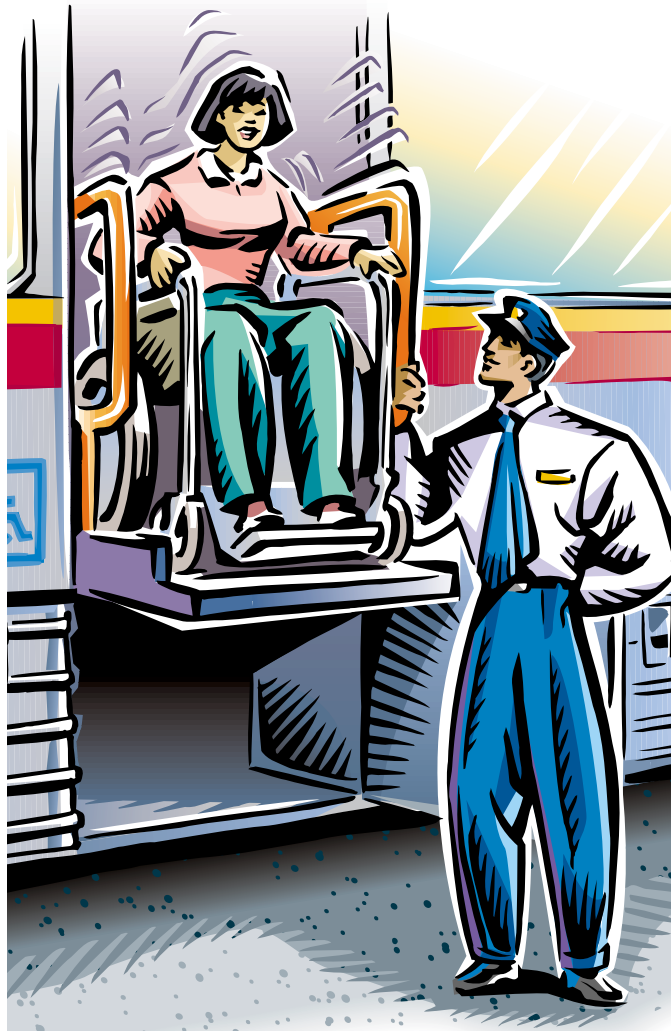


## Pocket Handbook

Easter Seals Project ACTION/  
American Bus Association  
ADA Training Program for  
Motorcoach Companies





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 Overview of ADA Regulations for Motorcoach and Tour Companies

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**SECTION I** **1**  
**The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed on July 26, 1990, to protect the civil rights of individuals with disabilities and guarantee everyone the same opportunities to participate and contribute to the society in which we live.

Civil rights are rights guaranteed to American citizens by the Constitution of the United States.

The ADA is comprehensive civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public services, public accommodations (including transportation services), and telecommunications.

**Definition of Disability**

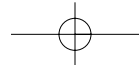
Under the ADA, a person with a disability is defined as:

- ❶ An individual with a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as breathing, seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, working, caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, learning, etc.
- ❷ An individual who has a record of such a physical or mental impairment.
- ❸ An individual who is regarded as having such an impairment.

**The ADA in Transportation**

The transportation provisions of the ADA guarantee individuals equal access to the same services and programs that are available to the general public, in both public and private transportation services.

These provisions require that transportation services, programs, and facilities are made accessible to individuals with disabilities, including people who use wheelchairs.



### Discriminatory Practices which are Illegal under the ADA

It is considered discrimination for a motorcoach company to:

- Deny transportation to individuals with disabilities.\*
- Refuse to provide service to an individual with a disability solely because the disability results in the appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience the company's employees or other persons.
- Use or request the use of persons other than employees (family members, companions, and medical/public safety personnel) for boarding or assistance to passengers with disabilities, unless the passenger requests or consents to assistance from such persons.
- Require or request a passenger with a disability to reschedule his/her trip/travel time in order to receive transportation.
- Fail to provide reservation services to passengers with disabilities equivalent to those provided to other passengers.
- Require that a passenger with a disability use designated priority seats, if the passenger does not choose to use them.
- Require that a passenger with a disability travel with an attendant.
- Impose special charges on individuals with disabilities, including those who use wheelchairs, for providing services that are required or necessary to accommodate them. (For example: charging a group requesting an accessible coach a higher price than a group requesting an inaccessible coach).
- Refuse to serve an individual with a disability because its insurance company conditions coverage or rates on the absence of persons with disabilities.
- Fail or refuse to comply with any of the applicable ADA regulations.

