

Accessible Temporary Events

Two perspectives from in the field in the field.

Google fairs or festivals and you will find an endless list of activities taking place all over America from summer through fall. Be it a carnival, outdoor concert, county fair, art and crafts fair, sporting tournament, parade or Fourth of July celebration; these types of events are an important part of American civic and social life—and like all such activities are required to be accessible. Planning and executing an accessible event is not that different from creating an accessible community. Most temporary events include many of the components of a community, just on a smaller scale. The ADA requires removal of physical barriers, modification of policies and procedures as needed, effective communication, equal access to goods and services, and the ability to participate in an inclusive environment. Each of these issues are present to some degree in a temporary event and should be planned for accordingly. The key to successfully implementing an accessible temporary event is to build access into the initial planning rather than “fix” accessibility problems after the event is put into place—and use available resources and information to guide the process.

This issue provides some of that needed information from two individuals who are involved in event planning. Laura Grunfeld specializes in accessibility planning and implementation for large scale outdoor concerts such as Bonnaroo. Lisa Hamburg is the event coordinator of the National ADA Symposium and handles all details related to providing an accessible conference.

Outdoor Festivals: Accessibility How-To's from an Expert

Laura Grunfeld, founder of Everyone's Invited, has designed and developed Access Programs for the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, Bonnaroo Music Festival, Phish Superball IX, Phish Bader Field, Rothbury Festival, Electric Forest Festival, Life is good Festival, and has provided training and consultation for other events as well as presented seminars at numerous

conferences. Laura's work involves meeting the challenges of bringing thousands of people (80,000 for Bonnaroo!) together in a temporary location with little infrastructure, sometimes rough terrain, limited budgets, and large numbers of temporary and volunteer staff and making it as accessible as possible to individuals with disabilities.

Despite Laura's incredibly busy summer schedule, she set some time aside to share her insights and experience from years of working with major concert events. Following are excerpts from our conversation on what works, best practices, and the importance of event accessibility for the disability community.

The Benefits of Creating an Accessible Event (Besides Being the “Right Thing to Do”)

Of course it helps to comply with the law and avoid litigation but I like to talk about access or accessibility rather than compliance with the ADA. It's hard to take a field in the middle of nowhere and make it 100 percent accessible. No one is expecting that. But we are expected to do the best we can with what we have.

Sometimes event planners are afraid to address access issues because they feel it will invite litigation. I don't agree with that. What I like to do is make sure our patrons are as informed as possible. We do our best to give accurate and

thorough information, to let our patrons know the distances they will have to travel once on site and the type of terrain to expect. Patrons come prepared and are less likely to be disappointed and upset. Upset people are the ones that make complaints. Those that feel informed and cared for and see that we are making every effort possible considering the conditions, are likely to be grateful and happy to be able to attend.

It is important to make the information about the Access Program easy to find on the website and to provide contact information to reach someone who can answer all of their questions. Designate one person to handle accessibility so that consistent and accurate information is given out.

I know event producers are doing the best they can with what they know, but they may not realize that if they are not accessible it's not just the person with the disability that can't attend, it's also their entire family or group of friends. They will all go do something else that IS accessible and the event loses all of that patronage.

The Importance of Training

A lot of the services I provide to the events that I work with involve training. Training begins with the pre-production meeting months before the event when the team leaders get together to conduct a site visit and exchange information about what they are doing. I provide training at these meetings to make sure the team leaders are on-board with the concept

of accessibility and have information specific to their particular teams. They can then give that information to their teams and incorporate it in their planning.

Then during the week or so prior to the event I provide job-specific training or at least information sheets for various groups of staff and volunteers. Examples of teams that get special training are security, parking, gate staff, info booth, the Access Team, the volunteers that staff the raised viewing platforms, and more. I try to reach everyone who is working the event with basic information about the Access Program, but it is impossible when there are thousands of workers. We do the best we can. I reach out in a variety of ways. One thing I do is laminate the basic Access Info sheet and put it out at staff catering. When people are eating they naturally read what is in front of them. I used to hold a contest and everyone that sent me an email with ten questions about the Access Program answered correctly would be entered into a drawing for a big prize. The administration takes time, but it's a lot of fun though and others may use that tip, time permitting.

