

# Detroit Disability Power's Social Justice Access Toolkit!

**Accessibility & content feedback:** To provide accessibility related feedback, please email Ani at [ani@detroitdisabilitypower.org](mailto:ani@detroitdisabilitypower.org). We recognize that this guide is limited in scope and design. It is meant to guide social justice organizers as they work to better include the disability community in their organizing. We hope that this document can be improved as we deepen our own understanding of creating accessibility and dismantling ableism in all of its manifestations, and hope that you approach accessibility with the same intention!

## About This Guide & Introduction to Disability:

Welcome to Detroit Disability Power's Social Justice Access Toolkit! We are glad you are reading and learning for the sake of inclusion. We created this toolkit to make it easier for you to habituate the inclusion of people with disabilities in your organizations, campaigns, and events.

It is our experience that many social justice activists and organizers have a healthy (or at least growing) race, gender and class analysis. However, when it comes to the large and diverse disability community, there is little knowledge or effort made for our inclusion. Of course, this is part of *Ableism* — the systemic oppression of disabled people, operating at personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural levels. Much of it is due to ignorance, as many non-disabled people never have to think about access or accommodations. Due to this privilege, many times, they don't even realize they aren't considering these things! **We are here to help; For the sake of disabled people who want to be a part of your social justice work, as well as for the sake of the Left, which needs more people engaged in general and needs the wisdom of disabled people in particular.**

## First things first, *what is disability anyway?*

When we're talking about people with disabilities, we are talking about people with *apparent* disabilities, such as many physical disabilities, as well as people with *hidden* disabilities, such as many mental health disabilities, intellectual disabilities, chronic pain, and learning disabilities. We define disability broadly, because while our individual diagnoses may be different, we share common experiences of discrimination,

harassment, and neglect. Also, to build power, embracing *more* people makes *more* sense!

Legally, disability is defined as “a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.” This is important to know for the sake of qualification for social programs, but is also somewhat meaningless on it's own. Doesn't *everyone* have limits? Based on this definition, there is no clear line between disabled and non-disabled.

While mainstream American culture tends to think about disability as an individual medical experience, we understand it more as a collective social, economic and relational experience. There are often medical aspects to people with disabilities' experience, but for most people, social aspects, such as stigma, discrimination and resulting isolation are far more impactful. For example, recent studies show that 19% of people with disabilities are employed, compared to 66% of non-disabled people. It is not that 80% of disabled people cannot work, but that it is harder to get past discrimination in the hiring process and to get the accommodations required to maintain employment (like accessible transportation or workspaces, ASL interpretation, etc).

**The good news is that we can undo ableist structures that create this culture of oppression and replace them with a culture of revolutionary inclusion that doesn't just benefit disabled people, but everyone!**

It is our hope that this toolkit helps you see and better understand ways that people with disabilities are often un-accommodated and unconsidered, as well as what you can do about it. This toolkit aims to offer easy-to-access tips for changing ableist culture and practices in our social justice movements. We hope that you and your colleagues, your members, board, activists, friends and family start asking these questions in every planning process: *How does this impact those with disabilities? How can we ensure that people with disabilities are being fully and meaningfully included in our social change work?*

People with disabilities are at least 20% of the population and are included in every single marginalized group. Therefore, simply put, our needs and inclusion cannot be an afterthought if you want your social justice work to be holistic and ultimately impactful.

Disability is a normal part of human diversity. We must organize like it.

Happy unlearning and relearning!  
**-The Detroit Disability Power Team**

**Making Relationships with the Disability Community** - Get to know your local disability-led/focused organizations to build mutual, long term relationships. Attend their events, subscribe to their newsletters, find ways to collaborate, and learn to advocate when policies are being made in nonprofits, businesses, and government. They will often model accessible practices, so learn from them!

**Southeast Michigan organizations that are disability-led and/or disability-focused:**

- [Detroit Disability Power](#)
- [Warriors on Wheels](#)
- [Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living](#)
- [Brain Injury Association of Michigan](#)
- [DeafCAN](#)
- [Michigan Disability Rights Coalition](#)
- [Collective for Disability Justice](#)
- [Disability Network Wayne County](#)
- [Disability Network Oakland & Macomb County](#)
- [Disabled Veterans of America](#)
- [Greater Detroit Agency for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)
- [Detroit Black Deaf Advocates](#)
- [Healing by Choice!](#)
- [Michigan Deaf Association](#)

## Language

**Approach to language use:** Language is complex. Each person and community has their own preference regarding what type of language they prefer. The best approach you can take is to always honor a person's wholeness. When in doubt, observe how disabled people identify themselves and use that, or ask how someone would like to be referred to.

### **Two Ways to Discuss Disability:**

1. Identity First or Proud language puts the disability up front in the wording. Some people prefer this language because it emphasizes and validates their identity\*. For example, "...disabled person, Deaf person."
2. *Person First* language emphasizes a person's individuality, and aims to highlight that a person isn't defined by their disability. Person-first language is often used

by people in social services and in proximity to disability. For example, “She is a woman with a disability,” or “They are a person who is blind.”

\*There are particular communities that overwhelmingly prefer identity first language such as the Deaf community and the Autistic community.

**Which to use?** There is no consensus among the disability community and Detroit Disability Power does not speak on behalf of all disabled people. When in doubt, mirror the language disabled people use when they talk about themselves and their experience. It’s often more important to ask what people’s **accessibility needs are** rather than what language they use and about their specific disability.

Detroit Disability Power uses both identity and person-first language. We advocate for people to be comfortable and embrace identity-first language. We, like many others in the disability community, believe that disability is not a bad word. It’s society’s negative connotation reinforced through ableist language, policies and practices that we wish to change.

## Harmful & Complicated Language

When discussing disability, use words and terms that are neutral and without value judgements. Much of the harmful and complicated language below was created by non-disabled people and institutionalized in many practices, policies, and in our culture.

### These terms perpetuate harmful stereotypes:

- **Handicapped:** Instead, use “accessible,” like an accessible bathroom or parking spot
- **Special needs, differently-abled:** These euphemisms erase people’s experience of disability and of ableism and shy away from the direct language about disability that more accurately describes our situations.
- **Wheelchair-bound:** This negative spin on assistive technology that makes millions of people more mobile is unnecessary and uninformed. It’s more appropriate to say “wheelchair user.” Remember to treat mobility devices, like wheelchairs, as an extension of someone’s personal space.
- **High/low functioning:** Assigning labels does not recognize a person’s wholeness and reinforces a false concept of a what a ‘normal’ body/mind should be. No need to use terms like these.

