



## Making Meetings Accessible

This is designed to provide information on making meetings accessible to persons with disabilities, in compliance with Section 508 and other disability rights laws.

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### Background and Legal Requirements

*All meetings organized or paid for by CDC must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Federal Officials are responsible for the accessibility of the meetings conducted under the auspices of their program or office.*

Sections 501 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as well as Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) stipulates that public facilities must make reasonable modifications to avoid discrimination in their policies, practices and procedures, which includes ensuring that such facilities are physically accessible to people with disabilities. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires Federal Agencies to provide employees who have disabilities access to electronic and information technology that is comparable to the access available to employees and members of the public who are not people with disabilities. These laws mandate certain proactive steps be made to ensure accessibility to people with disabilities who are visitors, employees, or applicants for employment.

Planning training, meetings, and conferences that are accessible to people with disabilities involves focusing on the accessibility of all aspects of the meeting from choosing a site through promotion, registration, presentations, and handouts. The Rehabilitation Act and ADA provides to individuals with disabilities the same civil rights protections that apply to race, sex, national origin, and religion. Consequently, any meetings that are open to the public must comply with the provisions of the Act. Furthermore, if the conference site is a public facility such as a hotel, it must also comply with the ADA.

The meeting planner must also work to ensure access to both the physical environment as well as access to the information which will be presented. Doing so will assure that any person with a disability – be they an invited speaker/presenter or an attendee – will have full and equal access to the facility and the proceedings. Attention to the information on this website will enhance the accessibility for persons with disabilities.

### Accessible Meeting Announcements

Whether training is developed in-house, or contractor provided, the training developer is responsible for providing compliant electronic training modules, as well as alternative formats for handouts of slides and other documentation. Assistance with testing training modules may be available through the CDC Section 508 Helpdesk.



Know your audience! Because no two disabled people experience their disability in exactly the same way, it's important to know who the audience is. The person in charge of handling the accommodations for the conference/ presentation should, if possible, speak with the disabled person(s) to inquire as to what their specific limitations are (total blindness, partial vision, color-blindness, or hard of hearing person who uses a FM System and does not rely on a sign language interpreter as opposed to a deaf person who does, Real Time Captioning, etc.) and how their needs can best be accommodated. Use registration forms to identify any special accommodations that may be necessary. An inquiry statement similar to the following must be included on all marketing posters, fliers, and emails:

- *"If you have a disability and require special assistance, please inform (conference planner) by attaching your requirements to this form or contact (conference planner) via email or telephone at (add contact information)."*
- *"If you have a disability and may require accommodation in order to fully participate in this activity, please check here; you will be contacted by someone from our staff to discuss your specific needs."*

#### **Additional tips for general meeting accessibility:**

- Check for the special needs of presenters with disabilities. Special needs may include ramping or podium requests, a Sign Language to spoken English interpreter for a deaf presenter, an orientation and mobility specialist, or guide for a person with limited vision.
- Choose well-lit and easily accessible meeting rooms.
- Control background noise to the greatest extent possible. Choose a meeting room with good acoustics and an auxiliary sound system, if possible.

## **Accessible Presentations and Materials**

Materials intended for electronic distribution (e.g. via a website or CD-ROM) must meet CDC and HHS criteria for the accessibility of the format in which the materials are available. The [CDC Section 508 for Web](#) has information on accessibility for a number of formats.

- Be sure to distribute checklists for the formats that will be used to presenter(s).

Discuss with each presenter, prior to the meeting, the importance of developing a presentation that will be accessible to all participants.

- Instruct the presenter(s) to include only the key points of the presentation on overheads or slides. Be sure they are completely legible, with large print and sharp, contrasting colors. In addition, ask the presenter(s) to limit the number of overheads or other visual aids used in the presentation and to allow adequate time for the audience to read the visual aids. Relying too heavily on Power point slides can sometimes cause the speaker to speak to the screen instead of the audience.
- Ask the speaker(s) to accompany conference materials, including presentations and handouts, with a complete verbal description. If slides, overheads, videos, or other visual aids are used, the speaker must describe them orally. Ask presenter(s) to provide a copy of presentation materials well in advance to allow for large print or Braille transcription.
- Instruct the presenter(s) to speak in well-paced and well-modulated tones. It is particularly important for presenters to monitor their rate of speech and not speak too rapidly. At the beginning of the presentation, inform the audience that notes will be available in appropriate formats for those persons needing such an accommodation.

## **Captioning**

Any conference material that includes an audio component should have a text version accompanying it (open or closed captioning.) This includes all training and informational video and multimedia productions which support the Agency's mission (both live and pre-recorded.)

