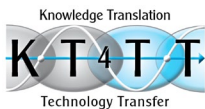
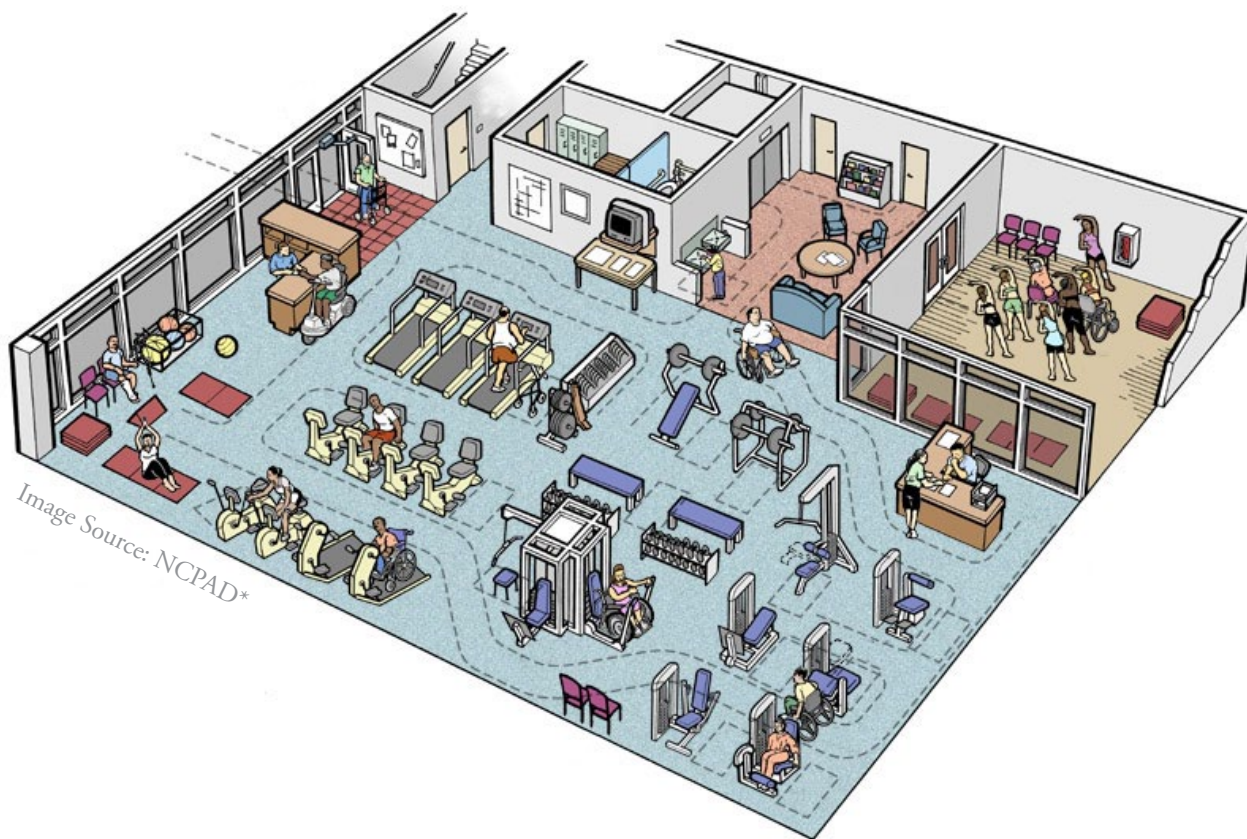


Information Package on

AIMFREE

Accessibility Instruments Measuring
Fitness and Recreation Environments



KT4TT Intervention Tools - Series B:1 (2011)

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As a Center for Independent Living, it's your job to **advise the community** on accessibility regulations and offer solutions to create **equal access for people with disabilities**. Providing these services to a variety of businesses and facilities can be a challenge when **different ADA regulations** may apply; or when **aspects that are not covered by the ADA** significantly impact accessibility for people with disabilities. Evaluating and providing solutions to *fitness facilities* can be particularly difficult due to the combination of varying factors related to architectural barriers, program and service delivery, and considerations related to fitness equipment.

AIMFREE is your solution!

This new resource can help you with your **advocacy** and **information and referral** efforts and make you a resource to fitness centers in your area by helping you to:

- Identify architectural barriers in fitness facilities.
- Give dimensions and sizes for spaces such as accessible pathways and bathrooms.
- Determine if fitness facility staff are properly trained to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
- Identify needed services and programs.
- Perform disability accessibility evaluations of fitness equipment and provide suggestions for modifications to equipment.
- Show a fitness center where to focus its accessibility efforts (i.e. what is and isn't accessible - pools, treadmills, pathways, etc.).
- Develop transition plans for fitness centers interested in implementing AIMFREE's proposed solutions.
- Help you educate fitness centers so they can do their own self-diagnosis.

