



# Age-Friendly and Accessible Event Guide





CITY OF CLEVELAND  
Mayor Frank G. Jackson



## Introduction

As part of the Age-Friendly Cleveland Community plan, this Age-Friendly and Accessible Event Planning Guide intends to assist event planners, organizations and facilities to enhance age-friendly features of community events by reducing barriers. This guide seeks to make events inclusive of people of all ages and abilities, by providing recommendations for venue selection and features, marketing and registration, evaluation as well as ideas for training of event staff and volunteers, and includes some of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) guidelines. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public. The purpose of the law is to make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else. Although it is impossible to anticipate and eliminate all barriers that might preclude participants, taking steps to become as inclusive as possible improves quality of life for all.

In 2014, the City of Cleveland became a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and later joined the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities. Participation in these networks should enhance the city's standing as a community for people of all ages and abilities. Cleveland is home to over 70,000 residents age 60 and older, who have a wide range of characteristics, abilities, strengths, and needs. This number is likely to grow over time, as people are living longer and healthier lives.

Cleveland was recently named one of "10 Great Places to Live on Less than \$40K" by *AARP Magazine*. As the article recognized, "With its varied neighborhoods, world-class orchestra, thriving downtown, elite medical centers, miles of biking and hiking trails along Lake Erie and – finally! – championship sports teams (thanks, LeBron), this Rust Belt city is staging a mighty comeback."

For more information about the [Age-Friendly Cleveland Action Plan](#), access the Cleveland Department of Aging website. [www.city.cleveland.oh.us/aging](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us/aging)

# Venue

Before deciding on a particular venue, it is always recommended to complete an on-site visit to check for barriers and determine the level of accessibility. Although not every site can or will be barrier-free, it is important to be aware of challenges, which could allow for additional training of staff and volunteers, and possibly accommodations to reduce the impact of a barrier.

## ***General Features Checklist***

- Are registration desks/tables an accessible height (28 to 34 inches) for those in wheelchairs/ scooters?**
  - If not, consider:
    - ❖ Providing tables/ surfaces that would be accessible
    - ❖ Training those who are accepting registration, to remove the barrier by moving to a space that can more comfortably accommodate the process

- Are there accessible bathrooms in close proximity to event location? How many ADA accessible stalls?**
  - If not, consider:
    - ❖ Providing Portable ADA Toilets

*\*During the community assessment of older adults, we discovered that lack of public restrooms is a major barrier for older adults. Some focus group participants noted that if there is no or limited access to restrooms, they just will not attend an event.*

### **[\\*Resource for ADA accessible stalls](#)**

Website: Bobrick

<http://www.bobrick.com/documents/PlanningGuide.pdf>

- Is there adequate lighting?**
  - If not, consider:
    - ❖ Providing staff/ volunteers with flashlights
    - ❖ Training staff/ volunteers on how to properly guide a person with a visual impairment

### **[\\*Resource for how to guide someone with a visual impairment](#)**

Website: American Federation for the Blind

<http://www.afb.org/info/friends-and-family/etiquette/being-a-sighted-guide/235>

- Are the acoustics noisy? Is there a functioning sound system on premises?**
  - If not, consider:
    - ❖ Providing/ renting assistive listening devices to those who are hard of hearing (HOH)

- ❖ Reserved seating for older adults. Ensure that the reserved area is free from obstruction, close proximity to presentation/performance area, and easy to access for those with mobility devices
- ❖ Renting or purchasing functional sound system

**\* [Resource for assistive devices](#)**

Website: National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders  
<https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/assistive-devices-people-hearing-voice-speech-or-language-disorders>

**Are signs easy to read and navigate? Make sure any directional arrows are clearly posted.**

- If not, consider :
  - ❖ Creating temporary signs with large, clear fonts in vivid colors

**\* [Resource for Fonts, colors](#)**

Website: American Federation for the Blind  
<http://www.afb.org/info/reading-and-writing/making-print-more-readable/35>

**Is there ample seating? If not a seated event, is there seating available?**

- If not, consider:
  - ❖ Reserved seating for older adults. Ensure that the reserved area is free from obstruction, close proximity to presentation/event, and easy to access for those with mobility devices
  - ❖ Setting up additional chairs and/or benches in areas close to restrooms, in areas that are mindful of temperatures/ weather elements
  - ❖ Bringing extra folding or collapsible chairs and wheelchairs and/or encouraging people to bring chairs, if space allows