The captioning requirement covers:

- Video for over-the-air broadcast, webcast and/or CD distribution
- Live stream and on-demand videos of any length
- Public service announcements (PSAs)



- Training videos
- Videos produced internally or externally, including by partners
- Webcasting
- Video Pod (or Vod) casts
- Both internal and external audience

There are two types of captioning. In *open captioning*, the words are visible on the screen. In *closed captioning*, the captions are hidden to most viewers and are decoded for people needing the captioning.

Most video is captioned from scripts or transcripts. This captioning is 100% accurate.

Webcasts and other live broadcasts are open captioned on the fly. These must be at least 95% accurate.

Once captioned, the video master must be encoded. That work can be done in-house by NCHM. For details and cost information, contact your Section 508 web contact at <http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/#2>. Captioning and encoding are handled simultaneously for webcast or other live broadcasts.

#### **When can I NOT caption a meeting?**

When the participants are a group of individuals known personally by the organizer as not having any communication impairments, **and** when the meeting is not intended to be recorded or rebroadcast. Generally, if you are not sure, you should caption the meeting. Contact the CDC Section 508 Helpdesk for more information on this policy.

#### **Audio meetings:**

Audio Meetings are teleconferences and LiveMeeting conferences. Audio meetings may include video, Envision, or other multimedia – however this section discusses the audio portion of remote meetings. Audio meetings are captioned using the Federal Relay Service. Pricing for this service is available at

[http://www.federalrelay.us/resources/Federal%2BRelay%2BPricing%2BTable\\_contract%2BGS00T07NSD0010\\_8-1-2009.pdf](http://www.federalrelay.us/resources/Federal%2BRelay%2BPricing%2BTable_contract%2BGS00T07NSD0010_8-1-2009.pdf). Note that individual employees may NOT be charged for this service – the cost will be charged to the Center that is hosting the meeting.

#### **Small groups (Internal)**

When meeting with a small group (such as a workgroup), first determine if the “When can I NOT caption a meeting?” policy applies. If not, the Federal Relay Service should be employed as listed below. Note: a computer **MUST** be in the room where the person with a disability is located, and the computer must be connected to the Internet. Contact the ITSO Helpdesk or your TSE to arrange for a computer to be placed in the conference room if one is not present for their use.

- If a single person with a hearing disability **that can speak** needs captioning, consider using the CAPTEL service.
  - WebCapTel is a web-based service that allows a person who can speak but has difficulty hearing over the phone to read word-for-word captions of their call on a web browser during the call, while at the same time hearing the other person using any telephone.
  - A WebCapTel user would make or receive calls while logged into a website ([www.sprintcapter.com](http://www.sprintcapter.com)) and hear the person on the other line using their own cell phone, desk phone, cordless phone, or even an amplified phone. The user (if they have any residual hearing) hears the person speaking through any telephone, not through the internet or web browser. During the call, captions appear on the user's web browser. Skilled human captioners are fully trained to caption your calls as quickly, accurately, and privately as possible. All calls are kept secure and confidential. Captions are provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in English, and from 7am to 11pm Central Time, 7 days a week in Spanish.
- If a single person with a hearing impairment that cannot speak needs captioning, consider using the IP Relay Service (FRSO).
  - This system, located at <http://www.frso.us/>, uses a Web Browser to simulate a TTY (Teletypewriter, a piece of assistive technology commonly used by persons who cannot hear or speak). Deaf, hard of hearing or speech disabled customers use this “Internet” TTY to type their conversation to a Federal Relay operator and the operator reads aloud these typed words to friends, family members or business associates. The standard telephone user responds with spoken words which the operator types back to the “Internet” TTY user.



- The process causes a delay while the cautioner types and the user responds. This can cause difficulties in allowing a person with a disability to participate in a group discussion among a number of people. In these instances use the [Relay Conference Captioning](#) service outlined below.
- There are other types of Relay services available, including Voice Carry Over and Video Relay. Contact the Section 508 Helpdesk if you feel none of the listed options meet your needs.

### ***Large or Unknown Groups***

Audio conferences consisting of any group large enough to consist of persons whose disabilities you do not know must use the Relay Conference Captioning Service (FedRCC). **NOTE: Requests to use FedRCC must be made at least 48 hours in advance (two working days).** Requests received with less than 48 hours advance notice will be covered using best efforts, but cannot be guaranteed.

- Federal Relay Conference Captioning is an Internet-based technology that can allow persons with communications disabilities to join and participate in teleconference meetings. Anyone who has access to the Internet and has a web browser can use [www.fedrcc.us](http://www.fedrcc.us).
- FedRCC is priced per minute based on the meeting, making it more cost-effective if more than one person is participating via relay.
- FedRCC uses the same high-quality steno-cautioners that provide closed captioning for live television, news, sports and weather to deliver live, real-time text streamed to an Internet-connected computer anywhere in the world. A high-speed Internet or dial-up (56k) connection will work.
- FedRCC is available from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays).