I also provide training for vendors. They receive information on how to design accessible booths and how to serve people with different types of disabilities such as how to make change for somebody who is blind.

It's very important the security team is trained on disability awareness and policy

modifications for patrons with disabilities.

Security may be doing bag searches at the entrance to an event and staff need to know that some people with disabilities, who may overheat easily due to exertion or medication, may need to bring in more than the allowed amount of water. People with food allergies may need to bring in their own food. Some medications cause sensitivity to sun and those folks may need to bring a small umbrella. Someone might have an unusual mobility device or a service animal. There are other exceptions that are approved on a case-by-case basis. When a patron has an unusual situation or request, we clear it at the Access Center before they get to the gates.

Medication

We inform patrons how to bring in medications and we teach security that as long as medication comes in prescription packaging and patrons show a photo ID that matches the name on the prescription, they are welcome to bring in their medication. Sometimes the medical team provides a refrigerator for those who need to keep their meds cool. Patrons are also welcome to have a small cooler with ice if they want to have their medication with them.

Accessible Viewing

The stages at most of the events I work are in open fields with "lawn seating" and the audience often stands up and it can be quite crowded. When it is safe we provide a place directly in front of the stage

for those who use wheelchairs or who have mobility disabilities that would make it very difficult to stand in the audience. We also provide a raised viewing platform set back in the audience so that folks sitting there can see over the heads of those standing.

Service Animals

This is an area of concern. Many people who love their pets state that their dogs are service animals so that they can keep their Fidos close at all times. These people are taking advantage of the laws meant to protect people with disabilities and are causing problems. We've had people bitten, lost dogs, dogs lunging at mounted patrol – all by dogs that are not well trained. I am working on systems that will help curb the problem and will be able to report on this at a later date.

Autism and Meeting the Needs of Families

One of the events I work, the Life is Good Festival just outside Boston, is a great event for families. Some parents whose kids have autism and may not be able to handle the crowds or may become over-stimulated have requested accommodations. Different kids will need different accommodations but examples of services we can provide include allowing the kids and their families up on the raised viewing platform where it is less crowded and providing a place where the family can chill out and relax in the shade, away from the loud music.

At this event we designate a couple of the accessible portable toilets as family restrooms so

that parents have room to go in with their kids. There is a tent that can be used as a nursing station and there is a changing area. These features help all families not just those who have a member with a disability. It is important to remember that every family may have different needs.

Designate an Access Center

I like to set up an Access Center. Specifically trained people who know how to answer access-related questions staff this booth. This is also where our volunteers report to and get trained before going to their assignments. It is home base for our sign language interpreters. We hand out Braille and large print copies of our programming information. We administer our survey program out of the Access Center – I always like to gather feedback from our patrons. We check out assistive listening devices and give out combinations to our locked toilets.

Accessible Port-a-Potties

Clean, accessible toilets are critical to our patrons with mobility disabilities! Accessible toilets take a lot of time and attention. They have to be placed in accessible locations, on accessible terrain, and kept clean and stocked with

TP. When possible, I place accessible toilets by the reserved accessible viewing areas. I often lock a few strategically placed accessible toilets and give out codes to those who need them. Since accessible toilets are larger, they are the most attractive to the general population. The only way to keep them clean is to lock or staff them. We use accessible combination locks that can be used by someone who is not able to grasp or twist a standard sized combination lock. Most toilets are placed around the perimeter of the venue because big trucks are needed to service the toilets and those trucks



shouldn't be brought into crowds of people.

