

A.R.T.S.

ARTS RESOURCES TO SHARE • RESOURCES FOR THE ARTS ORGANIZATION FROM THE OKLAHOMA ARTS COUNCIL

This newsletter is devoted to assisting organizations in finding information to help them be accessible. People with disabilities want to be full participants in all aspects of life and are guaranteed that right. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 provides anyone with a disability equal access to any program or service or activity that receives federal funds. The Americans with Disabilities Act extended the accessibility provisions to private entities that serve the public.

Getting to Know the Disabilities Community

The word "accessibility" is most often associated with wheelchair use, but accessibility actually involves the needs of people who have visual, cognitive or hearing disabilities as well as those with activity, manual or mobility impairments. A good definition of accessible is "easy to approach, enter, operate, participate in, and/or use safely and with dignity by a person with a disability (i.e., site, facility, work environment, service or program)."

A few examples of accommodations could include appropriate signage, a TDD or TTY (Telecommunication Device for the Deaf or Teletypewriter), qualified interpreters, print materials in alternate formats such as large print or Braille, audio description, or architectural considerations such as ramps or accessible parking spaces.

People with disabilities are people first. Focus on the person, not something that limits him or her and mention a person's disability only if it is relevant to the issue. Words are powerful so brush up on disability etiquette. For example, say or write "person with a disability" rather than disabled person; speak directly to the person with the disability, not to a companion; and, if you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted, then listen to or ask for any instructions the person may want to give.

Know where accessible restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones are located. If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives (e.g., the private/employee restroom, a glass of water, your desk phone).

Because art is an infinite and unconditional field, people with disabilities are free to express themselves without physical, social or attitudinal barriers. When we see art as the universal language that has the ability to unite all people, we can understand the importance it has in the lives of people with disabilities. It is for this reason that we seek accessibility.

Accessibility in the Arts

Although accessibility issues can seem overwhelming, they are essential. Just consider the statistics. Nationally, 54 million Americans (about 20 percent of the population) have a disability. One out of five Oklahomans, or approximately 650,000 persons, have some type of disability. The disabled community is the largest and fastest growing minority!

So, where do you begin? Consider the following goals:

1. Study materials and the law as to how it applies to employees, visitors and audiences with disabilities.
2. Adopt a policy stating your organization's commitment to accessibility.
3. Designate an accessibility coordinator to direct compliance. Consider creating an advisory committee of persons with and without disabilities, of different ages, and of different constituencies you serve or want to serve. Ask for input to better serve them and make programs more usable.
4. Survey/evaluate facilities, programs, services, and Web sites as to accessibility and usability.
5. Develop an access plan that addresses program accessibility, effective communication, barrier removal, etc. Include accessibility in policies, procedures and include "disabled" in your definition of diversity.
6. Solicit services and funding to implement the necessary changes.
7. Provide ongoing training for your staff, board and volunteers.
8. Implement the plan.
9. Advertise how your organization's programs and services are accessible.
10. Review your efforts on an ongoing basis.

Following are resources to achieve these goals. Remember, these goals are just a guide and are not intended to be a determination of your legal rights and responsibilities under Section 504 or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

First, a highly recommended publication, *Design for Accessibility: An Arts Administrator's Guide*, is available from the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies at 202.347.6352 or at www.nasaa-arts.org/new/nasaa/publications/desi.shtml Other great publications such as *The Arts and 504 Handbook*, *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, and *Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design* can be ordered online at http://arts.endow.gov/pub/Access_Publications.html. The full text of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 can be found at www.arts.gov/learn/Civil.html#laws and plain English highlights at <http://nadc.ucla.edu/10steps.htm#1>

Second, when adopting a policy, consider what your organization has to say about its commitment to accessibility. For assistance, see <http://nadc.ucla.edu/10steps.htm#6>

Section 504 Program Evaluation Workbook from the National Endowment for the Arts is very useful. It can be obtained from the Civil Rights Office by calling 202. 682.5454 (Voice) or 202.682.5695 (TDD). For ADA survey assistance, see <http://nadc.ucla.edu/10steps.htm#4>

For assistance in developing a plan, see <http://nadc.ucla.edu/10steps.htm#5> and www.managementhelp.org/legal/emp_la_w/laws/ada.htm

Possible financial assistance:

- 1) Community Development Block Grants may be available. See the web site at <http://arts.endow.gov/partner/Accessibility/CDBGContents.html>
- 2) A disability funding resources site can be found at www.fundsnetsservices.com/disabili.htm
- 3) Also see the back page of this newsletter.

