Planning an Accessible Event

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CUPA-HR WILDFIRE COHORT, 2018-2019
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Planning an Accessible Event

Creating accessible events improves the event experience for everybody. When hosting public events, conferences, and meetings, it is required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for all events to be accessible.

The following should be kept in mind while planning public meetings, conferences, and events. Best practices requires proactive planning ahead of the event, and that preparations for accessibility be included in initial event planning. It is strongly suggested that event planners, groups, departments, and organizations appoint at least one individual on the planning team to be responsible for accessibility for the event.

This document should be treated as a living document that is intended to evolve. This document should not be treated as legal advice.
Pre-Event Accessibility Planning Team Checklist:

General Information:

☐ Appoint a designated person responsible for ensuring accessibility of the event, and for facilitating requests for reasonable accommodations. List their contact information on all promotional materials.

☐ Designate person in charge of emergency planning for inclement weather and evacuation from building/space. Ensure accessible exits and alarms. Ensure emergency plan is shared with event planners and participants.

☐ Select and tour the venue to ensure it is accessible and has the technology required to ensure accessibility for CART and/or other requested services. (see ‘Guidelines for Selecting Event Space”.)

☐ Train staff working event about accommodations, assistive devices and on etiquette for communicating with individuals with disabilities. (see Common Accommodation Requests, The following are items that are best to provide proactively Disability Etiquette / Communication Guidelines.)

☐ Meet with event team, review event materials to ensure accessibility. (i.e., font/color contrast of promotional materials, Ensure all event flyers contain the required accommodation notification information.

"Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend [your University] sponsored events. If you require a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this event, please contact [Manager] by [Publish Date] at [Company Phone]."

(see Event Announcements for additional suggestions)
☐ Contact your ADA office/director for an event consultation.

☐ Make event and presentation materials available in advance of the event to interpreters and attendees to allow them to familiarize themselves with the content.

☐ Have multiple avenues for registration if registration is required; i.e. online, paper, in person

☐ Review event and campus accessibility resources. Decide what proactive accessibility and/or accommodations will be provided for the event. Reserve event funds for accommodation requests - for events larger than 100 participants, recommended reserve funds sufficient to provide CART and ASL services.
The following are items that are best to provide proactively:

☐ American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation

☐ Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)/ access to captioning.

☐ Print documents

☐ Looping technology, and/or FM Receivers

☐ Brailed documents

☐ Large print (16-18 size font), E-text, electronic documents

☐ Captioned videos: subtitles and closed captions open up your videos to a larger audience.

☐ Create a scent free statement to include on all event documentation. Unless approved through an accommodation, it is not required by the ADA but it is best practice have a scent free policy for events.

Example: This event is a scent-free environment. In accordance with this, attendees and presenters are requested to refrain from wearing scents such as perfume, cologne, aftershave, etc. They are encouraged to use scent-free personal care products, such as deodorant, hair spray, fabric softener, dryer sheets, etc. to the extent possible. Occasionally a product labeled “unscented” might have a strong odor. These products should also be avoided. Thank you for your cooperation.
Guidelines for Selecting an Event Space:

When selecting a location on or off campus to hold your event, please ensure the location is accessible. University sponsored events are required to be held in an accessible location on or off campus. Check to ensure that there is an accessible entrance to the building, the room is accessible, and there is an accessible restroom. Ensure that elevators are functioning and wheelchair ramps are unobstructed. Please ensure all exterior and interior items contained in this section are provided on the day of your event. For more detailed information visit: ADA Architectural Standards¹

Start with the Exterior of the building:

Accessible Parking

☐ Parking spaces required depends on the total number of parking spaces in the lot, as seen in the table below. Furthermore, one of every six accessible parking spaces, or fraction of six, must be “van-accessible.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Parking Spaces in Parking Facility (Lot or Garage)</th>
<th>Minimum total number of Accessible Parking Spaces Required</th>
<th>Minimum number of Van Accessible Parking Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76-100</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-150</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-200</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-400</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401-500</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-1000</td>
<td>2% of total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1001 and over</td>
<td>20, plus 1 for each 100, or fraction thereof, over 1000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

☐ Clearly marked path of accessible travel from the building entrance, through the building, to the registration/sign in location, and from sign in/registration to the space where the event will take place.

