

DCR Universal Access Program

Essential Eligibility Criteria for Program Participants

The following Essential Eligibility Criteria (EEC) help you understand the skills you need to participate in our programs. For safety and risk management considerations, everyone who attends our programs must meet these EEC.

You can meet the EEC on your own, or with the help of a caregiver (a family member, friend, or PCA). Many pieces of equipment at our programs offer tandem seating, steering, and braking.

If you have concerns about your ability to meet the EEC, please speak with the organization leading the activity. If you have general questions or concerns about our EEC, please contact the Universal Access Program at (413) 545-5760 or DCR.UniversalAccess@mass.gov.

General Criteria

Everyone who attends our programs must be able to do the following, either independently or with the help of a caregiver (a family member, friend, or PCA):

- Arrive at the program location early enough to be ready and on time for scheduled sessions.
- Come prepared for the weather and conditions of the day. This includes dressing for the elements and bringing your own sun and rain protection. It also includes bringing your own drinks and food.
- Be able to manage personal care. Personal care includes dressing, toileting, eating and drinking.
- Be able to get on and off of equipment either independently or with help. Our staff and volunteers will help you transfer. If you weigh more than 180 pounds, you must bring another person or equipment to help with the transfer.
- Be able to follow verbal or visual directions.
- Be able to tell program staff about your needs or if you are uncomfortable.
- Be able and willing to wear properly-fitted protective equipment, such as helmets and lifejackets.
- Respect the weight limit on equipment. Each piece of equipment has its own weight limit. You can't use equipment if you weigh more than the limit.
- Be able to refrain from behaviors that pose a risk to yourself or others. These behaviors include aggression, an inability to set boundaries, a lack of safety awareness, and drug or alcohol use or influence.
- Be willing and able to obey the risk assessments and decisions of program leaders.
- Not attend a program if you have signs or symptoms of being sick, especially if you have a contagious condition. If you have a cold with coughing and sneezing, or a fever, or the flu, or lice, you have a contagious condition.

If you are attending as a parent, staff, or guardian:

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to stay with the program, even if you are not participating in the activity.
- Be able to provide a cell phone number for contact if you need to leave the program.
- Be able to participate in the activity to the extent of your personal ability and skill.
- Be willing and able to assist in physical transfers of your family member or client to the degree of your ability.

If you are providing physical activity support:

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to offer one-on-one support with your companion or client, as needed.
- Be able and willing to lift, pull, push, and perform the work needed for the weight of your companion or client, and the distance and terrain involved.

Activity-Specific Criteria

Everyone who attends an activity must be able to do the following, either independently or with the help of a caregiver (a family member, friend, or PCA):

Cycling

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able and willing to wear a properly fitted helmet.
- Be able and willing to follow basic rules of safe riding on a rail trail with street crossings, with guidance if needed. For safe riding, you should move predictably and stay to the right, in single file with other cyclists. You should yield to pedestrians, and you should announce yourself when passing others. You should also stop at stop signs and be aware of vehicles at street crossings.
- Be able and willing to treat cycles, brakes, and shifters with care.
- Be able and willing to avoid trail hazards, with guidance if needed.
- Be willing to stay on the bike path within the limits of the program and park boundaries.
- Be able to tolerate moderate physical activity.
- Be able and willing to respect your limitations with regards to how far you plan to go.
- Be able to return your cycle on time.

Hiking: Gentle outing

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to tolerate moderate physical activity for up to one hour.
- Be able to navigate moderate terrain on selected trails for up to 1 mile, at a slow to moderate pace. These trails are often accessible trails. You can use approved adaptive equipment on the trail, such as crutches, walkers, or wheelchairs.
- Be able and willing to stay with the group and travel at the group's pace. This pace is based on the slowest hiker.

Hiking: Rugged outing

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, the Hiking: Gentle outing EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to navigate rugged terrain typical of hiking trails, for up to 3 miles at a slow to moderate pace. These trails often have rocks, roots, steep grades and cross slopes, and do not have ramps. You can use approved adaptive equipment on the trail.

