



# For Welcoming People with Physical Disabilities (wheelchair users)

## <<Foreword to Issuance of this Manual>>

With the advent of an aging society, **the creation of an environment that enables all people**, including seniors and people with disabilities – whose market segments are projected to grow in the future – **to enjoy traveling safely, securely and comfortably** is an important point in expanding the tourism industry in Okinawa. This manual was prepared to offer fundamentals for welcoming seniors and people with disabilities, in particular. We hope that you will use this manual when attending to seniors and people with disabilities in particular, which will **promote the creation of an environment in which all people can enjoy traveling with peace of mind.**

## 1. Four “Barriers”

It is said that **four “barriers”** exist in the lives of seniors or people with disabilities when they go out, travel, or engage in social activities. When considering how to welcome them, it is necessary to understand the presence of these “barriers” and remove obstacles.

- Physical barriers:** Barriers caused physically in roads, buildings, homes, stations, etc.
- Cultural and Information Barriers:** Barriers caused by the failure to provide information essential for daily life and transportation.
- Institutional Barriers:** Barriers caused mainly by institutional restraints when people receive education, find employment, and lead self-reliant lives in their community.
- Barriers in Consciousness:** Barriers caused by discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities, or misunderstanding due to lack of understanding of them.

## 2. Attitude Toward and Key Points to Attending to Guests

- Respect each person’s dignity.**  
Respecting the dignity of seniors and people with disabilities is the basis of attending to them. They do not need any special treatment. You should attend to them in the same way as you do with other people. Instead of talking to the companion or caregiver, communicate with seniors or people with disabilities directly.
- Understand correctly and respond to necessary assistance.**  
Each person has different levels of mental and physical functions and disability, and need different support. Avoid being judgmental but ask them to fully understand what kind of support they need. Avoid forcing support on them, but it is important to talk to proactively and communicate with them, to understand their needs. Make sure to grasp what they need and respond appropriately.
- Leave what they can do by themselves to them and avoid doing things you may not be capable of.**  
Even if people are old or have disabilities, they may not need all kinds of support. Respect their autonomous actions and watch over them when they do not need support. If you do not think that you can handle the situation on your own, avoid taking chances and ask people around you for cooperation.
- Provide information on facilities and equipment.**  
People know the best the degree of their physical and mental conditions and disability, as well as necessary support. Whereas it is important to understand and respond to needs, it is also important to provide detailed information so that seniors and people with disabilities can make their own decisions.

If you do not know what to do when attending to people, talk to them by using two “magic words.”  
 \*When you first meet: **“Is there something I can help you with?”**  
 \* When you do not know what to do when attending them: **“How do you usually handle this?”**

## 3. Characteristics of People with Physical Disabilities (Wheelchair Users)

### [Characteristics of disabilities]

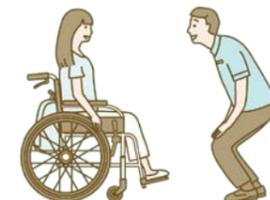
- ◆ Physical disability is a physical condition that affects the mobility of a person’s limbs due to injury or disease.
- ◆ Walking methods vary according to the conditions of the limbs (both hands and feet) and the core of the body (inner muscles).  
Example) People using electric wheelchairs, self-propelled wheelchairs, canes and braces, and people with artificial legs and hands, etc.
- ◆ Wheelchairs and walking aids come in various types and sizes depending on the physical condition. Some people use such devices at all times, while others use them only when they go out.
- ◆ Some people with physical disabilities or wheelchair users go out with a service dog.

### [Inconveniences in daily life]

- ◆ People with physical disabilities have difficulty using steps, stairs and on steep slopes.
- ◆ Some people with physical disabilities find it hard to walk a long distance or stand for a long time.  
\* Using a wheelchair requires more space than walking.  
(It is important to check the width of aisles, etc., in the facility and prepare to answer such inquiries.)
- ◆ People with upper limb disabilities have difficulty in opening and closing manual doors or operating things with their hands.
- ◆ Wheelchair users sometimes have difficulty in finding a wheelchair-accessible toilet when they go out.
- ◆ Some people find it difficult to use an umbrella on a rainy day.
- ◆ Some people have difficulty in adjusting their body temperatures according to the temperatures of places that they are in.
- ◆ Some people have difficulty in speaking, and it is hard to communicate with them.