☐ Ensure accessible route in inclement weather from parking space to accessible entrance

☐ Barrier free access to ramp.

☐ If no ramp is present, and you intend to use a temporary ramp:

☐ Insure ramp installed is non-slip
☐ Stable enough for someone who has limited mobility concerns to use without the ramp bowing, shifting, or tilting.

☐ Verify that the ramp meets the ADA minimum of 36 inches of width between handrails and the slope meets ADA standards.

Accessible entrance

☐ If possible, find a building with an accessible entrance not in the back of the building

☐ Wide width entrance (at least 32 inch wide door). Note revolving doors are not accessible

☐ Accessible push button access OR

☐ Doors with no power no more than 5 lb. weight to pull door
Evaluate the Interior of the event space:
Spacing of room

☐ Registration and sign in desks/tables should be at a height that is accessible for anyone who may use a wheelchair or scooter by frontal approach (no more than 34 inches and no less than 28 inches above the floor) and allows for adequate knee/leg clearance under the desk or table (at least 27 inches between the floor and underside of table).

☐ Information on table should be between 28 and 34 inches from the floor to the top of the table.

☐ All exhibits should be in an accessible space that will allow for two-way traffic pathway of at least 64 inches.

☐ If guests are seated at a table, knee space should be at least 27 inches from the floor to the bottom of the table.

☐ Hallway clear of clutter, ensure any tabling allows for clear two-way traffic of 64 inches wide. Barrier free path to any additional rooms that are used for event.

☐ Aisle at a minimum of 36 inches wide to accommodate wheelchair or scooter. Aisle only needs one way traffic

☐ Accessible restrooms and a clear marked path to accessible restrooms

☐ Speaker podium and stage accessible via ramp or lift if not at ground level.
Seating for event space:

☐ Provide chairs with and without arms, as well as bariatric chairs

☐ Avoid seats attached to tables

☐ Accessible, integrated seating throughout the room/s, with reserved seating near front for participants who may have vision or hearing impairments. Do not place all accessible seating in the same area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Seating Capacity</th>
<th>Required Number of Accessible Spaces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-25</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-50</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-300</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-500</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 500</td>
<td>6 (plus 1 additional space for each total seating capacity increase of 100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

☐ Well-lit space for ASL interpreter, preferable with a dark, solid colored background; i.e. no bright light behind them or distracting wall decoration
Technology/accessibility access of room

☐ Ensure well-lit rooms

☐ Ensure that your interpreters have adequate space to interpret, and rest when not interpreting.

☐ Ensure unobstructed view of ASL Interpreter and CART screen/text. Reserve the seats directly in front of the ASL interpreters and the CART screen for individuals using these services.

☐ Ensure at least one roving microphones is available during the event. This should be passed by a suggested one or two staff members/volunteers to the audience participants in order to ask any question/s they may have.

☐ Speaker should repeat the question before answering to ensure that the rest of the participants heard the question and to provide clarity.

☐ Check the acoustics and sound system of the event space/s as soon as possible. This provides an opportunity to request assistance if the sound quality is inadequate.

☐ Ensure that the presentation screen/s are viewable from all areas of the room.

☐ Ensure text is large enough to be read from the back of the room.

☐ Ensure closed captioning text is large enough to be read from the back of the room.

☐ Ensure enough space on PowerPoint/screen for captioning. Generally, four lines for captioning is needed, but this should always be checked before presenting and font size should be large enough to view from the back of the room.

☐ Ensure that you have enough assistive listening devices for all who have requested them, as a rule of thumb be prepared to have an
extra three devices on hand for any participants who did not request the device ahead of time but may request it the day of the event.

☐ Keep all audiovisual assistive devices in one central location. Make sure you have the devices that were requested ahead of time prepared for the participants to use them.
Holding event outdoors? Things to consider:

☐ Are there restrictions on bringing in bags or having chairs available? Please include accommodation notification in close proximity to any event restrictions contained on a flyer/event notification.

