

ADVANCING ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

# Creating Accessible & Inclusive Meetings or Events

Planning ahead for inclusion can help to create an event that is welcoming to everybody. Here are some guidelines to consider when organizing meetings and events.

## EARLY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- When possible, include people with disabilities in all stages of event planning.
- Consider the date and time of your event to minimize barriers related to length of day, number & duration of breaks throughout the event, availability of transportation, and religious observances.
- Designate an **Access Coordinator** on your team for the event or meeting.

### Event Access Coordinators

- Receive, confirm and track all access requests from participants.
- Manage and implement accommodations.
- Communicate accommodations arrangements with participants and staff.
- Identify assistants who will be available to help with access-related tasks.
- Coordinate all materials for accessible distribution several days in advance.
- Request interpreters & captioners at least **two weeks in advance** (<http://z.umn.edu/1803>).

## VENUE

Conduct an early site visit to clarify accessibility and what may require additional planning related to:

- Entrances & elevators
- Restrooms (accessible, all-gender & transfer table availability)
- A refrigerator & microwave for those bringing food
- Sufficient accessible parking & transportation
- Audio technology (microphones, listening devices)
- Temperature control & lighting considerations
- Quiet spaces

Please also:

- Ensure space is large enough.
- Plan for wheelchair accessible seating and paths throughout the space.
- Provide a variety of seating and table options (e.g. table heights, styles, sizes).
- Confirm emergency protocols and request changes needed for disabled people (e.g. elevator use during a fire).
- Identify other events at the same venue that day and plan to reduce access barriers (e.g. managing noise level).
- Avoid decorations in pathways, flash/strobe effects, latex balloons, and fog machines.

## MARKETING, WEB DESIGN & FORMS

- Create accessible materials — learn how at [accessibility.umn.edu](http://accessibility.umn.edu) or [z.umn.edu/doccon](http://z.umn.edu/doccon).
- Provide accessible online registration and request preferred names.
- Indicate access being provided (e.g. interpreting, captioning, listening devices, audio description).
- Ask and remind participants to use scent-free products.
- Use this language to invite accommodation requests: "To make disability-related accommodations or dietary requests contact [**Event Access Coordinator**]."

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## Other Considerations

For all-day or multi-day events and conferences:

Verify and provide, in advance, a list of:

- Accessible lodging
- Accessible restaurants nearby and hours of operation

Contact information for:

- Pharmacy – nearest & 24 hour
- Urgent Care, E.R. & crisis hotline
- Grocery stores
- Accessible transportation
- Veterinary office, emergency vet & pet stores

## MATERIALS

- ❑ Contact Document Conversion at [dsdoccon@umn.edu](mailto:dsdoccon@umn.edu) to request alternate formats at least **two weeks in advance**.
- ❑ Distribute all materials digitally in advance to all attendees—include an agenda indicating the amount of walking/physical activity.
- ❑ Provide copies in Braille (as requested), large print and digitally on event day.
- ❑ Check and update all **presenters'** materials for accessibility.
- ❑ Print preferred names on name tags in a large, dark font.
- ❑ Consider the color choices and contrast of all materials.
- ❑ Gather an **Event Kit**.

## Presenter Considerations

Instruct presenters to create accessible presentations by:

- Checking the order each slide element will be read by a screen reader.
- Including alt text on all images. ([accessibility.umn.edu](http://accessibility.umn.edu))
- Considering color/contrast choices and avoiding use of flash or strobe effects.

Remind presenters to:

- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Always use a microphone.
- Describe images and explain slide content.

## FOOD

- ❑ Plan ahead to provide gluten-free, dairy-free, vegetarian, vegan, kosher and halal options.
- ❑ Clearly label all food and keep specialized options separate.
- ❑ If meals are provided, offer full course options for specialized requests.

## Event Kit

- First aid kit with latex-free supplies & ear plugs
- Paper, pens, unscented markers, scissors, tape, duct tape, blank name tags & clipboards
- Unscented bathroom & cleaning products
- Bike tire pump & patch kit for wheelchair tires
- Juice or regular soda & straws
- Clean rug or mat
- Umbrellas & ponchos
- Water bowl & dog waste bags for service dogs
- Garbage bags

## Announcements

- Introduce the Event Access Coordinator.
- Give clear directions to accessible & all-gender bathrooms—indicate transfer table availability.
- Ask all participants to say their name before speaking.
- Invite participants to take breaks for self-care.
- Share emergency protocols.
- Explain Event Kit and identify quiet spaces.
- Invite people with dietary requests to get their food first.

## EVENT DAY

- ❑ Post directional signs and station greeters at all entry points, elevators, stairs.
- ❑ Use an inclusive check-in process (consider table height, amount of noise, number of staff, flow of check-in process).
- ❑ Avoid background music.
- ❑ Brief all staff about accessibility plans.
- ❑ Set up clear and spacious paths outside and inside.
- ❑ Ask photographers to not use flash and to seek permission before photographing people.

## EVENT FOLLOW-UP

- ❑ Distribute promised materials and/or post online in an accessible format.
- ❑ Send accessible thank you notes and evaluations and ask for feedback regarding accessibility and inclusion.

**Please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 612-626-1333 or [drc@umn.edu](mailto:drc@umn.edu) if you have questions.**

Disability Resource Center  
Office for **Equity and Diversity**

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