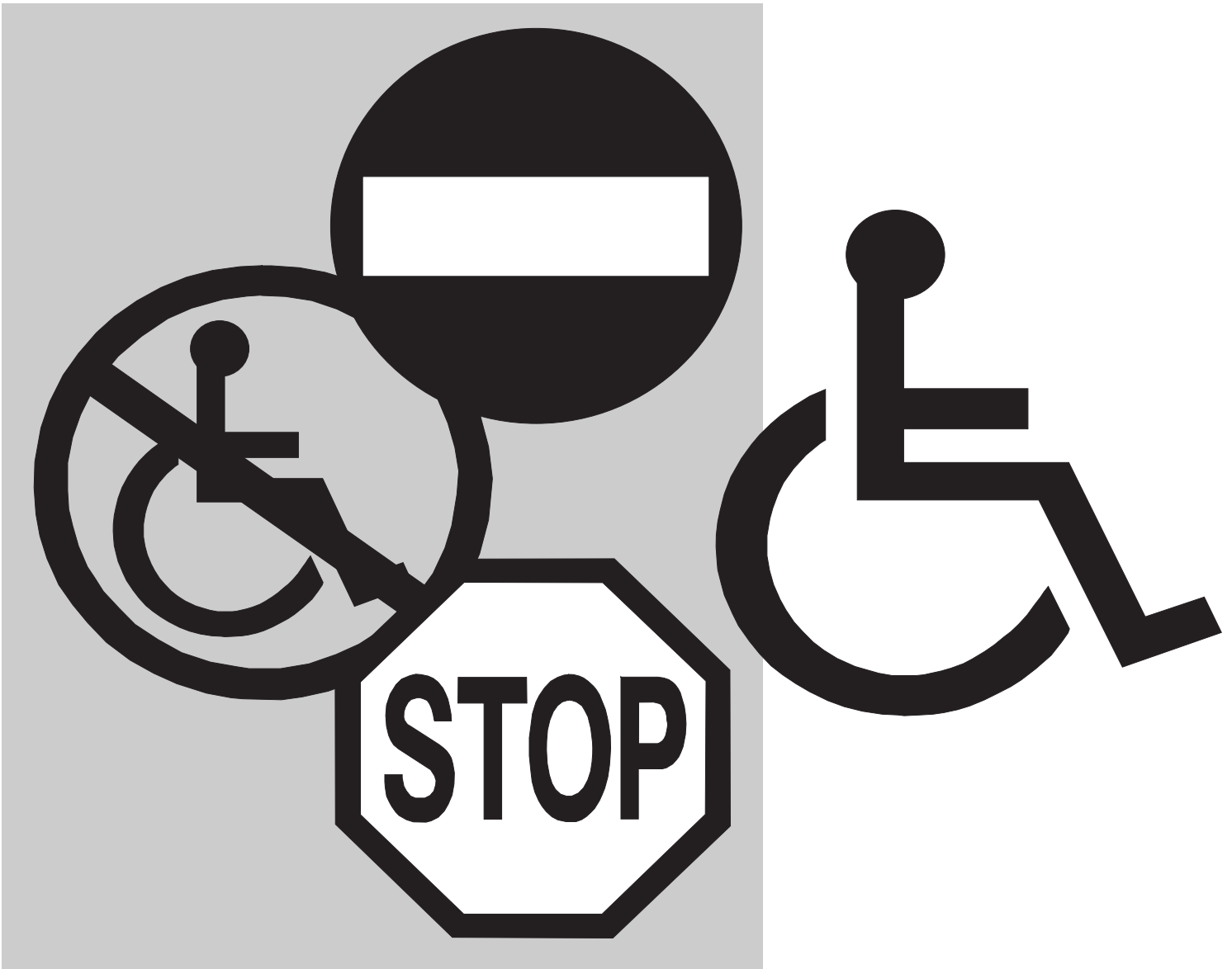


# ACCESS ABILITY

FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



**A Practical Guide  
for Organizers  
of Public Events**

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## A Few Words about Access-Ability

*Access-Ability* assists organizers of public events who wish to make their sites, facilities and services accessible to all people with disabilities. With assistance from people with disabilities, *Access-Ability* assesses the degree of accessibility of the organizations it works with, in order to suggest adaptations that respect their surroundings and financial ability.

*Access-Ability* is a service offered by The Regional Association for the Recreation of Disabled Persons of the Island of Montréal, an umbrella organization for over 100 associations. In addition to *Access-Ability*, the Regional Association is also responsible for the *Sports Challenge for Athletes with Disabilities* and *HANDIDACTIS*.

