

Providing an Accessible Event

McBurney Center

1. Accessible Event Considerations

a. Is the Space Accessible?

- i. Mobility disabilities: Consider path of travel from outside the building into the room, aisle width (minimum of 5'), turning radius in the room, registration table placement, food and materials, chair and table height and accessible seating.
- ii. Visual disabilities: Is the path of travel, (both exterior and interior) easy to navigate? Is the path well lit for evening events? Are there greeters to direct attendees to the event?
- iii. Are there accessible bathrooms located a reasonable distance from the event location? Provide that information in your welcome.
- iv. Parking should be available close to the event site. Know how many accessible spots are in the lot, both standard car and van-accessible.
- v. Does the room allow adequate space for service providers (interpreters and/or captioners, personal attendants, etc.) to stand or sit? Interpreters should be as close to the speaker as possible. Can space be reserved to improve the accessibility for attendees?
- vi. Assess whether there is good lighting and acoustics, and whether there is clear line of sight from all angles.
- vii. Where are the closest accessible emergency exits?

b. What are the event activities?

- i. If activities are part of the event, consider whether individuals with a range of disabilities can participate. Can an activity be modified in the moment to include all attendees or is a range of activities offered that can include everyone at least once?
- ii. Create an agenda, distribute them to the guests and service providers
 1. Different print formats may be needed: e.g., large font, Braille to electronic text. Materials may need to be requested from presenters in advance of the event to ensure that handouts and other materials can be provided in alternative formats.
 2. Remind presenters to be aware of the time limit and follow the schedule. Sessions that run over create difficulties for contract service providers (e.g., interpreters or captioners).
- iii. Videos shown should be captioned, whether requested or not.
- iv. Ask presenters to bring extra copies of the transcripts of their speeches.
- v. Consider food allergens. Make sure that the allergy warnings are well labeled and provide a wide array of food selections for everyone.
- vi. Encourage attendees to create a scent-free environment!

c. Does your budget include accommodation costs?

- i. Depending on your event, include funds for service providers, document conversion services, transportation, and parking

2. Prior to the Event

- a. **Advertise well in advance** (at least a month before) and **use multiple advertising approaches** (paper, electronic, chalking, etc.) to ensure the announcement reaches a diverse audience.
- b. **When emailing announcements of events as attachments, copy the text out of the attachment and paste it into the body of the email.**

This is better for people with disabilities because:

 - i. Users who need to convert the text to speech or magnify it will be able to hear and see it more easily.

This is better for *everyone* because:

 - ii. Text can easily be copied into an electronic calendar rather than retyping
 - iii. Text is more easily read on a smartphone
 - iv. Information is accessible even if users are not able to open the attachment or are worried about the security of the attachment.
- c. **Include complete event information and an accessibility tagline on all advertising materials:**
 - i. Provide event location, specific room number, date and time, and nearest accessible parking locations.
 - ii. A tagline should include contact information for who will handle accommodation requests (phone number *and* an email address). Provide a deadline for accommodations that require lead time to set up (e.g., alternative print, sign language interpreters, captioning, alternative location, etc.). Indicate that requests made after the deadline may not be able to be fulfilled (although every attempt will be made to do so).
 - iii. Sample tagline:

“If you need an accommodation to attend this event, please contact Jay Smith, Event Coordinator, at 555-123-4567 or jsmith@events.org. Requests for sign language interpreters, real time captioning, Braille or electronic documents should be made no less than two weeks before the event. We will attempt to fulfill requests made after this date but cannot guarantee they will be met.”
- d. **Follow up with people who request accommodations**
 - i. Acknowledge a request for accommodations within 24 hours of receipt, clarify the specific accommodations needed and contact the appropriate sources to fulfill the request.
 - ii. Confirm accommodations with requester once they are secured.

3. The Day of the Event

- a. Inform volunteers of locations of accessible bathrooms, parking, and emergency exits. Let them know if there will be service providers at the event
- b. Create reserved seating at the front of the room for those who may need it
- c. If a guest with a disability shows up that you didn't know about, don't panic! Ask what you can do to try to accommodate them in the moment and do your best. Also ask what you can do post-event (e.g., send a transcript or an e-file of the event materials) to include the guest to the extent possible.

4. Resources

Sign Language interpreters and Real Time Captioning, see:

<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/facstaffother/uwdeptgroup/index.php>

Captioned Media production, see:
<http://www.doit.wisc.edu/accessibility/caption.asp>