

# Baby Changing Stations and Accessibility

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There are a lot of accessibility issues in public restrooms, but do you ever think about the baby changing stations? There are two things to look at regarding accessibility:

1. If a mother or father who uses a wheelchair needs access to a baby changing station, what are the necessary technical criteria?
2. Can that baby changing station be located within an accessible stall, a family assisted-use bathroom or a single-occupant bathroom without causing a problem for access to the plumbing fixtures?

## Requirements

Where changing tables are installed, the code regulates them as it would any other element in a toilet or bathing room. Section 1109.2 of the *International Building Code*® (IBC) requires that “at least one of each type of fixture, element, control or dispenser in each accessible toilet room and bathing room shall be accessible.” It is not the intent of these provisions to require diaper changing tables.

The 2009 ICC A117.1 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities (ICC A117.1) has a new section, Section 603.5, specifically dealing with the technical criteria for diaper changing stations. Diaper changing tables, when provided, must meet the criteria for reach range and work surfaces. Diaper changing tables can be fixed or the fold up



type (see Figures 1 and 2). This means the handle or strap to open the folded types must be within reach ranges. When the table is folded down, or if the table is fixed, the changing surface must have knee and toe clearances and must be no higher than 34 inches above the floor.

A folding diaper changing table installed in an accessible single-occupant bathroom or the accessible stall should not, when folded up, overlap the clear floor space for any fixture (see Section 604.3.3). However, the diaper changing table can overlap the clearances when

in the folded down position (see Figure 3).

### Best Design Practices

Should the diaper changing station be located in the accessible stall? There is nothing in the *International Plumbing Code*® (IPC), IBC or ICC A117.1 that says the diaper changing station cannot be within the accessible stall, as long as it meets the clearance provisions. However, in multi-stall bathrooms, this is the only stall a person with mobility impairment may be able to use. While the accessible stall is not reserved for persons with dis-

abilities, it may be considered good design practice to place the diaper changing station somewhere else in the room. On the other side of the coin, a parent might appreciate the stall as a way to contain their other children and stroller while they are changing a baby. Some designers include a wall-mounted “toddler” seat in the same area as the diaper changing station.

Should the diaper changing station be located in the family-assisted use bathroom? While not required in a family assisted-use bathroom, the intent of this type of facility is to offer everyone who needs assistance to



Figure 1 – Diaper changing table—folded.



Figure 2 – Diaper changing table—unfolded.

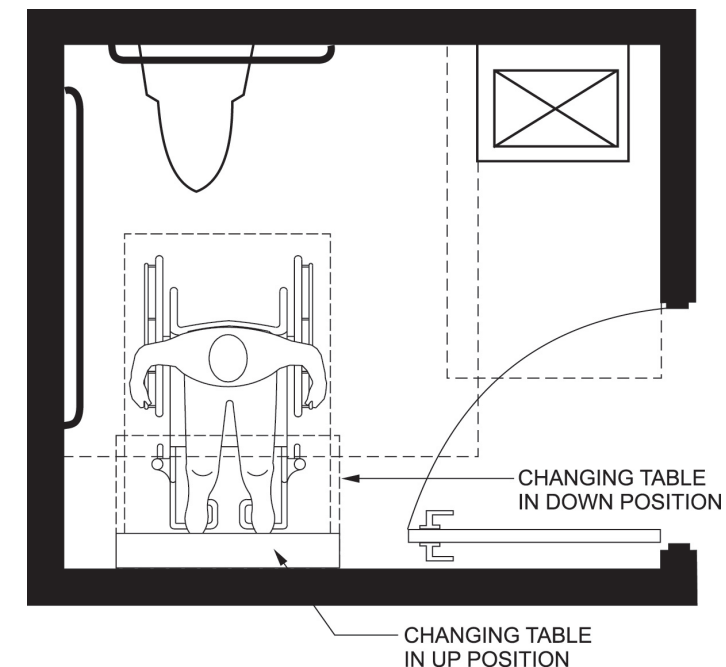


Figure 3 – Example of toilet room plan with diaper changing table.

be able to use this bathroom. This includes families with children that may be of the opposite sex of the parent they are with at the time. If diaper changing stations were provided in the women's and men's bathrooms, that same amenity also should be provided in the family-assisted use bathroom.

### Conclusion

The 2003 ICC A117.1 added provisions to design for accessible toilet facilities for children who are toddlers up to the 12th grade. Adding provisions for diaper changing stations is an extension that includes the care for the youngest members of the population. **bsj**

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