

Mobility and Accessibility Discussion Handout

Introduction

Although many public buildings now meet the requirements for accessibility defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), many older buildings like theaters may not yet meet those requirements. The list below is intended to help those involved in facilities management for their choruses determine the accessibility of a venue for rehearsal or performance.

All leadership designees should familiarize themselves with barriers to access due to mobility. In addition, all ushers and other volunteers who work with the public should be trained to discuss and assist with mobility issues. The need for assistance is always determined by the individual, never by the usher.

Instructions

For each of the scenarios below:

- ✓ Identify the issue/s surrounding equity, access and belonging present in this scenario.
- ✓ Reflect on how this situation may, or may not, be present in your own chorus.
- ✓ Brainstorm a range of possible responses to the scenario. In your chorus, whose responsibility is it to speak up and challenge, or support, the issue presented?
- ✓ Record your conversations and responses for reporting back to the larger group.

Scenarios for Discussion

1. You are a chorus director. For the first time, a wheelchair user auditions for the chorus. You look over the rehearsal space and see wheelchair accessible signage, that there is an elevator, etc. so you feel secure telling the new member, "Our rehearsal space is accessible." After the first rehearsal, however, the new member approaches you and says, "The bathroom has a grab bar, but the stall door opens inward. I can't get my chair in and also close the door, leaving me having to pee with the stall door open." This conversation leaves you feeling insecure that you have the capacity to assess accessibility.
2. Your chorus is performing a series of concerts at out-of-town venues. One venue is a state-of-the-art facility, completely ADA compliant for audience members. At tech rehearsal, a member who uses a walker finds that the chorus entrance to the stage is up a short flight of stairs. It takes some time to find an accessible stage entrance for them; the tech director of the facility assures this entrance will also be unlocked come time to enter for the concert. It isn't, and your chorus member nearly misses the concert trying to get into the stage area.

Action Steps

What are some concrete steps your chorus could undertake to improve accessibility at concerts and around rehearsal spaces?

Mobility Accessibility Checklist

Public Transit

- » Is the public transit station wheelchair accessible?
- » Is there an accessible route to the building from the stop?

Building Entrances

- » Is there an accessible front entrance?
- » If there are stairs at the main entrance, is there also a ramp or lift present?
- » Do inaccessible entrances provide signage to the accessible entrance?
- » Is the international symbol of accessibility provided at the accessible entrance?
- » Is the accessible entrance kept unlocked?
- » Is the entrance door at least 32 inches wide?
- » Does the accessible entrance provide direct access to the main floor, lobby, or elevator?

Entrance Door Handles

- » Is there 18 inches of clear wall space on the pull side of the door, next to handle?
- » Can door handle be operated with one hand without grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist?
- » Is it door handle no higher than 48 inches?

Mats and Ramps

- » Are door mats less than 1 inch high and secured to the floor at all edges?
- » Do ramps longer than 6 feet have handrails on both sides?
- » Are the handrails sturdy and between 34 and 38 inches high?
- » Is the width between handrails a minimum of 36 inches?
- » Is the ramp firm, stable and non-slip and designed to prevent water buildup on the surface?
- » If the ramp changes direction, is there a 5 foot by 5 foot landing provided?
- » Is there a level landing located at the top and bottom of the ramp?

Outdoor Infrastructure

- » Is there an accessible route between accessible buildings?
- » Are grates designed to allow wheelchair access?

Indoor Infrastructure

- » Are all public spaces on an accessible path of travel?
- » Is there a 5-foot circle or a T-shaped space for a person using a wheelchair to reverse direction?
- » Are all aisles and pathways to all goods and services at least 36 inches wide?
- » Is carpeting low-pile, tightly woven, and securely attached along edges?
- » Are elevator call buttons in the hallway no higher than 42 inches?
- » Can the wheelchair lift be used without assistance?
- » Are drinking fountain spouts no higher than 36 inches?
- » Do drinking fountains have clear knee space of at least 27 inches?

Other Mobility Accessibility Concerns

- » Are there chairs designated and labeled for individuals who use assistance when walking (crutches, canes)?
- » Are ushers correctly trained to ask those with disabilities if they need assistance? [Assistance is determined by the individual, not by the usher].