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Designing accessible events for people with disabilities and Deaf people

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Registration

Registration is a critical part of any successful event. It provides an opportunity for you to collect information and payment, if appropriate, from individuals who will be attending your event, allowing you to proactively design an event that best meets the number, background, and needs of your attendees. Registration is essential to designing an event that is accessible to people with disabilities. It serves as the mechanism by which attendees can request the accommodations they need—such as materials in large font or American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters—to be able to fully access and participate in your event. With this information, you can create an event that is accessible for all attendees and meets your legal obligations as the event host under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Is your registration form accessible?

Your registration form must be accessible to people with disabilities. If you are using an online registration form, make sure the service you are using is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act and the 21st Century and Video Accessibility Act. You will want to make sure that, among other things, it is accessible to individuals who are blind or have low vision and use a screen reader. It is best to contact your service provider and request information about the accessibility of their services. You can also check the accessibility of your online survey by using a free web accessibility tool, such as WAVE (www.wave.webaim.org). You should also make your registration process available in alternate formats, such as in a paper version, and allow people to register by phone.

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Federal legal requirements: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits discrimination of people with disabilities. Title III requires public accommodations, including meeting facilities, to provide accessible goods and services, and auxiliary aids, if necessary.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires federal agencies and private entities receiving federal funds to make electronic and information technology accessible to people with disabilities, including online registration forms.

The 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act requires that all communications, video programming, and equipment providers provide services, including Internet-based services, and equipment equally accessible to people with disabilities.

Asking the right questions

Registration is your opportunity to collect as much information about your attendees and their needs as possible, so be thorough. In addition to asking for basic information—name, title, agency, contact information—be sure to ask about the full range of needs attendees with disabilities may have pertaining to lodging, meals, interpreting, personal care attendants, and other accommodations. The more specific your questions and answer choices, the better equipped you will be to successfully meet the needs of your attendees. In this section, we discuss a few areas that are important to address on your registration form and provide sample registration questions. The sample registration questions can be found in a box following each section.

› **Personal Care Attendant (PCA):** Some people with disabilities who need assistance with certain daily activities—getting ready in the morning, toileting, eating, etc.—may have a personal care attendant or a personal assistant attend your event with them. While personal care attendants will not be participating in your event in the same way as other attendees, they will be present. If there are registration fees for your meeting, you will need to decide whether you will charge personal care attendants. Regardless, it is important to include them in your

count for space and other considerations. Your registration should include a question about them and, possibly, require them to complete their own registration form.

› **Lodging:** If your event requires overnight lodging, your registration should ask attendees questions about their lodging needs. If you are paying for and/or making lodging reservations for individuals, you will need to know if an attendee requires an ADA room with a roll-in shower, an ADA room with a tub and chair, a room accessible for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing, or a chemical-free room.

Are you traveling with a personal care attendant (PCA) or personal assistant (PA)?

      __ yes

      __ no

If yes, for planning purposes, please provide your PCA's or PA's contact information:

First name: ———————————

Last name: ———————————

Phone number: ———————————

E-mail address: ———————————

Option 1:

Please indicate which room type you require from the following list.

Option 2:

You are responsible for making your own hotel reservation. However, by providing us with information on the type of room you require, we will be able to check with the hotel to make sure they meet your needs.

Please indicate which room type you require from the following list:

> › no lodging required
>
> › standard room
>
> › ADA room with roll-in shower
>
> › ADA room with tub and chair
>
> › room accessible for Deaf/hard of hearing
>
> › chemical-free room
>
> › other (Please specify.)

Even if your event attendees are making their own hotel reservations, it is helpful to collect information about their lodging needs. As the event organizer, you and the hotel are responsible for ensuring the accessibility of the accommodations. By having this information on hand, you will

be able to check with the hotel to make sure attendees' requests are met before they arrive.