- **Normal, wrong with (them), suffers from, afflicted with, impaired, victim, fight to overcome:** Disabled people are people navigating a world, policies, and a culture that excludes and harms us. These terms do not recognize the role systemic ableism plays and negatively stereotypes our existence. They are not victims, and their goals regarding their bodies, minds, and overall holistic health are theirs and theirs alone.
- **Do not** use adjectives like insane, crazy, blind, paralyzed, tone deaf etc. in casual conversation: **Say what you really mean instead!**

## Planning Ahead for Accessibility

This section will offer suggestions while you think ahead and anticipate the different ways people will learn about, sign up, and show up to your event. Thoughtful planning, engagement and communicating accessibility features is crucial for many people, including disabled people. The more information you can provide up front to guests about the features of your event/space, the better they can decide whether their needs will be met enough to participate.

**Protests & Marches:** When planning protests and marches, please refer to our [Black Disabled Lives Matter Protest Best Practices](#) we documented.

**Planning stages:** Prioritizing disability and accessibility for meetings or events during initial planning stages is essential to ensuring that people's needs will be met. Designate an access coordinator or access team to lead the planning effort through the duration of the event. This is where your relationships with the disability community will come in, as you learn how to best create access for the people already in your community.

### **Tasks for access coordinator or team to manage:**

- Engage disabled people early on. Find out what their range of access needs are so that you can begin to work these features into your plans. If you do not have relationships with the disabled people near you, see the list of organizations on page 2 in Southeast/Michigan that are disability-led and/or disability-focused.
- Pad agenda time for breaks and be flexible with how people need to use their time
- Include an Access Statement outlining all the accessible features of your event. Note: basic information such as entrances, seating, breaks, bus stops and food service are all examples of accessibility information

- An invite sets the tone for the event and can signal to people that you are being intentional about people participating at the event equally. Ensure there is a way for guests to request accommodations upon RSVPing. You can include a list of these features people can select with an option to write in additional things they may need. If you have any access supports already scheduled, be sure to share them and ask if they need anything in addition
- Make sure online RSVP and request forms work with screen readers and are controllable with a keyboard
- Follow up from specific requests made during the event sign up process and ensure services are coordinated. Don't wait until the last minute for this!
- Plan to caption all media such as videos, promotional material, and any dialogue shared both before and during the event
- Consider how access features are communicated in different media and touchpoints throughout your event. Consider online, in social media (see section on social media), on flyers, on maps and additional materials.

**During the event:** Have access coordinators or knowledgeable staff/volunteers wear a name tag or indicator signaling to guests that they are the go-to person for access support. Announce features such as restroom location, elevators, lactation/parents' rooms, quiet rooms and more before the program starts. Document learning for future improvements.

**Accessibility-related Requests:** Accessibility-related requests are sometimes called accommodations, especially by non-disabled people. These are what people need to be most productive and be able to participate fully and equally. Everyone needs some kind of accommodation, but our society was designed to automatically accommodate some more than others. We recommend budgeting each year to improve accessibility features at events, meetings, and in programming. Budgeting ahead prevents having to turn away disabled potential-participants because there is not enough money to provide the accommodations they need.

**Examples:** Requesting interpreters and translators, providing seating for a range of body sizes, keeping 3-foot wide paths clear of clutter and obstructions so wheelchairs can pass through

**Tip:** As you create and schedule different accessibility features for an event or meeting, include them on the invite or event information. For example, if American Sign Language interpreters are already hired for the event, include this on the event information and on flyers so word can spread.

## Practices for Events & Meetings

Note: None of these lists are exhaustive. Please continue to do more research depending on the type of event and the needs of participants.

**Accessibility Checks before starting meetings:** Ask the participants if everyone has what they need to get started verbally and in writing if the meeting is online. This gives people time to communicate their needs and ensure that all features are set up. It also helps to create a culture of access within the meeting. When access features fail or stop, Do not continue until everyone has what they need.

**Tips:** Do Access Checks throughout the meeting! Check in with people in a variety of ways!

**State your name before you speak:** This allows interpreters, captioning, people who are blind, have low vision, people new to the group, and people who may be calling in to follow the conversation.

**Microphone use:** Always require using a microphone in in-person events, especially in large, echoey spaces. When questions are asked, restate the question into the microphone before answering.

**Tips:** During online meetings, using microphones built into headphones help automated and live captioners pick up your words.

**Transportation:** If an event requires transportation, ensure that vehicles are wheelchair accessible. Build relationships with community providers so that you are aware of the cost, logistics, and are not scrambling when you receive a last minute request.

**Selecting Venues & Meeting Places:** Many people with disabilities are required to plan and anticipate how they will navigate through space outside their homes, especially if it is a new space to them. Not having information about the access features of your event or space easily available can make or break a person's ability to attend. Lack of information or worse, showing up to an inaccessible event, negatively impacts the quality of disabled people's experience. These negative experiences can lead us to question your organization's commitment to equality.

### **Questions to ask yourself about getting to and from the venue**

1. Is the venue accessible by public transportation?
2. Are routes and stops on event materials or on venue information pages?
3. Is there sufficient accessible parking located near the accessible entrance? Are designated spaces indicated with signage/paint and clear from ice/snow?
4. If parking is in a structure, is it well lit and include an elevator if necessary?
5. Are major obstructions blocking the connected paths in the surrounding area? Includes bikes, trash bins, or construction equipment? (See appendix for more parking tips)

### **Questions to ask yourself about Accessible Entrances**

1. Is the main entrance stair-free? If not, is the accessible entrance clearly indicated by directional signage?
2. Is the surrounding ground free from major cracks and potential hazards that could interfere with a mobility device?
3. Are there slip mats? Are they secured down?
4. Are doorway widths at least 32 inches wide? (see appendix for more door details)
5. Is the check in area near an accessible venue entrance or elevator entrance?

### **Questions to ask yourself about Accessible Routes?**

1. Are routes/paths continuous, leveled, and have a path clear of obstructions and overhangs that leads to all the necessary rooms and amenities such as food, water, and restrooms?
2. Are accessible routes communicated in event materials or on maps?
3. Do accessible paths include ramps when necessary?
4. Is there signage indicating elevators, meeting locations, restrooms, water, and alternative paths clearly upon entering the building and throughout the site?
5. Are paths at least 36 inches or 3 feet wide?
6. Is lighting adequate along these routes or highlighting any hazards?

**Tips:** People with mobility and pain related disabilities may not have the energy to expend searching for the right room or the accessible route. This can put them in dangerous positions unnecessarily which is why great communication on event locations and logistics regarding routes are important to communicate. Avoid changing meeting rooms last minute unless accessibility will be enhanced.



