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Planning Accessible Meetings and Events
Minimize Surprises - Plan Ahead

MS Word format. <../documents/AccessibleMeetingsandEvents.doc>

The ADA Coordinator's Office is available to assist members of The Ohio State University Community in planning events. You can contact the office by e-mail at ADA-OSU@osu.edu or by calling (614) 292-6207.

Ask Early

There are no limits on human variation and one size never fits all. Thoughtful planning will minimize surprises and allow you to respond to requests efficiently. There is no substitution for inviting participants to let you know what they need early. The first phrase taught to me in a sign class was "slow down I am learning." In the same vein invite your participants to make requests for accommodation on all your communication (registration form, flyers, web pages, e-mails and print). For example:

> "For questions about accessibility or to request accommodations please contact (name) at (include phone and an e-mail address so that someone with a hearing or verbal disability can make inquiries). Two weeks advance notice will allow us to provide seamless access."

The person or office sponsoring the event should be assigned as a contact person because they will know about the event. When they can not answer a question about a need, they simply take down the information on the request and the contact information on the individual. They can then contact the ADA Coordinator for assistance in locating resources and implementing accommodations.

Budget

When budgeting for meetings or conferences, include accommodating people with disabilities as a budget item. You might need a sign language interpreter, assistive listening devices or amplification of the speaker or media in an alternate format, i.e. a copy of the power point presentation or handouts in large print or Braille. If you need to get an idea of costs, the ADA Coordinator's Office can help you anticipate costs and identify resources so that you are not addressing these needs at the last minute.

Staff

When you plan for moderators, facilitators, and registration, identify individuals that would be willing to volunteer as readers, guides, and do other functions related to accommodating individuals with disabilities. Be sure that these volunteers are included in any staff orientation and ensure that they have training on how to work with people with disabilities.

Have communications and other assistive devices regularly available for the use of individuals with disabilities. Consider the size and nature of your event and participants and the possibility of reserving interpreters and/or captionists as soon as you have selected the meeting dates. Familiarize yourself with the cancellation deadlines for the various agencies.

Site Selection

A site visit to the hotel or conference center should be conducted to determine whether barriers to accessibility exist. The site visit should consider barriers to those with a wide range of impairments (visual, hearing, mobility, etc.) in all of the areas used including:

- Accessibility/availability of parking, hotel shuttles, and public transportation;

- Entrances and interior doorways – width, ramps, automatic door openers, etc.;

- Signage – location of accessible bathrooms, entrances, etc.;

- Corridors, doorways, and aisles – width for wheelchair access, etc.;

- Elevators – easy access and adequate numbers;

- Sleeping rooms;

- Meeting rooms – allow for extra room capacity & table space to accommodate wheelchairs & assistance animals, including banquet/reception/meal areas. Also allow space for a clear line of sight to the interpreter/captionist from an appropriate number of seats in the audience;

- Restrooms;

- Dining facilities & catering (including ability to provide for dietary restrictions);

- A quiet break space for people and;

- Toileting space for assistance animals.

Links to detailed check lists are provided in the resource section.

Promotion and Registration

When promoting your event and planning for registration, you should:

- Use the appropriate standardized symbols on all conference/meeting promotion, registration forms, information materials, and facility signage. These symbols may be downloaded from the Graphic Artists Guild at: **www.gag.org/resources/das.php** <http://www.gag.org/resources/das.php> .

- Include an accommodation statement on your registration form, flyers, and computer or print advertisements.

- Include photographs of individuals with disabilities in the promotional material; this illustrates a commitment to assuring all participants an accessible conference/meeting.

- Planners should arrange for all promotional material to be available in alternative formats, such as Braille, large print, or computer disk.

- In all conference/meeting materials, make participants aware that accommodations can be made for a variety of needs. The registration form must ask whether assistance is needed. Examples include statements such as the following:

- If you have a disability and require assistance, please inform (planner) by attaching your requirements to this form or call (planner & their contact information.)

- If you have a disability and 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.