### **Scheduling Your FedRCC Teleconference Call**

Currently, all FedRCC calls are scheduled using an online ordering system at [www.fedrcc.us](http://www.fedrcc.us) and click "Book and event now".

- **Step 1** – Secure a teleconference/audio bridge from your telecommunication provider;
- **Step 2** – Complete the [ordering form](#) including date, time and conference call number.

*Scheduling Support E-Mail* [cc@captioncolorado.com](mailto:cc@captioncolorado.com)

### **Mobile service on the Go!**

Federal employees who rely heavily on teleconferencing as a normal course of business will now have the ability to access the Federal RCC–Mobile service from any location that has wireless coverage using supported wireless devices. This service is accessible over any wireless network and can be accessed at <http://mobilercc.sprintrelay.com> from the internet browser on select mobile devices, including Blackberry® Smartphones and WindowsTM enabled Smartphones. Users will still register for a captioned event by accessing the [www.fedrcc.us](http://www.fedrcc.us) site.

### **Video:**

#### ***Listen-only presentations***

Presentations where participants cannot interact (e.g. All-Hands meetings, Briefings, etc) should use [Relay Conference Captioning](#) to provide accessibility for persons with communications disorders. Presenters should be instructed to describe any charts, visuals, or other non-audio content being presented.

#### ***Videoconferences [Envision]***

ITSO is in the process of deploying a new system for Envision that will support the use of captions in real time. Until this system is operational, use the guidance for [audio meetings](#). Note: a computer **MUST** be in the room where the person with a disability is located, and the computer must be connected to the Internet. Contact the ITSO Helpdesk or your TSE to arrange for a computer to be placed in the conference room if one is not present for their use.

#### ***Recorded Video***

Recorded Video must be captioned. See the Section 508 for Web site at <http://intranet.cdc.gov/cdcweb/usability/508/#1> for specific guidance and information on captioning contracts for recorded video. NOTE: If a video is to be placed on the web, each Center is assigned a "Web 508 Approving Official". The Web 508 Approving Officials are those staff within the CC/NCs that review and approve Web materials for compliance with Section 508 standards and policies.



## Onsite Accessibility

### Audio Accessibility

#### Accessible Presentations for Individuals with Visual Impairments<sup>1</sup>

##### *Venue requirements*

- Provide oral or electronic descriptions/maps of meeting room layouts, emergency exit locations, and amenities prior to the beginning of the conference/presentation. Let it be known to the participants who have visual impairments that there will be a pre-conference meeting in order to do an individualized tour of the facilities, identifying the location of the meeting rooms, amenities and exits. Offer assistance in helping to find appropriate seating in the meeting room.
- Offer to make available papers, agendas, slides, or other materials in alternative formats. Options include large print, Braille, tape recordings, and computer disks or CDs. Print materials can be transcribed in Braille through contracting with outside agencies or vendors (contact the OEEODM Reasonable Accommodations team for more information 301-827-4840.) A verbal listing of contents should be included at the front of each tape. One other option is to have reader(s) available for participant(s) with visual disabilities.
- Reserve seats in the front row(s) and keep these available for persons with disabilities. Have a staff member or volunteer available to sit with a visually impaired participant in order to describe the presentations, if the participant so desires.
- Check for adjustable lighting in the meeting room; this is particularly important for an individual with low vision. Lowering the ceiling lights can increase the contrast—and thus the visibility—of audiovisual materials. However, moving from a brightly lit vestibule to a darkened room can cause temporary disorientation. Ask the participant whether a sighted guide would be helpful.
- Use sharply contrasting colors and large print for materials, maps, books, signs, menus, forms, and displays. If requested, all materials must be made available in large or raised print or in Braille.

##### *Presenter Requirements*

- Also remind the presenter(s) to avoid using gestures to illustrate a point such as using visual points of reference (e.g., “If you’ll notice over here...” or “If you compare this figure with that one...”)
- It is not necessary for the presenter to create a “special” presentation if it will diminish the content. The presenter should be reminded that all visual material must be described in detail—which also means that items should not be censored. If the presenter would normally exhibit a graphic as part of the talk, there is no need to jettison it because of the possible presence of visually impaired attendees, the graphic just needs to be described in detail.
- It can be suggested to presenters that they might consider bringing along objects that the blind can touch – nothing fragile – items which can be picked up and held. Also, interspersing a talk with documentary sound examples may bring the concept to life in a way sometimes more vivid than pictures. Use of background music, if it is appropriate to the presentation topic, may also be a rich addition.

