

Universally Accessible Playgrounds  
Design Criteria 2007



# Beyond Accessible Playgrounds Design Criteria 2007

*A universally accessible playground is a play environment specifically created to be accessible to all children including those with disabilities. It features more physically challenging routes of travel and/or activities beside ramp-accessible routes enabling children of all abilities to play side-by-side.*



## PLAY TYPES INCORPORATED

**PARALLEL PLAY:** Two or more similar play activities in close proximity; at least one is wheelchair accessible. *(example: both Accessible Stationary Cyclers and standing Stationary Cyclers side by side)*



**UPPER BODY:** Play components that directly involve the use of upper body muscles to navigate or play on the equipment. *(example: Overhead Ladders, Triple Ring Fling™ and Ring Pull)*



**BALANCE:** Play components or a group of components functionally linked to allow users to develop equilibrium, steadiness, and poise. *(example: Curved Balance Beam and Pod Climbers™)*



**GATHERING AREAS:** An uninterrupted wheelchair-accessible play space where children can gather for social interaction or engage in imaginary play. *(example: Playstructure Seats below decks, Sway Fun® glider)*

**COMPLEX ALTERNATE ROUTE:** Components or a group of play components that challenge the user to change the type of movement used to navigate. *(example: balance and lateral movements combined along the same route of travel)*

## DESIGN PARAMETERS

- Typically features a playstructure for children ages 5 to 12, that is at least 50 percent ramp-accessible, with the remaining components accessible by transfer.
- Each wheelchair-accessible platform should have at least one direct alternate route to the next wheelchair-accessible platform, which is parallel to the ramp.
- On-deck transfers are used before every slide, and include a 60" turning space and a 30" x 48" parking space for wheelchairs.
- Transfer steps are provided to allow users to return to their original transfer point, and are provided in close proximity to the play component exit.
- Shade is recommended over the playstructure, especially in those areas where slides are used.
- Three or more activities are recommended for each wheelchair-accessible platform. This could include an accessible reach panel, an alternate route of travel, and an activity panel or play event.
- To increase the amount of toe space for a frontal approach to the reach panel, balcony decks are recommended.
- If horizontal ladders are used, at least one is recommended be adjusted to a maximum height of 54" above the finished surfacing for wheelchair users.
- If five or more wheelchair-accessible platforms are used, it is recommended that a second ramp entrance be provided.
- Site furnishings like benches, tables and game tables should be strategically located around the play area for supervision and to promote intergenerational socialization.
- If parking, restrooms, drinking fountains, etc. are in the area, they should be in close proximity to the park entrance and that the accessible walkways to the play equipment are short and direct.
- Incorporate natural elements into the design with flowers, trees, shrubs or even edible plants.

**SENSORY:** Play events that offer visual, tactile, experiential or audio inputs. *(example: Sand Play, Braille and Clock Panel, Chimes Panel)*



**MANIPULATIVE PLAY:** Play components that allow users to operate, use, or handle something. *(example: Gear Panels, Sand and Water Play)*



**INTERACTIVE PLAY:** Play components that allow users of varying abilities to play together. *(example: Talk Tubes, locating a Periscope Reach Panel next to an alternate route)*



**LATERAL:** Components or a group of components that offer an opportunity for sideways motion to move to the intended destination. *(example: Fish Net Climber, Disc Challenge, Spider Web Climber)*

## SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

- All deck openings on wheelchair-accessible platforms are reduced to either 15" or 24" if it is part of the accessible route to prevent inadvertent falls.
- Kick plates are added between all deck openings that are wheelchair accessible to help prevent wheels from rolling under.
- When there is a change in elevation between adjacent decks, consider alternating deck colors to assist users with visual impairments.
- A separate play area is recommended for users under age 5. This is only required to be accessible by transfer. (Supervision of this age group and assistance with play is anticipated). Ramp accessibility is still encouraged. Enclosing this play area with a fence, hedge, or wall is recommended to prevent the young users from wandering into such dangers as open water or nearby traffic.
- Signage that indicates the age appropriateness of the equipment in each play area is recommended.

## COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

**PLAYGROUND SAFETY COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS:** All universally accessible playgrounds should comply with the current version of the ASTM F 1487 *"Standard Consumer Safety Performance Specification for Playground Equipment for Public Use."*

**ADAAG COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS:** All universally accessible playgrounds should conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines. This includes pathways, surrounding areas, utilities, parking, and the playground equipment.

**STATE AND LOCAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS:** All universally accessible playgrounds should comply with all state and local regulations/codes or requirements for playground areas.

**SAFETY INSPECTION:** A safety inspection should be performed by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) after the installation has been completed. Any non-conforming issues should be corrected before the play area is opened.

**SURFACING:** Unitary accessible safety surfacing material is recommended under and around all play equipment. All safety surfacing within the use zones of the play equipment should be in compliance with ASTM F 1951 *"Standard Specification for Determination of Accessibility of Surface Systems Under and around Playground Equipment"* and ASTM F1292 *"Standard Specification for Impact Attenuation of Surface Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment"*

