NYC Mayor's Office for
People with Disabilities

Planning an Accessible Event

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Introduction

About this Guide

This resource, developed by the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD), explains steps to make your event accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities.

The following icons are used to designate items related to in person and virtual events:

人 = **In Person Event**   ⌨ = **Virtual Event**   人|⌨ = **Hybrid Event**

The guide includes a glossary of terms at the end, as well as "info sheets" with more in-depth guidance on specific topics.

> ⓘ **Note**
> While this guide provides information on making events accessible and inclusive, remember that when an individual requests an accommodation, it is based on that person's own disability and should be reviewed on an individual basis.

What is Accessibility?

Accessibility occurs when a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to . . .

- acquire the same information as a non-disabled person,
- engage in the same interactions, and
- enjoy the same services

. . . in an equally integrated and equally effective manner with substantially equivalent ease of use.

Accessibility means that all people can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with information and their environment; and be active, contributing members of the physical and digital world. Therefore, visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities should be considered when implementing accessibility measures.

Why is Accessibility Important?

There are nearly one million New York City residents with a disability, about 11% of the population. Accessibility allows people with disabilities to actively participate in their community and benefits everyone, including people without disabilities.

Access for people with disabilities is also required by law for all public events or meetings sponsored directly by the City, those conducted by City contractors or subcontractors, and those held by private or not-for-profit entities where the event or meeting is open to the public, regardless of whether an admission fee is charged.

General Considerations

When planning for accessibility, think about all the activities happening during the event and anticipate potential access needs.

It's important to:

- Remember the goal - how you plan for accessibility can shift depending on the nature of the event.

- Design for accessibility from the start - this makes the process easier and more natural.

- Budget - set aside money to cover accessibility needs and accommodation requests you may receive.

As you think through the activities of the event, consider how people with various disabilities, affecting sight, hearing, cognition, mobility, language and stamina, will:

- Obtain information about the event and get directions.

- Arrive at the event site (e.g. public transportation, event shuttles/ferries, private vehicles, etc.).

- Obtain additional information and directions onsite.

- Move around the site as needed.

- Attend performances, participate in activities, and enter exhibits.

- Experience and enjoy activities, including participants whose disability affects their ability to communicate.

- Select and purchase items at concessions and/or enjoy meals.

- Use the restrooms, water fountains, shelters, first aid stations, and other common amenities.

Before the Event

⚇ Select an Accessible Venue

When selecting a venue, it is important to not only consider the accessibility of the space that will be used for the core event activities, but to look at the accessibility of the area around the location and to consider travel to the event, from the arrival point to the main entrance, and from the main entrance throughout the venue.

All facilities and spaces for the event must be accessible or have accessible options. This includes meeting spaces, refreshment stations, performance spaces, concessions, restrooms, ticketing/check-in, parking, etc.

Consider the information below to make sure your venue is accessible.

> ⓘ **Cautionary Note**
> Do not rely on signage at the venue or the say-so of the venue operator to determine if a particular entrance or facility is accessible. Always make your own assessment.

Arrival Points

Consider whether the venue is near an accessible subway stop and whether there are accessible drop-off points near the venue. A list of accessible subway stations is available on MTA's website at mta.info/accessibility/stations. An accessible drop-off point will generally be at a curb cut or in a parking lot near the accessible entrance to the building or event.

Building Entrances

An accessible entrance will be either flush with the sidewalk or accessible via a ramp or platform lift and must be reachable from a designated arrival point. It will also have a door opening with at least 32 inches of clear space. We also recommend that there be an automatic door opener in working order.

There must be signage at any inaccessible entrances indicating the location of the nearest accessible entrance.

> ⓘ **Note**
> To be most welcoming and inclusive, select a venue where people with disabilities can use the same main entrance as their non-disabled peers. Nobody likes to be told to use the back door.

Accessible Routes within the Venue

An accessible route allows all attendees and staff to arrive and reach all event activities and facilities. Make sure there is an accessible route to all your event's activities.

Things to keep in mind:

- The path of travel must be firm and not slippery. Be especially aware of this when planning outdoor events.

- Doors must have automatic door openers, or remain open for the event, or be easily operable by people with disabilities, or staff can be stationed at the door to open it.

- If event activities and facilities are on multiple levels, there will need to be access via a ramp, elevator or platform lift.

o Elevators must be large enough to accommodate a wheelchair user:

* a tolerance of minus 5/8" permitted
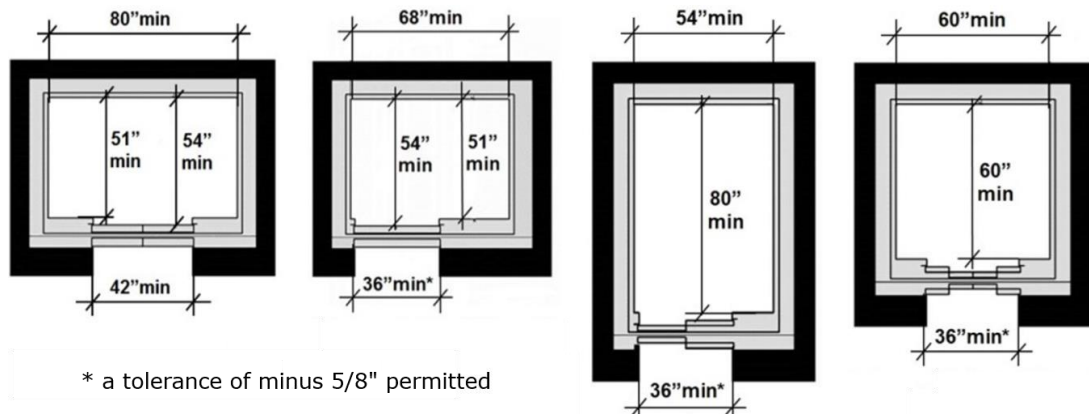
o Should have elevator controls that are low enough to be reached by someone using a wheelchair.

o Braille and tactile markings on the elevator controls and floor numbers should be present.

o Audible signals/announcements should be available for people who are blind or have low vision.

o If an elevator can be entered but cannot be independently operated by a person with disabilities, you will need to assign staff to assist with this during the event.

ⓘ **Note**
Any change in elevation of more than a quarter of an inch in the path of travel, such as a cable cover or threshold, is considered an obstruction, and must be ramped or covered to enable smooth travel by a person with a cane/walker or other mobility device, such as a wheelchair.

For more information about accessible routes, see **Info Sheet A**.

For information about doors, including how to measure the clear opening space of various types of doors, see **Info Sheet B**.

For information about ramps, see **Info Sheet C**.

Accessible Restrooms

There must be wheelchair accessible restrooms close to event activities. Facilities that do not have at least one wheelchair-accessible restroom should not be considered. If your event is outdoors at a park or other large venue, be prepared to place portable accessible restrooms throughout the area.

Wheelchair-accessible restrooms have the following features:

- 32-inch minimum width door clear space

- Approximately a 5-foot square that is clear of obstructions, allowing someone using a wheelchair to turn around – a wheelchair accessible stall must also include such turning space

- Grab bars by the toilet

- Sink that can be rolled up to, with handles that can be easily reached and used.

- Soap and paper towel dispensers or hand dryers easily reachable from a seated position.

> ⓘ **Cautionary Note**
> Many people mistakenly believe that their facilities' bathrooms are accessible to people using wheelchairs when they are not. Do not rely on an accessibility icon outside the restroom. This may indicate the presence of an "ambulatory" stall that has features that are helpful to someone who is ambulatory (able to walk) and needs extra space or support but will not be accessible to someone who uses a wheelchair.

For more information on accessible restrooms, including detailed illustrations of a wheelchair-accessible restroom, a wheelchair-accessible stall, and a wheelchair-accessible portable restroom (Porta Potty), see **Info Sheet D**.

Activity Spaces

Any space in which your event's activities will be held or where people will gather as part of the event must be accessible. This includes the stage and other areas that will be used by presenters.

Consider the following:

- Accessible seating layouts (including sufficient appropriate spaces, wide enough aisles for wheelchair travel).

- Availability of seats both with and without armrests.

- Portable mics for audience participation.

- A public address system with an assistive listening system.

- Potential spaces to set aside as quiet areas.

- For outdoor events, plenty of shaded areas.

For information on seating layouts, see **Info Sheet E**.

For information about assistive listening systems, see **Info Sheet F**.

⌨ Select a Virtual Platform

If your event has a virtual component, the platform used must be accessible for all, including those with disabilities. To be accessible, the platform needs to be easily used with access technology—like a screen reader. All the features available to those in attendance, including interactive features like chat, Q&A, and hand raising must be available to everyone, regardless of the way it is accessed.

Your meeting platform should have the following features:

- **Screen Reader Accessible**
  Compatible with screen reader software.

- **Keyboard Accessible**
  Usable with a keyboard, all functionality available via keyboard.

- **Support for Captioning (Live and Automated)**
  Both auto-generated captions and live (human-generated) captions can be used.

- **Support for American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation**
  Allows sign language interpreters to be 'Spotlighted' or otherwise designated so they remain on-screen.

Zoom and Teams are examples of virtual platforms that offer an accessible experience. After choosing the platform, it is important to familiarize yourself with all the accessibility features, including knowing how an attendee can access them. This should be shared with all attendees by announcement at the beginning of the event during the Access Check.

⼈|⌨ Standard Accessibility Features (In Person & Virtual)

Once you've selected your venue, decide which accessibility features that are not already included with the venue will be available as a standard feature of the event. Be prepared to provide any additional accommodations as requested free of charge to the participant. Physical access must be available as a matter of course. Other accessibility features can be automatically available as well.

Some possible accommodations that can either be provided as a matter of course, or upon request, are:

- **American Sign Language Interpretation (ASL)** – for people who are Deaf and fluent in ASL

- **Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)** – also known as live transcription for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing and people with certain cognitive or learning disabilities

- **Assistive Listening System** – for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing - see **Info Sheet F**

- **Audio Description** – for people who are blind or have low vision, have other disabilities that make it difficult to view a screen, or may be joining an event by phone - see nyc.gov/accessibilityguides

- **Alternate Formats of Printed Documents** – common alternative formats include: accessible electronic format, braille, large print, audio, and ASL

- **Accessible Electronic Documents/Slides** – see nyc.gov/accessibilityguides and section below entitled "**Inclusive Invitations and Promotional and Event Materials**"

- **Specific Type of Seating** – individual chair with or without armrest

- **Seating Location**

- ▪ **Scents -** you might consider asking attendees not to wear perfumes and colognes, as many people with disabilities are sensitive to scents

When preparing to provide the above accommodations, keep in mind that most of them require a certain amount of lead time and cost money. Determine in advance how you will procure these items or services if they are requested.

> ⓘ **Note**
> It is best practice to have certain things, like alternative formats of documents, available without the need for a request. Ideally, both large print and web-based (not pdf) electronic versions (available via QR Code or a shortcut URL) should be available.
>
> MOPD also recommends that CART and ASL be provided at any large event, particularly ones for which registration is not required.

