

Americans with Disabilities Act: Accessibility During Meetings

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BACKGROUND:

Ensuring that your public meeting or event is accessible is a crucial step in uplifting the voices of every member of the community. This pamphlet will serve as a guide to help you ensure that all members of the public are able to engage with your event.

PRE-EVENT ACCESSIBILITY

The road to accessibility starts before your event begins. To ensure that your event is accessible make sure you:

- Have a clear point of contact for pre-event and accessibility communications
- Allow for prospective participants to request any necessary accommodations at least one week in advance
- Provide spaces to sit and eat if providing refreshments
- Offer and provide accommodations to the reasonable extent possible
- Develop a public site plan that clearly labels accessible parking, bathrooms, elevators, and how to navigate your event space
- Account for maneuverability around the event space

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

It is important to engage with all participants in a way that is respectful, accommodating, and free of preconceived notions. When interacting directly with meeting participants, make sure to follow this basic etiquette:

- Address people directly and respectfully
- Make eye contact with and face the person you are talking to
- Don't assume mental capacity or physical ability; disabilities are not always visible and visible disabilities do not mean you should assume the presence of invisible or mental disabilities
- If you see someone struggling, politely offer help, but do not assume that someone needs help or is incapable of completing a task
- Pay attention to the audience, make eye contact while presenting, pay attention to see if participants are having difficulty seeing materials or hearing the presentation. Take appropriate action as necessary.
- Don't cut off people speaking, allow them to finish their full thought

AUDITORY ACCESSIBILITY

Auditory disabilities are common-place, and it is always in the best interest of your audience to ensure that all participants can hear presenters or speakers. A little bit of prep can often go a long way in ensuring auditory accessibility:

- Before your event, perform sound tests with all equipment
- Have each speaker practice using the microphone. Coach speakers on:
 - How to hold a microphone
 - What volume to speak at when using a microphone
 - Avoiding distraction or avoiding microphone use when hearing the sound of their own voice
- Control sound within the space, avoid having external noises or activity bleed into presentation spaces
- Have speakers or moderators repeat any questions asked by the audience during a Q&A
- Work with your venue to see what assistive listening technology is available
- If working in communities that have high non-English speaking populations, provide translation services as necessary, including sign language.
- Remind speakers, throughout the event, to use the microphone.

VISUAL ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility of presentation materials is easy to overlook, falling into many accessibility traps that can hurt the viewing and listening experience of meetings:

- Make sure that room lighting and screen contrast make digital materials clearly visible. Materials should be at an appropriate height with no glare
- Avoid having text and background colors with low contrast
 - The MPO recommends using the following website to check color contrast: <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker/>
- Print out digital materials before hand to ensure that formatting and color choices are still readable on physical copies
- Share information on a presentation in different ways:
 - Describe and explain tables or statistics
 - Describe pictures
 - Avoid long paragraphs, explain during the presentation
- The MPO recommends a minimum font size for presentation materials to be 16-18pt font in a clear and easy to read font.
- Ensure all materials are color-blind accessible

PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Not all presentation locations are equally accessible; While there may be situations where you are forced to use an inaccessible location, when you have the flexibility to choose, consider the following:

- Locate the event space near accessible bathrooms
- Post clear signage and directions around your event space to direct participants towards amenities, away from locked doors or from parking to the event space itself
- Avoid locations which have inaccessible sidewalks, steep elevation changes, small elevators, and few or no ramps
- Pay attention to the ground surface materials around the venue
 - Avoid dirt or gravel parking lots
 - Have clear concrete paths that lead into the venue
- Locations should be near bus stops. Look at the City of Pueblo's transit map for bus stop locations.
- Keep aisle spaces clear during the event