## Questions to ask yourself about Assembly Areas & Seating

1. In gathering spaces, are people able to sit or park wheelchairs where they choose?
2. Is there space for wheelchair parking reserved throughout the venue, and not only in one section or two sections?
3. Are tables between 28-34 inches high, with at least 27 inches of clearing space under the table?
4. Are aisles & tables at least 36 inches apart? measure from chair to chair if chairs around the table
5. Are there any obstructions under tables such as table legs or bases that will get in the way of a person's mobility devices?
6. Are tables accessible by a clear, connected path to the rest of the space?

**Tips:** Upon arriving, ask people where they may like to sit, this creates space for them to ask if they need support arranging a location they would like to sit if there is an obstruction or barrier in their ideal location. Space can be reserved by putting blue painters tape on the floor. This tape does not do damage to the floor and is easy to remove. It indicates where wheelchairs can park and where aisleways should remain clear. A common challenge for wheelchair users at events is navigating a room full of tables and chairs that are scattered about without a clear route of travel the width of a wheelchair.

**Tips:** Sometimes in the D/deaf and Hard of Hearing community, having private conversations can be a challenge since people may be able to read each other's conversations. Think of ways to create additional space to allow people to have private conversations. This can include reserving small meeting or conference rooms, creating make-shift partitions in a particular area in the space, or setting tables up in a way where people do not face other people conversing.

**Lactation/Parents' Room:** New parents require access to a space to pump milk multiple times throughout the day. These rooms should provide privacy, but still be available without the need for a staff escort in order to find and access the room. Ensure that the room has comfortable seating, an electrical outlet, a sink with warm water to wash equipment, a small fridge for mothers to come back to at the event of the event, storage space for bags and additional things they may need to bring with them or need to leave for privacy and comfort purposes.

**Tips:** The room should be lockable. If the space is communal, include room dividers such as moveable privacy screens or large white boards. If there is only room for one parent at a time and you have received multiple requests, offer scheduling to allow for privacy and better use of the space.

**Sensory/Stim Room:** These are rooms that allow people to engage their senses, especially if they feel overstimulated. This can be a space where there are textured toys and tactile objects, a weighted blanket, headphones, colored lights and more.

## Environmental Considerations

**Background Noise:** Make sure there are spaces set up with minimal background noise for people to converse among themselves and engage with speakers when appropriate.

**Lighting & Projector Screens:** Ensure adequate lighting in meeting spaces and where any potential trip hazards may occur. Adjustable LED lighting is preferred so that lights can be customized to a wide variety of needs. If a projector is being used, ensure the screen is visible from all locations throughout the space and captions are turned on during videos and any audio

**Creating a Scent-Free Space:** Keeping a low-scent or scent free space is ideal. Many people have adverse reactions such as allergies, migraines, breathing trouble and other sensitivities when exposed to fragrances, gases, and other chemicals. This also impacts people going through some medical treatments such as radiation. See resources in the Appendix for specific guides created by people in the Disability Justice community.

**Tips:** Remove or replace scented items such as soaps, air fresheners, and urinal cakes that can severely impact people sensitive to chemicals and strong smells, and allergies

**Communication Tips:** In reminder emails a day or two before an event, remind people to please refrain from using products with strong fragrances. Place a sign at the event registration stating that the event space is fragrance free

**Service Animals:** Ensure pet relief spaces are signed and clearly communicated. Ensure there is adequate space for service animals who need to sit or lay near their companion. Advise guests to not pet or distract the service animal and remind them that the animal is working

## Restrooms

**Accessible Restrooms:** Ensure your restroom meets basic ADA code. General restroom information is communicated with signage and included on maps. Ensure that grab bars and other fixtures are secured to walls and in the correct location with no obstructions. Ensure signage is up to date throughout the building and on stall or entrance doors. See appendix for signage guide

**Gender Neutral Restrooms:** If gender neutral restrooms are available in another area of the building. If restrooms are single stalled, signage can help convert them to become more gender neutral. If you have gender neutral accessible restrooms, **BLAST THIS ALL OVER YOUR EVENT INFORMATION!**

### **Common Access Fails in Restrooms:**

1. Soap dispensers/drying mechanisms are not within reach heights
2. Extra toilet paper crowded toilet/stall and obstructs grab rail
3. The bottom of the mirrors should be no more than 40 inches from the ground.  
When in doubt, have a full length mirror!
4. Heavy doors! Check that the bathroom doors do not require more than 5 pounds of force to operate
5. Locking mechanisms, door hardware, and faucets should be operable with a fist (levers & latches that do not require someone to grasp, twist, or bend their wrists/hands)
6. Sensors - sensors for flushing, drying and washing hands are sometimes considered accessible, and sometimes not depending on a person's needs and sometimes skin color as sensors are often tested on white skin only

**Reach Height Tips:** Items such as soap should be mounted or accessible between the following heights:

- Forward reach (unobstructed) = 48 inch-15 inch off of the ground
- 20 inch max obstruction = 48 inch max
- Reach depth greater than 20 inch = 44 inch max (reach depth can be no greater than 25 inch)

**Outdoor Tips:** If the event is outside or port-o-potties are being used, ensure to reserve accessible port-o-potties ahead of time as they are in high demand with

often a limited supply. Ensure that if it rains or weather changes, the ground will be safe for a person using a wheelchair or using mobility equipment to safely enter and exit. DO NOT place them in the back corner of events, rather somewhere central.

### **Questions to ask yourselves about Water Access**

1. Do you have water available?
2. Is there a drinking fountain up to ADA code or another mechanism for people to help themselves in an accessible location?
3. If the location is not clearly visible, are there signs?

**Food & Dietary Practices:** When serving food consider a wide range of dietary and cultural practices. Note that vegan and vegetarian options tend to meet many people's dietary needs. Put out labels with ingredients, allergens, and cultural practices such as gluten, dairy, nuts, types of meat or fish, Halal, and Kosher. Consider having areas where alcohol is not served, or alcohol-free hours during part of evening events

### **Ramps:**

Safe ramps for people to use by themselves should have a rise to run ratio of 1:12. This means that for every inch of height, the length of the ramp should be 12

**Tips:** to calculate ramp length in inches, measure the height of step in inches and multiply by 12. Ramp above 6 inches in height should have grab rails on each side

## **Communication ACCESS**

This section considers the various ways that we can amplify communication access for both disabled and non-disabled people. We identify and describe these assistive technologies and access practices such as captioning and CART below for both online and in person media and events.

## CART & Captioning

Captioning is written text that captures dialogue and audio during a conversation, event, in media and more. Closed-captions refer to captions that can be turned on/off during a program or media where Open-captions refer to captions that are embedded into a program or media. Below we will talk about the different types of captioning and their features.

