

# **GUIDE TO ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING**

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*People with Disabilities  
Are Part of Your Community*

City of Los Angeles  
**DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY**

# **GUIDE TO ACCESSIBLE EVENT PLANNING**

## ***People with Disabilities Are Part of Your Community***

### **Introduction**

Planning meetings and events, which are inclusive of all members of the community, may seem a daunting task. It may appear especially problematic when considering the needs of persons with disabilities. This important, but frequently overlooked segment of the public comprises in excess of 20 percent of the City's population. No event, regardless of its size or the number of attendees, may be deemed a success if it does not include the "disability community."

The purpose of a *Guide to Accessible Event Planning* is to provide an overview of what the event/meeting planner needs to know and do in order to make your activity fully accessible to individuals with disabilities. This guide will provide information to assist you in ensuring that the event/meeting is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the federal civil rights law.

Passed in 1990, the ADA guarantees to persons with disabilities equal access to all programs, services and activities. Access for members of the community with disabilities is required of all public events or meetings, sponsored directly by the City; those conducted by City contractors and/or

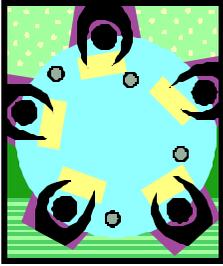
subcontractors; and those held by not-for-profit or private entities where the event/meeting is open to the public, regardless of whether an admission fee is charged.

This Guide has been prepared by the Los Angeles City Department on Disability (DOD). Established in 1998, the Department's mission, on behalf of the City of Los Angeles, is to ensure full access *to* employment, programs, facilities and services. This is accomplished through strategic management and partnerships, community outreach and education, legislative advocacy, training, research, and improved service delivery for the benefit of persons with disabilities.

DOD is available to provide technical assistance to anyone holding an event/meeting and who is interested in assuring persons with disabilities are fully included.

For more information, please call DOD at (213) 485-6334 Voice, (213) 485-6655 TTY, or visit our Website at [www.lacity.org/dod](http://www.lacity.org/dod).

## Background



As the population ages, disability has become a fact of life for tens of thousands of Americans. In preparing for any event/meeting, you must plan to accommodate individuals with a variety of special needs: persons who are hard-of-hearing, have speech or mobility limitations, or have vision or learning disabilities. You will need to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in your activity. If your event/meeting is truly inclusive of all members of the community, providing *reasonable accommodation* must be a key step in the planning process.

Briefly stated, **Reasonable Accommodation** may be thought of as efforts made to remove barriers, which prevent or limit participation by persons with disabilities in a program, service or activity. For example:

If a neighborhood council has developed a draft "action plan" which is being made available (in print only) just prior to the start of the meeting where it is to be discussed, someone who has vision impairment will be at a serious disadvantage. Everyone else in attendance can quickly read the document while waiting for the meeting to begin, but someone with limited or no vision will be unable to do so. Hence, his or her access to the meeting is not equal.

So, how do we define the term reasonable accommodation? For the purpose of this Guide, reasonable accommodation may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Holding an event/meeting at a venue where the path of travel is “barrier free” (e.g., the primary entrance is at street level or a ramp provides access, wheelchair seating is available throughout the venue, restrooms are of a size to allow wheelchair access).



- Making printed material (announcements, agendas, programs) available in alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print, audiocassette, computer disk).



- Providing qualified Sign Language Interpreters, assistive listening devices and/or real-time captioning.



Regardless of the segment of the community *your* event/meeting is intended to reach, it is safe to assume that individuals with disabilities will be a part of the audience. Hence, as you begin the process of planning to stage your activity, start with the premise that some unknown number of attendees will need an unspecified accommodation(s) in order to participate fully. If your event/meeting is targeting seniors, it is even more likely that you will be called upon to provide reasonable accommodation since a higher percentage of persons over the age of 65 have experienced a vision, hearing or mobility impairment. While

you may not always know who your audience will be, it is essential that you prepare to include persons with disabilities.

## Site Selection



Now that you recognize and understand the need to be prepared to offer reasonable accommodation, it is time to consider how this fits into the overall event/meeting planning process. For purposes of discussion, let us assume that the process begins with site selection. If individuals with disabilities are to be included in the target audience for your event/meeting, it is essential to take into account whether a proposed venue is conveniently located. Three factors should be given serious consideration in determining the suitability of any venue:

### 1. **Can the venue be reached by public transportation, as well as by car?**

The ADA does not mandate the maximum distance between an event/meeting venue and the closest access to public transportation. However, that distance may determine if a person with a disability can attend. Therefore, a reasonable distance should not exceed one or two blocks to a bus stop.



