

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS & MEETINGS GUIDE

*created by the new jersey coalition
against sexual assault
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Accessible Events & Meetings Guide

This document has been created to not only assist individuals with visible or known disabilities but also ensure all participants in a meeting or event—including individuals of all body types, ages, hidden disabilities and/or chronic health conditions—are able to fully engage in activities. The last page of this document includes additional resources to help make your events and meetings accessible. You can find additional information in NJCASA's *Designing Inclusive Presentations* guide.

The information in this document can be credited to and was adapted from Cornell University's accessible meeting and event checklist to suit the needs of New Jersey's sexual violence programs.

Invitations & Notices

Create a welcome message to let people know they can contact your organization for accommodations, whether it's the event planner or someone in a specialized accessibility role. Your message can be as simple as:

"To request an accommodation or for questions about accessibility, please contact [name, email, phone]."



Avoid using "special accommodations" as it often alienates people with disabilities and individuals that are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. If your meeting/event is in person, send out a reminder one or two days before it will take place that notifies attendees to refrain from wearing strong fragrances. You will also want to inform attendees of the types of food that will be present for those with various dietary needs and allergies. Another approach to consider is a checklist in your meeting RSVP or event registration page. For example:

I will need the following accommodations to participate:

- Assistive listening device
- Captioning
- Language interpreter
- Reserved front row seat
- Large print
- Advance copy of slides to be projected
- Wheelchair access
- Wheelchair access to working tables throughout room
- Scent-free room
- Lactation room
- Quiet room
- Gender neutral bathroom
- Diet Restrictions. List here: _____
- Other: _____

Be sure to follow up on all requests and make accommodations such as caption and interpretation services at least 2 weeks in advance. 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.

If holding an event that covers triggering topics, you can coordinate with your sexual violence program's direct service staff to create a safety plan in the event someone needs a private space to talk to a trained Confidential Sexual Violence Advocate (CSVA.) Ensure participants of the event are aware that they have this option in written communications and during the event.

Venue Check

Look for these features when inspecting your meeting/event space:



Technology — Consider those that may use assistive devices. Are there:

- Electrical outlets in accessible seating areas to accommodate devices, laptops, etc.
- Extra space or work surface

You may want to consider Zoom to create a hybrid or all-virtual event; they provide accessibility options. Please visit Zoom's website for more information: <https://zoom.us/accessibility>

Mobility — Consider those using wheelchairs, that have other mobility needs, or that are blind. Is there:

- Accessible parking near venue
- Proximity of venue to bus stop
- Ramp and/or elevator access points
- Accessible bathrooms
- Barrier-free pathways
- No loose cables across walking areas
- Wide seating; wide doorways and aisles to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters

Visibility — Consider those with vision loss. Is there:

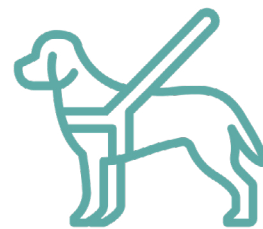
- Clear signage (identifying location and directions)
- Well-lit meeting space and adjacent areas
- Projection screen visible from all seating (if using projection)

Acoustics — Consider those that are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Is there:

- Public address (PA) system
- Roving microphone

Acoustics *(cont'd)*

- Limit unnecessary background music
- Seating available near presenter for lip reading
- Availability of assistive listening devices
- A well-lit space for an interpreter, if needed

**Service Animals** — Consider access and space for service animals:

- Comfortable space for service animals to rest during event
- Accessible toileting and watering facilities nearby

Before & During Event

Make sure presenters and/or interpreters are aware of accommodations. Ask them to prepare and deliver their presentations with accessibility in mind. It would be ideal to set some time aside before the event/meeting to prepare them and answer any questions or concerns they may have. At larger events or events with scheduled accommodations, designate someone (or multiple people) to be responsible for accommodations as well as help with seating, ensuring captioning and other technology is working, maintaining clear pathways, and/or other needs.

Consider the following:

Food — Clearly indicate allergens and gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options.

Presentations — Provide presenters with a checklist requesting that they:

- Submit materials in advance so that they can be forwarded to individuals who may not be able to view screens or flip charts
- Activate captions on any video used in the presentation
- Verbally describe visual materials i.e., slides, charts, etc.
- Have printed copies available (in larger font); avoid using small print on presentations that can't be seen from a distance
- Ensure speakers (including those asking questions) always use a microphone
- Encourage hourly breaks and organize breakout group activities to maximize distance between groups i.e., each group going to a corner of the room or side rooms
- Have someone on-site who helps to ensure follow-through on the steps above.

Q&A — Make sure to repeat questions posted by audience before responding, especially if there is not a roving microphone available. Presenters or audience members may express that they are loud enough and do not need a microphone. Ask them to speak into one regardless so that others with varying processing needs can follow along.

Additional Resources

Below are some website suggestions that can help make your event or meeting inclusive. Because accommodations are not one-size-fits-all, we encourage you to look into alternatives that better suit the needs of your program and the survivors it serves.

Accessible Webinar Best Practices

- [U.S. Food & Drug Administration FDA: Accessible Web Conferences and Webinar Best Practices](#)
- [Evolving Web: 9 Easy Ways to Make Your Webinars and Meetings More Accessible](#)
- [American Evaluation Association 365 \(AEA 365\): Making Your Webinar Accessible](#)

Interpreter Services

- [New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 2021 Directory of Sign Language Interpreters](#)
- [Registry of Interpreting Resources: List of Agencies & Freelance Interpreters](#)

Caption Services

- [Rev- Closed & Open Captioning](#)
- [Captioning Star](#)