Captions benefit Deaf and hard of hearing people, and people whose primary language is not the language of the event. It also helps people who may be multitasking such as caring for another person while participating in a meeting, event or program. One of the best benefits of captioning is when captions generate a good transcript after an event that can be shared or used to create more accessibility.

**CART (Communications Access Realtime Translation):** CART is captioning done in real time by a human either in-person or remote/online. They are typically assisted by a stenographer, or a machine that helps them caption accurately and quickly. The text can either be displayed for a large audience in person or online, or privately for individuals needing the service. CART services can cost between \$60-\$200/hour depending on the location of the services and the provider.

**Tips:** Although CART can be expensive if organizations do not budget ahead of time, having a very accurate transcript of an auditory event is priceless. Human captioners can also ask for adjustments from the participants such as speaking slower, clearer, or louder.

**Scheduling Tips:** CART providers are typically arranged 1-2 weeks in advance. Provide a list of terms or materials ahead of time to CART providers so that they can program their machine to account for preferred terms as well as feel prepared to capture the content to the best of their abilities.

**ASR (automated-speech-recognition) or Automated Captioning:** Automated speech recognition software is technology that uses machine learning to produce (often) live captions. The accuracy of these captions can depend on internet quality, distance the speaker is to a microphone, clarity of the speaker and the design and capabilities of the

captioning program itself. There are many free to low cost options available for automated captioning, including YouTube's DIY captioning capabilities.

**Free or low-cost automated captioning softwares for online event platforms include:**

- [Otter.ai](https://otter.ai)
- [Webcaptioner.com](https://webcaptioner.com)
- [Livecaptionapp.com](https://livecaptionapp.com)
- [Ava.me](https://ava.me)
- [REV](https://rev.com)

**FM Hearing Systems:** FM systems are devices worn that use radio waves to enhance people's Deaf and Hard of hearing people's hearing aids and Cochlear implants. Hearing aids are connected directly to microphones which allows Deaf and hard of hearing people to control both individual and group settings. There are continuous improvements being made to hearing aid technologies such as hearing aids directly connecting to AV technology (Computers/TVs).

## Language Interpretation

**Language Justice:** Language justice are practices and values that work to make sure that ALL voices can be heard, and can have access to the content being presented or communicated. It considers all of the languages and communication methods that may be used and preferred whether this is in a group, organizational, or individual setting. While we don't elaborate in this document on additional language interpretation aside from sign language and Deaf-Blind interpreting, we consider additional language interpretation to be a vital access feature. Many of the tips we outline below work for all types of language interpretation.

**American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation:** American Sign Language is a language that uses body and facial expressions to communicate. Having an ASL interpreter is the preferred accessibility feature for Deaf and hard of hearing people who use ASL. Without this accommodation, it is very difficult and often impossible for people to participate and understand the context being discussed at an event or meeting. It is very good practice to hire ASL interpreters who share identities with the audience and/or specialize in interpreting the type of content you are communicating. Ensure to hire licensed interpreters. During interpretation, both parties can be remote, both can be in-person, or an interpreter can be on video (Video Remote Interpreting) and a person can be in person. When using VRI, make sure that the person has privacy, good internet connection, and a quiet background.

**Tips:** ASL interpretation costs between \$50-\$150/hour where some people charge travel and cancelation fees. Similar to CART captioning, ASL requests typically need to be made at least one week before the event. The earlier you request interpretation the better, and you can include this accomodation on event marketing materials. For an event over 1 hour, you will need to hire TWO interpreters who will switch on and off throughout the event.

**Tips for working with interpreters:** State your name before you speak so that the interpreter can capture who is speaking. This is especially important for online meetings. Send materials to interpreters ahead of time to allow them to practice and study your preferred language. Talk directly and maintain eye contact with the person you are communicating with, not the interpreter. Don't be afraid to ask Deaf participants for feedback on interpreters, or if they have a preferred interpreter themselves they wish for you to schedule.

**Deaf-Blind Interpretation:** Interpretation for people who are Deaf-Blind differs slightly in that interpreters communicate visual, environmental, auditory, and signed content. They often use tactile and touch elements, although the interpretation process varies depending on a person's preference and disabilities. To learn more about this process, see this [Guidebook for Interpreters by expert Susanne Morgan from the Nebraska Deaf-Blind Project](#).

**Image & Visual Descriptions:** Whenever you use a visual or image (on a website, email, presentation and more) describe the images in detail so that Blind and low vision people can access the media. This can be done by writing image descriptions below media in captions, saving image descriptions into the back end of presentations and reading aloud when appropriate. See Social Media accessibility for more!

## **Social Media Accessibility**

Posting accessible content on social media is a great way to increase engagement with the disability community. This signals that you are considering us in your organizing and programming efforts. The following are guidelines we use and recommend.

**Note:** There are some limitations based on the design of each social media platform and their accessible features. [Access Guide](#) is a great resource created by [Alex Chen](#) for graphic design and web accessibility. Many of the tips we outline below are visually demonstrated online and on their instagram [@access\\_guide](#)

**Content Considerations:** Content should be written in plain language and be easy to understand. Include trigger or content warnings when content is sensitive. Ask yourself, is there inadvertently ableist, racist, classist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic... language in your post?

**Tips:** Images used should not be screen captures or scanned PDFs. Any directions given within the post are descriptive. For instance “sign up/subscribe by swiping up, use the link in our bio” rather than “click here”

## Color Contrast

Contrast between the background and any text (foreground) should have a contrast ratio of 4:5:1. Resource: Use [the Color Contrast tool from WebAIM](#) to check. You can use an eye-dropper tool to select the colors you are checking and input them into the web program. An additional tool is [Color Safe](#) that allows you to test contrast with font type and size.

**Tips:** Avoid color combinations that are green and red or blue and yellow that are difficult for people who are colorblind. Make sure text is on a solid background or a portion of the graphic that is solid. Ensure both patterns and colors are used to represent data on a chart or graphic to ensure colorblind and low vision people can perceive content. Use both an Image Description and Alternative Text in graphics and images (see below).

## Image Descriptions (IDs)

Image descriptions are text used to communicate detailed content of graphic posts and images to Blind and low vision people. Screen reading or voice over software on a person’s phone, tablet, or computer will read the image description out loud allowing a person to access the details of the image where otherwise they might not be able to. There are different types of image descriptions and your approach, how it’s shared and the length, will depend on the context of your content.



**How to include IDs in social media posts:** Depending on the platform or medium, you will need to include the image description in the caption, or in the comments. They can also be included under images in emails and on websites.