While most Angelinos own or have access to an automobile, many persons, particularly seniors and people with disabilities, do not. A sizeable number of such people travel by bus. It is a good idea, therefore, to hold

your event/meeting in a location that can be reached by public transportation. This is highly recommended where the event/meeting is expected to attract a large number of attendees, perhaps 100 or more.

**2. What is the availability of “disabled parking?”**

Typically, having adequate parking simply means making certain there are enough spaces for the number of persons expected. In the context of accessibility (when considering an activity at a hall or auditorium), the question is whether there is adequate “disabled parking” onsite. This means a space



that has been properly striped and displays of the wheelchair with occupant is known as the International Symbol of Accessibility. For every 25 parking spaces in a lot, there must be one disabled parking space wide enough (96 inches) to accommodate a van, with an adjacent 60 inches aisle way. Almost all public facilities currently comply with this requirement and many large privately owned venues do as well.

**3. Does the location have a convenient drop-off and pick-up point, adjacent to the main entrance, where attendees with disabilities may be left or wait for transportation?**

A significant number of persons with disabilities utilize an ADA mandated paratransit provider (such as Access Services, Inc. in Los Angeles County), to meet their transportation needs. This “curb-to-curb” service (passengers are dropped-off and picked-up



at a specific address) operates in conjunction with existing “fixed-route” public transit service. While generally reliable and on time, the nature of paratransit service is such that riders may have to wait a minimum of 30 minutes for transportation to arrive. Hence, an accessible facility should have a designated (preferably covered) area, which is clearly marked and can be readily identified both by drivers and waiting passengers.

The actual viewing of a likely venue may be handled in two ways, via the Internet and/or in-person. It is strongly recommended that inspection of any proposed event/meeting site be conducted to determine its overall suitability. Beyond that, such an inspection provides the opportunity to establish the site’s existing level of accessibility and plan for potential accommodation needs.

You may conduct a Virtual Site Inspection utilizing one of several companies providing this service online. Online site inspection has become increasingly popular and should reduce the time and effort required to select an appropriate location for your event/meeting. In performing either an onsite inspection or virtual tour, use the

**Site/Accessibility Checklist** (see “Attachment 1”) at the end of this document for detailed information. Along with the Site/Accessibility Checklist, be prepared by having with you a list of questions regarding the facility’s accessibility (based on the checklist), tape measure and note-taking supplies.



# Venue Accessibility - Physical Access



It is not the intent of this pamphlet to turn Event Planners into accessibility experts, but to alert you regarding those areas, which must be assessed to determine whether a particular venue is accessible. There are several points to consider aside from those already discussed when looking at a location for your event/meeting (Attachment 1). The following items should be reviewed:

- **Building Access and Entrances:** As previously mentioned, entrances must be either at street level or accessible via ramp (maximum 1-12) or lift, and a minimum of 32 inches wide.
- **Building Corridors (e.g., path of travel and elevators):** Corridors must be wide enough (36 inches) for a wheelchair user to navigate, free from obstacles and of a non-slippery surface; and elevators must be large enough (51 inches deep) for a wheelchair to turn around, have controls marked in Braille and low enough (54 inches from floor) to be reached from a wheelchair, and with audible signals for persons with vision impairments.
- **Signage:** Outside signage must indicate the accessible entrance(s); inside signage for meeting rooms (if a permanent space); and restrooms must have Braille and raised characters.