Researched by:	José Malo
Written by:	José Malo, Pierre Bérubé
Revised by:	Monique Lefebvre
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# People with Disabilities: A Sizeable Market

Truly opening your doors to people with disabilities means more than making a noteworthy social gesture. It also means increasing your clientele in a way that can become significant. In Canada, 15% of the population, i.e. over 3 million people, live with a disability. In Quebec, there are 600,000 such persons, 150,000 of whom live on the island of Montréal. It is easy to identify people who use wheelchairs, guide dogs or canes to move about, but they represent only a fraction of this number.

Who makes up the rest? People with developmental, psychiatric or hearing disabilities, or people with physical disabilities who move about without using a wheelchair. These people exist at all levels of society, regardless of age, sex or race.

## **Definition:**

An **accessible site** enables people with disabilities to circulate freely and take part in all the activities an event offers without any other assistance than that which they require in their daily lives.

They represent purchasing power that continues to grow as they participate more actively in society. When they attend an event, their parents and friends often do so as well, which increases the number of visitors to a site.

However, due to a deplorable lack of information, people with disabilities still run up against closed doors every day. They are refused access to public services or to necessities such as employment, housing or recreational activity.

The services provided by *Access-Ability* are specifically oriented towards making public recreational events accessible. Our mission is to enable people with disabilities to have access to the same entertainment and amusement as the rest of the population, be it on an individual or collective basis. We are here to assist organizers in their efforts to make such events accessible.

## Accessibility Benefits Everyone

A facility that encourages people with disabilities to participate is not reserved exclusively for these individuals. It can be just as helpful to other types of clientele. An accessible physical layout meets the needs of parents with children in carriages or strollers, elderly people, individuals with reduced mobility, as well as various delivery and physical services which move equipment about on your site.

The recommendations in this guide will make public events more convenient for over 30% of those who attend them. In addition, we believe that accessibility, in both its physical and human aspects, can be made possible while respecting everyone's safety and comfort.

Investing in the meaningful participation, independence and dignity of people with disabilities means opening your activities to them — and meeting the accessibility challenge!

# Facilities

The best time to think about ways to make your facilities accessible is at the planning stage. Here are a few ideas that may be suitable for your organization.

## Sites

- Use accessible sites. When you choose halls for performances, meetings or receptions, and when you arrange accommodations and restaurant services, add **physical accessibility** to your selection criteria. In addition, certain public places are now equipped with infrared sound systems for deaf people; this is a service you might consider providing.

## Access Ramps

- Install access ramps to eliminate obstacles along the pathways leading to halls or theatres, first aid facilities, washrooms, restaurants, information booths, ticket-selling areas, sidewalks, etc.
- Install the ramps in such a way that they are safe for people with disabilities and the general public. When designing ramps, respect proportions that promote safety. Ideally, the slope of a ramp should be **1:20**, i.e. for every 20 cm of length, there should be a slope of 1 cm. A steeper slope of **1:12** is acceptable.
- Equip the floors of ramps with a border, at least **2 cm high by 2 cm wide**, on either side, to prevent falls. If possible, install a bannister.
- Clearly indicate the slope of the ramps, either with contrasting colours or decorative elements.
- Make certain that doors at the top of ramps open inward. If this is not the case, make certain that there is a large enough platform so people with disabilities will have **no problem** opening the door.

## Stands

- Make certain that wheelchair users have easy access to all reception, information, souvenir, snack or other types of booths and stands. Part or all of the counter space may be lowered to approximately **76 cm**. You must also allow for leg room under these counters for wheelchair users.
- Choose mobile, cart-type sales stands, where customers can see items easily and the seller has direct contact with the buyer.
- Use mobile salespersons to sell refreshments.

## Washrooms

- Allow for a sufficient number of adapted chemical toilet stalls, i.e. one adapted stall per series of stalls located on the site. Whether you are using permanent facilities or chemical toilets, it is important to **clearly identify** the accessible toilet stalls. People with disabilities always look for the “adapted toilet stall” sign. It is still uncommon for accessible washrooms to be located in the same place as regular washrooms.

## Telephones

- Install accessible telephones so that they are easy to use. In other words, a person in a wheelchair must have enough space to reach the receiver comfortably.