Cleanliness is especially important because patrons with mobility disabilities aren't usually able to "hover" over the seat and because some people have medical conditions like cancer, etc, that cause low immune systems and less resistance to disease. Patrons with IBS or other conditions causing urgent and sudden need for the toilet may also request the code to the toilets.

Another issue with accessible portable toilets is that, even though they meet the requirements to be called "accessible", they are really too small for a wheelchair to turn around and make the transfer or to have a personal companion along to assist. However, there are extra large toilets that I call "apartment-sized toilets," that's my pet name for them. I always ask to have as many as possible of these extra-large toilets. Of course, the number available depend on the budget, so I am very careful to place those strategically around the event so people who need them can find one relatively close by.

Just Get Started

Event producers should know that there is a lot they can do for little money just by providing information about what they are already doing. Information on the website, signs at the event, emails to organizations that serve people with disabilities, handouts at the door, training staff – all that is relatively cheap. Signage let's people

A Few Tips

1. Use bumper sticker material, available on line, to make signs that stick onto the companion chair and reserve both the chair and the adjacent space for the wheelchair.
2. Provide a few extra sturdy, extra large chairs for heavier individuals who feel uncomfortable in your standard folding chair.
3. Accessible combination lock: www.masterlock.com/product_details/ADALocks/2076
4. Use swimming noodles to cover the guy wires and stakes holding up your Access Center Tent. They are cheap, brightly colored, decorative, and will prevent tripping.

know where to go to get assistance, where to find accessible routes, accessible parking etc. and makes navigating the whole event easier for the patron with a disability and their friends and family members.

Think "Universal Design." When planning an activity, design and build it so that everyone can participate. If you start at the design stage, it won't cost much more to make it accessible.

Thoughts on Accessibility and FUN

I don't like to think that we are doing this just because of the Americans with Disabilities Act; we are beyond that now. We do these things because we want the fun things in life, things like festivals and other events, to be accessible to all. It is the fun things that

heal us from our woes and make life worth living. Everyone deserves to be happy and have some time to live in the moment, without worry.

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Tips For Temporary Event Parking

Accessible spaces should be level and the ground must be firm and stable.

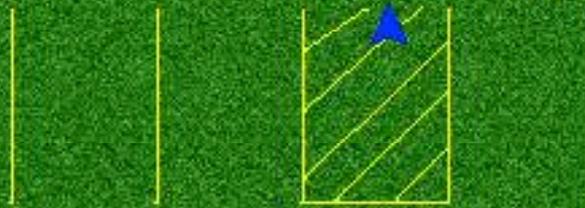
Note: If parking is located on grass, consider laying a temporary surface.

Use spray paint, chalk, ropes, stanchions, or crowd control fences to define parking spaces & access aisles.

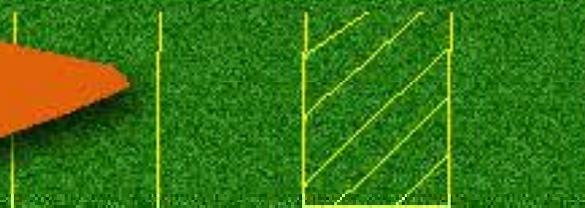


Grass Lot!

Spaces should be as close as possible to the entrance, but choose the location with the most **accessible path of travel**.



If the path of travel requires a curb ramp to be accessible, it's okay to use temporary/portable curb ramps.



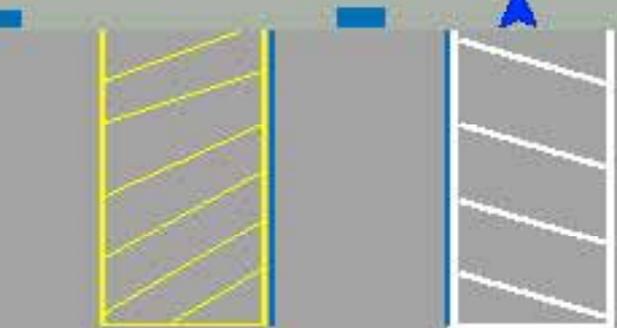
Use crowd control fences, traffic cones, or other barricades to mark off accessible parking lots/areas

Avoid having people with disabilities travel behind parked cars or across heavily trafficked areas.