- **Restrooms:** Restroom entrances must be wide enough (32 inches) to permit wheelchair access; interior must be sufficiently large (60 inches minimum diameter) to permit a wheelchair to enter and turn around; toilet stall doors must be 32 inches wide; toilet stalls (36-60 inches) equipped with a grab bar; and sinks high enough (30 inches) for a wheelchair to roll under with soap and towel dispensers within easy reach (48 inches from floor).
- **Water Fountains:** These must be low enough to permit use by someone in a wheelchair or have a cup dispenser, which can be reached easily.
- **TTY (Teletypewriter for the Deaf):** Public buildings must have a minimum of one TTY -equipped public telephone with appropriate signage. 
- **Meeting Room/Auditorium Setup:**
  - Aisle ways should be sloped, no steps;
  - Where aisle ways have steps, persons using wheelchairs have access via another entrance to seating at or near the front of the hall;
  - Aisles are sufficiently wide to permit a wheelchair to navigate;
  - In facilities constructed after 1990, wheelchair seating is available throughout the room or hall; where seating is at tables, spaces are left vacant throughout the venue;
  - Speakers' podium is at ground level or is accessible via ramp (portable ramp may be used if space permits) or lift; and

- Venue provides Assistive Listening Device (ALD) system for participants who are hard-of-hearing.

There are additional issues to be considered if the event/meeting is taking place at an *Outdoor Venue* (e.g., public park, stadium or other open area). Some points to consider include:

- **Disabled Parking:** (Please see previous discussion under "Site Selection.")
- **Park or Stadium Entrances:** As with entrances to closed buildings, entrances to parks or stadiums must be accessible to persons using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids. There should be at least one entrance with a ramp or lift at parking lot or street level.
- **Event Access:** Ideally, one entrance should be on a level with the event/activity. Where a venue is partially accessible (e.g., some activities take place in a location which can be reached only by stairs), it will be necessary to offer an alternate means for attendees to participate or observe. One option is to set up an area where persons participate and/or observe via closed-circuit television.
- **Seating:** If the event is held at a facility, which offers theater or bleacher seating, spaces must be provided for individuals using wheelchairs. Such spaces may be either at ground level or accessible via ramp or lift.
- **Restrooms:** Facilities that do not have at least one accessible restroom should not be

used unless accessible portable restrooms are provided. Sufficient numbers should be available and located as close to the designated accessible seating area as possible. The path of travel between the seating area and restrooms must be free from obstructions. At a park or other large venue, place accessible portable restrooms throughout the area.

- **Concession Areas and Stands:** These must be accessible and clearly identified. If this is not possible, alternate arrangements (e.g., carts circulating throughout the venue, ushers available to provide assistance in obtaining food and drink) should be made for persons with disabilities.
- **Signage:** Appropriate signage-directing persons with disabilities to accessible parking, entrances, seating areas, restrooms and concession stands must be provided. All accessible amenities should be clearly identified with the international accessibility symbol.
- **Other Amenities:** TTY -equipped phones may already be onsite; if not, they are available from the local telephone service provider. TTY equipment is also available through the California Public Utilities Commission. Assistive Listening Devices - which may be available if the event/meeting is being held in conjunction with the City of Los Angeles - may also be rented.

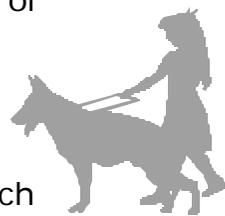
Typically, we think of events/meetings, which are open to the public as taking place in large venues, such as school auditoriums, municipal facilities or rented halls. Increasingly, however, public gatherings are being held in

private homes, condominium or apartment recreation rooms or small businesses. This is especially the case with the formation and certification of Neighborhood Councils throughout the City.

**Neighborhood Council** meetings - by virtue of the Brown Act - must be open to the public, even when held in a private residence. This statute makes it clear that meetings conducted in private residences or businesses must be equally accessible as those held in public buildings.

Therefore, such venues must be accessible to persons using wheelchairs or other mobility aids. As such, one entrance (preferably the primary entrance) must be either at street level or accessible via ramp or lift. It is never appropriate to carry someone - with or without his or her wheelchair - up steps in order to access the meeting.

Service Animals (almost always guide dogs for individuals who are blind, signal dogs for persons who are deaf, assistance dogs for those with mobility impairments, or service animals for persons with emotional disabilities) are permitted to accompany their handlers anywhere members of the public have been invited. Such animals will be well behaved and under control. Be aware that you may be asked by the handler where the service animal may be relieved or given water. You may not bar the animal from a public meeting in a private home or business unless it is disruptive.



If you are unsure whether it is a Service Animal, you may ask the individual: *“What service or assistance does the dog provide you?”* If you have concerns about allowing a service animal into a residence, you should conduct meetings at smaller public venues (e.g., library or recreation center, community or multi-purpose rooms).