## Space Assigned for Specific Purposes

- Assign specific areas for street artist activities, as is done for subway musicians, in order to prevent people gathered from blocking traffic. Most people with disabilities find it impossible to see what is going on, or move through a crowd.
- Set up rest areas so that wheelchair users and those with limited mobility can stop if necessary.
- Install one or several platforms that are positioned higher, so that people in wheelchairs are better able to see performances taking place on outdoor stages.
- When arranging adapted seating, make certain there are free chairs next to the adapted places for those accompanying people with disabilities.

You may contact *Access-Ability* or other organizations representing people with disabilities to help you assess your physical layout. You may also benefit from additional suggestions directly related to your services and your particular situation.

# Signage

- Mark obstacles, the borders of accessible areas, and ground or floor slopes in contrasting colours (e.g. barricades painted in bright colours).
- Clear, precise signage will not only benefit all visitors, but will also encourage people with hearing disabilities or low vision to participate.
- Make maximum use of your signage by indicating adapted services. To do this, use signs and symbols that are known or easily recognizable.

# Movement

## Circulating Freely within your Facilities

- Allow pathways to be at least **1.8 m wide**.
- **Outdoors:** Choose asphalt or cement pathways or wooden sidewalks that are evenly-surfaced and fairly wide, to make it easy for wheelchair users to move about. Avoid hard-packed earth, gravel, lawn, sand or other types of terrain that tend to shift.
- **Indoors:** Choose hardwood, terrazzo or cement flooring, since these provide an even surface, making it easy for those in wheelchairs or with restricted mobility to move about. Avoid ceramic floor coverings or carpeting.
- Set up a pedestrian walkway that leads from one site to another, making certain that it is clearly marked and safe. Place public benches along it, so that people with restricted mobility can rest if necessary.

## Maintenance

- Have pedestrian walkways cleaned and washed between performance days. Debris on unclean floors often causes flat tires on wheelchairs or injures wheelchair users' hands.
- Remove as fast as possible any obstacle obstructing the way (e. g. fallen trash can, repair area). They are a frequent cause of accident to blind or visually impaired persons.

# Transportation

- In your regular parking lots, allow for reserved parking spaces located as close as possible to accessible entry points.
- In addition, consider the possibility of setting up a special parking lot, reserved for people with disabilities, near the entrance, if your regular parking lot is located relatively far away from the entrance.

## Useful Reference:

### M.U.T.C. Adapted Transit

8680 Esplanade St.  
Montréal, Quebec, H2P 2S2

Tel.: (514) 280-5341

- Arrange for a shuttle-type transportation service or adapted transportation if the site is far from public transit stops or if your event is taking place on several sites.
- With the M.U.T.C. (Montreal Urban Transit Commission), arrange for a specific location to serve as a drop-off point for passengers in adapted vehicles.
- Inform the M.U.T.C. of any street closings, the schedule of activities and, most especially, anticipated peak hours.
- Make certain that the drop-off point is located near a public phone, a shelter, a bench and accessible washrooms.

# Entry

- Place priority on having everyone use the **main entrance**. If, unfortunately, people with disabilities must use a different entrance, identify it clearly.
- If you use a turnstile to monitor attendance, allow for a gateway accessible to wheelchair users.
- For halls with “first come, first served” seating, suggest times for people with disabilities — especially wheelchair users and people with visual disabilities — to enter before everyone else, so that they will not be jostled and pushed by the crowd.
- Inform all of your employees that people with visual disabilities have the right to be accompanied by a guide dog at all times. They may not be refused entry to your event, or to related services such as restaurants, because of their guide dogs. This provision is stipulated in section 10 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

# Advertising

- Send information to establishments and umbrella organizations in your area at least eight to ten weeks before the event. This will enable you to take advantage of their periodicals to publicize your event. People with disabilities will then receive more complete information, and be informed well enough in advance to plan their outing appropriately. You may obtain mailing lists by contacting *Access-Ability*.
- Inform clients with disabilities about your efforts. In the official program of your event, indicate all accessible aspects, special pathways and entrances for people with disabilities, and the services you are providing for these individuals. Display the official symbols, recognized by organizations dealing with or representing people with disabilities to indicate the accessible aspects of your event. Examples of these symbols can be found at the end of this guide.
- Include relevant information in your fliers, posters and advertising, to encourage people with disabilities to participate.
- Choose print that is quite large (10 to 12 points) for your publications. Sans-serif characters (e.g. Helvetica or Univers) are easier to read for visually impaired people.
- Post schedules on activity sites in such a way that everyone can read them easily, whether they are short or tall, or are close or far away (e.g. on Morris columns).

# Rates

*Access-Ability* recognizes that people with disabilities should pay the same admission fees as other citizens when they enjoy the same advantages.

