

Section 6.2

Setting Limits and Offering Help



It can be hard to admit you have reached your limits. However, you should safeguard your own health and well-being. You need to know your limits and how to say “no” when you have reached them.

How to Say “No”

It is important to understand that you should not assist a wheelchair rider if it presents a physical hazard to your own health or you are not confident in the outcome. This could result in injury to the wheelchair rider and/or yourself. For example, pushing a wheelchair up a curb with an injured back could be painful and may cause further injury to your back. Do not be afraid to say “No.” The following are several ways to decline to help:

- Politely decline by saying, “I don’t feel comfortable or safe assisting you in that way.” Explaining why you declined is often appreciated. However, if your reasons are personal, you have no obligation to explain yourself.
- Offer to find someone who can help. “I’m not able to assist you up this curb because I have a shoulder injury. Can I help you find someone else to assist?”
- Offer an alternative skill. “I’m not comfortable pulling your wheelchair backward up the curb because I don’t think I can lift the weight of the wheelchair. Can we try lifting your casters up onto the curb and then I can push you up the curb?”
- Offer an alternative route. “I’m concerned about trying to assist you down this steep hill. The hill isn’t so steep if we go to the next corner.”

Offering Assistance

Sometimes watching a wheelchair rider do something is difficult because you can see that whatever the rider is doing is not easy. Remember that the person may not want assistance; it may be important for the person to accomplish the activity independently. It might be easier for the wheelchair rider to do the activity alone than to explain to others how they can help. The wheelchair rider might have had bad experiences or even injuries in the past when people tried to help. It may be difficult to watch, but you do not necessarily need to help the person.

Only assist a wheelchair rider when you are asked and/or have been given permission. If you think a wheelchair rider might need assistance, offer. The wheelchair rider may be in a position that looks precarious, but have the situation under control.

Unexpected assistance might throw him or her off balance.

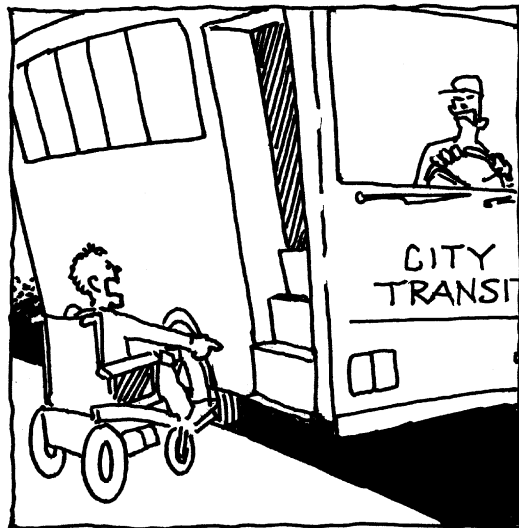
- Ask if the wheelchair user wants help. Avoid assertive statements such as, “Let me do this for you,” which make it difficult for the wheelchair rider to decline your help.
- Try wording your offer more casually. “Could you use a hand?” or “Can I help you out?”

If your offer to assist has been accepted, let the wheelchair rider be in charge. Ask the wheelchair rider how you can help and follow the rider’s instructions. Ask the wheelchair rider to talk you through the sequence before trying it, then work together to do it correctly.

- Do not push, lift or pull unless the wheelchair rider asks. Often you will be working together (e.g. to climb a curb, you may be pushing on the push handles as the wheelchair user drives forward).
- Speak up if you feel in danger of injuring yourself by following the rider’s instructions.

Appendix A

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was adopted as law in 1990 to ensure that equal access is provided to all individuals without regard to needs related to disability. This comprehensive law focuses on a number of areas, including accessibility to and within public buildings and services.

If you encounter problems with the accessibility of a building, you should first speak with the building owner or manager and explain your problem. They may have been unaware of any accessibility difficulties, and could make immediate changes for you. If the building manager or owner is unwilling to help, the next step is to get other people in the building to talk to the management. Local advocacy groups, such as Centers for Independent Living, may offer intermediary services or provide alternative resources for addressing problems. If you cannot achieve a resolution of the problem using these methods, you can file a complaint with the Department of Justice. For information about filing a complaint, call the ADA information line at 800-514-0301.

A problem might be as simple as a plant that was placed in front of the elevator buttons or within the clear passage of a hallway. It may be as complex as a multi-level building not serviced by an elevator or doorways that are too narrow for you to pass through.

U.S. Department of Justice

The U.S. Department of Justice provides general information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), answers to specific technical questions, ADA materials, and information about filing a complaint.

websites

www.usdoj.gov/disabilities.htm

www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm

ADA Information Line

Voice 800-514-0301

TTY 800-514-0383

The Access Board

The U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (The Access Board) provides technical assistance on the ADA Accessibility Guidelines.

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| website | www.access-board.gov |
| Voice | 800-872-2253 |
| TTY | 800-993-2822 |

U.S. Department of Transportation

The ADA also addresses accessibility to transportation services. The U.S. Department of Transportation oversees this aspect of the ADA.

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| website | www.dot.gov/accessibility |
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Office of the Secretary

Office of Civil Rights

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| Voice | 202-366-4648 |
| TTY | 202-366-5273 |

Federal Transit Administration

Office of Civil Rights

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| Voice | 888-446-4511 |
| E-mail | ada.assistance@fta.dot.gov |