

# Access Services



## Creating Accessible & Inclusive Meetings or Events

Planning ahead for inclusion can help to create an event that is welcoming to everybody. Here are some guidelines to consider when organizing meetings and events.

### Early Planning Considerations

- When possible, include people with disabilities in all stages of event planning.
- Consider the date and time of your event to minimize barriers related to length of day, number and duration of breaks throughout the event, availability of transportation, and religious observances.
- Designate an **Access Coordinator** on your team for the event or meeting.

### Event Access Coordinators

- Receive, confirm, and track all access requests from participants.
- Manage and implement accommodations.
- Communicate accommodation arrangements with participants and staff.
- Identify assistants who will be available to help with access-related tasks.
- Coordinate all materials for accessible distribution several days in advance.
- Request interpreters and captioners at least **two weeks in advance**.

### Marketing, Web Design, & Forms

- Create accessible materials
- Provide accessible online registration and request preferred names.
- Indicate access being provided (e.g. interpreting, captioning, listening devices, audio description).
- Ask and remind participants to use scent-free products.
- Use this language to invite accommodation requests: "To make disability-related accommodations, contact **Karen Hemker**."

### Venue

Conduct an early site visit to clarify accessibility and what may require additional planning related to:

- Entrances and elevators
- Restrooms (accessible, all-gender, and transfer table availability)
- A refrigerator and microwave for those bringing food
- Sufficient accessible parking and transportation
- Audio technology (microphones, listening devices)
- Temperature control and lighting considerations
- Quiet spaces

Please also:

- Ensure space is large enough.
- Plan for wheelchair accessible seating and paths throughout the space.
- Provide a variety of seating and table options (e.g. table heights, styles, sizes).
- Confirm emergency protocols and request changes needed for disabled people (e.g. elevator use during a fire).
- Identify other events at the same venue that day and plan to reduce access barriers (e.g. managing noise level).
- Avoid decorations in pathways, flash/strobe effects, latex balloons, and fog machines.

### Other Considerations

For all-day or multi-day events and conferences:

Verify and provide, in advance, a list of:

- Accessible lodging
- Accessible restaurants nearby and hours of operation

Contact information for:

- Pharmacy -- nearest and 24 hour
- Urgent care, E.R. and crisis hotline
- Grocery stores
- Accessible transportation
- Veterinary office, emergency vet, and pet stores

## Materials

- Distribute all materials digitally in advance to all attendees -- include an agenda indicating the amount of walking/physical activity.
- Provide copies in Braille (as requested), large print, and digitally on event day.
- Check and update all **presenters'** materials for accessibility.
- Print preferred names on name tags in a large, dark font.
- Consider the color choices and contrast of all materials.
- Gather an **\*Event Kit**.

## Food

- Plan ahead to provide gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, vegan, kosher, and halal options.
- Clearly label all food and keep specialized options separate.
- If meals are provided, offer full course options for specialized requests.

## Announcements

- Introduce the Event Access Coordinator.
- Give clear directions to accessible and all-gender bathrooms
- Ask all participants to say their name before speaking.
- Invite participants to take breaks for self-care.
- Share emergency protocols.
- Explain **\*Event Kit** and identify quiet spaces.
- Invite people with dietary requests to get their food first.

## Access Services Contact Information

- Karen Hemker - Director of Access Services  
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\*Credit to the University of Minnesota for information and materials

## Presenter Considerations

Instruct presenters to create accessible presentations by:

- Checking the order each slide element will be read by a screen reader.
- Including alt text on all images.
- Considering color/contrast choices and avoiding use of flash or strobe effects.

Remind presenters to:

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Always use a microphone.
- Describe images and explain slide content.

## \*Event Kit

- First aid kit with latex-free supplies and ear plugs
- Paper, pens, unscented markers, scissors, tape, duct tape, blank name tags, and clipboards
- Unscented bathroom and cleaning products
- Bike tire pump and patch kit for wheelchair tires
- Juice or regular soda and straws
- Clean rug or mat
- Umbrellas and ponchos
- Water bowl and dog waste bags for service dogs
- Garbage bags

## Event Day

- Post directional signs and station greeters at all entry points, elevators, and stairs.
- Use an inclusive check-in process (consider table height, amount of noise, number of staff, flow of check-in process).
- Avoid background music.
- Brief all staff about accessibility plans.
- Set up clear and spacious paths outside and inside.

## Event Follow-Up

- Distribute promised materials and/or post online in an accessible format.
- Send accessible thank you notes and evaluations and ask for feedback regarding accessibility and inclusion.