Paddling

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to breathe on your own without the use of medical devices to sustain breathing.
- Be comfortable with being wet and the possibility of being in the water (in case of a capsized).
- Be able and willing to wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device at all times while you are on the water. A lifejacket is a common type of personal flotation device.
- Be able to maintain a face-up position while you are in the water wearing a properly fitted personal flotation device.
- Be able to maintain an upright head position while you are in a boat. You can use a head support device or technique, if needed.
- Be able to sit in balanced position in a kayak or canoe for up to 45 minutes. You may need to sit for longer if you are on a river trip or a longer program session. You can use approved modifications or help, if needed.
- Be able and willing to paddle together with the group at the group's pace. This pace is based on the slowest paddlers.

Site Specific Paddling: Lake Quinsigamond, Connecticut River, Quabbin Reservoir

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, the Paddling EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to tolerate moderate wave action from passing motorboats.

Site Specific Paddling: Quabbin Reservoir

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, the Paddling EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be willing and able to refrain from touching the water on Pottapaug Pond and the rest of the Quabbin water supply.
- Be able to tolerate open water conditions without shelter from the weather, including the wind and the sun, for 1–2 hours.
- Be able and willing to paddle at pace of approximately 2 miles per hour for a distance of 1–4 miles.

Sailing or windsurfing

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able and willing to wear a properly fitted U.S. Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device at all times while you are on the water, or as required by a staff member. A lifejacket is a common type of personal flotation device.
- Be able and willing to follow basic rules of safe sailing as instructed by staff.
- Be able and willing to treat other sailors outside of the UAP sailors with care and respect.
- Be able and willing to avoid sailing hazards, with guidance.
- Be able to tolerate moderate physical activity within the realms of your ability.
- Be able and willing to respect your limitations with regards to how far you plan to go.
- Be comfortable with being wet and the possibility of being in the water (in case of a capsized).
- Participants should be able to form a watertight seal with their mouth.
- Be able to maintain an upright head position while you are in a boat. You can use a head support device or technique, if needed, and there are seats with body straps to support you.
- Be able to tolerate open water conditions without shelter from the weather, including the wind and the sun, for 1–2 hours.

Ice Skating Indoors

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Come dressed appropriately for indoor rink temperatures. Temperatures on the rink may be 20–40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Be able and willing to use a properly fitted helmet if you are going to use a skate walker or be assisted by a staff member in stand skating.

Winter Outdoors

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:
- Come dressed appropriately for winter conditions and weather.
- Be able to tolerate temperatures as cold as “feels like” 10 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes.

Winter Guided Group Excursions Outdoors: Gentle Outing

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, the Winter Outdoors criteria listed above, and those listed here:
- Be able to tolerate moderate physical activity for up to one hour.
- Be able to navigate moderate terrain on selected trails for up to one mile, at a slow to moderate pace. These trails are often accessible trails. You can use approved adaptive equipment on the trail, such as crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, snowshoes, and skis.
- Be able and willing to stay with the group and travel at the group’s pace. This pace is based on the slowest hiker.

Winter Guided Group Excursions Outdoors: Rugged Outing

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, the Guided Group Excursions Outdoors Gentle Outing EEC, and those listed here:
- Be able to navigate rugged terrain typical of hiking trails, for up to 3 miles at a slow to moderate pace. These trails often have rocks, roots, steep grades and cross slopes, and do not have ramps. You can use approved adaptive equipment on the trail.

Independent Winter Outdoor Excursions (Use of Program Equipment)

- Meet all of the General EEC listed above, the Winter Outdoors EEC, and those listed here:
- Be able to show knowledge of the trail system and basic map skills.
- Be able to communicate with program staff using a cell phone or 2-way radio.
- Be able and willing to tell program staff your planned route and estimated return time.
- Be willing to stay within the limits of the program and park boundaries.
- Be able and willing to treat the equipment with care.
- Be able to return the equipment on time.