⚇ Ticketed Events

The United States Department of Justice (DOJ) has issued detailed guidelines concerning ticketing and accessible seating. If your event is one for which tickets for specific seats will be sold or distributed, specific federal regulations apply and you should refer to the DOJ's guidance materials available at ada.gov/resources/ticket-sales/.

⚇⌨ Inclusive Event Materials: Invitations, Announcements, etc.

All materials for the event, both promotional and content, must be accessible.

General Principles for Creating Accessible Communications

The basic concepts of creating accessible materials are described below. The specific techniques to accomplish these will depend on the type of material and the authoring tool being used. MOPD has several guides on creating accessible content at nyc.gov/accessibilityguides.

Font Type and Size

A non-decorative, sans-serif font should be used. There are hundreds of sans-serif fonts available—popular examples include Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma, and Verdana. A sans-serif font is one that does not have the extra decorative extensions on the letter's strokes. See the illustration to the right for an example.

Font size minimums are dependent on the type of material:

- Printed/Electronic Document: 12 pt
- Large Print Document: 18 pt
- Slide Presentation: 24 pt

Color Contrast

The contrast between the text and its background must meet a 4.5:1 minimum. This can be checked with a color contrast checker, like WebAIM's Contrast Checker.

Alt Text

An alt text description will provide information about an image to those using screen readers and other access technologies. The descriptions can be entered through the authoring software being used (Word, PowerPoint, etc.) and are visually hidden.

A good description will concisely tell the user about the graphic being shown, conveying the reason the graphic was chosen. The description will answer the basic who, what, when, and where. These answers should be influenced by why that graphic is being used. Make sure the most important information is in the beginning of the description.

Semantic Structure (e.g., styles)

When creating content, it is important that the various elements have the correct programmatic semantic structure. This means that headings, lists, and links not only look this way, but also have the underlying code needed for access technology to recognize them.

Headings should be created using the authoring program's built-in heading styles. These styles can be customized to fit the style of your organization. Presentation slide titles should be created using title placeholders. Lists and hyperlinks need to be created using built-in list and link creation tools within the authoring software.

Plain Language

Plain language (also called plain writing or plain English) is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. Language that is plain to one set of readers may not be plain to others.

Material is in plain language if your audience can:

- Find what they need
- Understand what they find the first time they read or hear it
- Use what they find to meet their needs

There are many techniques that can help you achieve this goal. Among the most common are:

- Reader-centered organization (write for your target audience)
- "You" and other pronouns
- Active voice, not passive
- Short sentences and paragraphs
- Common, everyday words
- Easy-to-follow design features (lists, headings)

Disability-Inclusive Language

Be mindful of using language that is inclusive of people with disabilities and avoid offensive terms such as "wheelchair bound" and "special needs".

For information on disability-inclusive language, see MOPD's Disability Inclusive Terminology Guide, also available as **Info Sheet G**.

For plain language resources compiled by the federal government, visit plainlanguage.gov.

For information on how to make various types of documents and media accessible, see nyc.gov/accessibilityguides.

Invitations and Publicity Materials

It is best practice to include the following information in all promotional materials. Moreover, Local Law 28 of 2016 requires that this information be included in promotional materials for any events open to the general public that are hosted by a City agency:

- **What accessibility features will be present**, even absent a specific request. Icons can be used to represent these features.
- **Who to contact to request an accommodation** (name, email, phone).
- **The deadline for requests** (this should generally be 3 to 7 days before the event).

Versions of icons that can be used to indicate accessible features on promotional materials are available at **Info Sheet H**.

For a sample accessibility and reasonable accommodation statement for inclusion in promotional materials, see **Info Sheet I**.

Registration Materials

It is important to use accessible event pages and registration/RSVP forms that can be used by people with a disability, especially those using access technology.

Some examples include:

- Microsoft Forms
- Eventbrite
- Google Forms
- Facebook

Some considerations:

- Time limits applicable to registration and ticketing should be avoided.
- Provide options to register by email or phone—having multiple options always increases accessibility.
- Make sure that people can add a personal attendant or assistant to their registration.

⧎ Reasonable Accommodations and the Cooperative Dialogue

When someone requests an accommodation for an event, the event host must determine that they are able to meet the specific request or enter into a "cooperative dialogue" with the person making the request.

A "cooperative dialogue" is a good faith conversation about the person's accommodation needs. The conversation, which may be written or verbal, should include a discussion of potential accommodations that may address the person's needs, including alternatives to the specific accommodation that was requested and any difficulties that fulfilling the request may pose for the event host.

Be sure that whoever is designated to handle reasonable accommodation requests is familiar with the requirement to engage in a cooperative dialogue.

⧎ Additional Planning Prior to Event Day

Familiarize Yourself with Day-Of-Event Tasks

Consider whether you're ready for those tasks and handle some in advance, if helpful (such as briefing others, rehearsal, etc.).

Ask Your Presenters If They Have Any Access Needs

In addition to including a way for attendees to request accommodations, make sure to give your presenters an opportunity to let you know about any access needs they may have.

Review Presenter Materials

If your presenters have slide decks or any other materials they'll be sharing with participants, you should review them to make sure they meet accessibility standards.

Prepare Access Service Providers

Share with your access service providers (such as captioners and interpreters) a detailed run-of-show for the event, in addition to all speaker

names and any other proper nouns or specialized terminology that will be used during the event. If there is a script for any prepared remarks or speeches, share those as well.

For interactive programs with ASL interpreters, if you know the names of the attendees who will be using interpreters, you can share that information with the interpreters.[1]

For information on working with sign language interpreters, see **Info Sheet J**.

⚇ *Preparing Signage for Venue*

Prepare signage with information on where to find various facilities, including accessible restrooms and any quiet areas. If there are inaccessible entrances to the facility, directions to the accessible entrance must be provided. Similarly, if there are inaccessible restrooms or other facilities within the venue, directions to their accessible counterpart must be provided.

Designate an Accessibility Point Person for the Event

Designate one person to be the main point person on accessibility issues during the event.

The Day of the Event

⚇ In-Person Components

On the day of the event, come early and do a quick walkthrough of the space:

- Check that all the accessibility features are in place and in working order.

- Make sure that paths of travel are free of obstructions and tripping hazards.

- Check to see that signage is in place directing attendees to the various areas of the event, including those needed to direct people to

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[1] In the case of a City agency sharing such information, the agency privacy officer must approve first.

accessible entrances, restrooms and other facilities, when inaccessible facilities exist.

Have a person near or at the sign-in table or entrance to assist anyone needing help completing necessary paperwork or in reading event / meeting materials not available in an alternative format. Consider whether an interpreter would be helpful at sign-in, if an interpreter has been requested as an accommodation.

Make sure that those working the event know who is the point person on accessibility issues and how to reach that person. Brief them on what to expect and what accessibility questions they may receive from attendees.

For instance, make sure those working the event:

- Know where accessible restrooms and any other accessibility features are located.

- Are aware that attendees with disabilities may communicate in different ways – some may speak, others may write.

- Are ready to help blind and low-vision attendees navigate the space and locate name tags, as needed and otherwise assist people with disabilities. However, they should not help with personal tasks such as feeding and toileting.

- Know that **service animals** must be allowed to accompany their owners in all areas where the public is allowed. For additional information on service animals see Info Sheet K. **Emotional support animals** do not need to be allowed except pursuant to a specific approved reasonable accommodation request.

Consider providing brief disability etiquette training to staff and volunteers. You might choose to distribute the document attached as Info Sheet L.

⌨ Virtual Components

It is important to ensure the technology being used is set up and working in advance of the start of the event. Ensure all access professionals are present and have what they need to provide their services. Finally, check in with all presenters and providers to ensure they know what to expect and what is expected of them.

⧖⌨ Access Checks

Be sure to check in with the attendees at the start of the event. An access check should inform everyone about the accessibility features available and indicate how to access them. This is also your opportunity to let people know about overall housekeeping guidelines and what your expectations are for those in attendance, including how they can fully participate and let the organizers know about any issues. For in-person events, provide information on the location of accessible emergency exits and restrooms and any quiet areas.

⧖⌨ Presenter Expectations

Let the presenters know about your expectations to ensure full access for all.

Things to keep in mind:

- Quick visual descriptions can be encouraged during introductions. A person may choose to describe, for the benefit of those who cannot see them, their skin color or ethnicity, hair color / style, age / age range, gender, clothing and any aids (wheelchair, white cane, hearing aids) they are using.
- Only one person should speak at a time
- Always use the microphone, when available
- Speakers should identify themselves by name each time they speak.
- Repeat audience questions not spoken into the microphone
- Speak out slide titles and describe images

⧖⌨ Digital Media

When any form of media is played, such as video, there should be clearly visible captions and audio descriptions. For more information see MOPD's Captioning and Audio Description Guide at nyc.gov/accessibilityguides. If an audio recording is played, ensure the ASL Interpreters and CART Transcribers are aware and ask them to interpret/transcribe during it.

⧠⌨After the Event

Make sure all follow-up emails, resources and websites are accessible. If you are surveying participants about their experience, be sure to record any feedback on access issues. Congratulations!

Conclusion

While this document cannot address every situation, we have tried to address the most common issues and scenarios. We hope you have found it helpful. Feel free to reach out to us at DSF@cityhall.nyc.gov – we welcome feedback on this guide.

If you are planning an event on behalf of or in partnership with a New York City agency, you should also consult with that agency's Disability Service Facilitator (DSF). A list of agency DSFs can be found at nyc.gov/DSF.

Glossary

Access Need

Something that a person needs to understand or participate in a program, such as captions for videos. Access needs may or may not be related to a person's disability. Access needs vary from person to person, and a person's access needs can change over time.

Alt Text

A brief written description of an image. Alt text is not visible on a webpage or in an electronic document, but is embedded in code, so that someone using screen reader technology can access the description. Alt text will also be visible to someone whose internet cannot load images. The term alt text is short for alternative text.

Alternative Format

A way to present information to a person with a disability that is different from the standard print format. The purpose of alternative formats is to provide equal access to information for people who are blind or have low vision. Examples of alternative formats include large print, braille, and accessible electronic document.

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation

Provided by live qualified interpreters, this can include signed interpreting (English to American Sign Language) and voiced interpreting (American Sign Language to English). ASL interpretation benefits Deaf participants who know ASL. Captioning is not a replacement for interpreting, as ASL and English are two different languages. Captions will also not capture nuances of tone and expression.

Audio Description (AD)

A verbal description of key visual elements in your program. AD benefits many people, including people who are blind or have low vision, people who have trouble looking at their screens due to migraines or vertigo, and people calling into a program via phone. For a live program it is best in most instances to integrate AD into your program by having presenters describe their own visuals, but you can also use a professional audio describer. Post-production audio description can also be done in-house or by a professional.