☐ Accommodation request should be provided if a request is made to bring in a bag or a chair as an accommodation. The request should be reviewed by the designated accessibility contact for the event.

☐ Have a designated indoor area so people can relocate if necessary

☐ Let attendees know where accessible toilet facilities are located, have a portable accessible toilet if no facilities available.

☐ ADA Standards require that at least five percent of portable toilet units must be accessible.

☐ Have wheelchair accessible paths and clear signage

☐ Have plenty of seating for people to rest if a lot of walking is involved

☐ Ensure paths are clear of any debris
Event Announcements:

All event announcements (online or print) for university-sponsored events should include a statement of sufficient size and distinction informing the public of how to request accommodations for the event.

The statement should be placed prominently on the bottom of the material and include the following details:

☐ Event organizer’s name, email, phone, and TTY (text telephone) numbers

☐ Set a deadline for submitting the request. The department hosting the event can request as far out as 14 days and as close to the event as would be possible to provide requested services.

You can use the following example statement as a template for your announcements:

"Individuals with disabilities are encouraged to attend [name of University] sponsored events. If you require a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in this event, please contact [Manager] by [Publish Date] at [Company Phone]."
Digital Material

☐ Ensure your event website is accessible. Perform an accessibility check. Include information on how to submit an accommodation for the event on website.

☐ State any accessibility features that are available with or without request. Examples include: accessible restrooms, accessible entrance, looping, ASL, and CART.

☐ State any unavailable accessibility features, i.e. no looping available, but can provide FM receivers.

Digital flyers

☐ Ensure documents are physically (i.e. color contrast on document and font size (14-16 when printed) and digitally accessible.

☐ If a request is made for large print it should be font size 18 or larger.
Posting on social media

☐ Image descriptions for any photos
☐ All videos captioned
☐ Image descriptions for any photos
☐ Federal guidelines for accessible social media can be found here².

Common tips:
Use plain, active language
Explain any acronyms
Use Camel Case for hashtags
Use alternative text/image descriptions

Paper Handouts for Event

☐ Ensure flyers are accessible

☐ Text with sans serif or simple serif large type text at least size 14, aim for using font between 16-18, and avoid decorative fonts

☐ Use bold type when separating headlines and differentiating between sections

☐ Avoid using italics or all capital letters.

☐ Spell out numbers

☐ The use of different colored lettering for headings and emphasis is difficult to read for many people with low vision.

☐ Graphics are not accessible, and any background on the page will make the text difficult to read

☐ Use of cream colored paper is easier to read than white paper

☐ Align all text on the left

☐ Offer in alternative formats (braille, large print, black and white, e-text version of document)
Processing Event Accommodation Requests/Common Requests:

Processing requests

☐ Have designated accessibility contact facilitate all accommodation requests.

☐ Approve or deny requests

☐ Approval of a request: If the event team determines that the request is reasonable the designated accommodation contact should reach out to the requester to inform them their request is approved and discuss any necessary details.

☐ Denial of request: If the event team determines they are unable to provide the requested accommodation, the designated accessibility contact should review the request with the Director of the ADA department. The director should approve any denial of an accommodation request.

Common Accommodation Requests:

- Sign language – sign language interpreter arrangement should be made at least five days in advance of the event.

- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) CART is the instant translation of the spoken word into text, also known as real time captioning. The text produces a transcript and can be projected during your event.

- Large print (18 size), Braille, E-text
Day of Event Checklist/During Event:

☐ Ensure there are prepared materials in alternative formats.

☐ Ensure that visual aids are printed in large print, braille and make extra copies available.

☐ Provide written/audio description of all images, and presentation in large print

☐ Ensure technology is working

☐ Do a walk-through of event space

☐ Provide post event survey

☐ How to handle service animals (see Service Animal Guide)

For Presenters:

☐ Announce start and end of presentation

☐ Describe the room layout

☐ Describe locations of the emergency exits, food/beverages, restrooms, and a location where someone can locate a staff member.

☐ Inform attendees in the presentation and at the start of any writing or reading activities the content of the activity during the meeting so attendees with disabilities can fully and equally participate.