## SECTION II Why Should Your Company Comply with the Motorcoach - ADA Rules?

# 2

### ADA Compliance is Good Customer Service

Your customers want and expect good, safe service. Your customers with disabilities have the same expectations. Courteous and respectful treatment of individuals who are persons with disabilities is required under the ADA. It is also good business. Your goal should be to meet or exceed your customers' expectations for good service. ADA compliance helps to produce satisfied customers.

Satisfied customers mean:

- return business
- additional business
- additional revenue
- job security
- personal recognition and reward
- personal satisfaction

Individuals who are discriminated against have the right to file complaints with the U.S. Department of Justice. Failure to comply with the ADA may also result in lawsuits against your company. For these reasons, think through service delivery relationships between tour operators and charter companies, company rest stop policies, etc.

\*Exception: It is not discrimination to refuse to provide service to an individual with a disability because that individual engages in violent, seriously disruptive or illegal conduct.

SECTION III .....  
Good Customer Service Delivery to  
Customers with Disabilities

3

Providing Good Customer Service to Passengers  
with Disabilities

Speak directly to passengers with disabilities.  
Never address companions unless directed to do so  
by the passenger.

- Use the appropriate language when speaking to a person with a disability. Appropriate language emphasizes the person first, not the disability. Do not refer to the person as “handicapped” or a “wheelchair” or a “wheelchair passenger.”
- Offer assistance but do not take charge. Abide by the customer’s wishes.
- Ask the customer, “how may I assist you today?” Then, wait for the customer’s response. Asking shows courtesy and respect for the customer’s needs and abilities.
- Smile. Listen. Show respect. Be courteous. Say “please” and “thank you.”
- Maintain eye level. When speaking with a person using a wheelchair, it may be appropriate to sit.
- Speak clearly, do not shout. Try to keep conversations private. Do not shout from the front of the coach or across the station.
- Handle angry or upset passengers with disabilities by staying calm.
- Solve problems in a professional manner that shows care and concern.

## SECTION IV ..... Communicating with and Assisting Customers with Disabilities

# 4

Proper communication with people with disabilities is good customer service and good manners. In communicating about disabilities, it is important to emphasize the person, not the disability, and to use words that accurately portray an individual person or situation. Say “person who uses a wheelchair” instead of wheelchair-bound. Use “person who is deaf or hard of hearing” rather than hearing impaired, “seniors/older adults” in place of elderly, etc.

Some additional examples may also help. Refer to the lift on the coach as a “wheelchair lift” not a “handicapped lift.” Do not refer to the securement locations on the coach as “handicapped seats,” etc.

### General Guidelines for Assisting Customers with Disabilities

A critical point to remember is that identifying a customer’s disability does not tell you anything about that person’s abilities. People with disabilities have different ranges of abilities. Never make assumptions about your customers.

- Treat customers with disabilities as you would like to be treated.
- Speak directly to customers with disabilities, not their companions.
- Speak in a normal tone and speed, unless the customer requests otherwise.
- If you are asked to repeat or write what you said, do so calmly and pleasantly.

- Ask if a customer with a disability needs assistance. Don't make assumptions.
- Give customers with disabilities the same information and choices that you give any other customers.
- Keep customers with disabilities informed about what, when, where, and how they will be served.
- Make sure that other employees involved in serving customers (e.g., operators, customer service staff, etc.) are aware of the customers and their needs.
- Customers with the same disability often need different types of assistance to travel independently.
- It will be more efficient and contribute to greater customer satisfaction if you take the time to identify the customer's needs and determine how to best serve them from the first contact.

### Customers with Visual Disabilities

Visual disabilities vary widely. One person may have a total loss of vision while another may have difficulty seeing only under certain conditions.

#### Assisting Customers with Visual Disabilities

- 1 Signal your approach, and identify that you are an employee.
  - Use the customer's name, if you know it, or:
  - Lightly touch the customer's arm as you introduce yourself to show that you are addressing him/her. Don't touch or grab an arm unexpectedly.
  - Ask the customer what type of assistance is needed and how you can best provide it.