Mark temporary crosswalks, if needed.



When shuttles are provided and go to lots with accessible spaces, an accessible shuttle must be provided.

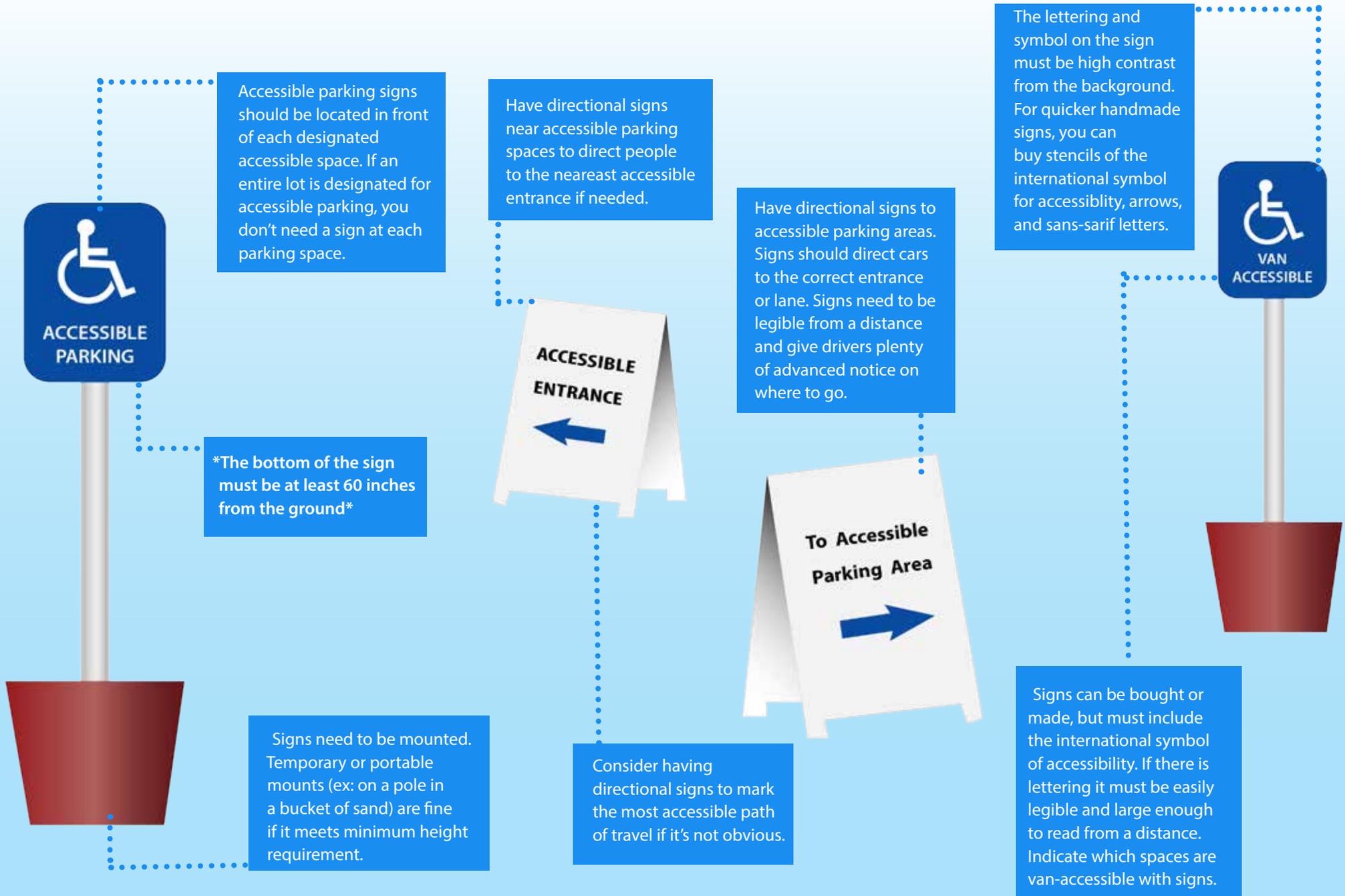


Temporary accessible space and access aisle marked with chalk and a portable sign

Paved Lot!