Braille

A system of writing for people who are blind that uses a system of raised dots that can be felt with the fingertips to represent characters and words.

Captions

A text equivalent of audio information presented during a program. Captions benefit many people, including people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, people with audio processing disabilities, and people in loud environments.

Types of captions include:

- **Automated Captioning**
  Automated captions are generated by AI. While automated captions are better than no captions, they are still, in most instances, significantly less accurate than CART captions.

- **CART Captioning**
  Communication Access Realtime Translation. CART captions are generated live during an event by a professional captioner. For a virtual program, they are typically delivered through the same virtual platform as your program, such as Zoom, and can sometimes be viewed in a separate window. For a live event, they will appear on a screen, and you will have to work out the logistics with the captioner in advance.

- **Post-Production Captioning**
  This refers to captions that are added to a video after it has been recorded.

- **Closed Captions**
  These captions are "closed" because they can be turned on and off by the viewer. These are the kind of captions you will see on platforms like Zoom and YouTube. Closed captions can be uploaded as an .srt file alongside a prerecorded video.

- **Open Captions**
  These captions are "open" because they cannot be turned on and off by the viewer. They are added by editing the video in post-production.

CART

See definition under "Captions" above.

Disability

Although federal, state, and local laws define disability more narrowly, a disability is essentially a mismatch between a person's needs and the features of a product, built environment, system, or service.

Disability Service Facilitator (DSF)

City agency representatives who coordinate their agencies' efforts to comply with and carry out their agencies' responsibilities under the ADA and other federal, state, and local laws and regulations concerning access to agency programs and services by people with disabilities. Every City agency is required to designate a DSF under Local Law 27 of 2016. MOPD maintains a list of agency DSFs on its website at nyc.gov/DSF.

Platform Lift

A platform lift is a fully powered device designed to raise a wheelchair and its occupant to overcome a step, a set of stairs, or similar vertical barrier. It is to be distinguished from a stair lift, which only transports a passenger and not their wheelchair or mobility scooter.

Reasonable Accommodation

A reasonable accommodation is a change or adjustment to a program or service that allows a person with a disability to participate equally. City agencies and others have a legal obligation to provide people with disabilities, as defined under various laws, with accommodations unless doing so will create an undue burden or fundamentally alter the nature of the service or program. Extensive information about the obligation to provide reasonable accommodations under the NYC Human Rights Law, including the obligation for covered entities to engage in a "cooperative dialogue" with the person with a disability, can be found in the Disability Legal Enforcement Guidance issued by the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR), available on the Legal Enforcement Guidance page of CCHR's website: nyc.gov/site/cchr/law/legal-guidances.page.

Visual Description

A visual description is a way for presenters or people at an event to describe their physical appearance and provide helpful contextual information for those who cannot see them.

Info Sheets

Info Sheet A: Accessible Routes

Info Sheet B: Common Door Accessibility Issues

Info Sheet C: Accessible Ramps

Info Sheet D: Accessible Restrooms

Info Sheet E: Accessible Seating Layouts

Info Sheet F: Assistive Listening Systems

Info Sheet G: MOPD Disability Inclusive Terminology Guide

Info Sheet H: Accessibility Icons

Info Sheet I: Sample Accessibility Language for Promotional Materials

Info Sheet J: Working with Sign Language Interpreters

Info Sheet K: Service Animals

Info Sheet L: Disability Etiquette: A Starting Guide

Info Sheet A
Accessible Routes

Definition: a continuous unobstructed path connecting all accessible elements and spaces of a building or facility – from the arrival point to all activity areas.

It's the best practice for all attendees to use the same entrance and routes. In other words, try to avoid relegating people with disabilities to a separate route where integration is possible.

Components of an Accessible Route

There are several components to an accessible route. Each is described below, with illustrations, as needed.

Width

In general, accessible routes must be at least 36 inches wide but may narrow to 32 inches. In general, a 36-inch-wide door will provide the required 32" clear distance when open. In all cases, the 36-inch accessible route cannot be reduced by any obstruction for more than 2 feet. For spaces in which the turning of a wheelchair is required, see diagrams below.
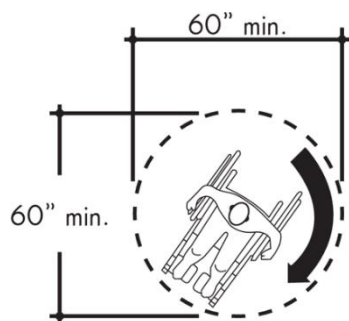
60" Diameter Turning Spacing
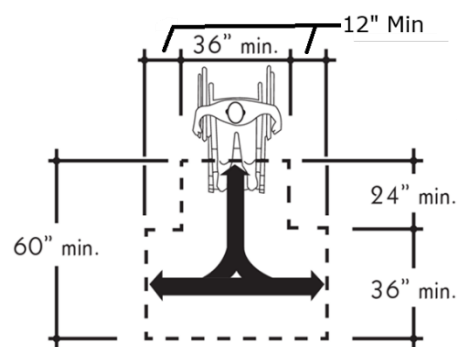
T-Shaped Turning Space

Passing Space

For routes narrower than 60 inches, passing spaces must be provided at least every 200 feet. While a T junction of two corridors is an acceptable option, each passing space must be 60 inches by 60 inches.

Headroom

There must be 80 inches of headroom where anyone will be circulating. Where 80 inches is not possible, a barrier warning (such as a planter or railing that would bar someone from passing under) must be provided.

Protrusions

Canes will generally only detect objects that protrude below 27 inches. Therefore, at heights 27-80 inches above the ground, nothing can protrude more than 4 inches into areas where people will be circulating unless there is a barrier warning.

Surface Textures

All floor and ground surfaces must be stable, firm, and slip-resistant. Be aware of trip hazards.

Changes in Level

Any change in level of over ¼ of an inch on an accessible route is considered an obstacle and must be addressed by either a ramp (i.e., a sloped surface), lift or elevator. Paths of travel with a slope that exceeds 1:20 must follow ramp requirements. For more information on Accessible Ramps, see Info Sheet C.

Doors

Doorways must provide a clear opening of at least 32 inches. For additional information, see Info Sheet B.
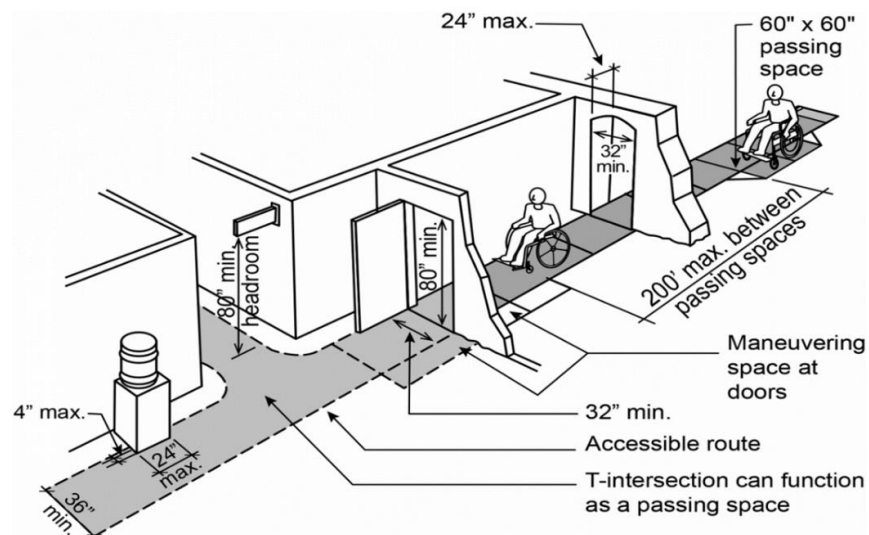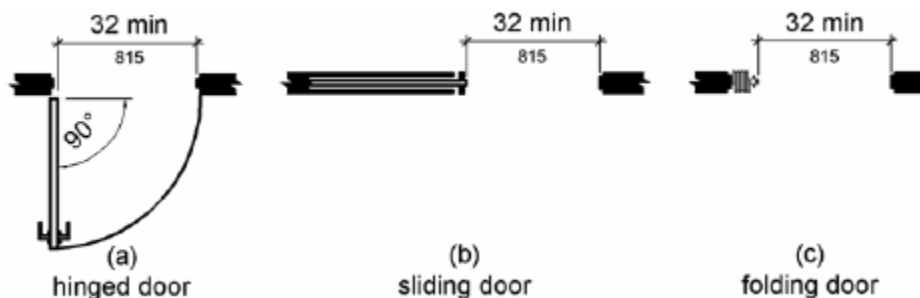
Info Sheet B
Accessible Doors

Clear Width

Accessible doors should provide at least 32 inches of clear width. Clear width is measured between the face of the door itself, when completely open (either at a 90-degree angle, slid all the way open, or folded open completely), and the opposite stop.


Door Operability

An accessible door will not require more than 5 lbs. of force to operate. Door handles and levers should be designed to be easily operated with a loose grip or closed fist, avoiding the need for tight grasping or twisting motions. Traditional round doorknobs are not accessible, as they require tight grasping and twisting to turn.

Thresholds

In general, thresholds must be no more than ¾ of an inch and if greater than ¼ an inch, must be beveled with a maximum slope of 1:2.
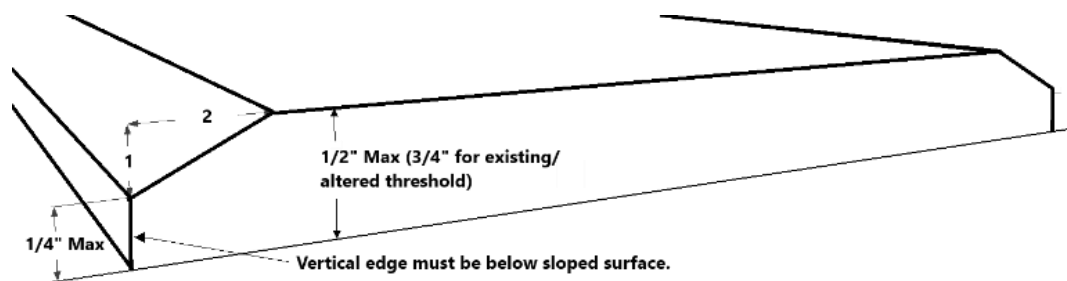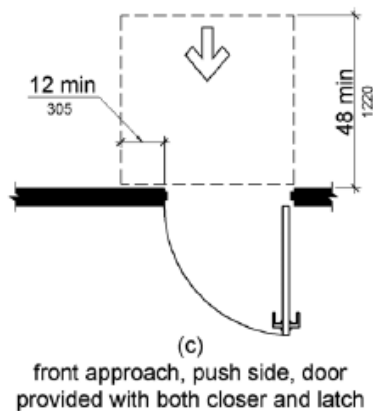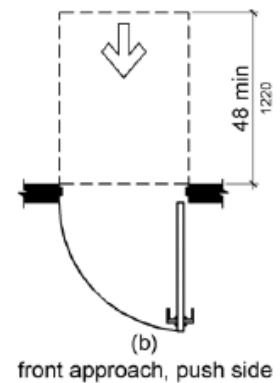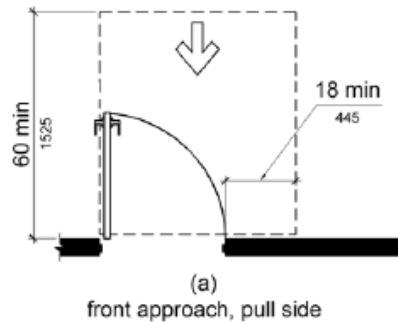
Maneuvering Space

Doors require a certain amount of clear space around them to allow individuals who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices to:

- Approach the door

- Reach the door or door hardware

- Open the door while remaining outside the swing of the door (if it's a swinging type)

- Maneuver through the doorway

- Close the door behind them

The space required varies depending on the type of door and the direction of approach:

- If Door Swings Toward – maneuvering clearance of 18 inches minimum on latch side of door.

