to minimize distractions from other groups.
 - Arrange supplies so they are accessible to everyone.
 - Bring found objects to a central accessible spot for sharing and discussion.

- **Step Two: Communication/Presentation**

- Timing

- Provide a written, oral, and pictorial agenda or schedule.
 - Allow an extended time option for slower learners.
 - Ask anyone in the group if they have any issues with time frame or length of special event or program.
 - Alternate active and passive portions of your program.
 - Allow for slower pace.
 - Plan for rest breaks.
- Communication
 - All of our publications (brochures, flyers, calendars of events) for the public should include a statement indicating a willingness to accommodate individuals with disabilities and a process for requesting accommodations. Including this accommodating statement makes our facilities and programs more inviting to participants with disabilities.
 - Introduce registration procedures that make it easy for people with disabilities to register and ask for an accommodation
 - Simplify directions, repeat, restate, and clarify steps given.
 - Provide written information in Large Print or Braille if requested.
 - Increase spacing in print materials and limit amount of type/page.

- Read aloud any written material not provided individually.
- Pre-record oral directions or information, and provide a portable audiocassette player.
- Frequently repeat and reinforce key ideas, concepts, or skills.
- Provide verbal prompts to begin and end an activity.
- Repeat and clarify description of any known terrain to be covered, and the environmental conditions present.

- **Step Three: Program Content**

- Instructional Presentation
 - Provide additional staff support. This includes regular staff as well as specialized individuals such as sign language interpreters, etc if needed. (See the attached list)
 - Identify program examples that require use of the senses, and prepare to allow individuals to pass or substitute.
 - Prepare a visual organizer for elements that might be challenging.
 - Incorporate music, poetry, song, and rhythm into presentation.
 - Use visuals and print material to support oral information.
 - Provide models and physical examples where appropriate.

- Offer visual magnification device or auditory amplification device.
- Use of supplemental teaching tools.
- Use of adaptive resources.
- Split your audience into smaller groups if necessary.
- Allow individuals to drop out of program as needed, rejoin if possible.
- Allow the person to be present even if they are not able to participate fully.
- Plan ample time for answering questions.
- Provide an opportunity to solicit participant feedback.

ACTION

- Use this tip as a checklist for increasing access for all when preparing for programs and special events at your park.