### [ABC of communication]

- ◆ **Make eye contact and communicate.**  
Wheelchair users have a low eye level.  
It is important to listen to them while maintaining eye contact for communication.
- ◆ **Speak to them and ask whether they need assistance.**  
Even if they have a companion or care-giver, **speak to them directly and confirm what they need.**



Not all people with disabilities have the same difficulties. Depending on physical conditions, some people can handle matters by themselves, such as stepping over small steps, opening and closing doors, or transferring to and from a wheelchair. **Ask people with disabilities what support they need.**

### [A variety of wheelchair types (one example)]

There are many different types of wheelchairs. Some examples are as below.

#### Manual wheelchair (pushed by a helper)



A wheelchair used by seniors or injured people and pushed by a helper from behind.

#### Manual wheelchair (driven by the user)



A wheelchair that users drive themselves with their arms. Some are lighter than those pushed by a helper.

#### Simple electric wheelchair



An electric wheelchair with a lightweight motor, etc. Operated by a joystick and can be switched between electric and manual operation

#### Electric wheelchair



Designed to meet user’s conditions, such as the degree of disability and their health condition. There are various shapes and operating methods.

#### Reclining wheelchair



The angle of the seat and the back can be changed to resting and other positions. Some electric wheelchairs have a function to change sitting positions.

Wheelchairs are often customized to meet a user’s physical conditions, and **the width and other specifications vary.**  
 Also, in places where wheelchairs are used, **the space needs to be wide enough to allow maneuvering them** in addition to the width of wheelchairs.

# 4. Points and Responses when Attending to Guests

- ① Learn and inform people of the current status of the facility**
- ◆ Check detailed **information for the facility, such as the status of routes and whether there are steps or bumps** to ensure the safe passage of wheelchairs.
  - ◆ When providing information, offer as much detailed information as possible (**visual information that enables people to confirm and make decisions**, such as photos and illustrations) to ensure people themselves can decide whether they can use the facility.
  - ◆ When providing information in the form of pamphlets, etc., **pay attention to the size of letters and easy-to-understand expressions.**
  - ◆ If there are barrier-free related equipment and devices in the facility, also provide information on the **type and number of the devices and how to borrow them.**

- [Information to check]**  
**(Information that people with physical disabilities often inquire about)**
- Entrances, passages, etc.: The width of entrances, presence of steps, the opening and closing of doors and whether doors can be locked, and the like.
  - Toilets, bathrooms, etc.: The layout and size of toilet seats and bathtubs, presence of steps, availability and positions of handrails, etc.
  - Bed: The layout of guestrooms (accessibility), the height and mobility of the bed, etc.  
 \* Understanding information in advance that guests want to know, such as the width of the door of guestrooms and of passages and the height of beds (availability, size, etc., of equipment) can lead to smooth responses.

- ② Learn and inform people of the current status of facilities in the vicinity**
- ◆ Check detailed information on barriers and barrier-free status of various facilities in the vicinity related to regional tourism, such as tourist attractions, accommodations, commercial buildings, public services and other places, and **offer information on the barrier-free status in the region.**
  - ◆ It is helpful when attending to guests if you confirm as much information as possible about services that are available in facilities in the neighborhood, such as the dispatch of care-givers and helpers.
  - ◆ It is important to **check information on access to the accommodation** when arriving from railway stations or airports.
  - ◆ Regarding information on access and traffic, provide detailed information, such as the barrier-free status in stations and airports, distance and travel times from stations and airports, in addition to offering a map. **(Also, check information distributed by transportation companies.)**

- ③ Considerations in communication**
- ◆ Communicate with eye contact. **Proactively talk to people with physical disabilities** even when they are accompanied by a companion.
  - ◆ **Firstly, explain the barrier-free situation**, such as services and routes in the facility to guests who use the facility.
  - ◆ Some people are not good at taking in lots of information in a short period of time, so avoid using technical terms, jargon or abbreviations and **lay out information slowly, clearly and concisely in a way to ensure it can be understood.**
  - ◆ It may be difficult to convey information sufficiently, so you should not only convey important information verbally but also **make and hand out memos of it.**
  - ◆ While giving due consideration to privacy to the extent necessary, **confirm whether guests have necessary information, and accurately understand and respond to the situation. Do not become complacent** that guests have understood information without confirming with them.