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- 2 Offer your arm. Let the customer take your upper arm near your body; this way, he or she can feel your change in gait as you approach different barriers and prepare for them. Don't take the customer's arm and push him or her along, as it will throw him/her off balance, and never grab the arm that is holding a cane or guide dog harness. Never grab a service animal's harness or in any way interact with the service animal without the owner's permission.

If the customer has a service animal, go to the side opposite the animal, and offer your arm (this will normally be the person's right side). The customer will drop the harness and take the animal's leash. This signals that the dog is to heel, not work.

- 3 Inform the customer about obstacles such as stairs or revolving doors as you lead. Slow down a bit and announce the obstacles before you get there. If you're not sure how to handle an obstacle, ask the person.
- 4 To help the customer sit down, place the person's hand on the back of the seat/chair and tell him/her which direction it is facing.
- 5 Before you leave the customer, offer to orient the person to their particular motorcoach or the terminal (food service, restroom facilities, layout of the motorcoach, etc.). Ask if further assistance is needed and how often you should check back (for example, "is there anything else I can do for you now?"). And finally, tell the person you are leaving so they don't go on talking, thinking you are still there.

#### Making Ticket Sales

- Tell the customer the price of the ticket verbally.

- When a customer gives you money, say the amount he or she has given you before you put it away.
- Count the customer's change out loud, as you would for any other customer. Most people with visual disabilities fold their bills so they can distinguish the denominations. Identify the denomination of the bills when you give the customer the change, and allow time to fold each bill.
- When a customer with a visual impairment hands you a ticket, cash, or other item, place the ticket stub, brochure, transfer change, etc., directly into his/her hand.
- When giving verbal directions to a customer with a visual impairment, your instructions should be very simple and very specific. Say "turn right," "turn left," or "turn toward the front/back of the coach" rather than "over there" or "that way."

Background noise can distort the sound of your voice, so do not act annoyed if you are asked to repeat what you have said by individuals with vision impairments.

#### Traveling

Assist with luggage by bringing it to the customer's seat or storing it. In any case, if you take a person's luggage, make sure he or she knows exactly where you are putting it.

Inform the person early of his or her stop. Allow plenty of time for disembarking—depending on the amount of luggage and the person's needs. Remember that the ADA requires that you announce stops, major routes, and transfer points.

Put the person in touch with his/her surroundings. It is better to put the person next to a wall,

bench, pillar, or other person rather than to put him/her alone in the middle of a sidewalk or room.

#### Customers Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Chances are you won't notice a person who is deaf or hard of hearing unless you see the person using sign language or wearing a hearing aid. Not all people who are deaf read lips.

##### Assisting Customers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- 1 Get the person's attention before you start to talk. Follow the customer's cues to find out if he/she prefers sign language, gesturing, writing, or speaking. If you have trouble understanding the speech of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, let them know. It's perfectly acceptable to:
  - Wave your hand or a note.
  - Tap the person lightly on the shoulder or arm.

If the conversation will last more than a few seconds, move to a quiet place. Don't try to talk in a very noisy environment. The environmental sounds may be amplified for people who are hard of hearing or wear hearing aids.

- 2 Position yourself to be seen.
  - Face the person and don't let any object obstruct the person's view of you.
  - Don't eat, smoke, chew gum, or hold your hands in front of your mouth when talking. These make it difficult to lip-read. Be aware that mustaches may also obstruct the lips.
  - Position yourself facing the light source. Don't stand with your back to a window or light—this will throw a shadow on your face.

- ③ Use gestures and facial expressions to get your message across.
- ④ Speak clearly and normally.
  - Don't exaggerate your lip movements.
  - Don't shout—shouting distorts both the sound of words and the lip movement.
  - Be prepared to write it down.
  - Many words have the same lip movement. For example, “15” and “50” cannot be distinguished when lip-reading.
- ⑤ Check for understanding.
  - Don't assume a blank expression means that the person understands.
  - Ask a yes/no question to check.
  - The person who is deaf or hard of hearing may want you to repeat. Be patient.
- ⑥ Rephrase your message when the person doesn't understand, instead of simply repeating it word for word.
- ⑦ Be sure that onboard announcements are communicated to customers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Write them down if needed.