## **Appropriate Notice and Registration Program Access**



You have done as much preparation as possible to ensure that the event/meeting is physically accessible. It is now time to inform your target audience - everyone you wish to attend - that reasonable accommodation is available upon request. The following language must be printed at the bottom of all information disseminated to publicize your event/meeting, including registration materials:

**“Sign Language Interpreters, assistive listening devices, or other auxiliary aids and/or services may be provided upon request. To ensure availability, you are advised to make your request at least 72- hours prior to the date of the event/meeting by contacting: (Phone Number, Voice and/or TTY).”**

Please see attached **Coordinating Interpreters for Conferences – Standard Practice Paper** (Attachment 2), for planning and coordinating such services. In lieu of a TTY, you may use the federally mandated 7-1-1 Telecommunications Relay System, operated within California by CRS (California Relay Service), which allows two-way communication by persons who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or have a speech impairment.

If the event/meeting requires registration in order to attend, space should be provided on the form to allow participants to request their desired accommodation. Requests may include:

- Qualified Sign Language Interpreters
- Assistive Listening Devices
- Real-time Captioning Services
- Material in Alternative Formats (e.g., Braille, large print, audiocassette and computer disk)

Remember that nearly all accommodation requests you are likely to receive will involve some expense to your organization. Since the ADA requires that reasonable accommodation be provided, be prepared to take this into consideration when developing the budget for the event/meeting.

One accommodation for which you are not required to pay is the use of a personal assistant; that is, someone who accompanies an individual with a disability and provides needed physical help. If you are holding an event/meeting, you do not have to cover the cost of a personal assistant or allow such assistant to attend free of charge (assuming there is a fee for the event/meeting).

It is essential that the individual(s) responsible for answering the contact telephone number(s) and/or processing registration forms be aware he or she may be called upon to provide a reasonable accommodation.

While you are not required to provide the specific accommodation requested, the ADA does require that the accommodation offered be **“equally effective”** for the individual making the request. For example, if an individual who is blind requests a Braille agenda at the time of the meeting and you cannot get it put into Braille in time, it may be considered equally effective to have someone read the agenda to the person prior to the start of the meeting.

It is equally essential that everyone who will be taking calls or processing forms from the public - volunteers and staff alike - know how to arrange for reasonable accommodation requests. The aforementioned 72-hour deadline is almost always sufficient to facilitate such requests if those responsible for event/meeting planning are aware of the available resources.

There are literally dozens of companies and agencies providing service and/or equipment to permit someone with a disability to fully participate in the event/meeting. It is not within the scope of this pamphlet to provide a comprehensive listing of such entities. However, the numbers for the Department on Disability are (213) 485-6334 Voice, and (213) 485-6655 TTY, and should be given to all staff and/or volunteers involved in this aspect of your planning. DOD staff will quickly put them



in touch with the most appropriate resource to meet the reasonable accommodation request.

If the event/meeting is one that does not require registration in advance, serious consideration should be given to having a pair of Qualified Sign Language Interpreters present, in case some attendees require such assistance.

Additional interpreters should be on hand if the event/meeting includes concurrent and/or breakout sessions. It is also recommended that a few sets of the written materials be prepared in large print (14-font size or greater). This is particularly advisable if the event/meeting is expected to attract a large number of people; hence, increasing the likelihood that some attendees will have hearing or vision impairments.

## **Staff And Volunteer Training**



One aspect of event/meeting planning, which is easily overlooked is the matter of the training of staff and volunteers. If the gathering is expected to be large, you will be using a number of staff members and volunteers to assist in the smooth running of the event/meeting. Along with whatever training you plan to provide, serious thought should be given to offering “awareness training” in order for personnel to better assist attendees with disabilities.

At the least, all persons involved on the day of the event/meeting should be provided copies of (Attachment 3):

## **“Guide to Etiquette and Behavior for Working with Persons with Disabilities”**

If you wish for more specific training for your staff and volunteers, please feel free to contact the Department on Disability for further assistance.

### **The Event Itself**



Even if you have done your job as an Event Planner, a few glitches will inevitably result. In order to minimize the possibility that one of those last-minute “snafus” will involve an attendee with a disability, make sure to do the following: Assign someone to be responsible for assuring that all accommodations (e.g., Interpreters, Assistive Listening Devices, Braille materials) previously requested are on hand at least 30 minutes prior to the start of the event/meeting.