**Are food and vending areas at a reachable height (28 to 34 inches) by wheelchairs/scooters and in an accessible location?**

- If not, consider:
  - ❖ Training those who are serving participants, to remove the barrier by moving to a space that can more comfortably accommodate the process

**Is venue aware of service animals requirements as part of the ADA?**

- If not, consider:
  - ❖ Discuss with venue management the possibly of patrons with service animals and the federal and state laws that permit them entrance into public facilities/locations
  - ❖ Define a service animal relief location(s) with venue management

- ❖ Train staff/volunteers about the need for service animals and how to handle situations with them

**[\\*Link to ADA FAQ's regarding service animals](#)**

Website: Americans with Disabilities Act

[https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service\\_animal\\_qa.html](https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.html)

**Is the venue/location close to public transit routes? Centrally located? Near senior housing or a Senior Center?**

➤ If not, consider:

- ❖ Relocating the event
- ❖ Working with public transit to provide ways to accommodate
- ❖ Notifying senior centers and senior housing of the event, as far in advance as possible, (2-3 months prior is ideal), in order to allow activities/ recreation staff ample time to plan group travel
- ❖ If interested in receiving a list of senior housing and/or senior centers in Cleveland, contact the Department of Aging at 216-664-2833 or at [aging@city.cleveland.oh.us](mailto:aging@city.cleveland.oh.us)

## ***Interior Features Checklist***

**Is the event entrance accessible for patrons using mobility devices – scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, etc.? Are there handrails to assist those with mobility impairments into the facility? Are there automatic doors? Are the doorways 32 inches wide with the door open 90 degrees? Are elevators functioning? Are the buttons reachable for those in a scooter/ wheelchair?**

➤ If not, consider:

- ❖ An alternate, accessible entrance that is in close proximity to the main entrance
- ❖ Providing staff/ volunteers in the entrance and elevator areas to assist with safe ambulation/ mobility challenges and assistance with stationary doors, etc.
- ❖ The use of door stops

**[\\*Resource for Accessible entrances](#)**

Website: United States Access Board

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/guide-to-the-ada-standards/chapter-4-entrances,-doors,-and-gates>

**Is the room or event space set up to facilitate mobility? Are hallways/ travel routes unobstructed?**

➤ If not, consider:

- ❖ Relocating or rearranging to make mobility more efficient and safe
- ❖ Removing rugs and other tripping and slipping hazards
- ❖ Inspecting areas with electric cords and wires - are they secured and covered?

*\*Note that using garbage cans to prop open doors can pose mobility problems/ barriers.*

## ***Exterior Features Checklist***

### **Is there designated ADA parking that is in close proximity to the entrance of event?**

- If not, consider:
  - ❖ Converting regular parking spots to ADA
  - ❖ Creating ADA designated parking
  - ❖ Providing accessible shuttle service from parking to entrance. This could include golf cart transport, busses, vans and/or coordinating with public transit/ paratransit.
  - ❖ Senior designated parking area that is in close proximity to entrance. Is providing parking passes or registration for senior specific parking zone feasible, realistic, and helpful for planning? When registering, ask older adults if they need ADA parking and track to get a rough estimate of spaces needed.

#### **\*Resource for ADA Parking**

Website: United States Access Board

<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/guide-to-the-ada-standards/chapter-5-parking>

### **Is the path of travel from parking to the event accessible and safe? Is the terrain even?**

#### **Can individuals using mobility devices travel with ease?**

- If not, consider:
  - ❖ Relocating parking
  - ❖ Providing accessible shuttle service from parking to entrance. This could include golf cart transport, busses, and/or coordinating with public transit/ paratransit
  - ❖ Providing volunteers to assist as mobility and ambulation guides, including crossing guard assistance at road intersections
  - ❖ Arrange for exterior lighting fixtures to provide additional lighting
  - ❖ Ensure snow and ice removal occurs prior and during the event

### **Will there be designated areas that address temperature concerns/needs?**

- If not, consider:
  - ❖ In warmer temperatures ( 70 degrees and higher): Provide shaded/ tent area that includes misters, fans, and water to provide relief from temperature
  - ❖ In colder temperatures (50 degrees and lower): Provide patio/outdoor heaters, tent or interior space to provide relief from temperature

# Marketing/ Registration

Positive images of older adults and people with disabilities are often left out of marketing materials. Demonstrate that your event is inclusive and multigenerational by using diverse images in a positive and meaningful way.

