Chapter Six
ADA & Accessibility
ADA AND DISABILITY OVERVIEW

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) took effect January 26, 1992 and is aimed at protecting the rights of people with disabilities. The passage of ADA guarantees access to recreation and play settings as a civil right for all Americans.

According to the 2017 Disability Statistics Annual Report by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, about 13% of the population has a disability. The report defines a person as having a disability if they are deaf or have serious hearing deficiency; blind or have serious sight deficiency with glasses; difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition; difficulty walking or climbing stairs; difficulty dressing or bathing; or difficulty doing errands alone due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition. Other report findings include:

• The percentage of those with a disability in the U.S. civilian population slowly increased from 11.9% in 2010 to 12.8% in 2016.
• Disability increases sharply with age. For ages 5-17, 5.6% had a disability; for ages 18-64, the rate was 10.6%; and for ages 65+, the rate was 35.2%.
• In 2016, 38.9% of people ages 18 and over with disabilities were obese. In comparison, only 26.4% of those without disabilities were obese.
• In the U.S. in 2016, 35.9% of people with disabilities ages 18-64 were employed. The employment percentage was more than double for people in the same age group without disabilities at 76.6%.

ST. JOSEPH COUNTY PARK SYSTEM ACCESSIBILITY OVERVIEW

During the preparation of this plan, an overall accessibility review of the St. Joseph County Parks was conducted. It is the goal of the department to offer barrier-free facilities, programs, and services inclusive of all users.

St. Joseph County has an ADA Transition Plan, but there is little information pertaining to the Parks in that plan. In order to better analyze accessibility in the parks, the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) performed an accessibility audit of park facilities in 2016. The MACOG audit used a checklist and standard accessibility forms to determine dimensions, clear spaces, heights, and other important factors for accessibility in the park facilities. The entire document is saved on file in the Parks’ office.

In general, most park facilities meet the requirements of ADA accessibility, but there are certain locations and amenities that need improvements to provide better accessibility. These improvements should be integrated into the planning of future needs and capital projects. If a capital improvement projects (including alterations to amenities) are completed, the improvements must meet ADA requirements. Other ADA improvements should be prioritized and completed as resources become available.

In addition to reviewing the accessibility of physical amenities, communication practices were also reviewed. Information about the park system and its accessible amenities should be added to the parks website, along with a grievance policy and contact information. St. Joseph County has this information on its website and it is available here: [http://sjcindiana.com/912/Compliance-Notices](http://sjcindiana.com/912/Compliance-Notices)

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