

Navigating Shifts in

FAMILY

DEMOGRAPHICS

By Brandon Willey

In a world where the evolving definition of family is as diverse as the people who form them, ensuring that location-based entertainment venues are inclusive and welcoming is more critical than ever. Imagine a guest stepping into your bowling entertainment center where every family, regardless of structure or size, finds a place to belong—where kids of all ages, parents, grandparents, and guardians can bond beyond the joy of knocking down pins—where inclusivity isn't just a buzzword, but the foundation of every strike, spare, and smile.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF "A.I."

While artificial intelligence may be taking the world by storm, **accessibility** and **inclusivity** must be at the heart of your approach to delivering entertainment that genuinely resonates with today's diverse families. The layout and attraction mix you offer can significantly influence how welcoming and engaging your center feels to guests of all ages and backgrounds. By thoughtfully creating age-appropriate zones, quiet spaces, or kid-friendly areas, you can ensure every guest finds something that suits their needs.

Providing an accessible mix of attractions means offering a variety of activities that cater to different preferences and physical capabilities, such as wheelchair-friendly bowling lanes, sensory-friendly play areas, and adaptive equipment for those with physical disabilities. Additionally, integrating a range of attractions like immersive enclosures, simulators, and virtual reality experiences can appeal to different age groups, abilities, and interests, ensuring entertainment for everyone.

Scheduling regular sensory-friendly events, where lighting, sound, and other stimuli are adjusted, can make your center more accessible to individuals with sensory processing disorders or other forms of neurodiversity. Cultural sensitivity and adaptability are vital components of an inclusive bowling

entertainment center. Recognizing and celebrating various cultural holidays and traditions through themed events or special activities and offering food and beverage options catering to different dietary restrictions and preferences, such as vegan, kosher, halal, and gluten-free, can draw in families from diverse backgrounds.

CRAFTING MESSAGES THAT WELCOME EVERYONE

One of the most effective ways to reach an ever-evolving audience is through inclusive marketing and messaging. Using neutral language and diverse imagery in all promotional materials, you can promote an environment where every guest feels welcome. Referring to "parents and guardians" instead of "moms and dads," avoiding gender-specific pronouns, and featuring imagery of single-parent families, blended families, multigenerational families, and families with LGBTQ+ parents can send a powerful message that your entertainment center is a place for all.

Highlighting inclusivity doesn't just stop at language and imagery. Explicitly stating in your marketing materials that your center is committed to welcoming all types of families underscores your dedication to diversity and inclusion. You could offer flexible pricing and package options that cater to different family sizes and budgets, such as discounts for single-parent families, options for extended family groups, or the addition of multiple guardians or caretakers.

By engaging with your community through partnerships with local organizations that serve diverse populations—such as LGBTQ+ advocacy groups, cultural associations, and disability support organizations—you can host



Competitive Strategies

events that cater to a broader audience. Hosting "Family Appreciation Days" is also a fantastic way to celebrate the diversity of family structures within your community. These events can include special activities, photo opportunities, and small giveaways that acknowledge and honor the unique makeup of every family.

VENUE ACCESSIBILITY AND STAFF TRAINING

Accessibility is critical in ensuring all families can enjoy your center regardless of their physical abilities. Ensuring your facility is fully accessible, with ramps, elevators, appropriately designed restrooms, and wheel-chair accessible lanes, is an excellent place to start. However, accessibility isn't only about physical accommodations; it's about creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable and supported. Providing resources like sensory kits and quiet spaces can be a game-changer for families with neurodiverse needs, allowing them to take a break from the sensory overload that can sometimes occur in a noisy entertainment center.

However, the physical accessibility of your venue is only as effective as the staff who manage it. By training your team in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles, you ensure that they are aware of the diverse family structures and needs of your guests, and they are also proactive in making every guest feel welcome. DEI training helps staff understand the importance of supporting all family types, whether it's a single-parent household, a multigenerational family, or a family with LGBTQ+ parents. Guest service sensitivity is another critical aspect of staff training that can elevate guests' experience.

Teaching your team to be attuned to the needs of different family structures and age groups ensures that everyone who walks through your doors receives thoughtful and personalized service. Whether recognizing the specific needs of elderly family members, being considerate of non-traditional family dynamics, or understanding how to interact with children and adults with special needs, well-trained staff can make all the difference in creating a welcoming environment. When your staff is equipped with the knowledge and skills to accommodate a wide range of needs, they become ambassadors of your center's commitment to inclusivity, enhancing the overall experience for every guest.

In the competitive world of family entertainment, investments in accessibility and staff training are not just ethical considerations but strategic advantages. A bowling entertainment center that prioritizes inclusivity and accessibility will attract a broader and more diverse customer base and build a reputation as a community-centric business that values every guest. By turning these considerations into a core part of your operations, you position your center as a place where all families, regardless of their unique needs, can come together to create lasting memories. ●



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Inclusive Environment:**
 - Design your center to be welcoming for all family structures, ensuring every guest feels they belong, regardless of age, background, or ability.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:**
 - Offer wheelchair-friendly lanes, sensory-friendly play areas, and adaptive equipment.
 - Create age-appropriate zones, quiet spaces, and activities for various physical capabilities.
 - Schedule sensory-friendly events and consider cultural sensitivity in your offerings.
- **Inclusive Marketing:**
 - Use neutral language and diverse imagery in promotions.
 - Highlight different family types (e.g., single-parent, LGBTQ+ families) and promote your center's commitment to inclusivity.
 - Offer flexible pricing options to accommodate different family sizes and budgets.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Partner with local organizations serving diverse populations for events.
 - Host "Family Appreciation Days" to celebrate diverse family structures within your community.
- **Venue Accessibility and Staff Training:**
 - Ensure full physical accessibility (ramps, elevators, wheelchair-accessible lanes).
 - Provide resources like sensory kits and quiet spaces.
 - Train staff in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to offer personalized and sensitive service, enhancing the experience for all guests.
- **Strategic Advantage:**
 - Prioritizing inclusivity and accessibility is not only ethical but also a competitive edge, helping attract a diverse customer base and building a reputation as a community-centric business.



Brandon Willey, ICAE, is co-founder of the LBX Collective and Premier LBX Group, co-host of The LBX Daily Show, and founder and CEO of Hownd. Brandon has an intense passion for the attractions industry and extensive knowledge of location-based entertainment. Brandon is the former chair of IAAPA's FEC Committee and now sits on the North American Manufacturers and Suppliers Committee. You can connect with him at [LinkedIn.com/in/bwilley](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bwilley).