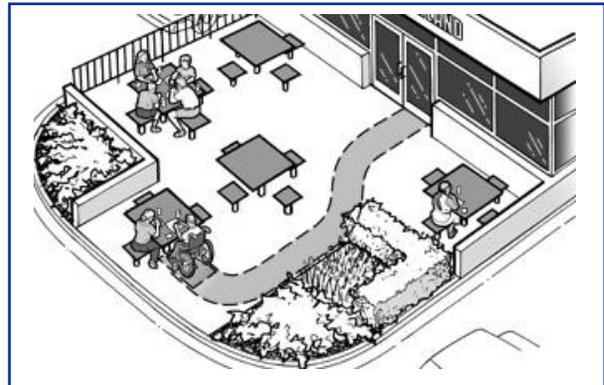

Hotels and Food Service: Accommodating Diners with Disabilities

Many hotels offer a variety of food service options, ranging from fine restaurants to coffee shops, as well as customized banquet services for conferences or parties. Making food service accessible for guests with disabilities, along with their families, friends, and colleagues, makes good business sense. Here are a few tips for hotel operators, event planners, and food service staff.

Room to Move

Path of travel: Check out the path of travel around self-serve stations, ordering and pick-up counters, and seating areas. Make sure there is enough clear space for people using wheelchairs, other mobility aids, or service animals.

Seating: Dining areas should include some accessible seating, integrated and spread throughout the available seating areas.



- *Accessible table:* table-top surface no higher than 34 inches above the floor, and clear space underneath for wheelchair users to get their feet and knees under the table

Temporary seating set up for special events should also include accessible tables; chairs can be removed, where needed, to accommodate people who remain in their own wheelchairs or scooters for dining.

Mobility devices: Never move a person's mobility device out of his reach without talking to him about it. People often like to keep their mobility devices close at hand, but of course crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs or scooters (some individuals may transfer to a booth or dining chair) need to be safely out of the way of other patrons and servers.

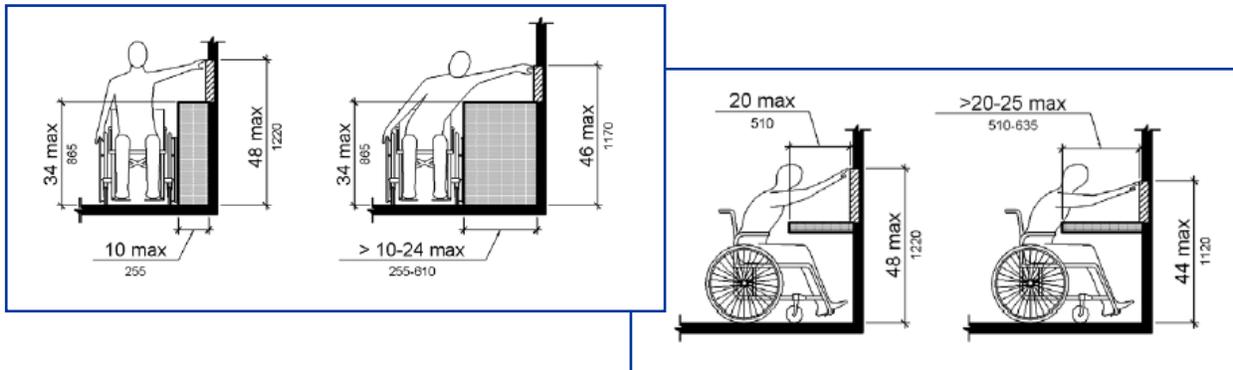
- Think about seating options and convenient storage space for mobility devices

Self-serve items: Here are some tips to improve safe and easy use for people using wheelchairs or people of short stature.

- The tops of tables or counters for self-serve items should not be higher than 36 inches above the floor

Food service items are often placed toward the back of a table or counter, leaving the front space available for people to set trays, plates, or beverage containers. Additionally, buffets and food service displays often use racks, risers, or other means of placing items at various heights above the table surface. This makes the most of limited space and adds visual appeal as well, but height and depth (the horizontal distance a person has to reach) combine to make items more difficult to reach, grasp, or use.

- Items that need to be seen and reached can be placed as high as 48 inches above the floor in some cases, but may need to be lower if they are farther from the front edge of the table, or if room to approach is limited in other ways



Take a seat: Pull up a chair and sit down next to the buffet or self-service area. If you can see and reach the items, it is a good indication of accessibility.

More Great Tips

Put the menu up front: When serving a buffet, place a menu at the beginning of the line to help guests with dietary restrictions or preferences make informed choices. This will help speed up the food line and cut down on waste.

Offer straws: Some people with disabilities find it difficult to lift or hold glasses, cups, or other beverage containers. Providing straws will be appreciated.

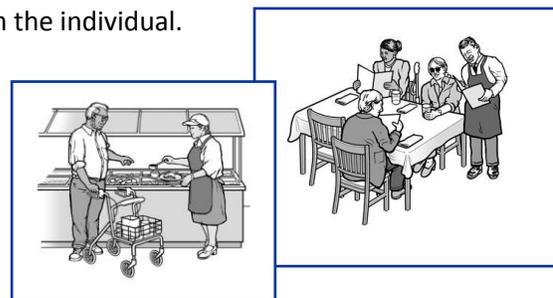
Offer assistance: People with a variety of disabilities, as well as older customers, may need assistance.

- People who are blind or have low vision may need servers to read menus, identify items on buffet lines, or provide guidance or direction to self-serve items, seating, or restrooms
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing may need to exchange notes or use other methods to communicate and get information about menu options or ingredients
- People who use service animals or have disabilities that affect strength, dexterity, or mobility may need assistance carrying trays or other self-serve items

Offer assistance and wait for a response or direction from the individual.



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This fact sheet was developed by the Mid-Atlantic ADA Center under a grant from the Department of Education (DOE), NIDRR grant # H133A110017. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the DOE, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.