



## Checklist for Hotel Accessibility

Studies show that 1 in 5 American adults live with a disability. Like everyone else, people with disabilities want to, and do, travel. Nevertheless, the hospitality industry can be less than welcoming to individuals with disabilities. This document lists practical, easy steps that hotel management can take to ensure that EVERY guest has a positive experience – regardless of ability or disability.

### Basics

- Train all staff (including housekeeping and maintenance) in proper disability etiquette and language. Some best practices include:
  - People with disabilities are people first. Treat them as you would treat any other guest.
  - Always use person-first language. This puts the person before the disability (i.e. person who is blind). Do not use identity-first language. This puts the disability before the person (i.e. Blind woman).
  - Do not talk down to individuals literally or figuratively. If they use a wheelchair, use a chair to be on their same eye level if you are having a lengthy conversation.
  - Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their companion.
  - A lack of immediate response does not indicate that the person can't or won't respond.
- Always give clear directions – instructions like “over there” are not helpful to people who can't see where you are pointing!
- It's OK to ask whether you can help, but accept “no” as an answer.
- Do not touch a guest's assistive devices (i.e. wheelchair, crutches, cane, medical equipment, technology) unless you have permission. Many of these devices are fragile and very expensive.
- Be prepared to accommodate service animals. Some things to note:
  - These animals are highly trained and will not act inappropriately. There is no reason to be afraid.
  - Ask questions if you don't understand how or what task the service animal performs.
  - Do not speak directly to or engage with the service animal.
  - Do not touch a service animal without asking permission first.

- Do not offer a service animal food, toys, or distract them with any other object.
- Remember pet fees DO NOT apply.
- Provide information on relieving areas for service animals. Make sure relieving areas are clean.
- Pay attention to color schemes and lighting to facilitate navigation for guests who are visual impaired or have sensory sensitivities.
- Keep ambient scents to a minimum.
- Ask for feedback to keep your accessibility features current and up to standard.

## Reservations

- Ensure that there are different ways to make a reservation – for example, by telephone and online. Note: Online reservation must be accessible.
- Online reservation services must specify whether accessible rooms are available.

## Check-in/Check-out

- Inform all guests of the accessibility features your hotel offers – many disabilities are invisible, so don't try to identify who will or will not need them.
- Offer recommendations for local restaurants, venues, and attractions that are accessible.
- Subscribe to a TTY or relay service and be prepared to communicate using written notes with guests who are Deaf or hard of hearing.
- Simplify check-in/check-out procedures to make them easy to follow.

## Physical Spaces

- Make directions and signage easy to read.
- Have Braille signage in place.
- Provide indoor mapping – ideally electronically.
- Offer a tour of the lobby and other public spaces to guests who might have difficulty navigating.
- Pay attention to the layout of your public areas – there should be room to maneuver for guests who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids.
- If you offer airport transportation, make sure the vehicle is accessible.

## Guest Rooms

- Offer accessible rooms with lower beds, handrails, and unobstructed pathways (pay special attention to the accessibility of the bathroom) and place them close to the elevators.
- Instruct housekeeping staff to place all items guests might use within easy reach.
- Offer vibrating and flashing alarm clocks.
- Put tape or a sticker on key cards to indicate the right way to hold them up to the sensor.
- Don't assume someone needs an accessible room if they have not requested one – but it's OK to ask guests about their wishes.

## Safety

- Have a plan for evacuating ALL guests and make this available in alternative format.
- Physically show location of stairways and emergency exits.
- Emergency signals should be both visible and audible.
- Run emergency drills.

These are just a few best practices on how you can provide a great experience for your guests with disabilities. If you are interested in learning more, please contact the Ablr team at [info@Ablr360.com](mailto:info@Ablr360.com)! Our mission is to remove barriers for people with disabilities and we know first-hand the challenges and barriers that people with disabilities face when visiting hotels. We want to help you create an experience where everyone feels welcome and keeps coming back!