#### Customers Who have Speech Disabilities

A person with a speech disability may have difficulty communicating verbally. Like other disabilities, speech disabilities may range in severity.

A person with a severe speech disability may travel with an interpreter or may use written notes to communicate. People who have had their larynx removed may speak with an artificial “voice box,” which actually generates an electronic voice. Other people with speech disabilities may use com-

puter assistive technology that they control by a keypad to emit a computerized voice.

#### Assisting Customers with Speech Disabilities

- ① Give the person your full attention. Don't interrupt or finish the customer's sentences.
- ② If you have trouble understanding, don't nod, just ask them to repeat. In most cases the person won't mind and will appreciate your effort to hear what they have to say.
- ③ If, after trying, you still cannot understand the person, ask him/her to write it down or suggest another way of communicating.
- ④ A quiet environment makes communication easier.

#### Hidden Disabilities

Many types of disabilities are not immediately obvious. You cannot always tell from the first glance that a person has a disability and may need assistance. Psychiatric, cognitive, and developmental disabilities are examples of some disabilities that may not be easily detected.

#### Customers who have Mental or Psychiatric Disabilities

People with mental or psychiatric disabilities are not recognizable from other groups of people and normally have no need to disclose the disability. Like any other group of individuals, people with mental or psychiatric disabilities may at times have difficulty coping with the stresses of travel (delays, crowds, and unfamiliar locations).

#### Assisting Customers with Mental or Psychiatric Disabilities

- ① Treat the person as an individual, with respect and dignity.

- ② Do not assume the person is in danger or is dangerous to others.
- ③ Reasonable requests may include:
  - Written or repeated instructions
  - Detailed directions
  - Priority boarding and disembarking
  - Traveling with a support person or service animal
  - Seating preferences
- ④ Respond to passengers in a calm, professional manner.

#### Customers with Tourette's Syndrome

People with Tourette's syndrome may make sounds or gestures that they cannot control. A small percentage of people with Tourette's syndrome involuntarily say ethnic slurs or obscene words.

#### Assisting Customers with Tourette's Syndrome

Generally, no particular help is needed. These guidelines may be helpful.

- If a customer with Tourette's syndrome makes sounds during a conversation, simply wait for them to finish, then calmly continue.
- The more the person tries to contain these urges, the more the urges build up. Allow the person to release the buildup in a private place, if possible.

#### Customers Who Have Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a disorder of the central nervous system that involves seizures, which can be controlled by medication. There are different types of seizures: convulsive and nonconvulsive.

#### Assisting Customers Who Have Epilepsy

If a person has a convulsive seizure:

- ① Stop the coach in a safe place.
- ② Reassure other passengers and explain what is happening.
- ③ Move the nearby passengers.
- ④ Remain calm and follow these steps:
  - Help ease the person onto the floor on his/her back, and place soft material (jacket or sweater) under the head.
  - Loosen clothing around the neck, and gently turn the customer's head to the side.
  - Allow the seizure to run its course. Do not attempt to restrain the person's movements.
  - Do not expect to be able to communicate during the seizure.
  - Do not insert anything into the person's mouth.
  - Stay with the person until they are fully reoriented.
  - Call for medical assistance if the seizure lasts more than five minutes, if seizures occur repeatedly and/or other injuries have occurred.
- ⑤ When the person is coherent, resume your route.

If a person has a nonconvulsive seizure:

- ① If necessary, stop the coach in a safe place.
- ② Ask the other passengers to remain calm. Explain what is happening.
- ③ Move the nearby passengers.
- ④ When the seizure is over, ask the person a few simple questions about themselves or their surroundings.

- ⑤ When the person is coherent, resume your route.

### Customers Who have Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease may affect short-term memory, speech, and other intellectual skills. At times, some people may become agitated, fearful, or confused. There are no obvious characteristics indicating that a person may have Alzheimer's disease. Many mildly and moderately impaired individuals appear as alert or physically fit as anyone else their age. The average person with Alzheimer's disease may exhibit some signs that suggest the individual has a memory impairment.