- If Door Swings Away –

  - With closer and latch: maneuvering clearance of 12 inches minimum on latch side of door

  - No closer or latch: No maneuvering clearance needed.

60 min
1525

18 min
445

(a)
front approach, pull side

48 min
1220

(b)
front approach, push side

12 min
305

48 min
1220

(c)
front approach, push side, door provided with both closer and latch

In all cases, the maneuvering space should have a level surface, that has a maximum slope of 1:48.

Closing Speed

Doors that close quickly make it difficult for users, particularly those with disabilities, to get through safely.

Follow these guidelines:

- Doors with closers should take at least 5 seconds to move from the open position at 90 degrees to 12 degrees from the latch (for a door with a 32-inch opening, this is about 6 to 7 inches from the latch).

- Doors with spring hinges should take at least 1.5 seconds to fully close from the open position of 70 degrees.

Smooth Door Surfaces

Generally, the bottom 10 inches of the push side of a door should have a smooth surface because canes, wheelchairs and other mobility devices can snag on uneven surfaces.
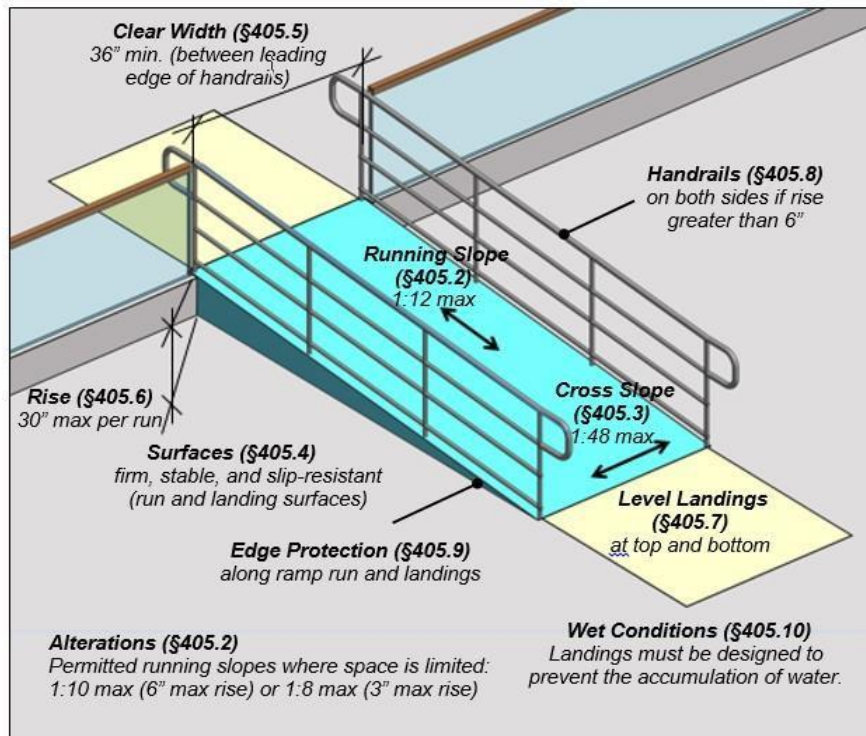
Info Sheet C
Accessible Ramps

An accessible ramp has the following features:

- a maximum slope of 1:12

- a minimum clear width of 36 inches

- edge protection (except for ramps that are less than 6 inches and have side flares)

- a non-slip surface, even when wet

- a flat landing at the start and end of each segment that is the full width of the ramp and at least 60 inches long

- a ramp segment cannot be longer than 30 feet (a landing required at least every 30 feet)

- ramps with an overall elevation of more than 6 inches must also have a handrail.
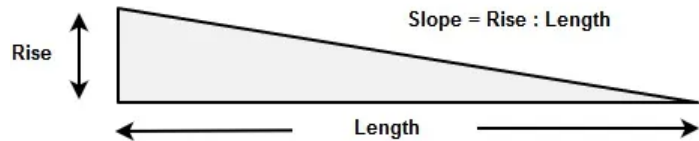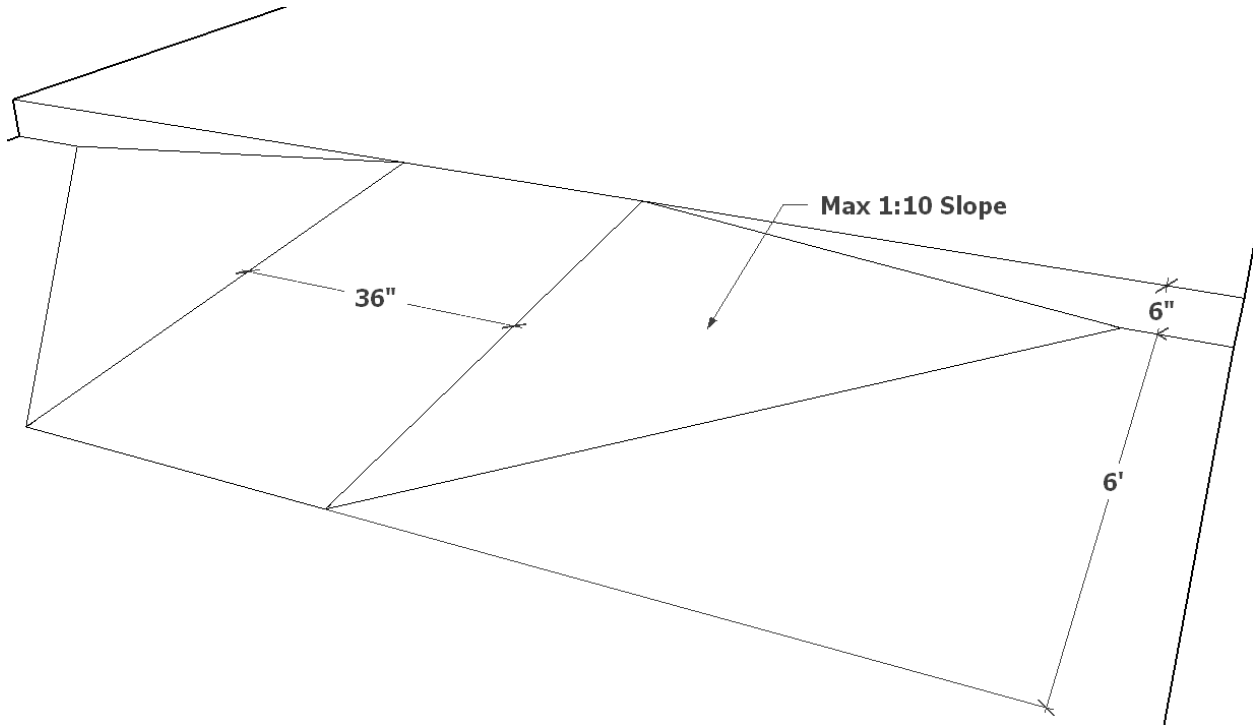
See the illustration below showing all these features.

Flared Sides

Flared sides, the sloped sides of a ramp, must have a maximum slope of 1:10, see the illustration below for an example.

Max 1:10 Slope

36"

6"

6'

Info Sheet D
Accessible Restrooms

Event venues must have wheelchair-accessible restroom options for all genders.

General Requirements of an Accessible Restroom

- Clear space underneath sink allowing wheelchairs to approach.

- Acceptable reach distances so wheelchair users can reach faucets (Maximum reach height of 48 inches when reach depth is 20 inches or less; reduced reach height of 44 inches when reach depth exceeds 20 inches).

- Accessible accessories such as toilet paper dispensers, seat cover dispensers, and trash cans should not block required clearances.

Features of a Wheelchair Accessible Multi-User Restroom:

- At least one wheelchair accessible stall (see diagram).

- An accessible route to all components of the restroom, which allows a wheelchair user to turn around (a 60" diameter circle or T-shaped space). Doors can swing into the turning space.

- If sink is within the stall, knee and toe clearance underneath can overlap a portion of the turning space but should still be positioned to allow safe transfer from wheelchair to toilet.
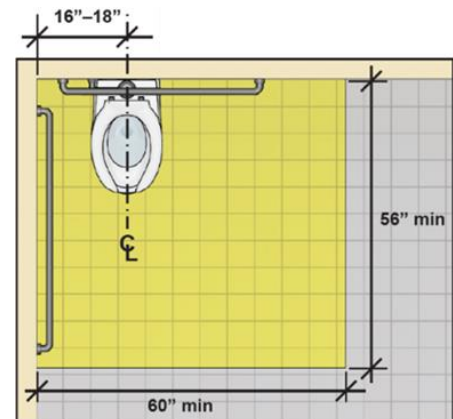
Features of a Wheelchair Accessible Single-User Restroom

- Wheelchair accessible restroom with a minimum size of 88 by 78 inches (see diagram).