- ④ Considerations in Attending to Guests**
- ◆ When assisting and **pushing people in a wheelchair, be sure to inform them of what you are going to do next.**  
 When sitting on a wheelchair, the speed of the wheelchair feels faster than the pusher thinks. **Push the wheelchair while asking the user if this speed is too fast.**
  - ◆ **Make sure the user's feet are on the ground** when helping them in or out of the wheelchair.  
 When starting to push a wheelchair, **make sure that the sitter's feet are on the footrests.**
  - ◆ When guiding people to a seat, proactively talk to them and offer to them **a seat that is as easy to use as possible** after asking them or their companion about their preference. Do they want to stay in a wheelchair?  
 Or, do they want to transfer to a seat? If they want to stay on the wheelchair, **guide them to a table that allows their knees to be placed underneath the table.**
  - ◆ When getting on and off the elevator, move forward or backward depending on the situation (after confirming with the user).



- ⑤ Considerations in guestrooms**
- ◆ To ensure wheelchair users can move around smoothly, ask them if they have any requests, then **change the arrangement of furniture**, if requested.
  - ◆ Change the arrangement of furniture and ensure that there is space enough for a wheelchair to move around and make turns.
  - ◆ **Inform guests of the types and positions of facilities and equipment in guestrooms when guiding them and make sure they can use them on their own.**

- [Examples of equipment and facilities that you need to confirm if guests can use on their own]**
- Opening and closing of closets and the position and height of clothing racks
  - The positions of remote controls and internal phones
  - How to adjust the room temperature
  - The position and height of the shower
  - The height of the sink
  - The place to put towels
  - Accessibility of faucets (e.g. Can guests can reach them?)
  - Access to the toilet
  - Can guests use the toilet on their own?



- ⑥ Considerations in case of emergency**
- ◆ **Confirm with guests whether they need assistance in evacuation, how to assist, how to contact them, etc., beforehand** in case of an earthquake or fire.
  - ◆ Unless guests give a room preference, **choose guestrooms that enable them to exit easily in case of emergency.**
  - ◆ In the event of an emergency, such as an earthquake or a fire, it can be assumed that there will be delays for seniors and people with disabilities in obtaining information or evacuating. Therefore, it is important to **make assumptions, preparations and have mental preparedness in advance.**
  - ◆ Check how to assist seniors and people with disabilities in their stay and the division of roles among staff during an evacuation drill and similar occasions. It is important to **consider how deal with emergencies on a daily basis.**

- ⑦ Prepare useful tools (For people with physical disabilities)**
- ◆ Prepare necessary equipment to the extent possible for accommodation, bathing, and the like.  
 If facilities are available, inform guests in advance.

- [Examples of barrier-free related fixtures]**
- Shower chair
  - Shower wheelchair
  - Anti-slip mat
  - Sponge mat for bathing
  - Simple retro-fit handrail
  - Extension cord, etc.



▲ Shower wheelchair

- ⑧ Help desk**
- ◆ If you have any questions or problems with attending to seniors or people with disabilities, read this manual. If you are still not sure of what to do, **contact the "Tourist Information Center for People with Disabilities and Seniors."**
  - ◆ The Tourist Information Center for People with Disabilities and Seniors is a help desk, located in the Naha Airport, Kokusai Street, and Naha Bus Terminal, to support seniors and people with disabilities. The center offers information on barrier-free facilities in Okinawa, such as where wheelchair-accessible facilities are located, to help ease the anxiety of travelers before and during travel.

- [Tourist Information Center for People with Disabilities and Seniors]**
- Tel: 098-858-7760
  - Naha Airport: Arrival lobby on the 1st floor of Naha Airport Domestic Passenger Terminal, 150 Kagamizu, Naha City, Okinawa 901 0142

<<References>>

- Manual for Welcoming Seniors and People with Disabilities**  
 Issued by: Japan Tourism Agency, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (March 2018)  
 Refer to: [https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/news06\\_000352.html](https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/news06_000352.html)
- Barrier-Free Tourism Manual by Industry --Toward Becoming a Fun-Filled and Amicable Tourist Destination for Everyone--**  
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