Training is an important consideration and <http://nadc.ucla.edu/10steps.htm#7> will explain and provide resources.

When including people with disabilities, make them aware of how your programs or services are accessible. See <http://nadc.ucla.edu/10steps.htm#9> and for Disability Access Symbols on the Internet that can be downloaded, see <http://az.arts.asu.edu/artscomm/access/symbols/symbols.html>

Finally, remember to make Web sites accessible. A good starting point is the articles found under "At a Glance" at www.webreview.com/2001/04_20/webauthors/index04.shtml. They are excerpts from the book, *Web Accessibility for People with Disabilities* by Michael G. Paciello. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) at www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT offers comprehensive guidelines for making Web content accessible. Other tips for making Web sites accessible can be found at <http://az.arts.asu.edu/artscomm/access/webacesstips.html>, <http://trace.wisc.edu/world/web/> and www.openstudio.org/info-url1595/info-url_show.htm?topics_attr=519

Popular Web site testing products are listed under "Validation and Transformation" at www.webable.com/library/linkspage.html. For other evaluation, repair and transformation tools for Web content accessibility, see www.w3.org/WAI/ER/existingtools.html

Additional sources of information:

The toll-free ADA Information Line from the U.S. Department of Justice is 800.514.0301 (Voice), 800.514.0383 (TDD) or www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm

National Endowment for the Arts, Office for AccessAbility, 202.682.5532 (Voice), 202.682.5496 (TTY) or www.arts.gov/partner/Accessibility/AccessMap.html

The Access Board, 800.872.2253 (V), 800.993.2822(TTY), or www.access-board.gov/indexes/accessindex.htm

Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center – Region 6
713.520.0232 (V/TTY) or 800.949.4232
www.ilru.org/dbtac

Oklahoma Office of Handicapped Concerns, 405.521.3756 (V), 800.522.8224(V), 405.522.6706 (TDD) or www.state.ok.us/~ohc

Oklahoma ABLE Tech, 888.885.5588 (V/TDD) or <http://okabletech.okstate.edu/> (numerous links and resources are given)

User-Friendly Materials and Alternate Formats - resources are found at www.ncddr.org/du/products/ufm/ufm.html

Services and providers for accessible facilities and programs in the arts - <http://nadc.ucla.edu/ACCESSIBLESERVICES&PRODUCTS.htm>

To locate an interpreter:
Sign Language Referral Service, 405.948.3323 (V), 405.948.3303 (TTY), 888.842.9460 (V), 888.842.9953 (TTY)
Tulsa Speech and Hearing Association (TSHA, Inc.), 918.832.8742, 405.239.6730 or 888.311.3523 (all numbers are V/TTY).

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**Possible Oklahoma Funding Sources
for Accessibility Compliance**

(for additional information, refer to The
Foundation Directory from the Foundation
Center, 800.424.9836 or
www.fdncenter.org)

Grace & Franklin Bernsen Foundation
918.584.4711, www.bernsen.org
The Cuesta Foundation, Inc.
918.496.0770
The Helmerich Foundation
918.742.5531
Kirkpatrick Foundation, Inc.
405.840.2882
McCasland Foundation
580.252.5580
The McGee Foundation, Inc.
405.842.6266
The McMahan Foundation
580.355.4622

The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation,
Inc., 580.223.5810, www.noble.org
Oklahoma City Community Foundation,
Inc., 405.235.5603, www.occf.org
Oklahoma Gas and Electric Company
Foundation, Inc.
405.553.3000
Sarkeys Foundation
405.364.3703, www.sarkeys.org/
The Williams Companies Foundation, Inc.
– 918.573.2106, www.williams.com

NEA Grants

Access, Heritage/Preservation —

Access: Access to the arts for all.
Heritage/Preservation: Preservation of our
cultural heritage.

Deadline: August 13
Information: 202.682.5400 or
202.682.5496 (Voice/TT)
www.arts.gov/guide/Orgs02/OrgIndex.html