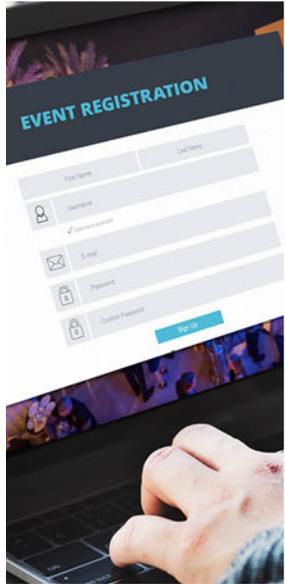




# Office for People With Developmental Disabilities



## Accessible Events Guide

2021

## Accessible Events Overview

As the lead agency in New York State for supporting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, we must make every effort to ensure that events and public meetings are accessible. When planning your next event or meeting, we hope you utilize this guide to ensure they are accessible to everyone.

## Pre-Event Considerations

- Avoid scheduling your event or meeting during major holidays and festivals. Be inclusive of all cultures, denominations and beliefs.
- When choosing a date, allow adequate time to make an announcement and any accommodations that have been requested. (for example, it sometimes takes a week to 10 days to arrange for sign language interpretation.)
- When hosting in-person meetings, evaluate the entire facility, including bathrooms and parking options to ensure that it can be utilized by people with disabilities with minimal help. If possible, barriers must be removed.
- Visit the venue prior to finalizing the selection, and also a few days before the event to ensure needs will be met.

## Location Considerations

- Venue is near accessible transportation options (public and private)
- Main entrance is accessible and well-lit. This includes wheelchair accessible ramps.
- There are covered drop-off and pick-up points adjacent to the main entrance, with curb cuts and clearly marked (Braille and tactile/raised signage).
- There are ample accessible parking spaces, marked with symbol of accessibility located on the shortest route nearest the accessible entrance. There are visual and audible signals at crosswalks.
- Doors are easy to open (automatic/push button door openers, lever handles) and lightweight (no more than 5 pounds); revolving doors are not accessible. Glass doors have contrasting door frames, stickers, or bright signs.
- If there are inaccessible areas at the venue, there should be ramps equipped with handrails on both sides if the rise is greater than 6 inches, and level landings.
- There are tactile ground surface indicators that signal stairs and ramps for people who are blind or have visual impairments, as well as pathways that are to remain unblocked.
- There is a toileting area for service animals.

For an extensive accommodation check list that you can utilize for your in-person events, visit the [NYS Department of Health website](#).

## Considerations for Interior of Event Space

- Main entrance/exit doorways are wide enough (32 inches with the door open 90 degrees) to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters.
- If elevators or lifts are present, there is adequate lighting, braille and tactile signage, a clearance, wide enough for wheelchairs, access to controls and voice and visual display for emergency communication.
- Registration/concierge desks are at a height accessible by wheelchair/scooter users that approach them, usually no less than 28 inches and no more than 34 inches above the floor, with a minimum knee clearance of 27 inches.
- There should be sufficiently wide (minimum of 36 inches or 64 inches for two-way traffic), barrier-free hallways and corridors to allow everyone to move about freely, especially to break-out rooms and restrooms.
- Offer accessible seating locations throughout the room so people with disabilities have choices like the choices available to others. Have event staff or volunteers in attendance at the start of each session to assist with last-minute changes that may be needed. Single wheelchair seat requires 36 inches X 48 inches. If 2 wheelchair seats, 33 inches each.
- Plan for seating when a person is accompanied by a personal assistant.
- There is adequate space for service animals.
- All participants face the direction of the speaker/presentation (use half of the round tables, one side of the square or oblong ones).
- Ensure that printed event materials (programs, handouts, etc.) and introductory remarks remind participants to keep those areas clear of bags, chairs, or other items that can cause barriers.
- Accessible restrooms are located on an accessible route and are clearly marked (Braille and tactile signage).
- Tables for materials and food/beverage are at a height (28 to 34 inches) reachable by wheelchairs/scooters and in an accessible location.
- If the event offers food or beverages, there are several service points so people can access a station near them. Staff are on hand to assist people who cannot access items themselves. Cutlery and tableware are easy to use. Straws are available. Clearly indicate allergens and gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options

- The speakers' platform is accessible. If it is not, all speakers present from the main floor so presenters with and without disabilities speak from the same area.
- The needs of people with disabilities are included in emergency plans. If there are announcements regarding restrooms, emergency exits, etc. they clearly describe locations, such as "If the fire alarm sounds, take the stairs marked EXIT located in the back corners of this room; go down two flights to exit on the ground level. If you are not able to use stairs, go to the area of refuge located in front of the elevators; to reach the area of refuge exit this room through the doors in the back of the room, where you entered; turn left and follow the hallway for about 50 feet to the elevator lobby; the area of refuge is marked with signage and equipped with a two-way communication system to register a call for help; staff will be on hand to provide you with further direction and assistance."

## Registration

When sending out registration emails or invites, include a message that let's invitees know who they can contact regarding accommodations. You may also include a fillable form for accommodations that allows the person to include their specific needs.

Make sure you follow up on all requests received. If it appears you will be unable to meet a specific request, follow up with the individual who made the request to determine whether an alternative arrangement can be made.

## Presentations & Material

If the presenter is using video, the video must have closed captioning.

- Presenters should be asked to submit all materials in advance so that they can be sent to attendees who may not be able to view screens or flip charts.
- Presenters should also attempt to make their documents accessible.