- Test any special equipment (e.g., ALD’s, lifts) beforehand.
- Have a person near or at the registration, or sign-in table to assist anyone needing help in completing necessary paperwork, or in reading event/meeting materials not available in an alternative format.
- Alert all staff and volunteers as to where accessible restrooms, TTY-equipped public telephones and other accessibility features are located.
- If an attendee with a disability needs assistance, provide help but remember that staff and volunteers are not required to do personal chores (e.g., feeding, toileting).

## Conclusion

The Department on Disability knows what a challenge it can be to plan and carry out a successful public event/meeting. Our intent in preparing this Event Planning Guide has been to provide the information necessary to assure that members of the community with disabilities, who need a little extra consideration, in order to fully participate in a public event/meeting receive assistance. While this document cannot respond to every situation that may arise, an effort has been made to address the most common issues and situations.

Feel free to contact the Department on Disability, should you need further assistance with your event/meeting planning activities, and in the meantime, have a great event!





ATTACHMENT 1  
**ATTACHMENT 1**

**SITE/  
ACCESSIBILITY  
CHECKLIST**



# ***SITE / ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST***

**Venue / Site:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Event:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Room:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone No.:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **ITEMS TO BE CHECKED:**

<b>VENUE / FACILITY ACCESS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
▪ Are 96" wide parking spaces designated with a 60" access aisle?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Are parking spaces near main facility/venue entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is there one accessible/disabled parking space for every 25 parking spaces?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is there a "drop off" zone at facility/venue entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is there a step-free route from the parking lot to the building entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is the venue/facility entrance doorway at least 32" wide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is the slope from parking to building entrance 1:12 or less?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Continue on next page . . .

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If the wheelchair accessible entrance is not the primary entrance, is there a sign on the primary entrance directing persons to the accessible entrance?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do doors have lever handles or pressure plates?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the door easy to open?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are other than revolving doors available?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments:**

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<b>FACILITY CORRIDORS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is path of travel free of obstruction and wide enough for a wheelchair (36" minimum)?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is floor surface hard and not slippery?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Do obstacles (e.g., phones, fountains) protrude no more than four inches?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are elevator controls low enough (54") to be reached from a wheelchair?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Are elevator markings in Braille for the blind?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does elevator provide audible signals for the blind?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does elevator interior provide a turning area 51" deep for wheelchairs?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments:**

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<b>RESTROOMS</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
▪ Are restrooms near facility/venue entrance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Do doors have lever handles?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Are doors at least 32" wide?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Are grab bars provided in toilet stalls?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Are sinks at least 30" high with room for a wheelchair to roll under?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Are sink handles easily reached and used?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Are soap and towel dispensers, no more than 48" from floor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Comments:**

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**END**



ATTACHMENT 2  
**ATTACHMENT 2**

**STANDARD  
PRACTICE PAPER**





## STANDARD PRACTICE PAPER

### Coordinating Interpreters For Conferences

People who are deaf are participating more often in international, national, regional, and local conferences sponsored by organizations predominantly composed of hearing people. Conference planners face the challenge of making it possible for participants who are deaf to take part in every aspect of conferences. The following information is provided (by the **Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, Inc.**) to assist the conference planner in providing optimum services for all deaf participants or presenters who attended the conference being arranged.

The conference needs can include interpreting for people who use American Sign Language (ASL) or an English sign or cued system; deaf-blind people who use speech-reading with little or no signing, and other deaf people who may desire assistive listening devices, such as an FM or infrared loop system, or live (real-time captioning).

Advance planning for the conferences should include:

- For larger conferences of two or more days' duration, a coordinator of interpreting services should be hired as an adjunct member of the conference planning committee.
- Provide space on all registration forms for a registrant to notify the conference staff of special communication needs:

- Interpreter Services
  - ASL – American Sign Language
  - an English sign system
  - tactile or close vision
  - oral
  - ethnic/cultural language preferences
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALD's)
- Visual Assistive Devices
- Note-taking Services
- Other (e.g., Cued Speech, Real Time Captioning, Telebraille, etc.).

The deadline date for requests should be minimum of one month prior to the conference to provide enough lead-time for planning of services. The conference can guarantee services only for those registered by the deadline. For late registrants, services may be difficult to obtain on short notice.

