Designing Accessible Events for People with Disabilities

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

> The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination of people with disabilities. Title III requires public accommodations, including meeting facilities, to provide accessible goods and services, and auxiliary aids, if necessary.

> Section 508 requires Federal agencies and private entities receiving Federal funds to make electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities, including on-line registration forms.

> The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act requires that all communications, video programming, and equipment providers provide services, including internet-based services, and equipment equally accessible to people with disabilities.

Registration is a critical part of any successful event. It provides an opportunity for you to collect information and payment, if appropriate, from individuals who will be attending your event, allowing you to pro actively design an event that best meets the number, background, and needs of your attendees. Registration is essential to designing an event that is accessible to people with disabilities. It serves as the mechanism by which attendees can request the accommodations they need, such as materials in large font or American Sign Language interpreters, to be able to fully access and participate in your event. With this information you can create an event that is accessible for all attendees and meets your legal obligations as the event host under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

IS YOUR REGISTRATION FORM ACCESSIBLE?

Your registration form must be accessible to people with disabilities. If you are using an online registration form, make sure the service you are using is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 and the 21st Century and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. You will want to make sure that, among other things, it is accessible to individuals who are blind or who have low vision and who use a screen reader. It is best to contact your service provider and request information about the accessibility of the services they provide. You can also check the accessibility of your online survey by using a free web accessibility tool, such as WAVE (www.wave.webaim.org). You should also make your registration process available in alternate formats such as in a paper version, and allow people to register by phone, if needed.

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ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Registration is your opportunity to collect as much information about your attendees and their needs as possible, so be thorough. In addition to asking standard questions such as name, title, agency, and contact information, be sure to ask questions about the full range of needs attendees with disabilities may have. This includes questions about lodging, meals, interpreting, personal care attendants, and other accommodations. The more specific your questions and answer choices are for registrants, the better equipped you will be to successfully meet their accommodation requests. In this section, we discuss a few areas that are important to address on your registration form, and provide sample registration questions. The sample registration questions can be found in a box following each section.

Personal Care Attendants. Some people with disabilities who need assistance with daily living activities – getting ready in the morning, toileting, eating, etc. – may have a personal care attendant or a personal assistant attend your event with them to assist with these tasks. While personal care attendants will not be participating in your event in the same way as other attendees, they will be present. If there are registration fees for your meeting, you will need to decide whether you will charge personal care attendants the registration fee. Regardless, for space and other considerations, it is important to include them in your count. In your registration, you will want to include a question about them and, possibly, require personal care attendants to complete their own registration form.

Are you traveling with a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) or Personal Assistant (PA)?

> Yes

> No

If yes, for planning purposes, please provide your Personal Care Attendant's or Personal Assistant's contact information:

> First Name:

> Last Name:

> Phone Number:

> Email Address:

Lodging. If your event requires overnight lodging, your registration should ask attendees questions about their lodging needs. If you are paying for and/or making lodging reservations for individuals, you will need this information to secure the proper room type: an ADA room with a roll-in shower, an ADA room with a tub and chair, a room accessible for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing, or a chemical free room.

Even if your event attendees are making their own hotel reservations, its helpful to collect information about their lodging needs. You have secured the block of rooms with the hotel and may have entered into a contract with the hotel for other aspects of your event. Therefore, you (and the hotel) are jointly responsible for ensuring the accessibility of their accommodations. By having this information on hand, you'll be able to check with the hotel to make sure their requests are met before attendees arrive.

> A roll-in shower has a floor that is flat and rimless which allows a wheelchair to maneuver into the shower stall.

> A tub chair sits inside the tub or shower and allows the person to take a shower while in a seated position rather than standing on the slippery bottom of the tub or shower.

> A room that is accessible for Deaf/hard of hearing individuals either has permanently or temporarily installed equipment which makes auditory alerts - a fire alarm, knock at the door, or telephone ring - visual.

> A chemical free room is cleaned without the use of harsh chemicals prior to the guest's arrival.

Option 1: Please indicate which room type you require from the following list.

Option 2: You are responsible for making your own hotel reservation. However, by providing us with information on the type of room you requested, we will be able to check with the hotel to make sure they meet your room request. Please indicate which room type you require from the following list:

> No Lodging Required

> Standard Room

> ADA Room with Roll-In Shower

> ADA Room with Tub & Chair

> Room Accessible for Deaf/Hard of Hearing

> Chemical Free Room

> Other. Please Specify:

_____

Meals. If you are serving food and beverages at your event, you will need to ask about attendees' dietary needs. Some people with disabilities may have dietary restrictions related to their disability, such as diabetes, or food needs associated with their medication. In addition, some individuals with limited mobility may require a pre-cut meal. This is a good place to collect requests for other dietary needs such as a Kosher meal, vegan, or vegetarian.

