

# The ADAPT Activist Handbook



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## Introduction

Participating in an ADAPT action can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life, but sometimes people aren't sure what they should do. This guide was prepared by seasoned ADAPT activists to answer your questions.

**If you haven't been to a national ADAPT action before OR you haven't been to a Legal meeting in the past two years, you MUST attend the Legal Meeting** that is held at the beginning of the action. At that meeting, experienced ADAPTer tell you everything you need to know and answer your questions. **Reading this booklet does not substitute for attending the Legal Meeting.** Even if you've been involved with ADAPT for years, you are expected to attend this meeting for a "refresher", assist with the training, and to welcome new activists!

Before the Action begins, **you must turn in your Emergency Form to the ADAPT leadership.** Although this form is used during the arrest process, it doesn't matter whether you intend to get arrested because this form is used for medical and other emergencies as well.



*ADAPTer with blue flag that represents her role as a Color leader*

## How We Are Organized

ADAPT activists are organized into Teams with a leadership structure developed through years of experience. Day Leaders organize the action and make decisions. There are typically eight to twelve Day Leaders, two for each color team. Color Leaders organize and ensure communication within the color teams. There are five to seven Color Leaders per color team. Information flows from Day Leaders to Color Leaders to you! Day Leaders have white flags, Color Leaders have their respective color flags. Flags are worn on the wheelchair or shoulder.

## The Line-Up and March

We line up in our color teams before the action and prepare to march.

**The destination for each action is secret and known only to the Day Leaders**, to help ensure that police or targets do not have advance notice that could interfere with our plans.

We march in the road, because it is actually safer than trying to travel on sidewalks with unsafe curb cuts. **We march in single file**, so we can avoid issues with traffic, roads, pedestrians, or the police escort, etc.

We do not allow police and others to break our line, **unless you are told by a color or day leader**. Just follow the line and go around obstacles like police. We call this “water around the rock.” **DO NOT raise your voice or your hands at a police officer** if they physically try to stop you. The only sounds and signs from ADAPTers should be the unending CHANTS to FREE OUR PEOPLE! We do let emergency vehicles with flashing lights go through the line, but this will be coordinated by the ADAPT leadership. Remember, who controls traffic: **WE DO!**

While we are marching, you should be **chanting**. Our chanting is important to keep everyone energized and to inform the public of why we're there! Unless you are on the Media Team, you should **NOT** be taking pictures or videos when we are marching. This can be distracting, hold up the line that needs to keep moving, or even inform our target that we are on the way to them. You can take pictures when we get to our destination, but not while we're marching.

**Chant:**  
*Free Our Parents  
Free Our Siblings  
Free Our People  
NOW!*

Lastly, ADAPT is comprised of many people with many different disabilities. Some disabilities can be triggered by smoke or scents from cigarettes or e-cigarettes. For this reason, **NO ONE** should be smoking in line while we are marching.



*ADAPTers marching on the road*



## Occupying and Holding Our Ground – Nonviolently!

When we get to our target, it is usually exciting, quick, and stressful. We **DO** go where we might not be “allowed,” but **we DO NOT force our way in**. If the door way is open, we go through it. If it is filled with bodies, ours or theirs, we **DO NOT push, shove, or pull** people out of the way to get in.

At the action site, do not argue, yell or engage with security, police or building staff. Example: If a security guard or police officer is yelling at you, trying to convince you to move, calling folks names, or pushing folks, **DO NOT** argue or push back. **DO NOT engage** in any verbal or physical confrontation at all. Instead, just keep chanting with the group. If the security or police officer needs something, point them to a Day or Color Leader.

**We DO NOT touch, shove, pull, scream at, or argue with anyone!** If someone shoves you, **stay calm!** Do not shove, push, pull, or argue back! Non-violence isn't always easy, but it is key to our actions.

## Protecting Our ADAPT Siblings

During our actions, some ADAPTerS may be targeted by the police, private security or others because of who they are or are perceived to be. People who walk are often perceived as leadership by police and targeted, feeling that if they are removed, the action will fall apart. Such individuals are often targeted.



Sign: “Black Lives Matter!”

Our siblings who are Black, People of Color (POC) or members (or perceived to be members) of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer (LGBTQ) community may be targeted because of racial, homophobic or transphobic bias. It is extremely important that ADAPTerS are aware of this and watch out for each other. If you feel that an ADAPTer is being singled out because of their race, particular disability (or lack thereof), or because they are LGBTQ, **stay with the individual as a witness and to provide support but also immediately alert Color and Day leaders about what is happening**. If you or others around you have a camera phone or video equipment, film and take pictures if you are able. As long as you are not interfering with the officer, it is legal to do so. If the person is being arrested, make sure ADAPT leadership is aware so we know what is happening to the person and can intercede.