**Tips:** For social media, IDs will typically be written in the post's caption or in the comments. Ensure any text included in the image is written somewhere (caption or comments) where a screen reader can pick up the language for a Blind/low vision person

## **Alternative (Alt) text**

Alt text is a type of image description that is a short, basic description that communicates the most important information in the image using 1-2 fragmented sentences. They are coded on the back end of online platforms meaning you won't access them unless you are using a screen reader and select the image, or another alt text-reader tool.

**How to add Alt Text:** Alt text can typically be added in the advanced settings in the upload process before you post or editing process after your content has been posted. Alt text is also important to use for website images.

### **Resources for writing Image Descriptions & Alt Text**

- [Alt Text as Poetry, SiteImprove](#)
- [AltText decision tree, How to Write Alt Text & Image](#)
- [Descriptions on Instagram by Veroniica on Perkins School for the Blind](#)
- [We Need Your Help: Specifying Race & Gender in Image Descriptions by Rachel Cohen-Rottenberg on The Body is Not an Apology](#)

### **Resources for using Alt Text to social media platforms:**

- [Instagram Alt Text by IconoSquare](#)
- [How to Add Alt-Text in Facebook by University of Illinois](#)
- [10 Things to Know About Twitter's Alternative Text for Images](#)

**Closed or Open Captioning Media Content:** All media content with audio should be closed or open-captioned. Closed captioning refers to captioning that can be turned on or off, where open captions are embedded into the media files and cannot be turned off.

Automated captioning programs are constantly improving. If using an automated program, check to ensure caption accuracy.

**Resources for captioning media:**

- [Captioning Videos: A Guide for Social Media Managers](#) (2019)
- [DIY YouTube Captioning](#)
- [Best closed captioning & subtitle apps for social media](#) from REV
- [7 tools for adding closed captions to videos](#) by Mashable

**How to write Hashtags:** Write hashtags in camel case for readability and screen reader accessibility, meaning the first letter in each word is capitalized. For example: #LikeThis #DetroitDisabilityPower #GetOutTheVote

**Emojis:** Limit emoji use. Screen reader technology reads text and social media content aloud. If you include 10 red hearts on your post, screen reader users will have to hear “red heart” 10 times.

## Conclusion

While all of this may seem like a lot to consider, remember that disability inclusion is like a muscle that gets stronger with use. Much of this will get easier as you do it more frequently. For the things that do not, an important question is raised: *Why is this so hard!?* Perhaps policies need to be changed. Perhaps culture needs to shift. We invite you to engage in both of those solutions! And we’re here to help you think through how to do that and to join you in that fight.

For further assistance doing a deep dive with your organization or campaign, consider working with DDP’s [Disability Access Consulting](#), a fee-for-service program designed to help you lead institutional change in your workplace, school, place of worship, or any other type of organization you want to make more equitable and inclusive.

P.S. There are many things we did not include in this document. If you have questions we are here to coach and train.

## Resources:

- ADA National Network: [Guidelines for Writing About People With Disabilities](#)
- ADA National Network (2015), [A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities](#)
- [Ai-Media](#), Resources for live and recorded captioning, CART, and transcripts.
- [Americans With Disabilities Act](#) of 1990
- Atena Aire [How To Build Language Justice](#)
- Basil Shadid [“3 Steps to Organizing a Scent Free Event”](#)
- Cara Liebowitz (2015) on The Body is Not an Apology, [I am Disabled: On Identity-First vs. Person-First Language](#)
- Cornell Human Resources Department (2020), [Accessible Meeting and Event Checklist](#).
- [DeafFriendly](#), directory of D/deaf-friendly businesses by location
- DiversityINC - [6 Things to never say about disabilities](#)
- Emily Harris, Victor Pineda, Franklin Anderson(2019), [How to Ensure Accessible Events](#) Webinar. Produced by Respectability (with captions).
- Hearing Link [FM Systems](#)
- Hearing Link [What Is a Hearing Loop?](#)
- Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, [“Fragrance Free Femme of Colour Genuis”](#)
- National Association of the Deaf, [ADA](#) & [Public Accommodations](#)
- National Center of Disability & Journalism, [Disability Language Style Guide](#)
- S.E. Smith (2017), [How to Make Your Social Justice Events Accessible to the Disability Community: A Checklist](#).
- U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, [Ada Design Guide 1: Restriping Parking Lots](#).
- United States Access Board. (ada.gov). [Chapter 4: Entrances, Doors, and Gates](#).
- WebAIM (2019), [Alternative Text](#).

# APPENDIX

Note: this appendix was created to assist primarily non-disabled people create basic access features in their practices as they relate to ADA law and beyond. We included some graphs, visuals and diagrams from the ADA where alt text is saved to each image and image descriptions/text are written below the image.

## **Example of Registration Accommodations:**

- Dietary needs (including gluten, allergens, dairy, vegan, vegetarian, Halaal, or Kosher)
- Tables or chairs
- Scent-free/smoke-free environment
- Reserved seating
- Disability/ADA requests
  - Wheelchair Access
  - Wheelchair Access to a particular route/amenity
  - Captioning
  - Assistive listening devices
  - ASL interpreters
  - Large print
  - Braille
  - Advance copies of presentations/written material
- Gender-neutral restroom
- Language interpreters
- Lactation or parent's room
- Quiet room
- Other: Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