☐ Avoid the use of strobe lights, unnecessary/unusually loud sounds, and exceptionally strong scents.

☐ Avoid the use of any non-accessible tool or device, i.e. non accessible ice breakers
☐ Verbally describe all visual aids and materials such as slides, charts, videos, etc.) In detail. (See audio description guidelines)

☐ Ensure all videos are captioned

☐ When reading directly from text, provide an advance copy and pause momentarily when interjecting information not found in the original text. Include “quote” and “end quote” to designate when reading and when stopped reading from text.

☐ Periodically check in with participants to ensure they are able to follow your presentation adequately.

☐ Avoid covering mouth

☐ Repeat questions posed by participants in the audience before responding.

☐ Allow for written questions.

☐ Depending on length of program allow for regular breaks (every hour to hour and a half) for questions and answers as well as restroom breaks for attendees, service animals, CART/ASL providers, and note takers.
Food Guidelines:
Table Set Up

☐ Tables with food should be between 28 and 34 inches from the floor to the top of the table.

☐ If you must place food higher than 34”, you must ensure a portion of this food is available at the lower level.

☐ Knee space: 27” from floor to bottom of table if guests will be using table for eating, writing, interviewing, receiving services, etc.

☐ Aisles: at least 36” wide for maneuverability, and up to 44” wide if goods/services are available on both sides of an aisle to ensure access from both sides.

☐ Cables: covers should be used over electrical cables or cords that must cross over aisles or pathways. Cable covers should be no more than 1/2” thick in order for wheelchairs to traverse across them.

☐ Have personal attendants available if using self-serve style

☐ Consider finger food that do not require utensil use

☐ Clearly mark ingredients in food items and place food on separate platters.
  • If food is being served allow an option on registration to request certain diet
Disability Etiquette / Communication Guidelines:

- Focus on the person, not their disability
- Use people first language (Guidelines, 8th Edition³)
- Do not assume an individual needs assistance. Wait to be asked before offering assistance.
- Talk directly to the individual, not the interpreter, friend, attendant
- Be polite in greeting, shake hands
- Listen carefully, wait to reply until individual has finished speaking
- Be sensitive about physical contact and space
- Respect an individual’s privacy
- Don’t make a decision on behalf of a person with a disability regarding what they can/can’t do
- Place yourself at eye level when speaking with an individual that uses a wheelchair.

Additional Guidelines/Resources:

Audio Description Guidelines

Audio description provides information about what is occurring on the screen. This allows video content and graphics to be accessible to those with visual disabilities. Requests for audio description are increasing. It is anticipated that event planners may receive requests for audio description of event. An example of audio descriptions is found below. Can you imagine what is being described in the attached clip?

Listen to Audio Descriptions in MP3 Format (152KB)⁴

If web video is produced with accessibility in mind, then audio descriptions are often unnecessary, as long as visual elements within the video are described in the audio.

Captioning Guidelines:

Web AIM Captioning⁵
Web AIM Realtime Captioning⁶

Web Content:

Web Content Guidelines⁷
Web AIM Audio Captioning⁸

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⁴ https://webaim.org/techniques/captions/media/audiodesc.mp3
⁵ https://webaim.org/techniques/captions/
⁶ https://webaim.org/techniques/captions/realtime
⁷ https://www.w3.org/TR/WAI-WEBCONTENT/#guidelines
⁸ https://webaim.org/techniques/captions/
**Service Animal**

Service animals are permitted to accompany their handler into any event space. The ADA limits service animals to only dogs (in some limited cases a miniature horse) that have been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with disability. The task performed by the dog must be directly related to the individual’s disability.

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that the service animal be under control of their handler at all times. The ADA does not require service animals to wear a vest, tag, specific harness, or have any specific certification.

If questions arise regarding the validity of a service animal the ADA only allows two questions of the handler:

- Is the dog (or horse) a service animal required of a disability?
- What work or task is the animal trained to perform?

If the person responds with yes and provides a task, the animal is a service animal and should be permitted to accompany their handler in the event.

If questions arise beyond this point please contact your ADA Director.