*ADAPTers holding up signs*

## Legal Actions

Most things ADAPT activists do during a protest are legal and no one can be arrested for them. Marching, carrying signs, and passing out flyers are all legal. Actually, most things that do not violate police orders or private property are legal.

ADAPT actions are very exciting and lots of fun, but they also consist of long hours and are usually outdoors. You will get hungry and thirsty, tired, hot or cold and wet, and bored. Please prepare yourself as much as possible. Bring jackets, toileting equipment, medications (in their original prescription containers only), sunscreen, snacks, and water.

For the many people who decide not to be arrested, there are many important tasks: press conferences, passing out flyers, welcoming those released by the police, and further protests. **The action must continue even after our people are arrested!** In every action, some ADAPT leaders will avoid arrest to direct further work and help you get home.

Most importantly, **be prepared to share and support each other.** Everyone on the action must endure the same conditions. We try to provide lunch and water during the day. Sharing and trusting each other make these difficult actions bearable. **We work together to accomplish our goals, and together we have done some absolutely amazing things!**



*ADAPTers holding up signs and protesting*





*ADAPTer being arrested*

## Illegal Actions

ADAPT uses a protest style called “nonviolent confrontation.” This means we will push an action even to the point of arrest. This demonstrates the strength of our commitment to this life and death issue. If you violate police orders by not leaving an area after a warning, or trying to cross barriers the police have created, or failing to obey an officer’s order – lawful or not – you are at risk of being arrested. Disobeying the police in this manner is called civil disobedience, and ADAPT uses this tactic in order to dramatize our commitment and the urgency of our issue.

**Civil disobedience MUST be carried out nonviolently!** If ADAPT members are the cause of any injury to the police or others it will cause damage to our work and result in very bad publicity. Please keep your emotions under control during these confrontations. Sometimes this can be very difficult to do, but the police are not the enemy. They are doing their job and we are doing ours.

Our work is incredibly important – literally life and death for folks – and actions can be very stressful. If you need help managing this stress, let the leadership know and we will have someone help you. If you know that you will likely need help with this during an action, let leadership know in advance. If you find yourself in needing help in the moment, find a way to let leadership know so that they can find a way to help you.

If you see another ADAPTer having a difficult time, please offer support. Support from another ADAPTer can make a huge difference for someone, but **ALWAYS** follow the lead of the person. As disabled people, we know what we need.



*Crowd protesting together in Boston*

Recognize that a wheelchair can cause real harm to a police officer or another individual, even if it’s an accident, so be very careful. We must act forcefully, but nonviolently. Sometimes activists are hurt during confrontations, chairs are tipped, or people are grabbed or pushed down. Please be emotionally prepared for this and **do not retaliate!** A careless, violent response by one of us could ruin many years of work.

## Arrest and the Jail Experience



*ADAPTer receiving tickets after being arrested*

Being arrested or jailed for our beliefs is a very important and meaningful experience, but it can also be difficult and frightening. Think it over carefully and decide before the protest what you believe you can do. Arrest experiences have ranged from being ticketed or booked at the site of arrest and then released, to a night or more in jail. We cannot tell in advance what the outcome will be, so be prepared for the whole range of possibilities.

**No one under age 18 should ever be arrested or engaged in activities that will likely result in arrest.** In addition, people who are on probation, have other pending criminal court cases, or are not US citizens should NOT be arrested. If you are under 18 or should not be arrested for another reason, tell your color leaders so they know to watch out for you and keep you safe.

Not being arrested doesn't make anyone less important or committed to our cause. There are many important activities outside of jail and we need people to carry them out. That work doesn't get done if everyone is arrested.

Most of our past experience has shown that the police really don't want to arrest a large group of disabled people and will give us many chances to avoid arrest. If you violate police orders, or make them angry enough, you may be arrested. The police sometimes believe that if our leadership is taken away, the protest will stop. **This must never happen! If leaders are arrested, you must keep the action going!**



*ADAPTer keeping action going*

**During an action, you MUST have on you at all times:**

1. A current form of identification
2. Your prescription medications **in their original bottles with the pharmacy label**

You may bring other items including a small amount of money, but it could all be confiscated. Medication boxes may be confiscated as "unknown drugs" which is why it is important to bring all medicine in their original bottles. After you are arrested, all medication may be taken





*ADAPTers lined up in hallway to protest*

from you and dispensed only by police staff. Be prepared to miss a few doses. If you are planning to be arrested and expect to be taken into custody, you may consider taking your next dose of meds just prior to arrest.