- If, in order to fully enjoy activities or services, a person with a disability requires the services of an attendant, this attendant should be charged a lower rate or be admitted free of charge, as the case may be.

## **Definition:**

An **attendant** is defined as someone whose presence at an activity is justified by the support and assistance he/she provides exclusively for one or several people with disabilities, and whom most attendees do not require in order to participate in your event.

# Information you Provide to Visitors

As you set up your information phone lines, booths, etc., provide employees whose job is to give out information or greet visitors with clearly written documentation supplying the information outlined below. This documentation should be updated regularly, especially at the beginning of the season in the case of annual events.

## Information Regarding your Services

- **Physical access** to ticket-sales areas, halls (especially halls with “first come, first served” seating), bars, restaurants, parking lots, accommodations, reserved sites, etc.
- A **map of your facilities** indicating the location of accessible services such as first aid, adapted washrooms and drinking fountains, telephones, accessible entrances, etc.
- A **list of your services** such as sign-language interpretation, audio-visual documentation (captioned or with titles flashed on a separate electronic screen), telephone reservations, rates (including policy on admission fees for attendants).

## Information on Services Provided by Other Suppliers

- **Accessible transportation:** telephone number, booking procedure for tourists, business hours, cost, location of drop-off point for the event;
- **Other adapted services,** such as telephone numbers of emergency wheelchair repair companies;
- Your employees should also know how to use the Bell Canada **Bell Relay** service for people with hearing disabilities. This service acts as an intermediary between deaf and hearing people.

### Useful Reference:

**Bell Relay**

Tel.: 1-800-363-6600

# Training your Employees

- The successful integration of people with disabilities into your activities depends primarily on the attitude of your employees. It is important for your employees to be positive.
- As they perform their duties, allow your employees the time they require to meet the needs of people with disabilities. It is important to understand that occasionally, more time may be required to meet these individuals' needs.
- Inform all your employees about the various adapted services your event offers.
- Inform ticket sellers about the accessibility of the halls, and about reservation procedures specifically for people with disabilities.
- Round out part or all of your employees' training via a course on serving clients with disabilities. This is a significant asset that will encourage people with disabilities to participate in your activities. Employees who greet visitors or give out information are the first points of contact with your organization. They also indicate how open your event is to people with disabilities.
- If you need a hand, you can retain the services of *HANDIDACTIS*, an organization specializing in training. It offers **courses in serving clients with disabilities**.

## Useful Reference:



**HANDIDACTIS**  
Training Services

525 Dominion St.  
Montréal, Quebec, H3J 2B7  
Tel.: (514) 933-2739

*HANDIDACTIS* courses are offered in three formats:

1. A **15-hour** course providing complete training. This course consists of seven modules dealing with the five types of disabilities (visual, hearing, physical, developmental and psychiatric) as well as with attitudes and social integration.
2. A **7-hour** course, lasting one day. This course is a condensed version of the 15-hour course, emphasizing sensitization.
3. A **modular** course, which covers one or several modules of the 15-hour course, according to participants' needs.

The courses are taught by **people with disabilities who are professionals**, and who have distinguished themselves via five or more years of experience as instructors.

Participants receive **detailed documentation** that can later be used as reference material.

# Display your Accreditation with Pride

Your efforts deserve to be known. By displaying them publicly, you are providing an invaluable service for all people with disabilities, and showing them that you recognize them as full-fledged citizens.

To obtain permission to use the universal accessibility symbols, simply contact *Access-Ability*, which is authorized to verify whether your facilities meet recognized standards.

You may then display the following symbols, according to your situation:



This symbol represents accessibility to people with **physical** disabilities.



This symbol represents accessibility to people with **visual** disabilities.



This symbol represents accessibility to people with **hearing** disabilities.

## Accessibility: A Mark of Excellence

The quality of a society is judged by the way it treats its minorities; we feel that this also applies to organizations.

People with disabilities are leading increasingly active lives. The aging population is also bringing to light its own set of new realities which must be dealt with. For organizers of public events, the question is not knowing whether or not they will have to confront this situation, but rather **how** to confront it.

A proactive attitude towards people with disabilities can prevent many difficult situations from arising, and turn a limitation into a competitive advantage. It is a mark of excellence that distinguishes “great” organizations.

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# Access-Ability

for persons with disabilities

A service of:



**The Regional Association  
for the Recreation of Disabled Persons  
of the Island of Montréal**

525 Dominion St.  
Montréal, Quebec H3J 2B7

Telephone: **(514) 933-2739** (TDD)  
Fax: (514) 933-9384