Requesting interpreting services prior to the conference allows for the planning necessary to provide a high quality of service. Planning time can be used to obtain the following necessary information:

- Presenters' preferences regarding interpreting services.
- Copies of presentation materials (speeches, songs, poems, etc.) for preview by interpreters.
- Information regarding the format of the presentations.
- Information regarding terminology, topic areas acronyms, conference agenda, and any expected speaker dialects.

Selection of interpreters for the conference should be based on the following factors:

- A minimum of two interpreters is necessary for each session a deaf person will be attending.

When planning for more than one deaf person in a conference with concurrent sessions, enough interpreters need to be scheduled to allow participants to attend the sessions of their choice<sup>1</sup>.

- The same team of interpreters (rather than hourly substitutes) should be used throughout the conference, as the team will acquire knowledge of the consumers, logistics, specialized, vocabulary, and topic areas.
- RID certified interpreters should be used whenever possible, preferably those who have prior experience and/or knowledge of the topic or theme of the conference.
- Ethnic, cultural and linguistic concerns of the consumers should be taken into account in selection of interpreters.

## **INTERPRETING POLICIES<sup>2</sup>**

Some issues, which should be agreed upon in advance of the conference, are:

- What is the cancellation policy for letting interpreters know that they are not needed for the conference, after they have been scheduled to work?
- What happens when more interpreters are scheduled than are needed at conference time?
- What is expected of the interpreter(s) if consumers do not show?
- What is the expected general attire for interpreters?

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<sup>1</sup> See *Team Interpreting and Use of a CDI*

<sup>2</sup> See *Business Practices: Job Billing*

- What policies apply to overtime for interpreters?
- What are the policies applying to videotaping conference activities involving interpreters?

During a pre-conference site visit, the conference planner or coordinator of interpreting services should attend to the following concerns:

- Proper lighting on interpreters.
- Physical location for the interpreters, including a check for:
  - a visual background that is non-distracting to the participants
  - the ability of interpreters to view consumers and their comments
  - elimination of traffic between interpreters and participants
- Easy, inconspicuous switching of team interpreters.
- Adequate, suitably located space for planning of interpreters' logistical needs.
- Appropriate signage to information and locations.

The conference planner should inform presenters on these basic points of protocol for working with interpreters. Presenter and interpreter(s) should meet prior to presentation, when possible, to:

- Preview the general content of presentation.
- Preview special content such as jokes, poems or songs.

- Forewarn interpreters of special occurrences that might be alarming or disconcerting if unexpected.
  - Presenters should not involve interpreters as “models” in demonstrations.
  - Presenters and interpreters are encouraged to talk at break or between sessions about how the interpreting process is going and make appropriate adjustments.

### **COORDINATOR OF INTERPRETING SERVICES**

Conference needs may vary depending on size, nature and duration. For a larger conference of two or more days, a coordinator should be hired as *adjunct member* of the conference planning committee early in the planning process. The person hired for the position of coordinator should have knowledge of the skills of interpreters as well as the needs of deaf and hearing consumers. The coordinator should be a flexible person possessing excellent scheduling skills as well as a calm professional demeanor.

The coordinator would be responsible for:

- Contacting/recruiting and scheduling appropriate, qualified, RID Certified Interpreters for the dates and times needed during the conference.
- Serving as liaison for contracts, payment negotiations, cancellation policies, and payment for interpreting services.
- Providing entrance credentials, badges, schedules and information regarding sessions for the interpreters upon their arrival at the site.
- Deploying interpreters according to need.

- Arranging last minute substitutions or changes.
- Providing technical and logistical assistance to the conference personnel.
- Problem solving or putting out “fires.”
- Coordinating with other language interpreters.
- Providing post-conference reports, summaries and final report on expenses as requested by the conference planning committee.

The coordinator of interpreting services and the conference interpreters might be hired through an interpreter service agency. If the coordinator is also an interpreter, it is best that this person not be scheduled for interpreting duties but be available for contact at all times through a pager system.

The Association believes that the planning for and use of skilled interpreters provides optimum services for the needs of deaf and hearing consumers alike who attend the conference. The conference planner can enhance the provision of equal access to all conference proceedings through this good use of qualified conference interpreters.