ADAPT leadership on the outside will have the lawyers working from the first arrests to make certain that the arrestees are being treated properly and that medications are being given. If people

are held in custody, the ADAPT people on the outside will provide wheelchair chargers and other essential equipment if allowed. Be prepared to go without these items for some time. You will sometimes be separated by gender, and able bodied people may be separated too. It is the jailers' responsibility to provide nursing, attendant services, and sign language interpreters. The process is **very, very slow!** Be patient. The time being processed can be a great time to meet other ADAPTers. That's a great way to pass the time.

Law enforcement and jailers often start lies and rumors, for example, threatening to hold people in custody for many days or weeks to break our spirits. **Do not believe anyone except your lawyer and the ADAPT leadership. ADAPT members never bond out of jail** unless we have a genuine medical emergency. To "bond out" means to pay a fine in order to be released. To bond out and abandon your ADAPT friends is very damaging for everyone. We never leave jail unless **ALL other ADAPTers** are leaving too. We stay together as a group, or we have no power.



*ADAPTers chanting and working together*



## Social Media

It is important to amplify our message on social media to share what we are doing. However, make sure not to post anything about our destination location or specifics until we are at the location to ensure police and others do not have advance notice of our plans.

When posting to social media make sure to use the proper hashtags for the action that will be given by the ADAPT Media Team. Actions are long and a lot of social media can drain your phone, so it helps to have an external phone charger and/or monitor your battery accordingly.

ADAPT strives to make our social media accessible to all our ADAPT siblings and allies. Photo and video descriptions are useful to various disability groups. The National ADAPT Facebook and Twitter pages will have photo descriptions and captions or video descriptions. Please try to include them in your posts. If possible set your ADAPT posts to public, so they can be shared on the National ADAPT page. When posting to Periscope and Facebook Live be sure to input a brief description of what is going on to improve accessibility. If there is an ASL interpreter in view of the camera, if possible, try to include them in the camera shot whenever possible. Here are some resources that may be helpful:



*Sign language interpreter with Senator Bernie Sanders*

More info on making web content accessible:  
<http://nosmag.org/5-ways-to-make-your-web-content-more-neurodiversity-inclusive/>

More info on Facebook photo description:  
<http://evengrounds.com/blog/adding-captions-to-facebook-photos>

More info on Facebook video captions:  
[https://www.facebook.com/help/273947702950567/?helpref=hc\\_fnav](https://www.facebook.com/help/273947702950567/?helpref=hc_fnav)

More info on Twitter accessibility:  
<https://blog.twitter.com/2016/accessible-images-for-everyone>



## When ADAPT Comes Marching Home



*ADAPTERs chanting in front of the White House*

Those not being arrested need to work with Day and Color Leaders for follow up actions, including marching back as a group, waiting up for arrestees, and supporting the **action as a group!** When we march back, everyone is tired! Everyone wants to get back to the hotel, but we must **stay together** in a group, **single file**, and follow the Day and Color Leaders.

If they don't come back with the full group, when the arrestees return, we **ALWAYS** gather to celebrate, hear arrest stories, reflect on our victories, and honor what our siblings in the movement have been through. This is where people who weren't arrested can play a really important role. It can take hours for those who were arrested to be processed, and they are often very tired, but a loud welcoming applause and cheers from other ADAPTERs always makes them feel energized, happy and proud!

Whether you are arrested or not, all the work is appreciated and the party is for **YOU!** ADAPT has successfully made large gains in the struggle for the civil rights of people with disabilities and only you can make the work continue to succeed.

## Court



*ADAPTER ready to pay fine*

You must turn your arrest paperwork over to ADAPT leaders who will get it to the lawyers. Sometimes we appear before the judge, but usually the court date is set in the future, and the lawyers can usually arrange to represent us so it is frequently unnecessary for us to return to town. During these experiences, you may gain a criminal record and you may have probation requirements.

If you are fined, **you are responsible for the fine.** You and your group may consider local fundraising to help cover the fines. You are expected to comply with the terms from the court. If you fail to carry out the court requirements, by violating your probation or not paying fines, you will have a warrant issued for your arrest.