- ① Failure to exit the coach or attempt to exit while it is still in motion
- ② Attempting to board the coach at a non-designated stop
- ③ Repeating requests for directional assistance
- ④ Failure to be seated or changing seats repeatedly
- ⑤ Wearing inappropriate clothing or taking clothes off in public
- ⑥ Appearing intoxicated
- ⑦ Substituting items such as buttons or paper for tickets

Passengers with Alzheimer's disease may travel with a companion or personal care attendant. If you know that a person on the coach has Alzheimer's before the route starts, you should verify that a responsible party will meet the passenger at the destination.

### Assisting Customers with Alzheimer's Disease

- ① Always treat the person as an adult with respect and dignity.
- ② Stay calm and use a non-threatening tone of voice.
- ③ Seat a passenger with Alzheimer's in the priority seats or as close to the front as possible.
- ④ Speak slowly and ask only one question at a time. Be willing to repeat information, if necessary.
- ⑤ Keep instructions simple and positive. For example, say "Please sit in this seat near me," rather than "Don't sit there!"
- ⑥ Many people with Alzheimer's wear "Safe Return" bracelets identifying them as having a memory impairment and giving an 800 number to call. If not, it may be necessary to check for a driver's license or other identification.
- ⑦ If the passenger with Alzheimer's is traveling alone, dispatch should be contacted as soon as possible. If the passenger has no identification, police should be called immediately. If you have a concern that the passenger will not be able to get where he/she needs to go, based on disorientation or inability to communicate with others, call the police.

### Customers with Cognitive Disabilities

Some people have disabilities that affect their ability to know, think, remember, learn and communicate. Mental retardation, learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury are some examples of cognitive disabilities.

### Assisting Customers with Cognitive Disabilities

- ① Always treat the person as an adult with respect and dignity.
- ② Do not assume the person is in danger. Do not assume the person is dangerous to others.
- ③ Be direct. Say what you mean. Don't use sarcasm, make jokes, or exaggerate.
- ④ Be specific. Use words that relate to things you can see.
- ⑤ Refer to landmarks or other visual cues to help the person understand direction. Avoid using directional terms like right, left, east, west. Write or draw if it helps get the information across.
- ⑥ Use body language and gestures that say you're willing to help. Maintain good eye contact. Show how to do something while you tell how to do it.
- ⑦ Use simple, concrete words and short sentences. Be willing to repeat information and break information down into smaller pieces.
- ⑧ Check to see if the person understood you by asking the person what he/she is going to do; use questions that begin with who/what/where.
- ⑨ Be patient and allow the person to take his/her time.
- ⑩ Reasonable requests may include:
  - Written or repeated instructions
  - Detailed directions
  - Priority boarding and disembarking
  - Traveling with a support person or service animal

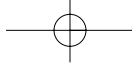
- Seating preferences
- Respond to passengers in a calm, professional manner.

### Customers with Mobility Limitations

Mobility limitations are probably the most frequent type of disability you will see. These kinds of disabilities affect a person's ability to move, walk, stand, or use the upper body for activities such as eating, drinking, or talking. There are many types of disabilities that may affect a person's mobility.

#### Assisting Customers with Mobility Limitations and those who Use Wheelchairs

- Ask the customer how you can assist him/her. The customer knows what works best for him/her.
  - A wheelchair is part of the customer's personal space. Do not hold onto or lean on the wheelchair or mobility aid without the customer's permission.
  - Wheelchairs and other mobility aids are individualized. Do not make assumptions about how they work.
- Upon the request of the passenger, motorcoach operators must assist with securing the wheelchair if the passenger cannot do so independently. If the operator must leave his/her seat to assist, then he/she must do so.
- An operator or a motorcoach company may not deny transportation to a passenger whose wheelchair does not have brakes, or the user does not choose to set the brakes.
  - Individuals with disabilities who do not use wheelchairs, including standees, may also use the lift upon request.