You probably already use some form of checklist to help with accessibility evaluations. AIMFREE goes one step further by consolidating physical aspects of a fitness facility with services. All assessment information is in one place - just pick up AIMFREE and go!

WHAT IS AIMFREE?

AIMFREE is a survey containing several questions about various elements of fitness facilities, including physical environment, equipment, programs, policies, training, and staff behavior. Its purpose is to measure the accessibility of fitness or recreational areas for persons with mobility or sensory impairments.

AIMFREE includes:

- Survey directions to help with answering the survey.
- The survey itself with items divided into sections for ease of use.
- Scoring instructions and scales.
- Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) information to provide references to the ADA items that are addressed in AIMFREE.
- Information resources.
- Equipment resources.
- A glossary of terms used to help with making observations and answering survey questions.
- A demographics form that notes the evaluator, type of facility and other demographic information.

How was AIMFREE developed?

AIMFREE resulted from a research project conducted by Dr. James Rimmer of the University of Illinois. Dr. Rimmer obtained input from people with disabilities, fitness professionals, architects, fitness facility designers, city planners and park district management through surveys, focus groups, and user testing activities.

The first part of the research was to determine the types of facilities that would be assessed for accessibility. A national survey was completed with persons with mobility limitations to determine their preference of facilities to use. The outcome included fitness centers and swimming pools.

The next part of the research was to develop the survey's measures. Dr. Rimmer held focus groups across 10 regions in the United States, with four groups in each region. The participants represented various groups concerned with accessibility, which helped to obtain more reliable measures.

Concerns from the focus group discussions were combined with information from the ADAAG to develop the questions found in AIMFREE.

AIMFREE was then used by fitness professionals at fitness centers across the country to assist with identification of norms and to establish the best way of scoring of the measures.

How is AIMFREE different than ADAAG?

Table 1 depicts the different elements of a fitness facility acknowledged by the ADA accessibility guidelines, and those addressed by AIMFREE. Checkmarks denote the presence of each element in AIMFREE (column 2) and ADAAG (column 3).

Table 1: Included elements	AIMFREE	ADAAG
Accessible Parking	✓	✓
Entrances	✓	✓
Paths of Travel	✓	✓
Restrooms	✓	✓
Exercise Equipment	✓	No
Exercise Programs & Services	✓	No
Professional Training	✓	No
Facility Policies	✓	No
Staff Behavior	✓	No

What does AIMFREE look like?

Table 2 provides a sample of questions taken from AIMFREE that go beyond the Access Board's accessibility requirements. Included are factors related to accessibility and a satisfactory experience within a fitness facility, such as accessibility of equipment, information, programs, policies, professional behavior, professional support and training.

Table 2: Excerpts from the AIMFREE Instrument	
Equipment	• Does the facility provide exercise equipment that does not require transfer from wheel chair to machine? Are buttons on equipment raised from the panel surface?
Fitness program	• Can individuals with disabilities participate in fitness /recreation programs at their own pace? Do exercise classes and programs (e.g., aerobics classes) include activities that can be performed from a seated position?
Hot tubs / saunas	• Is there a ramp leading into the whirlpool or hot tub? Is there a place to park a wheelchair outside the sauna so it doesn't get hot?
Locker rooms	• Is there a clear path leading from the locker room entrance to the lockers that is at least 36 inches wide? Can the highest lockers be opened from a seated position?
Policies	• Is the accessibility of the facility periodically reviewed? Can a consumer's personal assistant be allowed to enter the facility without incurring additional charges?
Professional behavior	• Did the staff member make eye contact when speaking to consumers? Did staff members ask consumers if they needed assistance before attempting to help them?
Professional knowledge / attitudes	• Did you feel that staff members were uneasy with regard to consumers' disability? Did you feel that staff members maintained a positive attitude when interacting with consumers?
Professional support and training	• Do staff members receive training on providing accommodations to persons with disabilities? Do staff members receive basic information on medications and their effect during exercise?
Swimming pool	• Are pool lift controls accessible from the deck level? Does the pool have a ledge to hold onto when entering the water?

Where can I find out more about AIMFREE?

If you have any questions related to AIMFREE, contact:

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Project Administrator

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Call or email today and become the go-to resource for all fitness centers in your service area!