- Wheelchair turning circle with a 60-inch diameter to maneuver.
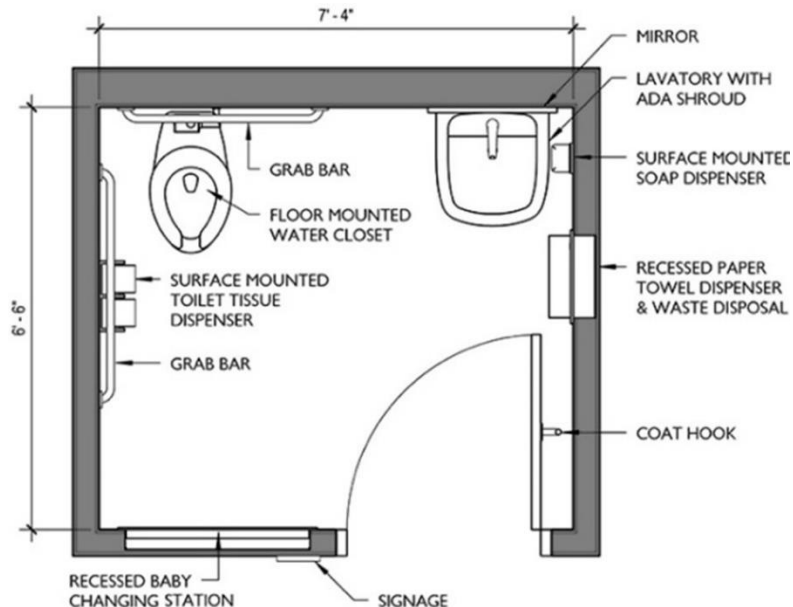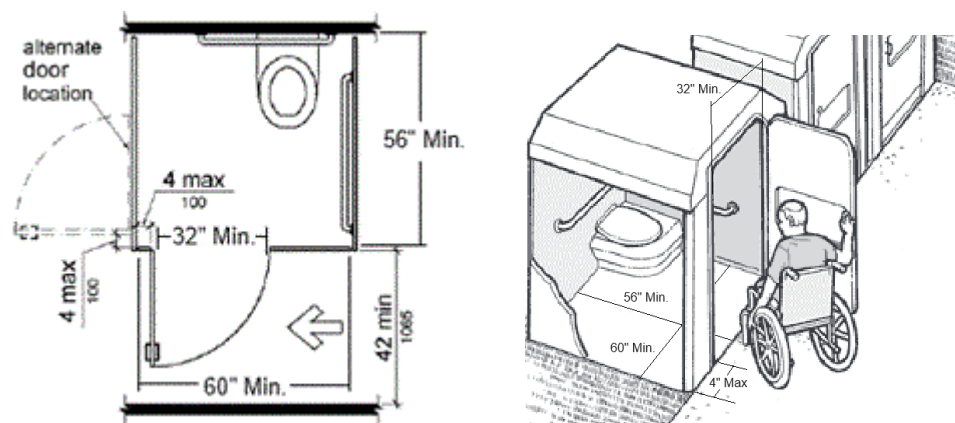

Outdoor Portable Wheelchair Accessible Restroom

- Have the same requirements as interior wheelchair accessible stalls.

- Must be along an exterior accessible route for outdoor events.

Inadequate Accessible Stall Types

Please note that many venues, based on the presence of ambulatory restroom stalls that met earlier ADA accessible restrooms standards, may consider themselves "fully accessible". However, while ambulatory stalls have features that are helpful to people with some disabilities, they are not accessible to wheelchair users. Prior to booking a venue, the availability of wheelchair accessible stalls or single-user restrooms must be verified.

Info Sheet E
Accessible Seating Layouts

The following information and layouts will provide all users access to your event and activities. These layouts are suggestions.

Each layout below can be printed and included as an addendum to your facility contract. You can use them in a pre-meeting with facility and banquet staff, and with your internal planning team to ensure that your rooms are set up correctly. Measurements shown ensure accessibility. More space is highly recommended for aisles, paths between chairs and tables, around the perimeter of the room, and around any refreshment or display tables.

Note: these layouts are for meetings where up to 10% of attendees use mobility devices (wheelchairs, scooters, crutches, etc.). If your meeting will have more than 10% of attendees using mobility devices, increase the number of accessible seating locations and aisle widths accordingly.

Best Practices for Seating Layouts

Keep these recommendations in mind as you plan the layout of seating, tables, and other elements:

- Remove two chairs for each mobility device space.
- Chairs should be un-ganged to allow attendees to move them as needed.
- If 10% or more of participants are expected to use mobility aids, plan for 30% more space.
- Take note of the known number of attendees who use mobility devices to ensure there is enough accessible seating.
- Circulation space should be at least 36 inches, though 60 inches allows for passing room for people using mobility devices.
- A six-foot minimum width is recommended for aisles and room perimeters.

- When possible, include both "horizontal" (side to side) and "vertical" (front to back) aisles to improve access and flow.

- Offer accessible seating locations throughout the room so individuals with disabilities have choices similar to the choices available to others. At a minimum, set up the front, back, and middle rows as accessible.

- Have event staff or volunteers in attendance at the start of each session to assist with last-minute changes (moving chairs, etc.) that may be needed.

- Individuals who use scooters may remain in their scooter seats or may transfer to standard chairs and keep their scooters nearby or behind their chairs. Again, event staff may be needed to assist with adjusting furniture.

- When a personal assistant accompanies an individual, plan seating to include the assistant.

- If possible, leave room at the rear of the meeting space for attendees to stand or stretch.

- Doors should be propped open at the start and end of each session, and event staff should be on hand to open doors during sessions if needed.

- When round tables are used for a presentation, consider the use of half-round seating so that all participants may face the direction of the speakers/presentations.

- Place low-tack tape on carpeted floors to mark pathways that should remain unblocked. Include information in printed event materials (programs, handouts, etc.) and introductory remarks to remind participants to keep those areas clear of bags, chairs, or other items that can cause barriers.

Accessible Theater Seating Layout

This is a classic set up with rows of chairs divided by side and center aisles. This set-up is appropriate for large sessions and short lectures that do not require desks or tables for extensive note-taking or frequent reference to handouts. Note the minimum widths for center and side aisles, and for the distance between accessible rows.
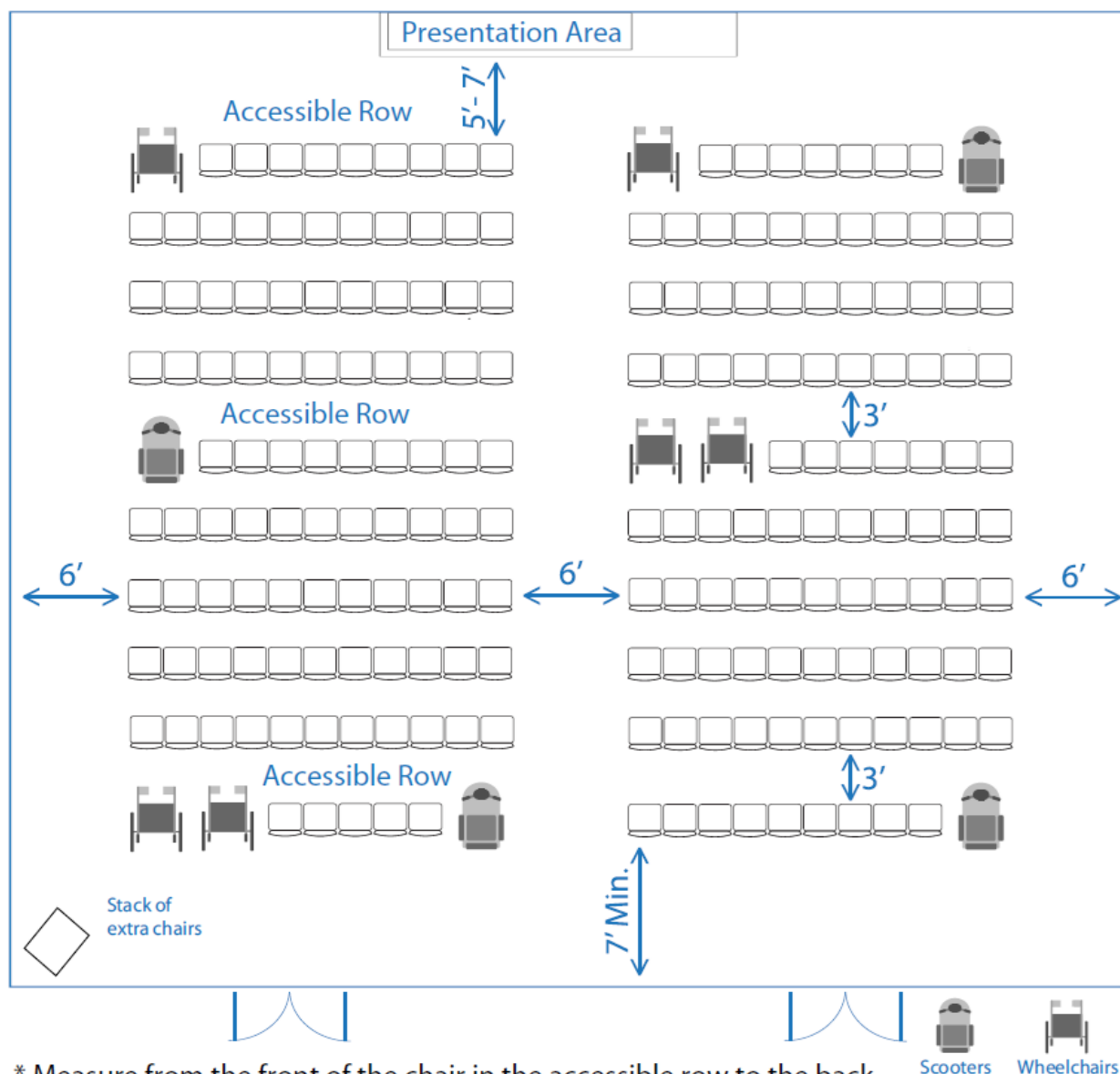
* Measure from the front of the chair in the accessible row to the back of the chair in front.

The Theater Layout above has the following features:

- Side and center aisles with a width of 6 feet.

- Space from back row to back wall is a minimum of 7 feet.

- Space between front row and presentation area is 5 to 7 feet.

- Accessible rows in the front, middle, and back with 3 feet of space between the front of the seat to the back of the seat in the row in front.

Accessible Classroom Seating Layout

This set up is like the Theater Layout, with the addition of a shallow long table in each row and is very helpful when participants need a surface to take notes and refer to materials.

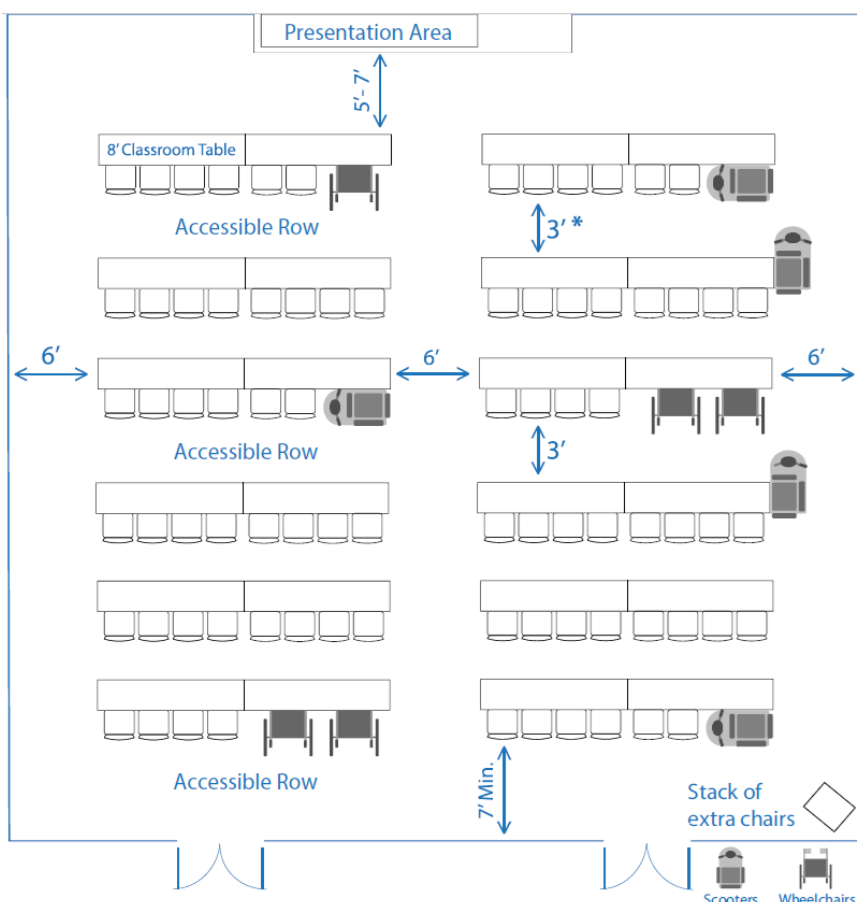The Classroom Layout has the following features:

- Side and center aisles with a width of 6 feet.