## ***Creating age-friendly Marketing Materials, i.e. posters, flyers, advertisements***

- Use images of older adults involved at your event or similar event in documents**

For ideas about positive portrayals on aging in your marketing, [click here](#).

Website: International Council on Active Aging

<http://www.changingthewayweage.com/media-marketers.htm>

- Use clear and concise language specifically highlighting the location, time, and cost. Specify if there are additional fees beyond admission**

- Make clear the event is multi-generational or age-friendly**

- Designate specific contact for ADA and logistics questions in marketing materials**

- Use large fonts**

- Consider translating marketing materials into Spanish or other languages**

- Specify various methods of registration on marketing materials.** Consider call in registration for those who do not have access to, or do not utilize, the internet

- Distribute hard copy flyers to senior living locations and senior centers**

*\*Remember not all populations utilize social media*

- Consider advertising in the newspaper, radio, and on local news, as older adults utilize these sources more than the internet**

- Consider marketing to senior and caregiver groups**

- Develop and disseminate a hard copy map of event.** Include contact number if needing assistance, first aid/ EMS location, how to identify staff or volunteers, bathroom locations, temperature controlled areas, and relief locations for service animals. Remember to use large font, vivid colors, and simple map

## **Registration/ Cost**

According to the Age-Friendly Cleveland Assessment data, some older adults desire increased social participation in their community but face obstacles to social participation. Efforts to reduce barriers to participation would be beneficial; for example, city residents shared that cost presented a challenge. Many were interested in the possibility of identifying mechanisms for increasing the affordability of local activities for older residents. About 22 percent of residents over age 60 in Cleveland live in poverty, and an additional 17 percent are living near poverty (between 100 and 150 percent of the poverty threshold).

- Provide multiple registration methods (online, phone, email, in person)**
  
- Consider providing a free or discounted admission to older adults. Some ideas:**
  - If event is multiple days, offer a senior day – where admission is free or reduced
  - Offer a time frame where the admission is free or reduced for seniors
    - ❖ Example: Seniors are free from 10a-12p
    - ❖ Mornings and early afternoons are best for older adults, as transportation is often easier to obtain during that time frame and many do not like to travel at night.
  
  - Provide a senior group discount
  - This option could encourage senior groups to attend and/or individuals who would not attend by themselves.
  - To offset the cost of free or reduced admissions, look for a local company or agency to sponsor older adults

## **Training for Staff/ Volunteers**

Many Cleveland older adults in the focus groups reported feeling they are not respected in the community, particularly by young people. Being proactive by training staff and volunteers to be sensitive to the needs of all populations can go a long way with increasing respect and social inclusion for all.

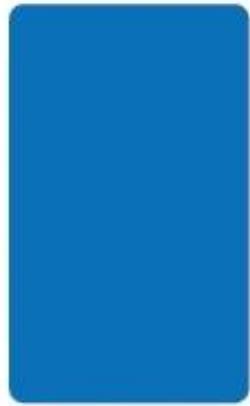
- Provide age sensitivity training that covers older adult topics such as:**
  - Respectful communication tones/methods
  - Common health changes in older adults including vision loss and mobility issues
  - Use of assistive devices including canes, walkers, wheelchairs
  - Types of disabilities and disability etiquette including how to properly guide someone with visual impairment and communicating with someone who is hard of hearing
  - Service Animals
  - Address specific areas within venue/event that could pose an accessibility/mobility challenge, and/or older adult concern and how staff/ volunteers can assist

- ❖ Some examples: Transportation from parking, crossing street, ambulation/ mobility assistance, food service, confusing locations, bathroom matrons, survey assistance – see evaluation section
  - Contact the Cleveland Department of Aging at 216-664-2833 or at [aging@city.cleveland.oh.us](mailto:aging@city.cleveland.oh.us) for ideas and connections to other organizations that might be able to assist with training.
- Invite older adults to venue prior to event to address any accessibility or safety concerns**
  - Designate a Staff Member or Lead Volunteer as point of contact for accessibility questions**
  - Develop an emergency evacuation plan that specifically assigns staff and volunteers to assist older adults and people with disabilities**
  - Provide First Aid Tent with specific supplies helpful for seniors, such as incontinence supplies, ear plugs, water, seating, etc.**
  - Provide vendor expectations for older adults and individuals with disabilities, which include:**
    - Providing informational materials in larger fonts
    - Developing alternative methods to disseminate their information such as: staff reading the information, offering to email information, or provide an audio recording on site to listen to the available information

