

# 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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# 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 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](http://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
- > For accessible meetings: Local disability providers
- > [http://www.accessingsafety.org/index.php/main/main\\_menu/planning\\_for\\_change/planning-accessible-meetings](http://www.accessingsafety.org/index.php/main/main_menu/planning_for_change/planning-accessible-meetings)

# Contact Information

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