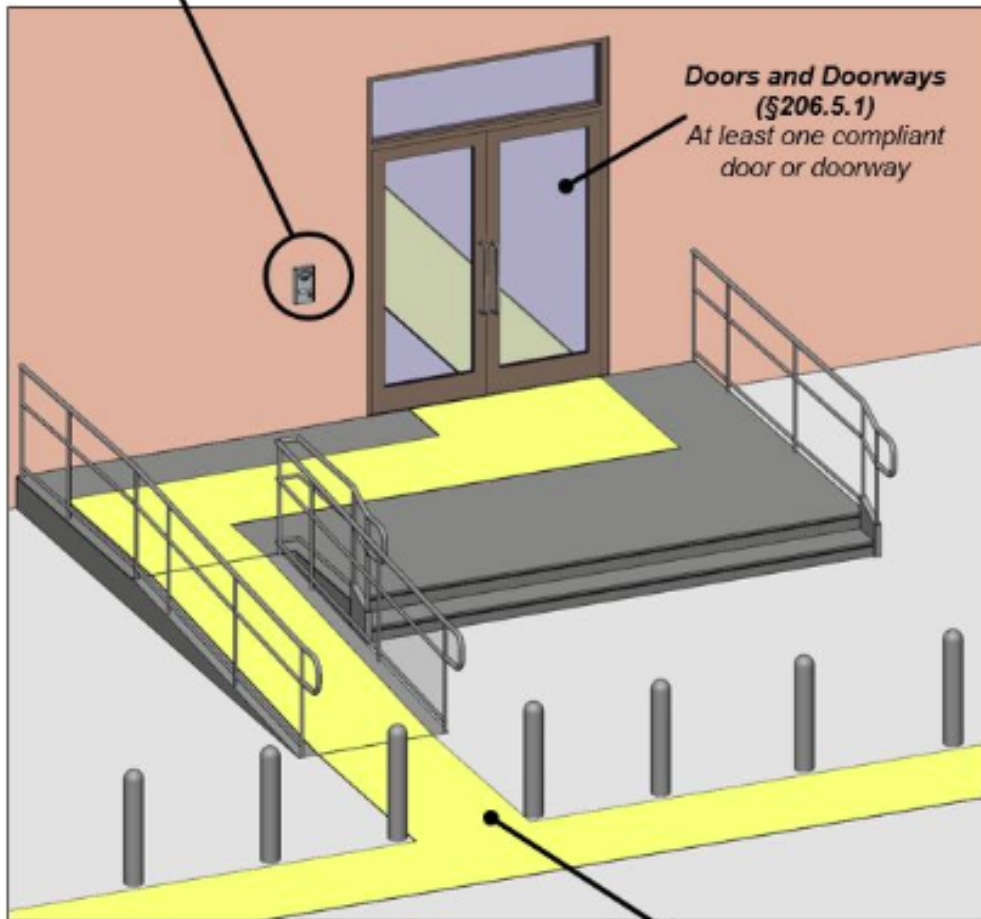
# Accessible Entrances

## Components of Accessible Entrances

**Communication Systems (§230)**  
*Two-way communication systems, where provided, must be equipped with visual and audible signals and compliant as operable parts*



**Designation (§216.6)**  
*International Symbol of Accessibility label (not required if all public entrances are accessible)*



**Doors and Doorways (§206.5.1)**  
*At least one compliant door or doorway*

**Accessible Route (§206.3)**  
*Accessible route to entrance from site arrival points and located in the same area as general circulation paths*

**Security Barriers (§206.8)**  
*Bollards and other security barriers cannot obstruct accessible routes*



**Directional Signs at Inaccessible Entrances (§216.6)**  
*Signs indicating the location of the nearest accessible entrances are required at each inaccessible public entrance. These signs must include the International Symbol of Accessibility and note direction. Additional content or text is not specified, but can be helpful. It is advisable to locate signs in a manner that minimizes back-tracking.*

**Image text reads:**

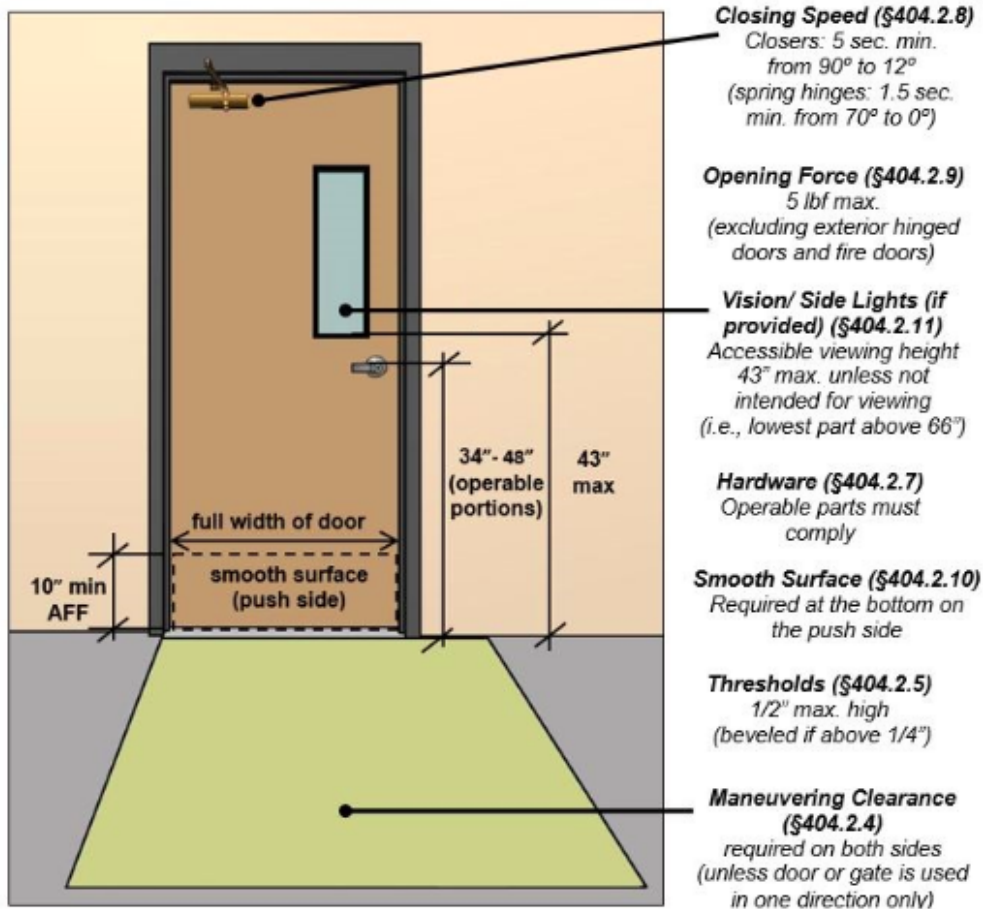
- **Communication Systems.** Two-way communication systems, where provided, must be equipped with visual and audible signals and compliant as operable parts.
- **Designation.** International Symbol of Accessibility label (not required if all public entrances are accessible)
- **Doors and Doorways.** At least one compliant door or doorway.
- **Accessible Route.** Accessible route to entrance from site arrival points and located in the same area as general circulation paths.
- **Security Barriers.** Bollards and other security barriers cannot obstruct accessible routes.
- **Directional Signs at Inaccessible Entrances.** Signs indicating the location of the nearest accessible entrances are required at each inaccessible public entrance. These signs must include the International Symbol of Accessibility and note direction. Additional content or text is not specified but can be helpful. It is advisable to locate signs in a manner that minimizes back-tracking.