› **Meals:** If you are serving food and beverages at your event, you will need to ask about attendees' dietary needs. Some people with disabilities may have dietary restrictions related to their disability, such as diabetes, or food needs associated with their medication. In addition, some individuals with limited mobility may require a pre-cut meal. This is a good place to collect requests for other dietary needs such as a kosher, vegan, or vegetarian meal.

> Please note any dietary needs from the following list:
> - › no dietary needs
> - › kosher meal
> - › pre-cut meal
> - › vegan
> - › vegetarian
> - › other (Please specify.)

› **Accommodations:** People with disabilities are as diverse as every other community and their accessibility needs are just as varied. Extra steps may need to be taken in order to address unique accessibility or accommodations needs. Your registration should include a question on attendees' accommodation needs. Providing a list of options, along with an "other" choice, communicates your commitment to access and may increase attendees' comfort levels when requesting an accommodation.

> Please select any additional accommodations you require from the list below. If you require something that is not listed, please indicate your request by selecting "Other" and providing us with specific information about your request in the comments box. We may contact you for further information, if necessary.
> - › none
> - › electronic copies of materials in advance
> - › electronic text file of materials on-site
> - › hard copies of materials on-site
> - › materials in Braille
> - › materials in a font over x pt (insert your standard font size)
> - › wheelchair access
> - › other (Please specify.)

Definitions

A **roll-in shower** has a floor that is flat and rimless, allowing a wheelchair to maneuver into the shower stall.

A **tub chair** sits inside the tub or shower and allows the person to take a shower while in a seated position rather than standing on the slippery bottom of the tub or shower.

A room that is accessible for Deaf/ hard of hearing people either has permanently or temporarily installed equipment which makes auditory alerts—a fire alarm, knock at the door, or telephone ring—visual.

A chemical-free room is cleaned without the use of harsh chemicals prior to the guest's arrival.

› **Interpreting:** People who use a different language than the primary one used in your event, including Deaf individuals who use ASL, will need interpreters to fully participate in your event. A simple question can be included on your registration to capture whether someone needs an interpreter. In addition, it is best to follow up with anyone who requests an interpreter to learn more about their communication needs to ensure you hire interpreters who are the best fit for the person making the request.

If you know that a large number of Deaf or hard of hearing people are likely to attend your event, it makes sense to provide more detailed interpreting options in your answer choices. This will provide you with more information as you work to meet everyone's requests and ensure the interpreters you select meet the unique communication needs of your attendees. Even with this detailed information, it is best to follow up with anyone who requests an interpreter to get more information to help you hire the best team of interpreters.

Please indicate your interpreting needs from the list below:

› none required

› American Sign Language

› simultaneous spoken foreign language interpretation (please specify)

› other (Please specify.)

› A **catchall question:** Given the diversity of disabilities and possible auxiliary

aids people may need to fully participate in your event, it is important to provide registrants with an open-ended question designed for them to tell you about any other needs they may have.

Please tell us any additional needs you may have for this meeting. Please be as specific as possible:

_____

_____

_____

An important caveat

As the meeting host, you are responsible for meeting reasonable requests for accommodations that are made through the meeting registration process. While efforts should be made to meet requests that are made on-site, provided that you created an opportunity for attendees to make requests during your pre-event registration, you are not legally required to meet those on-site requests. Moreover, you are only required to provide auxiliary aids or modifications to event programming during the hours of the event. The attendee is responsible for securing auxiliary aids for after-hour engagements

that are not part of your programming. It is important to notify attendees of these limitations during registration.

Timing is everything

Since attendees are making their accommodation requests through your registration process, you will need to make sure registration closes on a date that gives you ample time to meet any accommodation requests. For example, you typically need to secure ASL interpreters two to three months in advance to ensure qualified interpreters are obtained. Thus, you would need your registration to close two to three months before your event is scheduled to take place. As a general rule, we recommend that you close your registration three months before your event.