## **Evaluation/ Survey**

- Develop a survey that addresses accessibility, senior appeal, affordability, logistics, etc.**
- Provide a station for surveys – Have volunteers reach out to older adults at event, or as they are leaving and assist with completion as needed. Prepare those collecting the information to offer the survey verbally. This might yield more responses.**
- Reach out to senior groups that attended for feedback**

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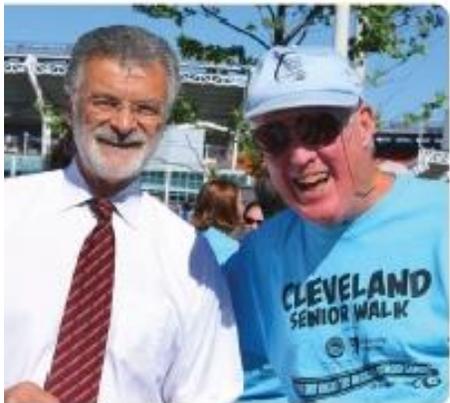
[city.cleveland.oh.us/agefriendlycycle](http://city.cleveland.oh.us/agefriendlycycle)



[twitter.com/ClevelandAging](https://twitter.com/ClevelandAging)



[facebook.com/clevelanddepartmentofaging](https://facebook.com/clevelanddepartmentofaging)



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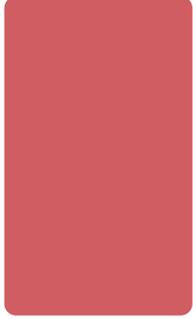
# Checklist for Planning **Age-Friendly** and Accessible Events



 [city.cleveland.oh.us/agefriendlycle](http://city.cleveland.oh.us/agefriendlycle)  
 [twitter.com/ClevelandAging](https://twitter.com/ClevelandAging)  
 [facebook.com/clevelanddepartmentofaging](https://facebook.com/clevelanddepartmentofaging)



  
**CITY OF CLEVELAND**  
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 Department of Aging  
 75 Erieview Plaza  
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 216-664-2833







**The City of Cleveland is a proud member of the Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities and the AARP Network of Age-Friendly Communities.**

An essential component of Mayor Frank G. Jackson's vision for an age-friendly city is inclusivity and the ability for all ages to participate in community activities.

Be a part of making Cleveland age-friendly by considering all the needs of your audience when planning your community event. Being mindful of the following concerns can help make all residents feel welcome and encouraged to attend community events.

**☑ How accessible is your venue and event?**

Would someone using a cane, walker, or wheelchair be able to get around easily? Are there any reasonable modifications to make it easier to move around our venue?

*Smooth, even terrain without steps (or with ramps and/or elevators) and automatic doors are things to consider.*

**☑ Is there ample seating?**

Are chairs and/or benches available for people to rest? Is there a wheelchair and walker seating area?

*Adding seating, or a reserved seating area, would make the event more comfortable and safe.*

**☑ Are there accessible bathrooms in close proximity to event location?**

*Older adults feel that lack of access to public restrooms at events is one of the biggest barriers to participation.*

**☑ Is there accessible parking in close proximity to event location?**

*Providing close accessible parking, or reserved parking, reduces anxiety for people with mobility limitations.*



**☑ Have you removed barriers and trip hazards?**

Are there trash cans or displays or other items blocking travel paths and aisles? Are there cords or other trip hazards that can be removed?

*Maneuvering around barriers is difficult, and people are more susceptible to tripping.*

**☑ If there is an admission fee, can you provide a discount or a time during the event when it is free?**

*Many older adults and people with disabilities are on a fixed income. Over 22% of older Clevelanders live in poverty, while another 17% are living near poverty.*

**☑ Do your marketing materials speak to groups of all ages and abilities?**

Do they include images of older adults and people with disabilities participating? Do they mention that it is a multigenerational event?

*Older adults benefit from clear concise language and the use of larger, easy to read fonts, and darker colored wording.*

**☑ Can you incorporate sensitivity training for your staff, volunteers, and vendors to provide them with a better understanding and awareness of common challenges of older adults and people with disabilities?**

*Education about how to communicate with older adults and persons with disabilities, as well as providing awareness about specific accommodations at the event, will provide a more inclusive and successful experience.*

Thank you for making your event more age-friendly for Clevelanders. Simple changes can make your activity inclusive and help improve the quality of life for all.

For more information on how to make your event more age-friendly, download the *Age-Friendly Planning Guide* [www.city.cleveland.oh.us/aging](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us/aging) or call the *Department of Aging* at 216-664-2833.