## Rules For ADAPT National Actions

- All luggage must be marked and identified **TWICE** on the outside. Mark it with your name, address, city and state, and separately mark it with your ADAPT chapter's name.
- Everyone is expected to attend **ALL** actions.
- Everyone is expected to attend **ALL** group meetings (AKA the "Big Meetings").
- **Everyone is expected to fill out their Emergency Form and turn it in BEFORE the actions.**
- We **stay together!** It's important to stay together when we are traveling to the action, during the action, and going back to the hotel. If you must leave to go to the bathroom or leave the group for another reason, **ask your color leader and tell at least one other person.** This is important so no one is lost or left behind.
- **Everyone must follow the directions of the ADAPT leadership, Day and Color Leaders.** We are flexible, but when you are told to, "Be downstairs at 8:00 AM" we expect you to be downstairs at 7:55. Day and Color Leaders give these directions for the safety of the individuals and the success of the action!
- The actions are **ROUGH!** No one can expect to have all of their desires met in terms of attendant services, food, or comfort. We try to meet basic needs and accommodate the health needs of individuals.
- **DO NOT answer any questions about where we are going or when we are going. Refer those questions to a Day Leader.**
- **Communicate** your needs to your attendants and try to work out a reasonable schedule. Remember also, most are working with more than one person. Please remember our attendants are human beings. They get tired and hungry too.
- Attendants must also communicate their needs. If you need a break, tell the other attendants and your chapter leaders. Make sure someone is covering for you.
- With three or four people to a room, courtesy is a must, especially after a long, hard, tiring day. If you need time alone in the room, work it out with your roommates in advance!
- Key words are **share, respect, and communicate!** If we cut each other a break, we'll all feel better at the end. Remember we are fighting for freedom and justice; if we end up fighting with each other, what kind of an example are we setting? ADAPT is each and every one of us, working together.



*ADAPTers chanting in the Capitol Rotunda*



*Marchers waving the Disability Rights flag*

## **What To Bring**

First, empty your backpack and only bring what is absolutely necessary:

- Photo Identification
- Medication in **original** pharmacy containers
- Gloves
- Rain Coat or Poncho
- Umbrella
- Band-Aids
- Water
- Straws
- Snacks
- Zip lock bags
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Tissues
- Hat
- Hand Cleaner
- Layered clothing
- Wet Wipes
- Hard Candies/lozenges
- Small amount of money



## Never Bring These Items

- Unmarked medications
- Illegal drugs
- Pocket knives
- Large amounts of cash
- Alcohol
- Anything that might be considered a weapon

## Be Prepared

- Be prepared for changes in weather. Bring rain gear and dress in layers.
- Be prepared to share your snacks and water.
- Be prepared to spend the night.
- Be prepared to help others if they ask.

## Help Each Other

ADAPT is like a big family and we all help one another when we can. If you are able to help someone by pushing a chair, feeding someone, emptying a leg bag, helping another up or down a curb, or in any other way, please do it. Our actions take a lot of energy and cooperation to accomplish our goals.

## Most Importantly, Thank You!

Be proud and be strong! Your work to FREE OUR PEOPLE is extremely important ...and **very much appreciated!**



*ADAPTerS interacting during an ADAPT Action*



# Disability Integration Act NOW!

Tune: *Battle Hymn of the Republic*  
Words: *Elaine Marie Kolb*  
Written: *West Haven, CT, April 2016,*  
*modified April 2017*

## CHORUS:

We want Community Integration,  
We want Community Integration,  
We want Community Integration,  
**Disability Integration Act NOW!**

1. We want to Live in a Real Community,  
We want to Live in a Real Community,  
We want to Live in a Real Community,  
**Disability Integration Act NOW!**
2. In a Real Community,  
Everyone Belongs (3x)  
**Disability Integration Act NOW!**
3. Together we are Free,  
Together we are Strong, (3x)  
**Disability Integration Act NOW!**
4. We have a Voice,  
We want a Choice (3x)  
**Disability Integration Act NOW!**
5. We're Tired of being Locked Away,  
Free Our People Now (3x)  
**Disability Integration Act NOW!**



# My Medicaid Matters!

Tune: *Battle Hymn of the Republic*  
Words: *Elaine Marie Kolb*  
September 12, 2011 (ADAPTeD 10/20/2012)

## CHORUS:

**MY** Medicaid Matters,  
**YOUR** Medicaid Matters,  
**OUR** Medicaid Matters,  
It's Life or Death for **ME & YOU & US!**

1. With Medicaid, I can get the medicine  
I need (3x),  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!
2. With Personal Assistance,  
I can live at home (3x),  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!
3. To live, day to day, there's equipment  
that I need (3x),  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!
4. With Medicaid, I can call  
an ambulance (3x),  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!
5. Medicaid helps a lot of children (3x)  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!
6. Low income people count on  
Medicaid (3x),  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!
7. Lots of us do rely on Medicare, it's true,  
But, there are limits to what Medicare  
will do, So, some of us have to count on  
Medicaid, too,  
With Medicaid, we've got a chance to live!