- Space from back row to back wall is a minimum of 7 feet.

- Space between front row and presentation area is 5 to 7 feet.

- Accessible rows in the front, middle, and back with 3 feet of space between the back of the seat (with seat pulled out so that front edge of seat is aligned with the front edge of the table) to the front of the table in the row behind.
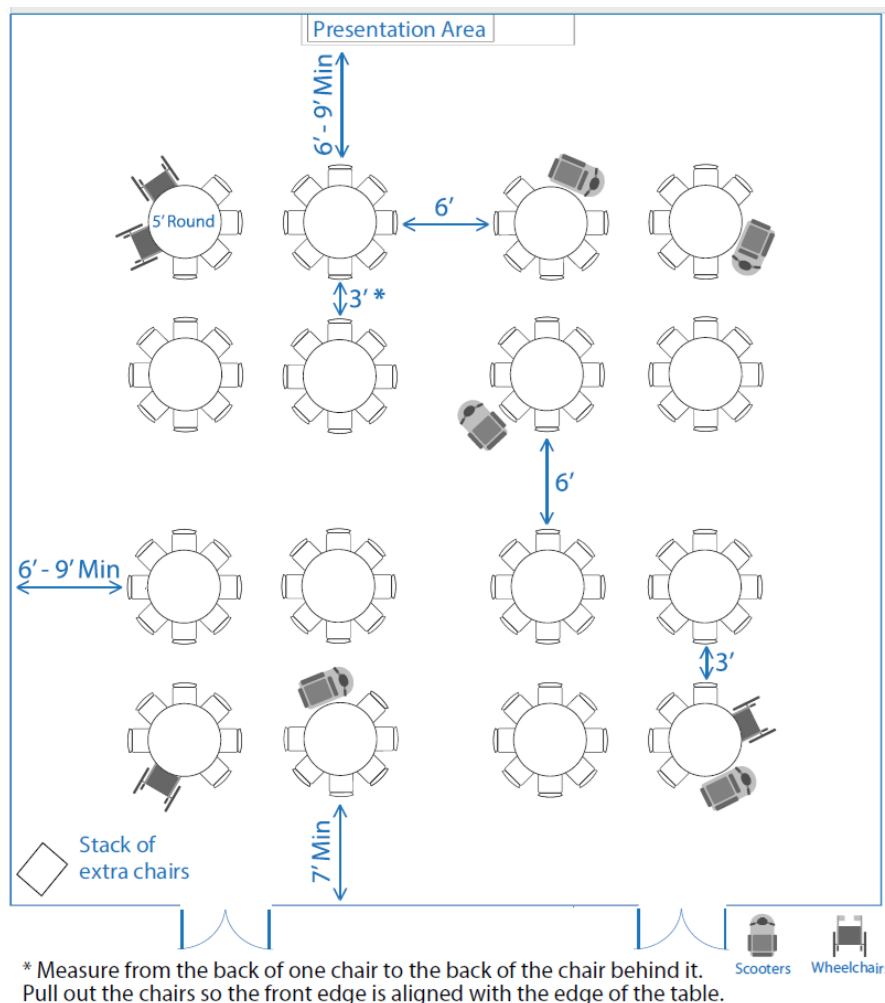

* With chairs pulled out so the front edge of the chair is at the front edge of the table, measure from the back of the chair to the front edge of the table in the row behind.

Accessible Round Table Layout

This is the classic banquet layout. Note the minimum widths for center and side aisles, and for the distance between tables.

The Round Table Layout has the following features:

- Side aisles with a width of 6 to 9 feet.

- Center aisles (horizontal and vertical) with a width of 6 feet.

- Space from back row of tables to back wall is a minimum of 7 feet.

- Space between front row of table and presentation area is 6 to 9 feet.

- Spacing between tables a minimum of 3 feet between the back of the seat at one table to the back of the seat at the adjacent table (measured with seats pulled out so that front edge of seat is aligned with the edge of the table).

Presentation Area

6' - 9' Min

5' Round

6'

3' *

6'

6' - 9' Min

3'

Stack of extra chairs

7' Min

* Measure from the back of one chair to the back of the chair behind it.
Pull out the chairs so the front edge is aligned with the edge of the table.

Scooters   Wheelchair

Accessible Speaker Platform

Two layouts are provided here, and either could be adapted for additional presentation elements. Both layouts incorporate presentation screens that are easily viewed from all areas of the room. All presentation platforms must be accessible by ADA-compliant ramps. The back edge of the platform should be placed against a wall to eliminate one edge where speakers could possibly fall off. Provide for a 5' turning radius to ensure adequate maneuvering space.

Captioning should be on all screens that are showing slides, videos, or live feed of the presenters. If this is not feasible, then a dedicated screen for captions can be used. Space for a qualified ASL Interpreter should be included in all plans, and seating nearest interpreters should be reserved for individuals using those services.

In no case should a presenter who uses a wheelchair or scooter be asked to present from the floor while others present from a stage. Neither should a presenter using a mobility device be seated at the end of a skirted table instead of with the other presenters. Rather, create an environment where each panelist or presenter is viewed on equal ground with the others. Podiums should be avoided, unless a presenter requests one specifically to accommodate his or her needs.

Traditional Stage Layout

This design shows a stage area with multiple panelists / presenters.
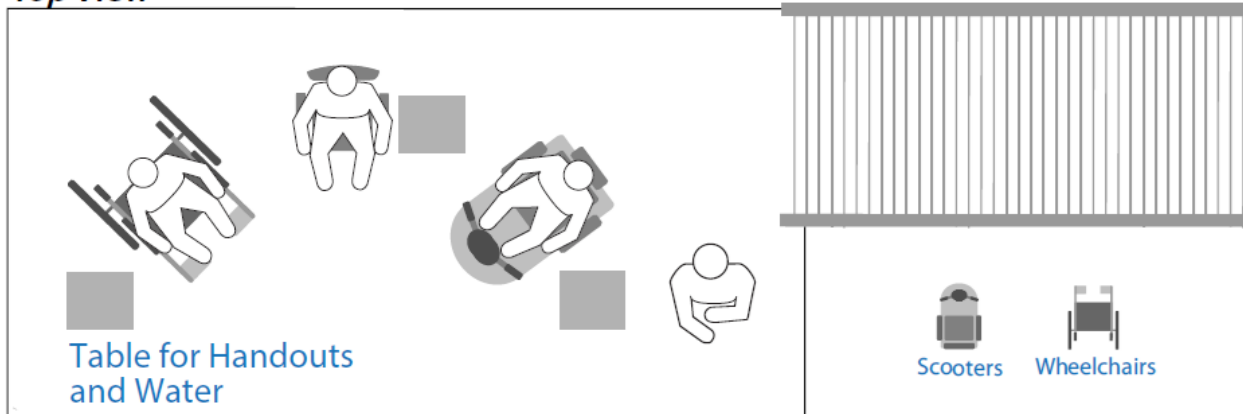
Front View
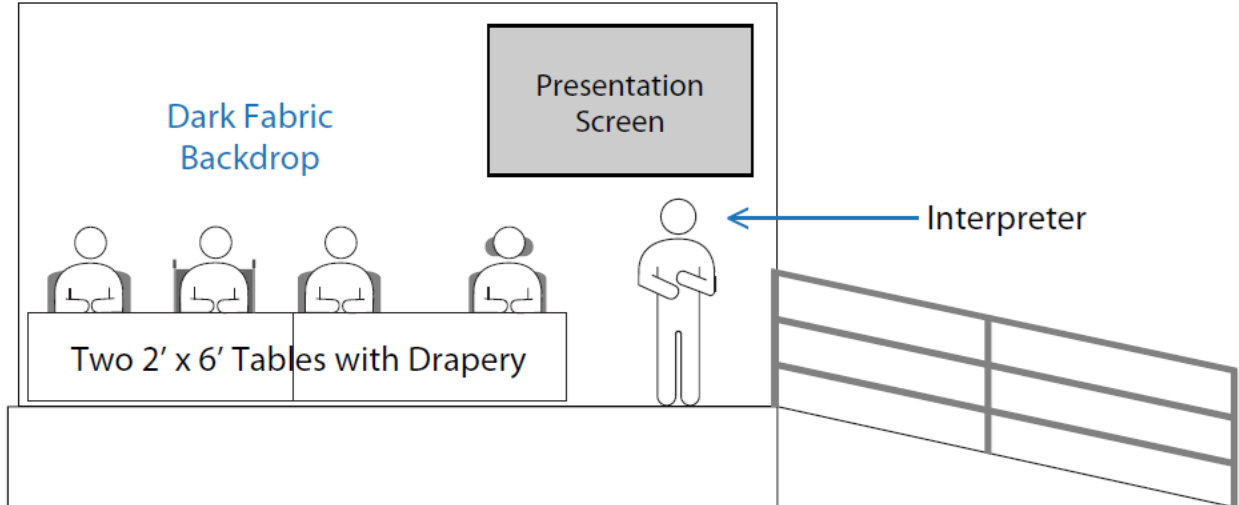
Top View
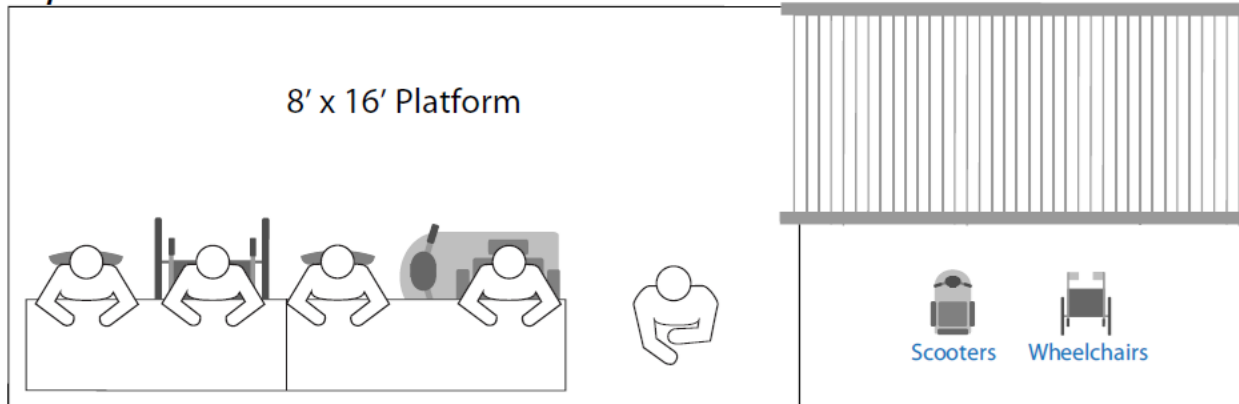
The Traditional Stage Layout above has the following features:

- An 8- by 16-foot raised platform.