### Service Animals

- Trained service animals are allowed in customer areas in stations and on motorcoaches.
- People with various types of disabilities use service animals.
- Service animals are primarily dogs (any breed or size) but may include other animals (including but not limited to cats, monkeys, pot-bellied pigs, birds, and reptiles), depending on the service they provide their owners.
- Some, but not all, service animals wear an identifying harness or collar. Certification for the animal is not required. In some cases the only identification is the credible verbal assurance of the customer using the service animal. Believe the customer!
- If you are not certain that the animal is a service animal, ask if the animal is a pet. If the customer responds that the animal is a service animal, you may ask the customer if he/she has a disability. You may not ask what the disability is.
- Trained service animals may accompany only passengers with disabilities.
- All service animals must be kept under the control of their owners at all times and comply with local animal safety regulations. If the animal acts out of control or causes a major disturbance to the environment (e.g., howling), the animal may be removed from the coach and turned over to the local animal control officials, if appropriate.
- Service animals do not require a seat.
- The owner must stay with the service animal at

all times. Employees should NEVER walk with the animal without its owner.

- Do not touch or talk to a service animal without asking the owner's permission.

### Customers of Short Stature

People of short stature are usually no taller than 4'10" in height.

#### Assisting Customers of Short Stature

Be cognizant of reach limitations, such as placing suitcases in luggage racks, boarding and disembarking, and serving customers with short stature at the ticket counter. Remember that the customer of short stature is an adult. Treat adults as adults.

### Customers with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities

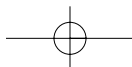
People with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) react to toxins in the air.

#### Assisting Customers with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities

Customers with multiple chemical sensitivities should be seated in the priority seats if possible. If these seats are occupied, try to isolate the customer with MCS as reasonably as possible onboard the coach.

### Customers Who have HIV/AIDS

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus, and AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, a condition in which the body's immune system is destroyed. While there are



treatments that help people survive some of the diseases they get as a result of losing their immunity, there is no cure for AIDS.

**Assisting Customers with HIV/AIDS**

Generally, you will not know that a customer has HIV/AIDS and no particular assistance is needed unless otherwise indicated. However, in the advanced stages of AIDS, other debilitating conditions may exist, such as limited mobility, respiratory problems, and general weakness.

**SECTION V** .....  
**Operation and Maintenance of Accessibility Equipment**

**5**

**Lift Operations and Maintenance** .....

You should always ensure that personnel are trained to safely use the type of lift equipment operated by your company.

Operators must report lift failures by the most immediate means available to the appropriate personnel that the motorcoach company has designated.

**Wheelchair and Occupant Securement Operations & Procedures**

Properly securing wheelchairs is extremely important. For safety, it is recommended that the wheelchair be secured prior to moving the coach. Most of today's wheelchair restraint systems are based on a 4-point tie down, - meaning that each of the four corners of the chair are restrained by a belt to a permanently mounted floor bracket.

**Securing the Wheelchair**

Ask the customer if he/she needs assistance first. Consult the owner of the wheelchair to determine the best method of securement. Know how to operate the securement system on the motorcoach. Keep the securement instructions stowed on the coach with the securement system, so that you can consult the instructions as needed.

**Securing the Passenger**

Under the ADA, a motorcoach company is not permitted to mandate the use of seatbelts and shoulder harnesses by persons using wheelchairs, unless the company mandates the use of these

devices by all passengers, including those sitting in vehicle seats. If none of the other motorcoach passengers are required to use the seatbelts and shoulder harnesses, then the person using the mobility aid cannot be required to do so.

If seatbelts and shoulder harnesses are provided at all seating locations, companies may establish a policy that requires the use of seatbelts and shoulder harnesses by all passengers, including those seated in vehicle seats.

An operator may tell the customer that the company would prefer that he or she use the lap belt and shoulder harness for his or her own safety.

If the passenger requests assistance in using the lap belt and shoulder harness:

- Never put the lap belt over the arm rests or the side panel of the wheelchair.
- Never use the lap belt unless the wheelchair is secured.

SECTION VI  
 Manual Boarding of Customers Who Use Wheelchairs or Other Mobility Aids

# 6

Boarding Customers Who Use Wheelchairs and Other Mobility Aids

The ADA requires that motorcoach companies assist customers who use wheelchairs in getting on and off coaches. Boarding and deboarding assistance must also be provided at rest stops.

The United States Department of Transportation does not require a particular method of providing boarding assistance onto nonaccessible coaches. The preferable method of providing boarding assistance is through the use of lift equipment.

The Department of Transportation views manual lifting with disfavor. The ADA makes it very clear that motorcoach employees must be properly trained to manually lift passengers safely.