Every effort will be made to accommodate advance requests; on-site requests cannot be guaranteed. Reasonable accommodations will be provided during meeting sessions. Referrals for assistance outside of the meeting can be made available.

›   Please contact:
(insert staff person)
at emailaddress@dot.org
with any questions or for
more assistance.

Additional Resources

U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Home Page

https://perma.cc/ST4R-H294

The ADA website provides information and technical assistance on the ADA.

ADA National Network

https://perma.cc/ST4R-H294

The ADA National Network provides information, guidance, and training on the ADA available through 10 regional centers.

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)

https://perma.cc/Z25V-5DWD

ATAP is a resource on and link to assistive technology programs in your state.

For more information

The Center on Victimization and Safety (CVS) at the Vera Institute of Justice works with communities around the country to fashion services that reach, appeal to, and benefit all victims. Our work focuses on communities of people who are at elevated risk of harm but often marginalized from victim services and the criminal justice system. We combine research, technical assistance, and training to equip policymakers and practitioners with the information, skills, and resources needed to effectively serve all victims. To learn more about CVS, contact cvs@vera.org.

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Budgeting for Access

When planning events—meetings, conferences, roundtables, seminars, etc.—there are accommodations necessary to ensure that attendees with disabilities and Deaf attendees have complete access to the venue and the event's presentations and materials. Although many modifications and accommodations have little-to-no cost, some accommodations do. This tip sheet is designed to provide you with information and cost estimates so you can incorporate those considerations into funding proposals and budgets for your event. Including accurate estimates for common meeting expenses and specific disability accommodation line items in your budget is essential to meeting your obligations (see box below) under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and creating a welcoming environment for attendees with disabilities and Deaf attendees.

Estimating venue-specific expenses

Budgeting for an accessible event will include line items that exist in the budgets of most events, such as room rentals and audio-visual aids, but certain costs will need to be calculated differently. For all of the items and accommodations listed below, check prices with your venue in advance.

› **Meeting room rental:** venues estimate the maximum number of people who can fit into their meeting rooms assuming very narrow pathways between tables, which are often inaccessible to people with disabilities. To create accessible pathways (e.g., pathways that can be easily navigated by people using wheelchairs), it is necessary to set the room with a minimum of 36-inch-wide aisles between tables. To meet these requirements,

Federal legal requirements: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires any business or organization to make all of its services available to people with a disability.

Title III also requires public and private entities to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure that people with speech, hearing, and vision disabilities understand what is said or written and can communicate effectively.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits organizations that receive federal funding from excluding people on the basis of disability or denying them an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services.

you should secure meeting space that, according to the hotel, can accommodate 30 percent more people than you anticipate attending. A larger room may cost more so you will need to

Tip!

Always have the venue provide you with a diagram of the space using **36-inch-wide aisles** to ensure the space they are proposing will work for your needs.

account for this additional expense in your room rental calculations. Room rental expenses vary greatly. You may be able to negotiate for free meeting space, or you may pay a premium per room per day. Factors that affect your room rental costs include the number of rooms, size of rooms, number of days the space is needed, and other expenses you have committed to at your venue. Room rental costs range anywhere from $0 to $1,500+ per meeting room per day.

› **Stage and ramp:** If you are holding your meeting in a large space, you should ensure that everyone in attendance has a clear line of sight to your presenters, presentations, and interpreters. If you have a stage, you will need a ramp to ensure that people with disabilities affecting their mobility can access it. While hotels generally offer

these at no cost, should you be holding an event at a retreat center, you may have to rent a ramp to the stage that meets ADA requirements. The cost for

> **Tip!**
>
> To save on costs, if your venue does not have an ADA ramp available, suggest they borrow one from another venue.

the stage and ramp vary so you should request a price list from potential venues or rental companies prior to contracting with your venue. You will also need to ensure that any ramps meet ADA requirements, including being of adequate width (36 inches), having an appropriate slope (no more than one inch in height for every 12 inches in length), and handrails.