### Visual Accessibility

#### Accessible Presentations for Individuals who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

- Any conference material that includes an audio component should have a text version accompanying it (open or closed captioning.) This includes all training and informational video and multimedia productions which support the Agency’s mission (both live and pre-recorded.) Relay conference captioning is available free of charge to Federal employees to caption meetings, videoconferences, and multi-party conference calls at <http://www.fedrcc.us> (transcripts are also available through this service.)
- Arrange for qualified, professional interpreters, trained in the preferred communication style, for example, American Sign Language, Signed English, or Cued-Speech. Arrange for an adequate number of interpreters for meetings, meals, and social events; at least two interpreters must be available for any meeting longer than an hour and a half. Have an additional interpreter available for registration. Provide the interpreter with material ahead of time, if possible, so he/she can become familiar with it. Give the interpreter agendas and key printed information that will be used during the presentation.

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<sup>1</sup> Note. The items listed in this section may also increase the accessibility for sighted individuals with reading or learning disabilities.



- Allow preferred seating for individuals making use of sign language interpretation. Take into account that the interpreter needs to be either next to the speaker/presenter or seated in a sight line so as to allow the deaf person to see the speaker/presenter beyond the interpreter. (Preferred seating should also be away from heating and air conditioning units, hallways, and other “noisy” areas so as not to be distracting to the interpreter(s).) Keep lights bright in the area where the presenter and interpreter stand.
- Find out if any assistive listening devices will be used by the participants to improve the auditory reception of speech or sound information. These devices, which can be used alone or in conjunction with personal hearing aids, involve a microphone-transmitter unit, either worn by the speaker or placed close to the sound source and a receiver worn by the listener. Categories of assistive listening systems include:
  - Hardwired Devices
  - Induction Loop Devices
  - FM Devices
  - Infrared Devices
  - Amplification Systems
- Check that window coverings are adjustable to reduce or remove glare.
- Arrange seats in a circle for smaller discussion groups so the deaf participant(s) may more easily follow/know who is speaking.
- Have notes on the presentation available beforehand, if at all possible. Alternatively, have a staff member or volunteer available to take notes during the presentation, allowing the participant to focus on the speaker and interpreter.
- Be aware there may be deaf/hard of hearing individuals in attendance who don’t use sign language to communicate and that they may require Real Time Captioning services. Also the possibility of real-time captioning for large group meetings should be investigated.

## Physical Accessibility

### *Accessibility for Individuals Who Use Wheelchairs*

- Ensure that there is handicap parking available, if needed, making sure that the parking space(s) will also accommodate lift equipped vans.
- Hold meetings/presentations in rooms where the doors are wide enough, and easy to open (requiring no more than 5 pounds of pressure). Also ensure that the main entry and exit routes of the facility are easily maneuverable and obstacle free.
- The facilities where conferences or meetings are held must have wheelchair accessible restrooms. An accessible restroom includes wide easy-to-open doors (requiring no more than 5 pounds of pressure); unobstructed sinks of appropriate height; large stalls with raised toilet seats, grab bars, adequate space in which to maneuver a wheelchair, with flushing mechanisms and dispensers easily operated/reached from a sitting position.
- Allow for adequate space for wheelchairs in meeting rooms. Also allow adequate space at the general seating conference and banquet tables alongside the other participants, making sure not to create a fringe community of wheelchair users on the outskirts.
- Be mindful that the registration table is wheelchair accessible.

### *Accommodating Participants with Differing Disabilities*

In the event that there are conference participants with both visual and hearing impairments, accommodations necessary for one person may conflict with the needs of another. For example, presenters using overheads usually request that the lights be dimmed in the room, making it difficult for a person who is hard of hearing to see the interpreter in the dim light. However, if the lights are raised, individuals with visual impairments may have difficulty seeing the overheads because the contrast is decreased by the bright lighting. Therefore, it is particularly important to consult with persons with visual impairments and those who are deaf or hard of hearing before visual aids are used or the lighting level in the room is brightened or dimmed.

### *A Special Note for Conferences and Meetings Including Meals*

When planning conferences and meetings that include meals, meeting planners should:



- Include personal assistants and interpreters in the estimated number of participants.
- Make adequate provisions for seating, allowing all participants to sit in the same area. Do not place persons in wheelchairs, or those who use walkers or dog guides on the fringes of the dining area.
- Avoid buffet lines; they can be particularly difficult for persons with mobility or visual impairments. If they can't be avoided, ask the individual with a disability if she/he would like assistance in reaching the food.