# 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. For information related to COVID-19, please see the current Program Attendance Guidelines.

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 questions or concerns about your ability to meet the EEC for an activity, 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) 461-7126](tel:4134617126) or [DCR.UniversalAccess@state.ma.us](mailto:DCR.UniversalAccess@state.ma.us).

## General Essential Eligibility Criteria

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

* 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.
* Manage personal care. Personal care includes dressing, toileting, eating and drinking.
* Manage personal behavior. Refrain from behaviors that pose a risk to yourself or others. These behaviors include:
  + Inability to maintain boundaries or follow rules
  + Lack of safety awareness
  + Physical aggression such as striking, hitting, kicking, or biting
  + Sexual aggression such as comments and advances
  + Verbal aggression such as swearing and yelling at others
  + Drug and alcohol use or influence
* Get on and off equipment. If you weigh more than 180 pounds and need transfer assistance, you must bring support person(s) or equipment to help you transfer.
* Follow verbal or visual directions.
* Tell program staff about your needs or if you are uncomfortable.
* 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.
* Obey the risk assessments and decisions of program leaders.

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

Meet the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Stay with and attentive to the participant(s) you came with throughout the program.
* Provide physical transfers, personal care, communication support, and behavioral management as required by your family member or client.
* Transfer your family member or client independently or in accordance with the transfer plan established with the program operator in advance.

## If you are providing physical activity support:

Meet the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Offer one-on-one support with your companion or client, as needed.
* Lift, pull, push, and perform the work needed for the weight of your companion or client, and the distance and terrain involved.

## Cycling

Meet the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Wear a properly fitted helmet.
* Follow basic rules of safe riding on a rail trail with street crossings. 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 stop at stop signs and be aware of vehicles at street crossings.
* Treat cycles, brakes, and shifters with care.
* Avoid trail hazards, with guidance if needed.
* Stay on the bike path within the limits of the program and park boundaries.
* Tolerate moderate physical activity.
* Respect your limitations with regards to how far you plan to go.
* Return your cycle on time.

## Hiking

### Hiking: Gentle outing

Meet the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Tolerate moderate physical activity for up to one hour.
* Navigate easy to 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.
* Stay with the group and travel at the group’s pace. This pace is based on the slowest hiker.

### Hiking: Rugged outing

Meet the General EEC and Hiking: Gentle outing EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* 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 the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* 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 capsize).
* 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.
* Maintain a face-up position while you are in the water wearing a properly fitted personal flotation device.
* Maintain an upright head position while you are in a boat. You can use a head support device or technique, if needed.
* 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

Meet the General and Paddling EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Tolerate moderate wave action from passing motorboats.

## Ice Skating Indoors

Meet all 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.

## Winter Outdoors

Meet the General EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Come dressed appropriately for winter conditions and weather.
* Tolerate temperatures as cold as “feels like” 10 degrees Fahrenheit for 30 minutes or longer.

### Winter Guided Group Excursions Outdoors: Gentle Outing

Meet the General and Winter Outdoors EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Tolerate moderate physical activity for up to one hour.
* Navigate moderate terrain on selected snow-groomed or hiking trails for up to one mile, at a slow to moderate pace. You can use approved adaptive equipment on the trail, such as crutches, walkers, wheelchairs, snowshoes, and skis.
* Stay with the group and travel at the group’s pace. This pace is based on the slowest participants.

### Winter Guided Group Excursions Outdoors: Rugged Outing

Meet the General, Winter Outdoors, Guided Group Excursions Outdoors Gentle Outing EEC, and those listed here:

* Navigate snow-groomed or non-groomed hiking trails on varying terrain, 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 the General, Winter Outdoors, and Winter Guided Group Excursions EEC listed above, and those listed here:

* Show knowledge of the trail system and basic map skills.
* Communicate with program staff using a cell phone or 2-way radio.
* Tell program staff your planned route and estimated return time.
* Stay within the limits of the program and park boundaries.
* Treat the equipment with care.
* Return the equipment on time.