If there is an emergency en route, you may have to evacuate the motorcoach or transfer passengers to another motorcoach without using a wheelchair lift.

If rescue teams are present, they can safely move injured passengers with disabilities. If not, you will have to physically assist passengers in transferring from the motorcoach.

Don't touch a customer's wheelchair without permission. The wheelchair is part of his or her personal space.

Be sure to get the customer's input before attempting a manual lift. Ask the customer how you can assist him or her and decide together the safest and most comfortable way to make the move. Do not touch the customer until he or she is ready. Always transfer the way the customer requests. The customer knows what works best for him or her.

## SECTION VII ..... Handling and Storage of Wheelchairs and Other Mobility Aids

# 7

### Design Features of Power Chairs

The power chair is not a complicated machine. However, because of its independent power source, weight (100-200 lbs.) and cost (\$5,000-\$7,000 and up), it is important that personnel dealing with power chairs become familiar with their operation.

#### Storing Wheelchairs

Whenever possible, wheelchairs and other mobility aids such as walkers, crutches, and canes should travel in the passenger compartment with the customer. However, sometimes the size of these aids requires that they must be transported in the baggage bay. Use these guidelines when handling and storing these aids.

Manual and power wheelchairs, scooters, and other mobility aids that cannot travel with the customer will be stored as luggage, at no additional cost to the passenger. These items are stored in addition to the customer's free baggage allowances. Make sure to place a baggage claim on all items (including the wheelchairs), and give the customer a claim check.

SECTION VIII  
Overview of ADA Regulations for  
Motorcoach Companies\*

8

General Service Provisions for the  
Motorcoach Industry

If possible, wheelchairs will be transported in the passenger compartment. Wheelchairs that cannot be transported in the passenger compartment must be transported in the baggage compartment (including power wheelchairs), unless they are too large to fit in the baggage compartment.

At rest stops, the motorcoach operator or another employee must assist with retrieving and storing the wheelchair.

At any given stop, individuals with disabilities must have their wheelchairs stowed into the baggage compartment before other luggage is loaded.

To orient individuals with visual impairments to their location, operators shall announce stops for transfer points, major intersections, intervals along the route, or any stop at the request of an individual with a disability.

Where more than one vehicle serves the same stop, motorcoach companies shall provide a means by which an individual with a visual impairment or other disability can identify his/her motorcoach or can be identified to the operator as a passenger of the motorcoach.

Service animals must be permitted to accompany individuals with disabilities in motorcoach facilities and vehicles.

Communication and information about motorcoach services must be available to individuals with disabilities in accessible formats and technology such as Braille, large print, audio, TTYs, etc.

\* "See Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. ss12101 et seq (1991); see also Transportation for Individuals with Disabilities, 63 Fed. Reg. 51,670 (1998)".

Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted to travel with a respirator or portable oxygen.

Individuals with disabilities shall be permitted adequate time to get on and off the coach.

When an individual with a disability needs the priority seat, the operator shall ask other passengers to move, unless another individual with a disability or senior citizen is sitting in a designated priority seat.

When an individual with a disability needs to occupy the wheelchair securement location, the operator shall ask passengers sitting in the fold-down or moveable seats in a wheelchair location to move to another seat.

You should know if your company has established a policy concerning reserving seats in the securement locations for customers with disabilities.

On September 28, 1998, the Department of Transportation issued additional ADA regulations for the motorcoach industry. These regulations require the accessibility of new motorcoaches and the accessibility of motorcoach service to people with disabilities. The rules for the purchase/lease of new motorcoaches went into effect on October 30, 2000 for large fixed-route motorcoach companies and will go into effect October 29, 2001, for small fixed-route motorcoach companies.

The rules for delivering accessible motorcoach service go into effect in October 29, 2001 for large fixed-route, charter, tour, and other demand responsive motorcoach companies. The rules go into effect for small operators in October 28, 2002. After these dates, companies must provide service in an accessible coach to a passenger who requests it and gives 48 hours' notice. Small companies may provide equivalent service instead of acquiring accessible coaches. This equivalent service may be provided in an alternate vehicle (e.g., a van), provided that the service allows passengers to travel in their own wheelchairs.