Accommodations. People with disabilities are as diverse as every other community and their accessibility needs are just as diverse. Some individuals and circumstances will inevitably require individualized solutions for accessibility or accommodations, which may involve taking additional steps on your part. Your registration should include a question on attendees' accommodation needs. Providing a list of options, along with an "other" choice, communicates your commitment to access and may increase attendees comfort level when requesting an accommodation.

Please note any dietary needs from the following list:

> No Dietary Needs

> Kosher Meal

> Pre-cut Meal

> Vegan

> Vegetarian

> Other. Please Specify:

_____

Please select any additional accommodations you require from the list below. If you require something that is not listed, please indicate your request by selecting "Other" and providing us with specific information about your request in the comments box. We may contact you for further information, if necessary.

> None

> Electronic copies of materials in advance

> Electronic text file of materials on-site

> Hard copies of materials on-site

> Materials in Braille

> Materials in font over X pt
   (insert your standard font size)

> Wheelchair access

> Other. Please Specify:

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Interpreting. Individuals who use a different language than the primary one used in your event, including Deaf individuals who use American Sign Language, will need interpreters to fully participate in your event. A simple question can be included on your registration to capture whether someone needs an interpreter. In addition, it is best to follow-up with anyone who requests an interpreter to learn more about their communication needs to ensure you hire interpreters who are the best fit for the person making the request.

Please indicate your interpreting needs from the list below:
> None required

> American Sign Language

> Simultaneous Spoken Foreign Language Interpretation,

    Please Specify_____

> Other. Please Specify:_____

If you know that a high number of Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals are likely to attend your event, it may make sense to provide more detailed interpreting options in your answer choices. This will provide you with more information as you work to meet everyone's requests and ensure the interpreters you select meet the unique communication needs of your attendees. Even with this detailed information, it is best to follow-up with anyone who requests an interpreter to get more information to help you hire the best team of interpreters.

Please indicate your interpreting needs from the list below:
> None required

> American Sign Language

> Communication Access in Real Time (CART)

> C-PRINT

> Cued Speech

> Signed English

> Simultaneous Communication

> Other. Please Specify:_____

A Catch All Question. Given the diversity of disabilities and possible auxiliary aides people may need to fully participate in your event, it is important to provide registrants with an open-ended question designed for them to tell you any other needs they may have.

Please tell us of any additional needs you may have for this meeting. Please be as specific as possible.

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AN IMPORTANT CAVEAT

As the meeting host, you are responsible for meeting reasonable requests for accommodations that are made through the meeting registration process. While efforts should be made to meet requests that are made on-site, provided that you created an opportunity for individuals to make requests during your pre-event registration, you are not legally required to meet those on-site requests. Moreover, you are only required to provide auxiliary aides or modifications to event programming during the hours of the event. The individual is responsible for securing auxiliary aides for after-hour engagements that are not part of your programming. It is important to notify individuals of these limitations during registration.

Every effort will be made to accommodate advance requests; on-site requests cannot be guaranteed. Reasonable accommodations will be provided during meeting sessions. Referrals for assistance outside of the meeting can be made available. Please contact (INSERT STAFF PERSON) at emailaddress@dot.org with any questions or for more assistance.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Since attendees are making their accommodation requests through your registration process, you will need to make sure registration closes on a date that gives you ample time to meet any accommodation requests. For example, you typically need to secure American Sign Language interpreters two to three months in advance to ensure qualified interpreters are obtained. Thus, you would need your registration to close two to three months before your event is scheduled to take place. As a general rule, we recommend that you close your registration three months before your event.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

U.S. Department of Justice • ADA Home Page • http://www.ada.gov • Information and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act

ADA National Network • http://adata.org/contact-us • Information, Guidance, and Training on the ADA available through 10 Regional Centers

Accessing Safety Initiative • http://www.accessingsafety.org/index.php/main/main_menu/planning_for_change/planning-accessible-meetings • Planning Accessible Meetings

ABOUT THE CENTER ON VICTIMIZATION AND SAFETY

The Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice works to ensure that underserved victims of crime have equal access to victim services and criminal justice interventions by fostering collaboration and building organizational capacity among victim service organizations, culturally specific service providers, and the criminal justice system. A cornerstone of our work is a portfolio of projects designed to end violence against people with disabilities. This portfolio includes research studies, training initiatives, technical assistance to foster community-based collaborations to improve responses to violence against people with disabilities, and evaluation efforts to identify what works when serving these survivors.

233 Broadway, 12th Floor   Tel: (212) 334-1300
New York, NY 10279   Fax: (212) 941-9407
                           www.vera.org

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