Use the following table, “Timeline for Scheduling Conference Interpreting Services,” to build a timeline for scheduling your interpreters:



## TIMELINE FOR SCHEDULING CONFERENCE INTERPRETING SERVICES

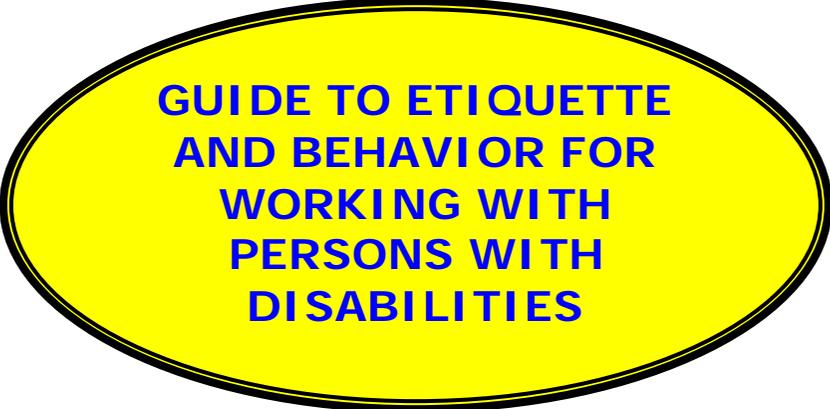
Activity	2-3 mo	1 mo	2 wks	On Site	2 wk Post
Hire Interpreter coordinator	?				
Secure names of interpreters		?			
Mail contracts to interpreters		?			
Registration requests received		?			
Contracts returned			?		
Written presentations, songs or audio tapes to interpreters			?		
Names of deaf participants			?		
Cancellation of services			?		
Conference logistics				?	
Payment to interpreters					?
Post-conference meeting to evaluate services					?



ATTACHMENT 3  
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**GUIDE TO ETIQUETTE  
AND BEHAVIOR FOR  
WORKING WITH  
PERSONS WITH  
DISABILITIES**





# **GUIDE TO ETIQUETTE AND BEHAVIOR FOR WORKING WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

## **PART I - GENERAL ETIQUETTE**

### TIPS ON CONVERSATION:

The most important thing to remember in any conversation with someone with a disability is to assume nothing. If you have a question about what to do, what language or terminology to use, what assistance, if any, they might need, the person with the disability should be your first and best resource. Do not be afraid to ask.

- Be patient, not only with the person with the disability, but with yourself. Frustration may come from both sides of the conversation and needs to be understood and dealt with by both parties.
- The most important thing to focus on during conversation with persons with disabilities is the overall goal. It is simply communication between two individuals. Ultimately, it is what is communicated, not how it is communicated.

## **PART II - SPECIFIC DISABILITIES**

The following summary contains many true statements, but no absolute truths. Every person with a disability is an individual. While this summary is about disabilities, it is important to remember that you are not working with disabilities, you are working with individuals who have disabilities. It is most important to ask the individual what terminology they prefer or if they need assistance. With this in mind, the following general guidelines are offered:

### **DISABILITY – Blind and/or Visually Impaired**

#### THINGS TO KNOW:

- The definition of *legally blind* is 20/200 vision with best correction. Most persons who are considered blind have some sight.
- Most persons who are blind are mobile and independent.
- While many persons who are blind can use Braille, the majority of persons who are blind do not.

#### THINGS TO DO:

- Introduce yourself. Identify who you are and what your job or role is. Give the person verbal information that is visually obvious to those who can see.
- Be descriptive when giving directions. For instance, saying, "Over there," has little

meaning to someone who cannot see you point. Instead, saying, "Four doors after turning right from the elevator," would be much more helpful.

- Always ask someone if they need your assistance and how you can assist them. Lead someone who is blind only after they have accepted your offer to do so. Allow them to hold your arm rather than you holding theirs. It is important that they control their own movements.
  
- Many techniques are used as tools for independence. Some persons who are blind use a "clock" reference for things directly in front of them such as a meal. For example, something could be positioned at three o'clock (to their right) or six o'clock (directly in front and close). Before using this technique, ask the person if this is useful. Remember to describe things from their perspective, not yours.

**THINGS TO AVOID:**

- DO NOT move any items (i.e., furniture, personal items) without informing the person who is blind. Doing so can be frustrating and, in some cases, dangerous for the person.
  
- DO NOT use references that are visually-oriented, such as: "Over there near the green plant."
  
- DO NOT interact with a dog guide while it is working (in harness), without permission.