If a general statement such as the one above is included, staff responding to requests should be prepared to ask detailed questions regarding necessary accommodations. A more detailed registration form requesting information on specific needs can also be used.

Sample detailed registration questions:

I will need the following accommodations in order to participate:

ASL Interpreter
Note taker
Assistive listening device
Captioning
Large print
Braille
Audio Cassette
Disk. List format: _____
Wheelchair access
Orientation to facility
Diet Restrictions. List: _____
An assistant will be accompanying me Yes   No
Other: _____

Social Functions and Meals

When planning social functions and meals, planners should:

- Include personal assistants and interpreters in the estimated number of participants at no charge to them.

- 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.

- If you choose a buffet, have servers available to assist; buffets can be particularly difficult for persons with mobility or visual impairments.

- Determine the accessibility of any outside entertainment and transportation services offered to participants.

Presentations

The conference/meeting planner should work with invited speakers and presenters to ensure that presentations are accessible to persons with disabilities.

- 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.

- Provide written materials (handouts, overheads, etc.) disseminated at the meeting in a variety of formats as requested by participants, (e.g., raised print, large print, Braille, audiocassette, or computer disks.)

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

- Instruct the presenter to include 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 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.

- Ask the presenter to accompany 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 the presenter to provide a copy of presentation materials well in advance to allow for large print or Braille transcription.

- Check for the needs of presenters with disabilities (ramping or podium requests, a reverse interpreter, sighted guide for a person with limited vision, etc.)

Resources

ADA Coordinator's Office, Ohio State University.
http://ada.osu.edu <http://ada.osu.edu/>

Planning Accessible Meetings.
AXIS Center for Public Awareness of People with Disabilities.
http://www.merrillassociates.com/topic/2000/11/planning-accessible-meetings/
<http://www.merrillassociates.com/topic/2000/11/planning-accessible-meetings/>

Guide to Accessible Meetings and Events
Disabled People's Network Manchester
http://www.dpnsg.org.uk/guide.htm <http://www.dpnsg.org.uk/guide.htm>

Checklist for Planning Accessible Meetings and Events.
U.S. Department of Transportation, Disability Resource Center.
http://www.connectoncampus.ca/resources/access.pdf <http://www.connectoncampus.ca/resources/access.pdf>

Removing Barriers: Planning Meetings That Are Accessible To All Participants.
North Carolina Office on Disability and Health in collaboration with The Center for Universal Design.
http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/pdfs/rbmeetingguide.pdf <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/pdfs/rbmeetingguide.pdf>

Accessible Best Practices (resources for accessible science centers, museums, exhibits, displays, presentations, tours, and meetings).
Association of Science and Technology Centers.
http://www.astc.org/resource/access/best.htm <http://www.astc.org/resource/access/best.htm>

Section 504 Programs and Activities Accessibility Handbook.
Federal Communications Commission (FCC).
http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/504/504_handbook.pdf <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/504/504_handbook.pdf>

Arranging Accessible Meetings.
National Assistive Technology Technical Assistance Partnership (NATTAP).
http://www.resna.org/taproject/library/bulletins/tapaug.html <http://www.resna.org/taproject/library/bulletins/tapaug.html>

How to Plan Events that Everybody Can Attend.
New York State Department of Health.
http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/promo/events.htm <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/promo/events.htm>

See Through Barriers: Making Conferences & Events Accessible to People Who Are Blind.
Canadian Abilities Foundation.
http://e-bility.com/articles/feb00.shtml <http://e-bility.com/articles/feb00.shtml>

Planning Accessible Conferences and Meetings: An ERIC/OSEP Information Brief for Conference Planners.
Education Resources Information Center/Office of Special Education Programs.
http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/eric/e735.html <http://www.hoagiesgifted.org/eric/e735.html>

If you have difficulty accessing any portions of this website due to incompatibility with adaptive technology, or you have suggestions on how we can make this site more accessible, or you need the information in an alternative format, please contact us at:

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