

How to start a Wheelchair Tennis Program

The key to a successful wheelchair tennis program is communication, recruitment, and the continuation of the program. These three ingredients will ensure the success of the wheelchair tennis program.

Communication is essential with your local parks department, local rehabilitation center, public schools, colleges, other established wheelchair programs, community tennis associations, and your USTA district, sectional and national offices. The wheelchair tennis coordinator needs to be in touch and communicate with their community for support of the program.

Recruitment starts with your local community. Any where you see a person with a physical disability is your recruiting center (i.e. Shopping centers, hospitals, parks, etc.) People will not try a new sport without an invitation.

Once a program is started, continuation of the program is a must. Just as recruitment and communication is an ongoing process, so goes the tennis program.

1. After the person(s) responsible for the wheelchair tennis program is identified, communication with your local parks department, local rehabilitation center, established wheelchair programs, community tennis associations, and your USTA district office should began.
 - a. The local USTA district office can offer some invaluable support
 - b. The local parks department will have tennis courts to offer
 - c. Rehab centers and parks department are a resource for recruitment
 - d. Local tennis club may offer free court time
2. Secure tennis courts with accessible restrooms and drinking fountains.
3. Secure a certified teaching instructor.
4. Host a free wheelchair tennis clinic with a n Up/Down event, to interest the community.
5. Set aside one or two days a week for a practice session.
6. Secure tennis wheelchairs with fundraiser or grant writing.
7. Establish a wheelchair tennis camp and/or tournament.
8. Establish wheelchair exhibitions to raise awareness about the programs
9. Establish a funding source for competitive player to compete in tournaments
10. Integrate the wheelchair programs/players with the general population when the player is ready to move to other level of play.