



## Companion Agreement Form Frequently Asked Questions – FAQs

### Overview

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) offers a wide range of Inclusion Services and disability modifications including Companions, which promote and support the participation of people with disabilities. Reasonable modifications are provided based on individual needs and abilities. Companions work closely with Disability Services Team (DST) to provide support within the code of conduct and program rules.

### What is a Companion?

A Companion is an assistant chosen by the patron with a disability to support them with participation within M-NCPPC sponsored programs, classes, events, drop-ins and/or memberships.

### Are there requirements for being a Companion?

Companions must be 14 years of age or older and be able to accommodate the patron with the disability within the program setting while following the Code of Conduct and program rules. The Disability Services Team (DST) has sole discretion to determine what is to be in the best interest of M-NCPPC and the Department.

### Can there be more than one Companion?

Yes, a person may elect to have more than one companion. A patron with a disability may choose to have more than one companion for various reasons such as additional companions may be a backup, for a specific day or program, or maybe require two to assist with lifting, etc.

### What is my role as a Companion?

Companions support the patron with the disability with specific manual, verbal and/or visual modifications before, during and/or after the program. This may include:

- Support with social interactions (i.e., effective communication, taking turns, sharing supplies)
- Personal care (dressing, feeding, toileting, or medical/medication administration)
- Support with entering/exiting the pool
- Assisting with mobility
- Providing a preferred method of assistance (i.e., hand-over-hand guidance, verbal prompting)

### Will I be required to do a background check?

Depending upon the program setting, Companions may be required to submit to a Federal and State criminal background check. Background checks may also be dependent upon the length and/or duration of the program(s). Approval as a Companion is contingent upon favorable results. Background clearances from other agencies are non-transferable.

### **Do I need a PARKS Direct Account?**

Companions are required to have a current PARKS DIRECT Account for safety reasons. M-NCPPC staff monitor who is in our facilities at all times through check-ins linked to PARKS DIRECT Accounts.

### **Are Companions required to register/reserve space or pay?**

When accompanying a paying and/or registered patron with a disability, when assistance is required to participate, a Companion will not be charged program fees.

- When providing support before, during, or after a program, the Companion will not be charged the usual registration and/or attendance fee.
- This may occur in and is not limited to, swimming, ice skating, tennis, and other types of recreation opportunities.
- At times, there may be additional expenses outside of the program registration fee (i.e., mealtimes) that will be the responsibility of the Companion.

### **Where can I get a Companion Agreement Form?**

- Complete online ([Online Companion Agreement Form](#))
- Print and mail ([Fillable Companion Agreement Form PDF](#))
- Contact a member of the Disability Services Team (DST) See contact information below.

### **How long do requests take?**

Disability Modification Requests can take up to two weeks to process. Please plan accordingly to allow time for review and approval.

### **Who authorizes the Companion Agreement Form?**

The Companion Agreement form must be verified and authorized by a Disability Services Team (DST) member. This form is valid with a DST member signature and date stamp.

### **Whom do I contact for help?**

To provide better customer service, the Department of Parks and Recreation has established the following service areas, which include staff from the Disability Services Team (DST). All staff can be reached via MD Relay: 7-1-1 or 800-522-7724.

Program Access Hub (Program Access; program accommodations/modifications)  
2904 Enterprise Road / Mitchellville, MD 20721 / 301-249-7200 [program.access@pgparks.com](mailto:program.access@pgparks.com)

Special Programs Office (Therapeutic Recreation Programs)  
7833 Walker Drive, Suite 110 / Greenbelt, MD 20770 / 301-446-3400 [disabilityservices@pgparks.com](mailto:disabilityservices@pgparks.com)

Reach the Customer Service Help Desk at 301-699-2255 (Maryland Relay 7-1-1-) and they can connect you with the appropriate office.

**How is my request processed?**

Once the Disability Services Team (DST) receives your Companion Agreement Form, you will be contacted to assist with your disability modification request. After approval by the DST, companion(s) will receive an authorization notification.

**Is authorization required?**

Yes, all forms will be reviewed, stamped, signed, and dated by an authorized representative of the Disability Services Team (DST) for each program/event/drop-in/membership identified in section two (2) of the Companion Agreement Form.

If it is an episodic or one-time event, authorization may not be required due to the quick turnaround timeframe. This type of activity typically does not require pre-registration or a reservation. A Companion will not be charged admission fees with a paying patron with a disability when assistance is required to participate. Examples include but are not limited to M-NCPPC attractions like the carousel, train, miniature golf, museums, etc.

**How is my information shared and where is it stored?**

- A copy of this agreement is maintained at the office where it was approved.
- This agreement is linked to the participant's & companion's PARKS DIRECT Account.
- An internal notification is added to both the companion and participant's PARKS DIRECT accounts.
- A background check with favorable results may be required prior to being an approved companion.