

ENSURING ACCESSIBILITY

**ADA COMPLIANCE IN PRIVATE HIGHER
EDUCATION RECREATION FACILITIES**

BY ED BAUER



Private higher education institutions pride themselves on providing an enriching and inclusive environment for students. A crucial aspect of this inclusivity is ensuring that recreation facilities are accessible to individuals of all abilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets the standards for accessibility in various public spaces, including recreation facilities at private institutions. In this article, we will delve into the key considerations and regulations surrounding ADA compliance in private higher education recreation facilities and provide valuable resources for recreation facility directors.

Understanding ADA and Its Implications

The Americans with Disabilities Act, enacted in 1990, is a landmark piece of legislation designed to eliminate discrimination against individuals with disabilities. Title III of the ADA focuses on public accommodations, encompassing spaces like hotels, restaurants, and, significantly for educational institutions, recreational facilities.

Key ADA Requirements for Private Higher Education Recreation Facilities

- 1. Accessible Design and Construction:** ADA mandates that recreation facilities must be designed and constructed to be accessible to individuals with disabilities. This includes features such as ramps, elevators, and accessible entrances to ensure that all areas of the facility are reachable and usable by everyone.
- 2. Equipment and Features Accessibility:** All equipment and features within recreation facilities must be designed with accessibility in mind. This involves providing accessible routes to exercise equipment, ensuring the availability of assistive devices, and implementing features like pool lifts for swimming facilities.
- 3. Program Accessibility:** ADA requires that programs and services offered in recreation facilities are

accessible to individuals with disabilities. This may involve providing alternative formats for instructional materials, ensuring effective communication methods, and making reasonable modifications to policies and practices to accommodate everyone.

4. Communication Accessibility:

Information about recreation programs and services must be communicated effectively to all individuals, regardless of their abilities. Recreation facility directors need to ensure that their communication methods, including websites and printed materials, are accessible to individuals with visual or auditory impairments.

5. Training and Awareness:

It is essential for staff members to be trained on ADA requirements. Recreation facility directors should conduct regular awareness campaigns to ensure that staff understands the importance of inclusivity, knows how to assist individuals with disabilities, and is aware of emergency procedures that consider all patrons.

Resources for Recreation Facility Directors

For recreation facility directors, staying informed about ADA regulations is crucial. Here are some key resources:

- ADA Standards for Accessible Design (2010)
- ADA Title III Regulations

- Department of Justice (DOJ) ADA Guide for Small Businesses
- U.S. Access Board—Recreation Facilities

These resources provide detailed information about ADA standards, ensuring that recreation facility directors have the necessary tools to create and maintain accessible environments on their campuses. It's not just a legal requirement; it is a commitment to creating an inclusive campus environment. Recreation facility directors play a pivotal role in achieving this goal by implementing accessible design, ensuring program accessibility, and fostering awareness among staff. By adhering to ADA standards, private higher education institutions can fulfill their mission of providing equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, in both academic and recreational pursuits. Continuous education and vigilance around ADA regulations will contribute to the ongoing success of creating universally accessible recreation facilities.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Ed Bauer has been in publishing for over twenty years. In his early career years, he worked on the staff at Mount Union College and for the last twelve years as publisher and managing partner at Flaherty Media has been privileged to tour many private higher education campuses and talk with numerous staff members who manage these multiple building facilities. He can be reached at ed@pupnmag.com.