## Doorways

Considerations:

- Does the door require 5 lbs or less strength to open?
  - If not, automatic push buttons should be installed
- Are door handles operable with a closed fist?
- If the door is locked or inoperable from the outside, is there a doorbell or way for a person to alert staff that they are awaiting entry at the accessible entrance

## Manual Doors and Gates [§404.2]



### Text (in alt text description):

- Manual Doors and Gates
- Closing Speed. Closers: 5 second minimum from 90° to 12° (spring hinges: 1.5 seconds minimum from 70° to 0°)
- Opening Force. 5 lbs of force maximum (excluding exterior hinged doors and fire doors)
- Vision/Side Lights (if provided). Accessible viewing heights 43° maximum. Unless not intended for viewing (i.e., lowest part above 66°)
- Hardware. Operable parts must comply
- Smooth Surface. Required at the bottom on the push side.
- Thresholds. 0.5 inch maximum high (beveled if above 0.25 inches)
- Maneuvering Clearance. Required on both sides (unless door or gate is used in one direction only)

Image citation: United States Access Board. (n.d.). Chapter 4: Entrances, Doors, and Gates. Retrieved from <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/guide-to-the-ada-standards/chapter-4-entrances,-doors,-and-gates>

## Accessible Parking.

A thorough analysis of ADA parking requirements, see U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, [Ada Design Guide 1: Restriping Parking Lots](#).

### **Number of Accessible parking spaces (ADA Standards)**



## Minimum Number of Accessible Parking Spaces

ADA Standards for Accessible Design 4.1.2 (5)

Total Number of Parking spaces Provided (per lot)	Total Minimum Number of Accessible Parking Spaces (60" & 96" aisles)	Van Accessible Parking Spaces with min. 96" wide access aisle	Accessible Parking Spaces with min. 60" wide access aisle
	Column A		
1 to 25	1	1	0
26 to 50	2	1	1
51 to 75	3	1	2
76 to 100	4	1	3
101 to 150	5	1	4
151 to 200	6	1	5
201 to 300	7	1	6
301 to 400	8	1	7
401 to 500	9	2	7
501 to 1000	2% of total parking provided in each lot	1/8 of Column A*	7/8 of Column A**
1001 and over	20 plus 1 for each 100 over 1000	1/8 of Column A*	7/8 of Column A**

\* one out of every 8 accessible spaces      \*\* 7 out of every 8 accessible parking spaces

Minimum number of Accessible Parking Spaces. ADA Standards for Accessible Design

Text/Table Version (typed by Eva):

### Minimum Number of Accessible Parking Spaces ADA Standards for Accessible Design 4.1.2 (5)

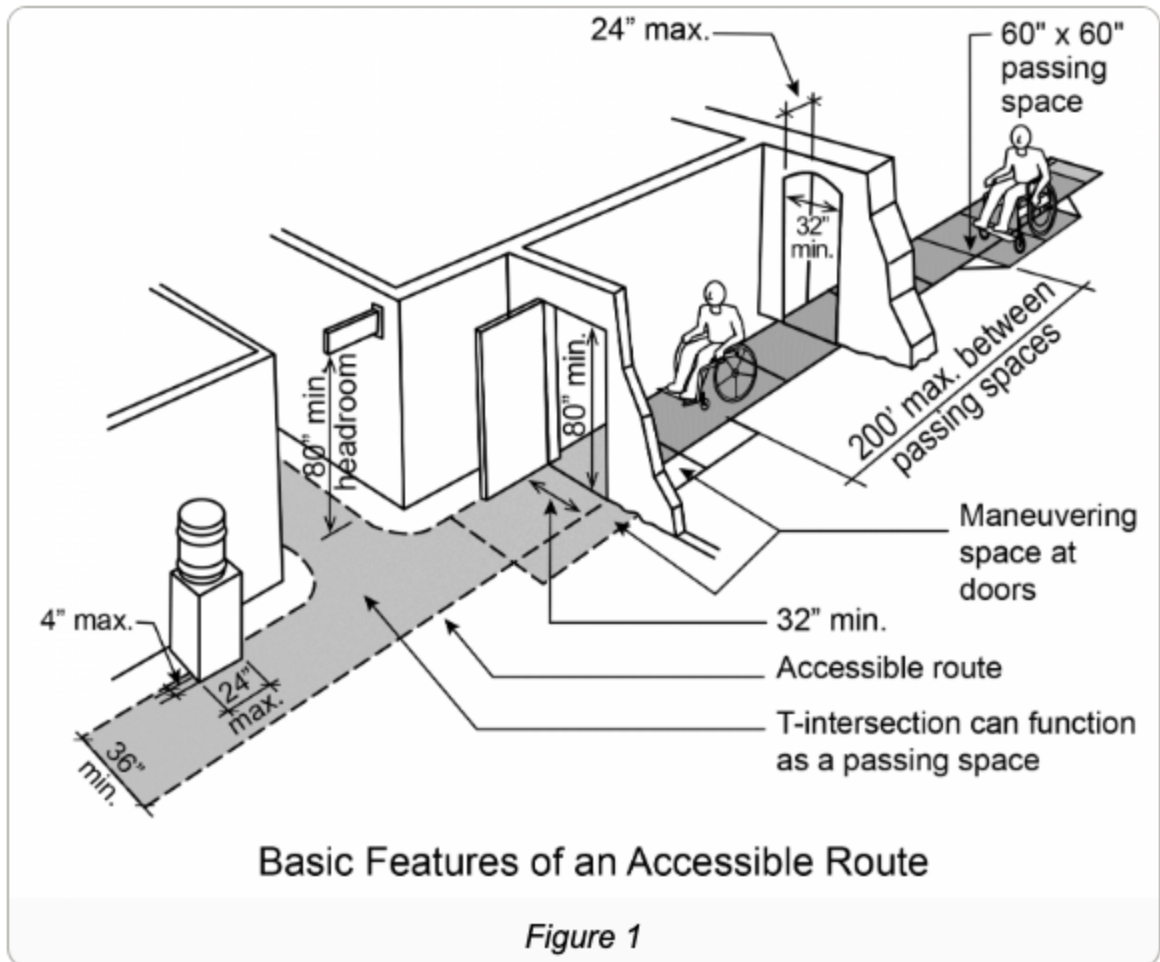
Total Number of Parking spaces Provided (per lot)	Total minimum number of Accessible Parking Spaces (60" & 96" aisles) <b>Column A</b>	Van Accessible Parking Spaces with minimum 96" wide access aisle	Accessible Parking Spaces with minimum 60" wide access aisle
1-25	1	1	0
26-50	2	1	1
51-75	3	1	2
76-100	4	1	3
101-150	5	1	4
151-200	6	1	5
201-300	7	1	6
301-400	8	1	7
401-500	9	2	7
501-1000	2% of total parking provided in each lot	1/8 of <b>Column A</b> *	7/8 of <b>Column A</b> **
1000+	20 plus 1 for each 100 over 1000	1/8 of <b>Column A</b> *	7/8 of <b>Column A</b> **

**\*Note: one out of every 8 accessible spaces**

**\*\*Note: 7 out of every 8 accessible parking spaces**

Image citation: U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. (n.d.). *Ada Design Guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.ada.gov/restripe.pdf>

## Accessible Routes



**Note:** Carpeting should be low pile, but the absence of carpeting is best.

ADA National Network. *A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities*. Pg. 8 (2015).

