

Beyond ADA

Going beyond the basics pays off
for patients and facilities

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Everyone, regardless of ability, benefits from accessible design. Wide doors make moving equipment and furniture easier for everyone. Spacious toilet rooms provide space for wheelchair users but also accommodate parents with strollers or several children. A place to sit while transacting business is good for anyone who might be tired, pregnant or not feeling well.

People-accommodating features enhance your facility's value, create a more interactive environment, relieve staff of unnecessary extra work and help maintain a comfortable place to work and visit. Going beyond the minimum requirements makes your facility more usable for all.

Specific rehab benefits

For rehab facilities, going beyond ADA is particularly beneficial, says Leslie Young, director of design assistance at the Center for Universal Design. "The universal

rehab facility fosters greater independence in the individual going through the program," says Young. "It is a facility that minimizes reliance on staff and can thus reduce staff workload. Such an environment helps the individual maintain the sense that they can be as vital as they were before."

There's a practical payoff too, she notes. "Rehab centers with universal demonstration areas allow people to experiment and learn new ways to perform activities of daily living in an environment that promotes possibility rather than negative self-image. The universal rehab facility can offer the individual more self-determination and an increased knowledge of what 'could be' in either their home or work environment. And since more and more universal products are available on the market, the possibility of having such features in one's environment outside the rehab world is increasing."

It's up to you

Creating barrier-free health care environments is an ongoing process that requires input from many people. Designers, builders and equipment suppliers do not set policies and are not taught to design for or to accommodate the full range of human needs and abilities. Building codes and laws cannot correct for this deficiency, so it is important for health care professionals to become active team members in planning for any health care facility or program.

Partner with your patients

It is essential to involve people with a variety of disabilities as a part of each team for assessing accessibility and recommending additional accommodations. The lived experience of disability is an excellent resource. Seek advice from more than one person because each person's

magazine and display racks within reachable height



TVs and VCRs easy to reach and with remote controls



Selected ADA requirements for health care providers

- | Accessible parking spaces close to entrances.
- | Accessible front entrance with ramp and curb cut at appropriate grades and surfaces.
- Interior and exterior doors that are wide and easy to open.
- Low counters, service windows or receptionist stations for transactions with short or seated people.
- Desk-height writing surfaces with knee space for use by wheelchair users and others who cannot stand while transacting business.
- Accessible toilets and dressing rooms large enough for a person using a wheelchair to navigate.
- Accessible route throughout the facility connecting all accessible features and service areas.
- Audible and visual alarm systems.
- Clear floor space so people, even those using wheelchairs, can get close to and reach all controls and other features.
- | Qualified sign language interpreters for communication with people who are deaf.
- Large printout capability of key papers and documents for people with low vision.
- | Controls, storage facilities and amenities such as magazine and literature racks within reach ranges for short people and wheelchair users.
- Raised lettering and Braille on selected signs such as room and elevator controls.

Recommended universal design features

- Weather protection at entrance doors.
- | Power door operators at interior and exterior entrances.
- m Spaces left open but dispersed in waiting areas where wheelchair users can sit out of traffic lanes but with other people.
- | Chairs for use by people who cannot stand while transacting business.
- Chairs that can be set at different heights for use by children, adults and older people, some equipped with armrests for those who need assistance rising to their feet.
- Scales that allow people with difficulty standing to hold on and one scale that weighs people who are sitting in wheelchairs.
- | Motorized, adjustable-height treatment and examining tables and chairs.
- | Mammography machines that can be used on a woman in a seated position.
- | A portable, amplified communication system or device with volume control at service desks and treatment spaces for people who are hard of hearing.
- More than one accessible toilet and dressing room, some left-handed and some right-handed.
- | A TTY for use by people who are deaf to make phone calls.
- | Staff awareness and training in using the National Telephone Relay System.
- Awareness and sensitivity training for all staff and professional personnel on interacting with people with disabilities.

experience and knowledge are different and also because disabilities vary so broadly. Ask your patients for their input on how to make your facility and services more accessible. Local disability organizations or advocates can provide information on a broad range of disabilities including mobility, cognitive, vision, and hearing and are excellent sources for planning advice.

Here are some ideas that will take you beyond the basics of accessible design. They were developed by the Center for Universal Design at North Carolina State University, Raleigh, in collaboration with the North Carolina Office on Disability and Health.

For more information on how to improve accessibility at your facility or to order the booklet "Removing Barriers to Health Care: A Guide for Health Professionals," contact the Center for Universal Design, North Carolina State University, Campus Box 8613, Raleigh, NC 27695; 800/647-6777, 919/515-3082; Web site: www.design.ncsu.edu/cud