## **DISABILITY – Deaf and/or Hard-Of-Hearing**

### THINGS TO KNOW:

- Most persons who are deaf or hard-of-hearing have some hearing.
- Sign language is not another form of English. It is a language with its own grammar, context and rules.
- Lip-reading, while helpful without sound clues, is only about 30% effective.
- Long conversations with persons who lip-read can be very fatiguing.
- Not all persons who are deaf use sign language, read or write.
- Not all persons who are deaf speak or lip-read.

### THINGS TO DO:

- Determine how the person prefers to communicate.
- If the person uses an interpreter, address the person directly, not the interpreter.
- If the person reads lips, speak in a normal not exaggerated way. Short, simple sentences are best.
- If the person reads lips, avoid blocking their view of your face. Make sure the lighting is good.

- Gain their attention before starting a conversation.
- If there is any doubt that you have been misunderstood, ask if they understand you.
- Be aware of situations where a person may be waiting for assistance (i.e., transportation, a table, the start of an activity), where the common method of communication is by announcement or the calling of the person's name. Develop an alternative method for notifying the deaf and/or hard-of-hearing person.

**THINGS TO AVOID:**

- DO NOT become impatient or exasperated with the person if it takes additional time to communicate.
- Make sure there are no physical barriers to effective communication.
- If the person is using hearing aids, avoid conversations in large, open and/or noisy surroundings.

**DISABILITY – Wheelchair User**

**THINGS TO KNOW:**

- There are many reasons (not just paralysis) why someone uses a wheelchair.
- There is a wide range of physical abilities among those who use wheelchairs. Persons using them may require different degrees of assistance or no assistance at all.

- Some persons do not use wheelchairs exclusively, but may use canes, leg braces, and in some cases, no assistive devices at all for short periods.
- All wheelchairs are not the same. Different sizes and shapes meet different needs. Some wheelchairs are manually operated and others are motorized.

THINGS TO DO:

- If you are requested to fold, carry or store a wheelchair, treat it with care. They can break, and are difficult to repair on short notice. It is extremely disruptive to the user if their wheelchair is unavailable.
- When speaking to someone who uses a wheelchair, give the person a comfortable viewing angle of your face. Having to look straight up is not a comfortable viewing angle.

THINGS TO AVOID:

- DO NOT push someone using a wheelchair without permission.
- When communicating, do not stand too close to the person in the wheelchair. Give him/her some space.

## **DISABILITY – Speech Limitations**

### THINGS TO KNOW:

- There are many causes for persons having speech limitations. Deafness, cerebral palsy, stroke, head injury, and general speech impairment are just a few.
- It is not unusual in stressful situations for a person's speech to become harder to understand.

### THINGS TO DO:

- If you do not understand what the person is saying, bring it to his/her attention immediately and ask how the two of you may better communicate.
- If the situation is stressful, try to stay calm. If you are in a public area with many distractions, move to a quiet or private location.
- Consider writing as an alternative means of communication.

### THINGS TO AVOID:

- DO NOT pretend to understand them if you do not.
- DO NOT become impatient with the communication difficulty.
- DO NOT finish the person's sentences or interrupt.

## **DISABILITY – Dwarfism**

### THINGS TO KNOW:

- Dwarfism is a protected disability under the ADA. Other preferred terms are "person of short stature" or "little person." Generally, a person is considered to have dwarfism if they are 4' 10," or under. The individual may or may not have an apparent disability.
- Less than half of those with dwarfism experience orthopedic impairments.
- A significant difficulty for those with dwarfism is receiving treatment based on their size, rather than their age.

### THINGS TO DO:

- Whenever possible, try to maintain eye level contact with the person. This may require standing a little further away than usual so that the person does not have to look straight up. Picking a person up or squatting down is not acceptable methods of having eye contact.
- If the person is having difficulty dealing with furniture, ask what he/she prefers. Do not volunteer footstools or stepladders.
- Relate to the person's age and professional status, not his/her size.

THINGS TO AVOID:

- DO NOT pat the person on the head.
- DO NOT point out to the person that he/she is short; the person already knows it.
- Avoid short jokes even if the person initiates them.
- Avoid questions about the person's sexuality or sex life. A person's "differentness" does not give you a license to go beyond common standards of decorum.

###

# NOTES



For Questions Contact:  
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