

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 sports 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. 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 sports programs, community tennis associations, and your USTA district office should begin.
 - 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 clubs may offer free court time
2. Secure tennis courts with accessible restrooms and drinking fountains.
3. Secure a certified teaching instructor..
4. Host a wheelchair exhibition with a Run 'n Roll to raise awareness about the programs, try to include some local celebrities, the mayor, etc.
5. Host a free wheelchair tennis camp (1/2 day).
6. Set aside a weekly practice session.
7. Strongly promote items 4, 5, & 6 with media (newspaper, local news, fliers)
8. Secure tennis wheelchairs with fundraiser or grant writing.
9. Establish a wheelchair tennis tournament.
10. Establish a funding source for competitive players to compete in tournaments (local tennis clubs/pros will possibly offer free lessons and/or court time, and help with sponsor connections).
11. Integrate the wheelchair tennis programs/players with the general tennis population when the player is ready to move to other level of play.