Safe and Accessible Meeting and Event Planning

Serving Survivors with Disabilities and Deaf Survivors: Practical Guidance and Information for Advocates and Others Working to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Webinar Series

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Sandra Harrell, Director
Accessing Safety Initiative
Vera Institute of Justice
Why Safety? Why Access?

> Honors our movements principles of inclusion and empowerment;

> Promotes full participation from all collaboration members coming from different disciplines and backgrounds;

> Lays the foundation for deeper conversations and stronger relationships by respecting each member’s fundamental needs;

> Models the behavior you ultimately want to see in your organizations and/or pilot sites;

> Meets your legal and ethical responsibilities.
Safety: Key Considerations

> Survivors of violence may experience a state of hyper-vigilance for years after the violent incident.

> Survivors of domestic violence may experience some level of stalking for years after the relationship ends.

> Survivors of violence embrace confidentiality as a key strategy for safety.

> Perpetrators of violence exploit seemingly benign situations.

> Attention to safety benefits all meeting participants.
Elements of a Safe Meeting

Physical Environment

> Is the venue for the meeting in a safe location? What type of security system is available?

> Does the venue perform background checks on employees?

> Does the venue have a clear security protocol?

> Is the meeting environment in a secure location? Can you lock meeting rooms/office space/registration area?

> If meetings are occurring after dark, is the parking area well-lit? Are there any large obstructions behind which someone could hide?

> Can you create a safe room and designate safe people?
Elements of a Safe Meeting

Attitudinal Environment

> Presenters and materials should avoid communicating victim-blaming attitudes and drawing on violent idioms

> Presenters should disclose if they will be sharing stories or information that may be triggering

> Staff should be aware of where safe room is and who the safe people are
Elements of a Safe Meeting

Communication Environment

> Consider how you publicize your meeting/event

> Create meeting guidelines to encourage confidentiality

> Ask participants to avoid “victim-blaming” language and attitudes

> Ask participants to make an effort to avoid language that has violent origins

> Provide transparency to the participants around who will know the details of the meeting
Access: Key Considerations

> Accessibility is more than just architectural and structural.

> People with disabilities and Deaf people need full access to the meeting activities and materials to fully participate in the meeting.

> Accommodations for collaboration meetings should be factored into your grant budget.

> Many accessibility concerns can be addressed proactively.

> Meeting participants should be provided an opportunity to request specific accommodations based on their disability.
Responsibilities Under the ADA

> The meeting facility would typically have responsibility for architectural access.

> However, the organizer of the event has a shared responsibility to select an accessible location.

> The organizer has responsibility to provide auxiliary aids if requested.
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Information Environment

> Access considerations for website design
  www.accessingsafety.org

> Access considerations for printed materials

> Access considerations for e-mail blasts
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Attitudinal Environment

> Use of people-first language

> Recognition of Deaf culture

> Use of “accessible” to describe parking spaces, restrooms, sleeping rooms

> Pro-actively working to accommodate service animals (i.e., service dog relief areas, providing water bowls, etc)
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Physical Environment – Venue

> Is there accessible transportation in your chosen location? Is the venue accessible via that transportation?

> Are there accessible parking spaces? Where are they?

> Is the main entryway to the building accessible?

> Are restrooms on the same floor as the meeting space? Are they accessible?

> Is the lighting in the meeting space conducive to all participants’ access needs?

> If the space is specifically designed for people with a particular disability, could those design specifications conflict with other access needs?
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Physical Environment - Meeting Rooms

> Is the meeting space large enough to accommodate access needs? Is it near an elevator if it is not on the first floor?

> Plan for 30% more meeting space when 10% or more participants use mobility aids.

> Aisles should be at least 36 inches.

> Do not provide “disability seating” in one area – unless requested by a participant to have a reserved seat.

> Often, it is ideal to have tables – meeting participants can lay their materials and take notes.
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Provide “universally accessible” materials

> Ensure any DVD or Videos used in the meeting are closed captioned.

> Use contrasting colors.

> Include information about transportation and parking.

> Heavy binders are inaccessible.

> Consider strength and mobility variations when choosing.
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Be Prepared to Make Accommodations

> Ask about accessibility needs.

> Provide confirmation on specific accommodations requested.

> Use qualified Interpreters (ie. ASL, Signed English, or other types of interpreters).

> Be able to provide materials in Braille if requested.

> Print some materials in Large Print (18-point font or higher).

> Download materials on CD-Rom if requested.

> Use a microphone if requested.
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Schedule an Accessible Meeting

> Give as much notice as possible of the meeting.
> Early mornings or after dark may not be ideal start/end times.
> Provide longer breaks.
> Avoid longer meetings when possible.
Elements of an Accessible Meeting

Meal/Snack Considerations

> Avoid buffets for lunch and dinner.

> Be sure to make note of dietary restrictions.

> Continental breakfast and coffee service:
  > Nothing on risers
  > Stack cups 2 high
  > Everything close to edge of table / within reach

> Ensure that there are pre-cut meat meals available.

> Ensure that there are bendable straws at all beverage and meal functions.

> Stick to scheduled meal times.
Resources and Support

> For safe meetings: Local VAW agencies
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> For accessible meetings: Local disability providers
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Contact Information

Sandra Harrell
(615) 460-1172
sharrell@vera.org
www.accessingsafety.org