- An ADA-compliant ramp.

- Two 2- by 6-foot tables with one chair at each, providing space for two people using mobility devices.

- A dork fabric backdrop and display screen.

- Space to the side of the tables for an interpreter.

'Talk Show' Stage Layout

This style is often used for a more conversational presentation, typically with a moderator and one or more guests. Side tables should be provided (for water, notes, or other materials) for each guest. Individuals who use wheelchairs or scooters may need a higher side table than other guests.

The Traditional Stage Layout above has the following features:

- An 8- by 16-foot raised platform.

- An ADA-compliant ramp.

- An arrangement of small tables and a chair with space for two mobility device users.

- A dork fabric backdrop and display screen.

- Space to the side of the presenters for an interpreter.

Adapted from information and layouts at: adainfo.org/hospitality/accessible-meetings-events-conferences-guide/#tab5.

Info Sheet F
Assistive Listening Systems

Assistive listening systems are used by people who are D/deaf or hard of hearing to amplify the voice of a person speaking in isolation from the surrounding background noise. These systems have three basic uses: individual, small space, and whole room. They also use two basic methods of sending sound to the user: through the air (radio or infrared signals) and a loop (magnetic field).

The systems are made up of three basic components: A **microphone** captures the speaker's voice. An **amplification system** sends that sound out to the user(s). Finally, a **receiver unit** allows the user to hear the speaker through a headset or directly in the user's hearing aid or cochlear implant.

Individual systems have all three components combined into a portable system that a single user can carry around. These systems are useful for events that have multiple speakers spread through a large area—like a hiring hall or resource fair. It is recommended to have 3 to 5 of these systems available for attendees to borrow during the event.

Small space systems also have all three components combined but are permanently installed. These are often used at check-in and security desks. It allows one or two users to access the sound of the person speaking.

Whole-room systems rely on the room's PA system to pick up the speaker's voice. The Assistive Listening System is connected to the PA system and sends its sound out to the receivers of each user; or through the wire loop installed around the room. These are useful for events with spaces that already have a PA system in use and allow an unlimited number of users to access the sound (the number of users is only limited by the number of receivers available).

Radio/Infrared vs. Loop Systems

Over-the-air systems (radio and infrared) have the advantage of the user not needing a compatible hearing aid or cochlear implant, through a receiver with a pair of headphones. These systems also have receivers that can communicate with those compatible personal devices as well, through a receiver with a neck loop. The disadvantage of these systems is that an attendee must check out a receiver from the event organizers, instead of having immediate access.

Loop systems have the advantage of allowing users with compatible personal devices immediate access to the system output, by switching the device to the T-coil setting. These systems also have the availability of using specialized receivers that allow a user without a compatible device to use a headset. The disadvantage is that these specialized receivers are not commonly available and are typically more expensive than other receivers.

Additional Resources

A description of various assistive listening systems and devices can be found on the website of the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA).

A filterable database of assistive listening systems in City-owned and operated facilities on MOPD's website. This database is currently updated annually based on information that agencies self-report to MOPD.

HLAA's NYC chapter maintains **a list of venues with hearing loops in the NYC area**.

Info Sheet G
MOPD Disability-Inclusive
Terminology Guide

Our words matter. How we choose to write and speak about people has the power to help or hinder efforts to create inclusive experiences and a culture respectful of all.

Many commonly used words hold negative connotations that the speaker may not even be aware of. Becoming familiar with these words — and their appropriate alternatives — is important for everyone, but especially those creating content for a public as diverse as New York City.

Everyone has their preferred terms and it is not possible to capture everyone's preferred terms in written language. However, it is important to understand why these words matter and which to avoid when writing about people with disabilities.

Below, you will find a list of words or phrases to avoid, what to use instead, and a short rationale for each.

Offensive Terms and Alternatives

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Handicapped	Accessible or Disabled	Use the appropriate alternatives such as "accessible bathrooms", "accessible parking spots", "disabled athletes", or "athletes with disabilities".
Retarded / Mentally Retarded	Cognitive, Intellectual, or Developmental Disabilities	Replace the slang word "retarded" with "ridiculous" or something not offensive.
Stupid / idiot / moron / dumb	Say "that makes no sense" or "that's ridiculous". Avoid using these words as an insult.	Did you know that the terms idiot and moron were medical terms and in 1927 the Supreme Court ruled that it was legal to sterilize people who were declared idiots or morons?
Visually Impaired Hearing Impaired	Blind/Low Vision; Deaf/Hard of Hearing	"Impaired" has a negative connotation.
Deaf-mute / Deaf and dumb	Deaf	These terms assume that Deaf people do not vocalize.
Cripple or Gimp	Person with a disability, or people with physical disabilities	Using "cripple" to refer to a person, or as a metaphor, is offensive.

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Midget	Little Person, or Dwarf	"Midget" comes from a time when Little People were a source of entertainment. "Dwarf" is a medically acceptable term. "Little Person" is socially acceptable.
Lame	Not cool, dull, awkward, uninteresting, disappointing. Say "poor excuse" instead of "lame excuse".	Very few people know that the slang word "lame" refers to someone with limited mobility, especially someone who cannot walk. Try saying what you really mean.
Spaz / spastic	Say "got overly excited" instead of "spazzed out". Say "that was silly of me" instead of "I'm such a spaz".	The term "spaz" comes from "spastic", which is a medical term used to refer to spasms, especially spasms related to high muscle tone, which can be a characteristic of someone with cerebral palsy.
Special	Person with disabilities	This term is patronizing. Everyone can have needs, people with disabilities' needs are not special. Use "students with disabilities" instead of "special ed students".
Differently Abled	Use person-first or identity-first language (see below chart).	Disabled people are proud of their identity and do not want to be referred to with euphemisms. See the table below.

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Crazy	Wild, out of this world, bizarre, outrageous	Considered an offensive term because it stigmatizes people with mental health disabilities.
OCD / ADHD	Use an alternative term that describes the person's behavior unless you are actually referring to a medical diagnosis. For example, instead of describing someone as OCD, you could say that they are "hyper-focused", "picky" or "hard to please".	OCD and ADHD are medical terms. It can lead to misunderstandings to use these terms in other contexts and may be hurtful to those who have the diagnosis.
Wheelchair Bound	Person with physical disabilities, person who uses a wheelchair, person with an ambulatory disability	People are not bound by their wheelchairs. They transfer out of them all the time.
Victim (of) / Sufferer / Suffers from	Use person-first or identity-first language (see below chart).	These terms assume that the person's experience of disability is necessarily a negative or deficit, and invoke pity, which may promote a feeling of superiority.
Invalid	Person with a disability	Another degrading term. Gives the impression of invalidation.

Offensive Term	Appropriate Term	Comments
Disability metaphors such as blind-sided, fall on deaf ears, paralyzed	Unexpected, ambivalent, frozen	It can be harmful for a disabled person to hear their identity used as a metaphor for ignorance or inaction. Say what you mean instead of using expressions like blind-sided.

Person-First and Identity-First Language

Person-first language puts the person first such as "person with a disability". Identity-first language places the disability first such as "disabled person". Whenever it's possible, ask each person how they identify and remember their preference. When that is not possible, the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities recommends using "person-first language".

Below is a list of disability types and their corresponding person-first and identity-first terminologies.

Disability Type	Person-First Language	Identity-First Language
Mobility	Person with mobility disabilities, person with physical disabilities. Person who uses a wheelchair	Disabled person, wheelchair user
Hearing	Person who is Deaf, person who is hard of hearing	Deaf person
Vision	Person who is blind, person who has low vision	Blind person

Disability Type	Person-First Language	Identity-First Language
Mental Health	Person who is living with or experiencing a mental health disability or mental illness. Or, specify the illness or condition: Person who is experiencing psychosis, or person who is living with bipolar disorder.	Identity-first language is usually not favored in this context.
Cognitive/ Intellectual/ Developmental	Person with cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities	Identity-first language is usually not favored in this context.
Neurodiversity	Person who is neurodivergent. Or refer to specific diagnosis: Person with autism, or with autism spectrum disorder.	Neurodivergent individual, ASD individual

Additional Resources for Language

Disability Language Style Guide
(National Center on Disability and Journalism)

Disability Writing and Journalism Guidelines
(Center for Disability Rights – New York State)

