DISABILITY ETIQUETTE & COMMUNICATION TIPS

Website: Make sure that your hotel’s website is accessible and includes alt tags (text describing graphics) and/or a link to a text only version of your site. If you have a no-pet policy, make sure you state that you allow service dogs.

Phone: Make sure your staff is aware of your hotel’s accessibility and is trained to respond accordingly to inquiries about accessibility. Have a list of your facility’s accessible features available for staff and identify those features on your website.

In-Person:

- Speak directly to the individual you are addressing, not to a companion or sign language interpreter. Never shout at a person. Speak in a normal tone of voice.
- When you meet someone with a vision disability, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. Be sure to let the individual know when you are leaving.
- Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking, and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask questions that require short answers or a nod of the head. Never pretend to understand; instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
- Service animals are working animals, not pets. Do not pet, feed or distract them.
- Person First. Avoid words/phrases such as handicapped, victim, confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair bound, cripple, suffers from, retarded, mute, or dumb. Always remember that you are talking to a person...a customer.

Service Animals: Welcome service animals into your establishment. Service animals assist people with all types of disabilities, including individuals who are blind, Deaf, have epilepsy, use wheelchairs, and many others. If pets are not allowed and it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed:
1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

Staff cannot ask about the person’s disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. When in doubt or debate, err on the side of caution and permit the animal.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY...

Accessibility pays dividends and makes good business sense.

By the year 2030, 71.5 million Baby Boomers will be over the age of 65 and demanding products, services, and environments that address their age-related physical changes.

Accessibility attracts not only people with disabilities but also their families and friends. This expands the potential market exponentially!

~ U.S. Dept. of Justice

This group has $175 billion in discretionary spending power.

~ U.S. Dept. of Labor

TAX INCENTIVES FOR ADA MODIFICATIONS

Businesses can take advantage of two Federal tax incentives available to help cover costs of making access improvements for customers with disabilities:

- A tax credit for small businesses who remove access barriers from their facilities, provide accessible services, or take other steps to improve accessibility for customers with disabilities
- A tax deduction for businesses of all sizes that remove access barriers in their facilities or vehicles
- A business that annually incurs eligible expenses to bring itself into compliance with the ADA may use these tax incentives every year.

Example: Hotel ABC spent $20,000 on access improvements by modifying their guest rooms and front entrance. These expenditures qualify under both the tax credit and deduction, so ABC can use these incentives in combination. They may first take a tax credit of $5,000 (based on $10,250 of expenditures) and then deduct $15,000 (the difference between the total expenditures and the amount of the credit claimed).

READILY ACHIEVABLE BARRIER REMOVAL

“We believe that it is important to re-emphasize that determining whether removal of a particular barrier is readily achievable requires a case-by-case assessment that may vary from business to business and sometimes from one year to the next for the same business. If a public accommodation determines that its facilities have barriers that should be removed pursuant to the ADA, but it is not readily achievable to undertake all of the modifications immediately, the Department recommends, as it has for many years, that the public accommodation develop an implementation plan designed to achieve compliance with the ADA’s barrier removal requirements over time. Indeed, the March 15, 2012 effective date for the 2010 Standards reflects an 18-month delay in implementation of the revised requirements, which delay was provided, in part, to allow businesses sufficient time to consider the new requirements while developing plans to meet their on-going barrier removal obligations. Such a plan, if appropriately designed and diligently executed, may well serve as evidence of a good faith effort to comply with the ADA’s barrier removal requirements.”

~ 2/21/12 Letter from the Dept. of Justice to the American Hotel & Lodging Association

QUESTIONS?

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Helping the Hospitality Industry...

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242.2 Swimming Pools. At least two accessible means of entry shall be provided for swimming pools. ...Exception: Where a swimming pool has less than 300 linear feet (91 m) of swimming pool wall, no more than one accessible means of entry shall be required provided that the accessible means of entry is a swimming pool lift complying with 1009.2 or sloped entry complying with 1009.3.

242.4 Spas. At least one accessible means of entry shall be provided for spas. Accessible means of entry shall comply with swimming pool lifts complying with 1009.2.

1009.2.1 Pool Lift Location. Pool lifts shall be located where the water level does not exceed 48 inches.

1009.2.3 Clear Deck Space. On the side of the seat opposite the water, a clear deck space shall be provided parallel with the seat. The space shall be 36 inches wide minimum and shall extend forward 48 inches minimum from a line located 12 inches behind the rear edge of the seat. The clear deck space shall have a slope not steeper than 1:48.

1009.2.7 Operation. The lift shall be capable of unassisted operation from both the deck and water levels. Controls and operating mechanisms shall be unobstructed when the lift is in use and shall comply with 309.4.

Ensure accessible parking...

Start lowering features to a max of 48":
- Towel Racks
- Hair dryer
- Cosmetic mirror
- Closet bars
- Curtain rods
- Iron and ironing board
- Nightstand light switches
- Dispensers: Soap, paper towel, seat protectors, shampoo/condition/body wash in showers/tubs, etc.

2010 Standards for Accessible Design

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GOOD & SERVICES

COMMUNICATION & SIGNAGE

POOLS AND SPAS

If you have a pool or spa without a lift:
- Consult with a pool specialist to determine if it’s technically feasible (in most cases it is) and the best location
- Have a licensed contractor install the lift, with a permit

If you have a pool and/or lift:
- Keep a charged battery in it or get a solar-powered battery
- Keep the cover off during operational hours
- Ensure your staff know how to operate it, if asked

*Although every effort has been made to verify accuracy of items on this tip sheet, users are urged to check independently on matters of specific interest.*