

The Brattleboro town ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Committee is aware how much planning goes into hosting a successful event. One way to ensure success is to anticipate difficulties before they arise.

Vermont currently has the third most senior population in the U.S., and Windham County has the oldest population in the State. 19% of Americans have disabilities.

Below, you will find information and practical solutions to some of the problems that people with disabilities or medical issues frequently encounter while at festivals and events.

If you have questions, please contact us at 802-387-5285.

Parking

ISSUE:

Adequate accessible parking near the event.

*Nearly 30% of individuals over 65 years of age have mobility issues.

*7.1% of all adults have trouble walking a quarter of a mile.

*3,967 residents of Windham County, 1,542 in Brattleboro alone, have Handicap/Accessible Plates or Placards.

Parking is an ever-present concern for individuals with mobility issues of any sort. Having an adequate number of parking spaces enables numerous more people to attend events.

SOLUTIONS:

Reserve all of the parking spaces closest to the event for accessible parking.

The town rents out hoods (at a low cost) that cover parking meters. Event organizers could use these marked spaces for accessible parking.

Meter hoods could read "Reserved for mobility impaired. Permit required."

Use parking lots of town buildings, the courthouse and the town's standard parking lots for accessible parking.

Speak to businesses about using their parking lots during the events.

Rent accessible buses that literally 'go downward' aiding people with mobility issues in climbing into the buses.

Last resort: Rent wheelchair accessible buses to transport people who use wheelchairs from distant parking lots to the event.

All buses could have sturdy, wide width step stools to make boarding easier for people with mobility issues who choose to use the buses.

Mobility

ISSUE:

It is nearly impossible to push a stroller or wheelchair, or use a walker or crutches when maneuvering across grass, uneven pavement, sand or gravel. The Common/Green also has large roots crisscrossing the grass making the situation impossible to maneuver in a chair, and dangerous for all who walk.

Reminder: Liability for injuries sustained in a trip/fall situation rests on the shoulders of the event organization.

SOLUTIONS:

Put rubber mats over the ground as much as possible and definitely over the roots. This technique is already used to cover electric cords.

Use this link for information on purchasing extremely large mats.

<https://www.accessrec.com/ada-access-mats>

Have exhibit tables set up over the roots.

Have the event in a different location, either on a different section of the common or elsewhere.

ISSUE:

Aisles need to be wide enough for a person in a wheelchair to maneuver while people are walking in the opposite direction.

SOLUTIONS:

Spread out the tables thereby making wider aisles.

If necessary, move the event to an area where there is enough room to space the tables correctly.

For more information on mobility issues contact the local ADA Committee at: 802-387-5285

Seating

ISSUES:

Many people have health conditions that require them to sit or rest periodically.

Individuals need adequate seating where they can view the main activities.

People who use wheelchairs need spaces to park their chairs so they can see the activities.

SOLUTIONS:

Clearly marked reserved seating, and spaces for wheelchairs in front rows.

Benches and chairs placed throughout event.

Signage

ISSUES:

People with health challenges should not use their limited strength wandering around looking for the location of an activity, bathroom, or food booth.

SOLUTIONS:

Proper, clear signage would enable individuals to go straight from point A to point B.

Clearly marked accessible parking.

Clearly marked accessible seating and empty spaces for wheelchair users.

Bathrooms

SOLUTION:

Wheelchair accessible porta-pottys.

Fragrances

ISSUE:

About a quarter of the population experience health repercussions such as asthma attacks, headaches, swollen glands (and more) from fragranced products.

SOLUTION:

Have event staff and vendors do their best to avoid using fragranced personal care and cleaning products for the event. Individuals tend to believe their own fragranced products 'aren't strong' and will be fine. They are not. Clarify the need for 'fragrance free' and inform them of the health challenges many face. Education goes a long way to helping someone follow through on this.

For more information or an educational handout on fragrance issues, please contact: Janis freethecanaries@gmail.com, 802-579-7846

Staff

ISSUE:

Volunteers and staff not having adequate information about accessibility issues at the event.

SOLUTIONS:

Inform ALL staff and volunteers about the need for and location of reserved seating, empty spaces for wheelchair users, accessible parking and toilets.

Staff and Volunteers wear a specific brightly colored shirt that is easily seen.

Staff have a paper copy of all necessary information on their person at all times.

Contact information

ISSUE:

Individuals with disabilities tend to call ahead to get the necessary information on accessibility. This information then helps the individual to determine if the event is accessible enough for their specific needs.

SOLUTION:

All written materials, ads, etc. include a contact phone number for a specific individual who has all the information about their events accessibility.

This individual would be able to answer questions related to the specifics of accessible parking, location of activities and reserved seating, and whether there will be an ASL interpreter at the event.

American Sign Language/ASL

ISSUE:

People with hearing differences may need ASL interpreters for the main event.

By law, the Americans with Disabilities Act endorses that when an event is being advertised it should be clearly stated that if individuals need a reasonable accommodation that accommodation would be met by the organization putting on the event.

SOLUTION:

Event planners would schedule ASL interpreters for the main event.

Event advertisements would state that individuals who need an ASL interpreter have a specific period of time to contact them to sign up for the service.

If no one signs up for the service the organizer cancels the ASL interpreters.

For information on Vt Interpreter Referral Service contact: 802-254-3920