# Restrooms

## Signage

- Signage should be indicated with the International Symbol of Access and include braille
- Different options to sign Gender Neutral restrooms: these options indicate accessibility and what equipment is available so people can make the best choice for themselves.



1. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Equity Center. (n.d.). Good Practices: Inclusive Restrooms & Signage. Retrieved January 29, 2020, from <https://lgbt.umd.edu/good-practices-inclusive-restrooms-and-signage> (first photo)
2. ADA Central. (n.d.). ADA Gender Neutral Restroom Sign. Retrieved January 29, 2020, from <https://adacentral.com/ada-gender-neutral-restroom-sign/> (second photo)

## Stall Design

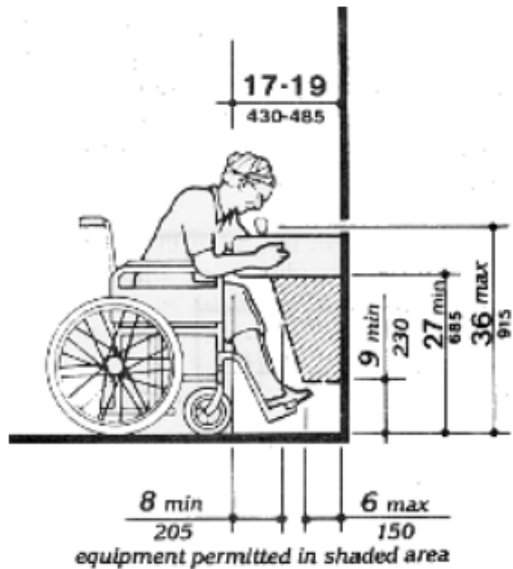
**Standard Stall.** The minimum width of the stall is 60 inches (1525 mm). The centerline of the water closet is 18 inches (455 mm) from the side wall. The location of the door is in front of the clear space and diagonal to the water closet, with a maximum stile width of 4 inches (100 mm). An alternate door location is permitted to be on the adjacent side (side wall) of the stall also diagonal to the water closet with a maximum stile width of 4 inches (100 mm). If a wall mounted water closet is used, the depth of the stall is required to be a minimum of 56 inches (1420 mm). If a floor mounted water closet is used, the depth of the stall is required to be a minimum of 59 inches (1500 mm). A grab bar at least 36 inches (965 mm) long shall be located behind the water closet, with one end no farther than 6 inches (150 mm) from the inside corner of the stall. Another grab bar shall be mounted adjacent to the water closet on the side wall and extend from no more than 12 inches (305 mm) from the back wall to at least 52 inches (1320 mm) from the back wall.

## Water Access

### Considerations:

- Spout should be max 36 inches from ground (30 inch for kids)
- Water should flow 4 inches high
- Controls should be operable by a closed fist and in the front side of the machine

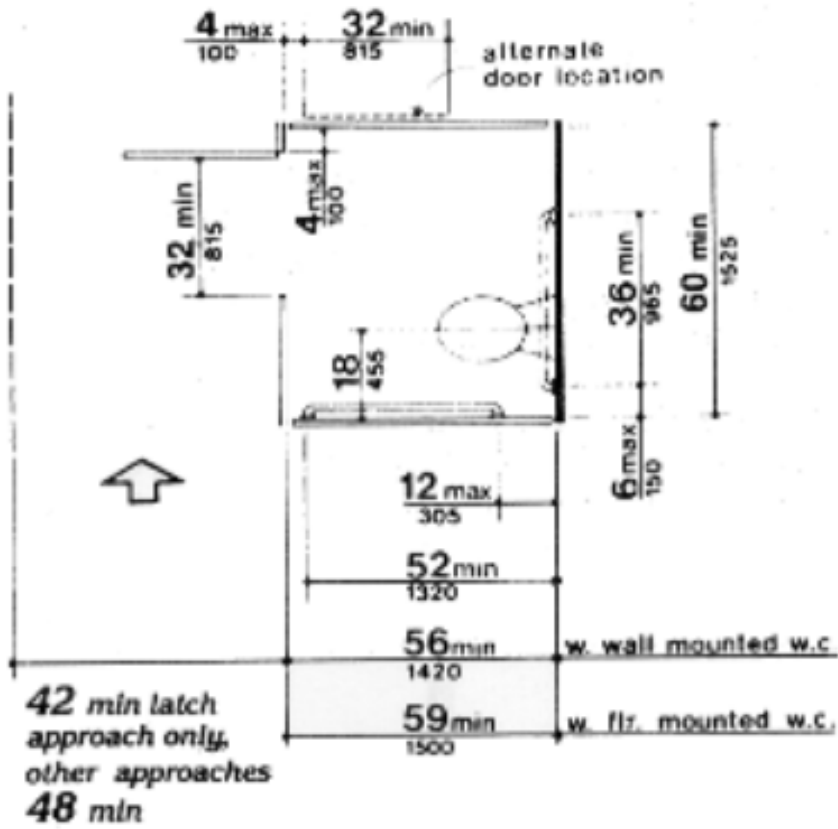
## Spout Height and Knee Clearance



Spout Height and Knee Clearance. The front edge of the fountain must extend 17 to 19 inches (130mm- 485mm) from the wall. The 27 inches (685 mm) high minimum clear knee space must be free of equipment or obstructions for a minimum of 8 inches (205 mm) extending from the front edge of the fountain back toward the wall. In addition, a minimum 9 inches (230 mm) high toe clearance space must be provided extending back toward the wall to a distance no more than 6 inches (150 mm) from the back wall. The toe clearance space must be free of equipment or obstructions.

ADA Compliance Directory (2020), Drinking Fountains and Water Coolers.

# Standard Stall



ADA Compliance Directory. (n.d.). ADA Toilet Stalls. Retrieved January 29, 2020, from <https://www.ada-compliance.com/ada-compliance/ada-toilet-stalls.html>

# Reach Ranges & Heights

(Applicable in many places within your space)

## Reach Ranges (adults)

- Reach ranges are important to understand when doing things such as mounting amenities to walls like soap or a hand dryer, as well as operating buttons or placing spare cups for beverages.
- See reach ranges for unobstructed forward reach, obstructed forward reach, unobstructed side reach, and obstructed side reach.
- ADA: Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, § 3, 308 Stat. 328 (1990).

