

Operator Pre-trip Accessibility Checklist

- ✓ Cycle your lift and make sure you can operate the lift manually.
- ✓ Be sure that the public address and automated stop announcement systems are in working order.
- ✓ Make sure you have a pad and pen available in case it's needed for customer communication.
- ✓ Check belts, hooks, straps and securement devices to make sure they are clean and in working condition.
- ✓ Make sure the vehicle floor is clear of debris and that securement tracks are free of obstruction.
- ✓ Complete your pre-trip vehicle safety inspection.

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A program of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration administered by Easterseals and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) with guidance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living.

Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA is a civil rights law that guarantees people with disabilities an equal opportunity to take part in community life. Transportation services are key to that participation. The ADA requires transit systems to ensure that their personnel are trained to proficiency on how to operate vehicles and equipment safely and to treat individuals with disabilities in a respectful, courteous and efficient way.

DRIVERS MUST:

- Provide rides to customers with disabilities.
- Offer assistance with boarding, but not lifting, the rider.
- Not assume an escort, medical personnel or family members will provide boarding assistance.
- Charge the same fare for a trip whether or not the customer has a disability or requires assistance.
- Not deny service because a disability is annoying, inconvenient or offensive to the driver or other customers.
- Not deny transportation to a rider whose wheelchair is difficult to secure.
- Allow service animals to accompany their owners.

PRIORITY SEATING:

- When a person with a disability boards your bus and needs to sit in a seat or occupy a wheelchair securement location, the driver must ask individuals in that location to vacate their seat, unless that individual is also a person with a disability.
- If the person in a priority seating area or wheelchair securement location refuses to leave their seat, you are not required to force them to move.
- Know your agency's policy on priority seating.

CALLING OUT STOPS:

- Announce stops at all major intersections, transfer points, and major destination points. Be sure to know what stops your company has identified as stops that should be announced.
- Announce stops at sufficient intervals along a route to orient a person with a visual impairment to the vehicle's location.
- Announce any stop requested by a passenger. Announcements can be made personally by the vehicle operator or mechanically by a recorded system.



Get on board with the ADA & good customer service!

As a bus operator, you are an ambassador for your transit system. Your excellent customer service will result in a positive experience for your passengers. It will also make your job easier! This pocket guide explains how to best serve customers with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). By using these tips for good customer service and safety, you and your passengers will have a safe and enjoyable trip.

The ADA isn't just the law—it's a guide on how to serve all customers with respect, courtesy, and efficiency.



1. General Guidelines for Serving Customers with Disabilities

- Treat customers with disabilities with courtesy and respect.
- Give customers with disabilities the same information and choices that you give other customers.
- Never make assumptions about your customers' physical or mental abilities.
- Ask customers if they need assistance—don't assume.
- Do not touch customers without their permission.
- Speak directly to customers, not their companions.
- Speak clearly with a normal tone and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise.
- If you are asked to repeat or write what you said, do so calmly and pleasantly.
- Be patient and allow the customer to take his time. Respond to him in a calm, professional manner.

2. Serving Customers with Hearing Impairments

- Face customers when speaking to them, and don't let objects obstruct their view.
- Do not raise your voice—doing so distorts your lip movement and makes lip reading difficult.
- Be sure to notify the customer of any schedule changes or any audible announcements.

3. Serving Customers with Visual Disabilities

- Identify yourself.
- Respond verbally when the customer gives you information, so that he will know that you have heard him.
- If handling a monetary transaction, count the customer's change out loud.

4. Serving Customers Who Use Wheelchairs

- Ask customers how you can assist them.
- Wheelchairs, walkers, canes, and other mobility devices are part of the customer's personal space. Do not hold or lean on them without the customer's permission.
- Make no assumptions on how to operate mobility aids.
- Wheelchairs are not required to have brakes or any other equipment.

- Transit agencies may require that customers using wheelchairs ride in designated locations.
- You have the responsibility to know the maximum size and weight capacities of the bus's lift equipment because the size and weight of customers' wheelchairs vary.
- You have the responsibility to know how to secure mobility devices on your transit vehicle so that you can do so if requested or required (by transit system policy).

5. Serving Customers Who Use Service Animals

- Service animals are highly trained and allowed by law to ride on buses.
- Dogs are the most common service animals, but in accordance with U.S. DOT ADA regulations, other animals may help people with disabilities.
- Some service animals wear identification such as a tag, vest or special harness. If you are not sure that the animal is a service animal, you may ask if it is a pet or service animal. You may also ask what type of tasks the service animal performs but not request a demonstration.
- The owner must stay with the service animal and keep it under control at all times.
- Never touch or talk to the service animal—it is working!

Communication Tips

Communication with people with disabilities follows the basic rules of customer service and good manners.

- Emphasize the person, not the disability. Use person-first language, such as "person who uses a wheelchair" instead of "wheelchair user".
- Greet passengers and inform them of your bus route and destination. Announcing both the route and destination at stops served by multiple routes assists customers with visual impairments as well as customers unfamiliar with the route, bus stop or general area.
- Refer to landmarks or other visual cues to help the passenger understand direction.
- Be willing to repeat information and break information down into smaller pieces.
- When passengers are disembarking, alert passengers to any barriers or obstacles around the bus stop.