Conscious Style Guide

Info Sheet H
Accessibility Icons

The following icons can be used to advertise various accessibility features of an event. They can be used in promotional materials and on signage. To download an image, open in Acrobat then click on the desired image to select it. Next, right-click and choose 'Copy Image' ('Save Image as' if using Acrobat Pro). Once copied, you can paste it into your creation tool.
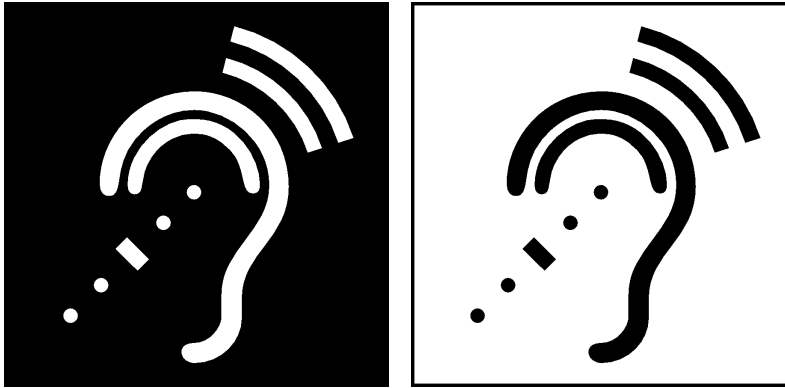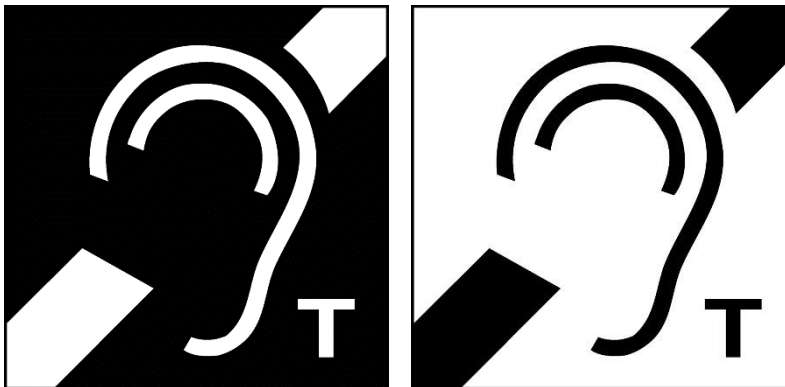
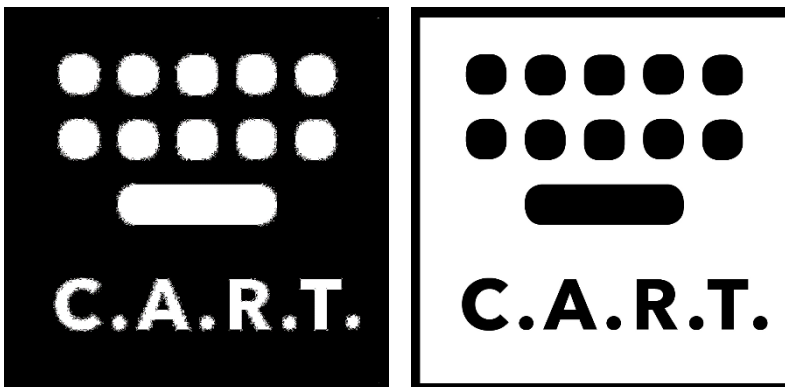Wheelchair Accessible
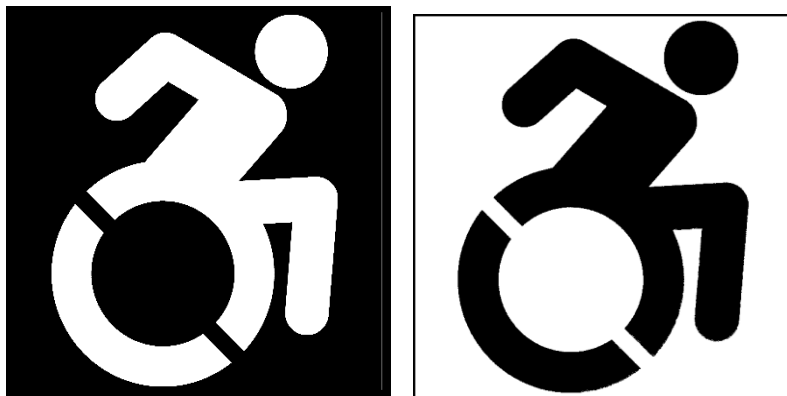
ASL Interpretation
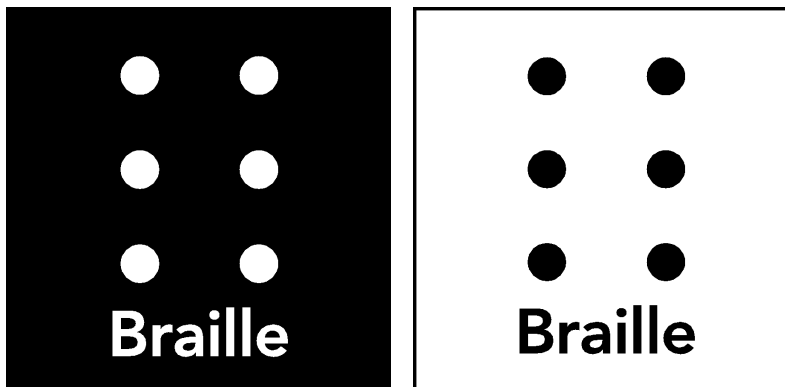
Assistive Listening System
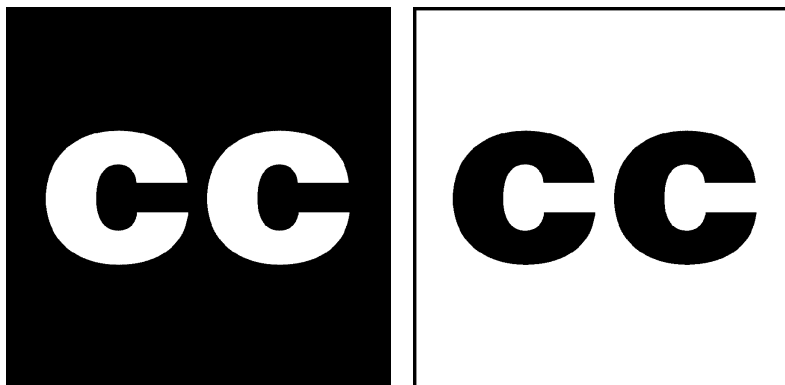

Hearing Loop

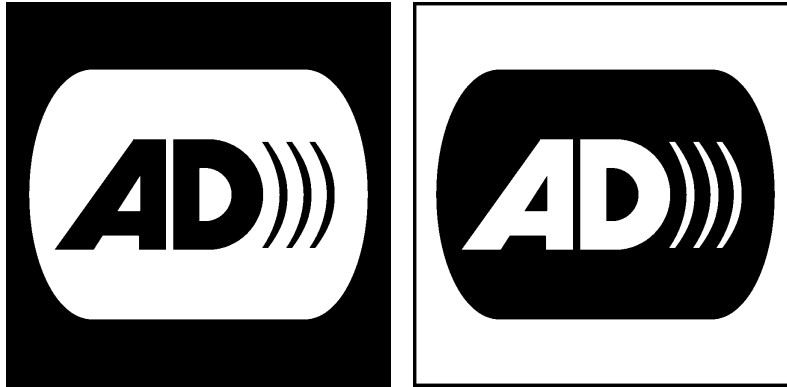Human Transcription

Large Print Materials

Large
Print

Large
Print

Braille Materials

Braille

Braille

Closed Captioning

CC CC

Audio Description

Info Sheet I
Sample Accessibility Language
for Promotional Materials

The venue is wheelchair accessible, has an assistive listening system, and CART (live captioning) will be provided. Please request alternate formats, sign language interpreters, and any other accommodations by [date] by contacting [name of contact person] at [insert email address] or [insert phone number].

Info Sheet J
Working with Sign Language Interpreters

When working with ASL interpreters, it is important to keep the following in mind.

Pre-Event Prep

Before the event, whenever possible, share any agendas, slides, outlines, handouts, and uncaptioned video content with the interpreters. Also, share speakers' names, acronyms, and any other specialized terminology that will be used.

Line of Sight

For in-person events, position the interpreter(s) near the speaker(s). Provide seating for the deaf or hard of hearing individual(s) with a clear line of sight to the interpreter(s).

For virtual events, be sure the video conferencing platform is set up so that the interpreter who is signing will always be visible.

Lighting

Always provide appropriate lighting for the interpreter. If you plan to turn down the lights during the event, remember to leave enough lighting on the interpreter.

Interactions and Expectations

Treat the interpreters as professionals. The interpreter is not a personal assistant for the deaf attendees and should only be asked to facilitate communication.

Look and speak directly to the deaf or hard of hearing individual when speaking to them through an interpreter and while they are signing to you.

Do not speak to the interpreter directly. This may feel awkward at first since the message is coming through the interpreter.

Address the deaf or hard of hearing individual directly:

☑ Appropriate: "What is your name?"

☒ Inappropriate: "Ask her what her name is?"

Speak at a normal tone and pace. The interpreter will tell you if you need to pause or slow down. In addition, give the interpreter time to finish so that the deaf or hard of hearing person can ask questions or join the discussion.

Permit only one person to speak at a time during group discussions. It is difficult for an interpreter to follow several people speaking at once. Ask for a brief pause between speakers to permit the interpreter to finish before the next speaker starts. It can be helpful to ask people to raise their hands and wait to speak after they have been recognized. Also, it is appropriate etiquette for effective communication for each participant to state their name before speaking so a deaf-blind individual will know who is talking.

Finally, relax. If you are unsure of the appropriate way to proceed in a particular situation, just ask.

Credit: This appendix is adapted almost entirely from a guide issued by the Washington, DC Office of Disability Rights.

Info Sheet K
Service Animals in Public Places
and Facilities

A service animal is an animal that performs a specific task or set of tasks to assist a person with a disability. Federal, state, and local laws generally require that facilities open to the public allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is normally allowed to go.

Facts

You may only ask two questions:

- ✓ Is the service animal required because of a disability?
- ✓ What work or task does the service animal perform?

You may not ask:

- ✖ About the person's disability
- ✖ For medical documentation
- ✖ For training documentation or a special card for the dog
- ✖ For a demonstration of the tasks the dog performs

Tips to Remember:

- ■ Service animals are not pets. Do not play with or pet a service animal.
- ■ Service animals are not required to wear jackets or vests identifying them as such.
- ■ Service animals are not required to have an identification card or other documentation.

You may ask the handler to remove the service animal only when:

- ■ The service animal is out of control and the handler does not or cannot take effective action to control it.
- ■ The service animal is not housebroken.

In all circumstances, staff must offer the person with a disability the opportunity to obtain goods or services without the animal present.

Info Sheet L
Disability Etiquette: A Starting Guide

The following guidance is meant to better equip you to interact with people who have various disabilities. It is a starting point, and not meant to be exhaustive.

General Do's and Don'ts

- Relax and enjoy getting to know your colleagues or guests as people and as professionals.

- Ask before you provide assistance.

- Do not assume that a person with an apparent disability needs assistance; offering assistance in broad terms such as "Let me know if you need anything" opens the door without assumptions of inability.

- Think in terms of 'Disability Pride' language using powerful words such as: wheelchair user as opposed to confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair person; person who is deaf or blind rather than deaf or blind people.

Individuals with Mobility Disabilities

- Do not touch a person's mobility equipment.

- Be considerate of possible pain, balance, or post-traumatic stress concerns during physical contact.

- When engaging in a conversation, select a location where you can engage comfortably and that reduces distance between you.

Individuals who are Blind or have Low Vision

- Identify yourself when entering a conversation and announce when you leave.

- When serving as a sighted guide, offer your arm or shoulder rather than grabbing or pushing the individual.

- Describe the setting, environment, written material, and obstacles when serving as a human guide.
- Resist the temptation to pet or talk to a guide or service animal.

Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation.
- If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter; keep your eyes on the individual and not on the interpreter.
- Face the person and speak in normal tones.

Individuals who have Speech Disabilities

- If you do not understand what the person is saying, ask the person to repeat what they said and then repeat it back to ensure you understood.
- Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish their sentences.

Individuals who have Non-Apparent Disabilities

- Seek to understand their lived experience.
- Recognize that disclosing their disability comes with a risk and honor requested confidentiality.
- Engage in a dialogue to determine individual needs.
- Support accommodations.

Excerpted from: disabilityin.org/resource/disability-etiquette/