Consider providing some *additional* accessible parking on a paved lot, even if it is farther away

Accessible Parking Signage



Total Number of Parking Spaces Provided in Lot/ Structure	Minimum Number of Accessible Parking Spaces Required per Lot/Structure
1 - 25	1
26 - 50	2
51 - 75	3
76 - 100	4
101 - 150	5
151 - 200	6
201 - 300	7
301 - 400	8
401 - 500	9
500 - 1,000	2 % of total
1,000+	20, plus 1 per each 100 over 1,000*

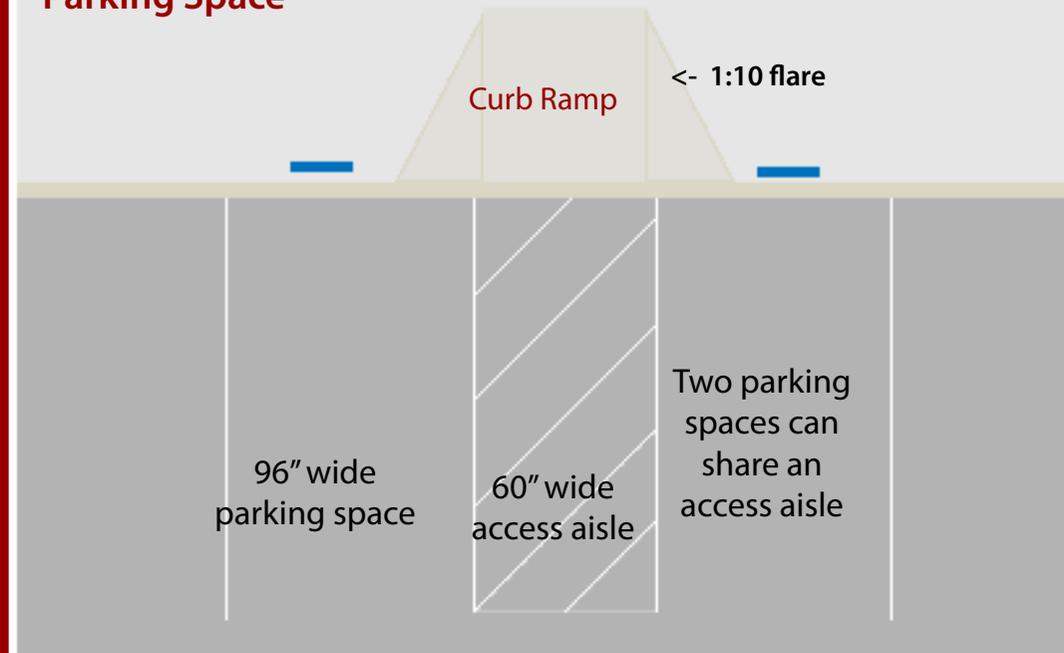
1 of every 8 of accessible spaces must be van-accessible. Facilities with fewer than 8 accessible spaces must have at least one van-accessible space.

For temporary events, it's okay to group accessible spaces in the closest parking areas, so long as the number of accessible spaces is based on the total number of parking spaces for all parking areas.

* Example: Total spaces providing is 1,320. How many accessible spaces are needed to meet the min. requirement?

- 20 (first thousand)
- + 3 (next three hundred)
- + 1 (b/c spaces cross into next hundred)
- = **24 accessible spaces (3 are van-accessible)**

Standard Accessible Parking Space



Van Accessible Parking Space