If the passenger does not provide 48 hours' notice, the company must provide the service if it is reasonable to do so.

However, the company is not required to change its normal reservation policies or displace other passengers who have reserved seats on the motorcoach.

#### **Interline Service**

This rule applies to all fixed-route companies that are involved in interline service.

When the general public can purchase a ticket or make a reservation with one company for a fixed-route trip of two or more stages in which another company provides service, the first company must arrange for an accessible coach, or equivalent service, to be provided for each stage of the trip to a passenger with a disability. Each company retains full responsibility for actually providing the service to the customer on its leg of the trip.

Motorcoach companies that interline are required to send and receive information to one another to ensure that all accessible service needed for a trip is provided.

The company with whom the passenger initially makes a reservation or buys a ticket for an interline trip with 48 hours' advance notice must immediately communicate with the other coach companies involved with the trip as to the need for an accessible coach to be provided for each stage of the trip.

All motorcoach companies involved in interline service must have a means of receiving the communications concerning interline service for passengers with disabilities at all times.

#### **Intermediate and Rest Stops**

When a motorcoach makes an intermediate or rest stop at which passengers have the opportunity to get off of the coach to use the facilities, passengers with disabilities must also have the opportunity to get off of the coach to use the facilities.

The motorcoach operator or another is required to provide needed assistance (such as operating the lift, providing assistance with securement, and other debarking assistance for customers who have transferred to vehicle seats) to allow the passenger with a disability to access the facilities.

If a motorcoach with an inaccessible restroom is making an express run of three hours or more without a rest stop and a passenger with a disability, who is unable to use the inaccessible restroom, requests an unscheduled rest stop, the motorcoach operator must make a good-faith effort to accommodate the request. The operator is not required to make the stop, but must explain to the passenger the reason for the denial. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences.

#### **Additional Passengers Who Use Wheelchairs**

When there are more customers who want to travel than there are securement locations, passengers will be assigned securement locations on a first-come, first-served basis.

Additional passengers will be offered the opportunity to transfer to a seat. They would board using the lift, but be assisted to a seat. The wheelchair would be stored in the baggage compartment.

If the passenger is unwilling or unable to accept this offer, he/she does not have to be transported on that coach.

#### **Lift and Securement Use**

Companies must transport all persons using wheelchairs or other commonly used mobility aids.

A common wheelchair belonging to any class of three or four-wheel devices measures no more than 30" wide and 48" long and weighs no more than 600 pounds when occupied. Companies are not required to permit wheelchairs to ride in places other than designated securement locations in the vehicle.

A motorcoach operator may require that common wheelchairs be secured to the motorcoach, if the motorcoach company has established that as a policy.\* The Department of Transportation's ADA regulations allow motorcoach companies to establish a policy requiring that common wheelchairs be secured while onboard the motorcoach.

Alternatively, a motorcoach company may adopt a policy that allows common wheelchairs to ride unsecured. If the passenger wishes his or her wheelchair to be secured, the operator must provide the requested assistance.

Make sure that you know if your company has an established policy and what the policy is.

If the policy has been established, the operator may decline to provide service to a passenger who refuses to allow his or her common wheelchair to be secured.

If both wheelchair securement locations are occupied, operators must offer boarding assistance to passengers who are willing and able to transfer to a coach seat. If the additional passengers are unable or unwilling to accept this offer, operators are not required to transport the additional passengers on that particular coach.

If the motorcoach company has a policy that requires securement, or if a rider asks that the wheelchair be secured, motorcoach company personnel are required to use their best efforts to secure any mobility device that meets the definition of a common wheelchair. A motorcoach company or operator cannot refuse to accommodate a common wheelchair (or its user) because the wheelchair cannot be secured to the operator's satisfaction. Operators should consult the owner of the wheelchair to determine the best method of securement.

\* See "Federal Transit Administration ADA Information", Volume 1.



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Easter Seals Project ACTION  
700 Thirteenth Street, N.W.,  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 347-3066  
Fax: (202) 347-4157  
www.projectaction.org

American Bus Association  
1100 New York Avenue, N.W.,  
Suite 1050  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (800) 283-2877  
Fax: (202) 842-0850  
www.buses.org

email: project\_action@opa.easter-seals.org

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