### How to make presentation and other materials accessible

The following are recommended practices for creating accessible materials:

- Consider multiple formats for content such as html, Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, PDFs.
- Use a 16-point font size, but if not practical, at least 14 point
- Avoid using highly stylized typefaces
- Use easy-to-read fonts with clearly defined letters and clear spacing between the letters, such as sans-serif fonts (e.g., Helvetica, Verdana, Arial)
- Avoid using blocks of capital letters for more than a couple of words
- Avoid underlining or italicizing large volumes of text
- Spell out numbers, as persons with visual impairments often have trouble distinguishing between the numbers 3, 5, 8, and 0
- Instead of manually changing the font size and bolding text to differentiate headings from paragraph text, use the heading styles.

- Headings must be in chronological order. You may not skip headings. For example, heading 1 must be the first heading used. If there is a sub-heading, you must use heading 2 and so forth.
- Align all text on the left, rather than centered or right justified
- Avoid centralized or justified paragraphs
- Avoid columns
- When creating a table, it must have a header row. Avoid merging columns and rows in an excel document.
- Avoid lines of text longer than six inches (for persons using magnifiers)
- Do not place text directly over or wrap text around an image
- Use at least 1.5 spacing between lines of text paragraphs
- Use column lay out where practical, making sure to input space or use a vertical line to mark the end and beginning of each column
- Ensure good contrast between the text and background colors
- Use black text
- Create PDFs with Optical Character Recognition rather than as scanned images.
- When using images, you must include alt text. Alt text stands for alternative text. Alt text is the written copy that appears in place of an image. It is used to describe the image.
- Microsoft and Acrobat provide accessibility checkers that you can utilize to make your document accessible.
- The materials are available in alternative formats. Please check the format you need:
  - Braille
  - Large Print
  - Audio
  - Digital File
  - Other Language

## Language Access

- Always ask if any translations are needed for written word and/or interpretation for the spoken word.
- When asking what language a person speaks, make sure to also ask what language he or she reads – it may actually be different.
- Language needs also include American Sign Language – again, be sure to ask.

**Plain Language-** The following is adapted from Plainlanguage.gov

- Write for your audience: Use language your audience is comfortable with – for example, you would not write with an 8th-grade reading level if you had an audience of Ph.D. students – or vice versa.
- Organize the information: Lay things out in logical order – have a simple, easy-to-follow outline.
- Choose your words carefully: The choice of words you use will determine whether you are understood by your audience – or not. Avoid using jargon, technical terms or abbreviations people may not understand.

- Be concise: Wordy, dense documents are not read and not understood. Ask yourself if the word is necessary to get the point across. If it is not, take it out.
- Keep it conversational: Use verbs as they make your writing exciting. Verbs tell your audience what to do. Make sure it's clear who does what. Use active voice. Use the word "must" to indicate requirements.
- When speaking with a person in a wheelchair, either sit in a chair so you are at their level or stand at a slight distance, so they do not need to strain their neck looking up at you. Don't reach over someone in a wheelchair to shake another person's hand or pick something up from a table.

## Online Events

When hosting an online event, you must first take in consideration the platform that you are using to host the events and its capabilities. Please keep in mind that everyone does not have easy access to internet or a computer to attend the event. Provide information on how people can access the event with no access to internet, as well as be willing to share the information offline. Many platforms provide dial-in by phone options.

Registration for online events should be similar to the registration you send out for in-person events. They must be sent out ahead of time and ask about accommodations. This way, you and other organizers can prepare.

- Make sure the service you're using to host the virtual event is compatible with assistive technology like screen readers.
- Factor the costs of captioning, sign language interpretation, translation services and other potential accommodations into your budget.
- Provide any written or visual materials ahead of time to give people an idea of what to expect and the ability to plan in advance. Be sure to use an accessible file format.
- Ensure that fonts are easy to read, and text is large and has good color contrast.
- Use plain language.
- If sharing a video, be sure to describe what's happening in the video and add captions.
- Consider hiring a professional to write captions or a Sign Language Interpreter for your event.

Below are links to video conferencing options and their accessibility features:

- **Zoom** <https://zoom.us/accessibility>
- **Google Meet** <https://support.google.com/meet/answer/7313544?hl=en>
- **Microsoft Teams** <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/accessibility-overview-of-microsoft-teams-2d4009e7-1300-4766-87e8-7a217496c3d5>
- **Webex** <https://www.webex.com/accessibility.html>
- **Skype** <https://support.skype.com/en/skype/all/everythingelse/accessibility/>
- **GoToMeeting** <https://support.goto.com/meeting/help/what-accessibility-features-are-available-in-gotomeeting>

## Resources

<https://accessibility.cornell.edu/event-planning/accessible-meeting-and-event-checklist/>

<https://adata.org/guide/planning-guide-making-temporary-events-accessible-people-disabilities#Modifications%20to%20a%20Site%E2%80%94Removing%20Barriers>

<https://splashthat.com/blog/accessible-event-planning>

<http://www.buffalo.edu/access/help-and-support/planningaccessiblemeetingsandevents.html>

[https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/mental\\_physical\\_disability/Accessible\\_Meetings\\_Toolkit.authcheckdam.pdf](https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/mental_physical_disability/Accessible_Meetings_Toolkit.authcheckdam.pdf)

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/0956/>

\*There are several training videos on YouTube that show you how to make accessible Word documents and PDFs.