› **Audio-visual aids:** Presenters and their presentations need to be easily seen and heard to ensure that all attendees have the same access to the information being shared.

Microphones ensure that everyone, especially people who are hard of hearing and may be using assistive listening devices, can hear the information presented at your event. In addition, microphones ensure that American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters can dedicate their full attention to interpretation without straining to hear. The number of microphones needed for your event depends on the size of the room and the format of the event. At a minimum, you should budget for one to be used by the speakers and one to be used by audience members if there will be discussion or questions and answers. While the costs of microphones vary considerably from venue to venue, the average cost per wireless microphone varies from $150 to $300 per day. In addition, if using microphones, you will incur additional expenses for a sound system (the costs of which can vary widely depending on the amount of equipment needed and the quality of equipment used) and, possibly, tech support.

Tripod screens are commonly used at events to show PowerPoint presentations, videos, or broadcasts of the event. Multiple screens may be needed to ensure that all attendees—especially those using wheelchairs who may have limited mobility and Deaf and

hard of hearing attendees who rely heavily on sight—have a clear line of sight. These screens can cost anywhere from $150 per day for a five foot by five foot screen (not including a projector) to $1,350 per day for a 7.5-by-10-foot screen (including projector) at a hotel.

Pipe and drape background—a typically solid-colored fabric used to create a backdrop to a stage—should be considered if a significant portion of your event is occurring on a stage with extremely busy walls behind it (i.e., patterned or decorated with bright colors). Busy walls can be distractions for Deaf people and can cause eyestrain. Average cost for draping is $150 per panel, but the cost is heavily dependent on the venue and will vary depending upon how many panels you need.

› **Postage and delivery:** An attendee may request to receive meeting materials in advance of your event. This would include anything that will be disseminated on-site at your event. You should send meeting materials to ASL interpreters in advance of your event to give them time to familiarize themselves with the core content of the event, including participants' names and any

specialized language that will be used. Unless you are sending these materials electronically, your budget should include additional money to cover copying and shipping costs. Costs for shipping vary greatly depending on your provider and how quickly you need to have materials arrive at their destination.

› **Service animal relief area:** service animals assist people with a wide range of disabilities, including sensory and mobility limitations. Because you cannot ask participants if they will be traveling with a service animal, you need to proactively ensure that there is a designated service animal relief area on the venue's property for every event. This can be a grassy area that exists already (in which case there should be no charge) or the venue may have to create a space (in which case you may incur a charge). You will need to work closely with the hotel to determine where the space will be. Additionally, you will need to advertise the location of the service animal relief area in your program and materials, and with appropriate signage.

Budgeting for individual accommodations

While the items listed in the previous section are common event-related expenses, the following is a list of accommodations that may be requested by individual attendees.

› **ASL interpreters:** Qualified ASL interpreters provide translation between ASL and spoken English. ASL has its own grammar and sentence structure and is the primary language used by Deaf individuals. The average cost for an ASL interpreter is between $55 and $65 per hour, with a minimum of two interpreters required in a team-interpreting format.

› **Assistive listening devices (ALDs)** help individuals separate the sounds they want to hear from background noise and are available for personal and group use. Some ALDs are designed to be used with hearing aids or cochlear implants, while others are designed to be used alone. If an ALD is used in conjunction with a hearing aid, it may require a telecoil (T-switch). Costs for telecoils range from $50 to $170+.

Personal ALDs have separate tone and volume controls and may be configured to work with more than one speaker. The most common devices are wired, like the Pocket Talker. Similar in purpose is the wireless—and more flexible—Personal Frequency Modulation System. Event organizers can purchase or rent these items if the individual does not own one him/herself. The purchase cost ranges from $150 to $800.

Group ALDs are preferable when there are several people with hearing loss in a group. The primary advantage is that multiple people can benefit from these systems, though they are expensive and not as portable as single-user devices. Costs for group ALDs range from $500 to $1500 depending upon the number of receivers, headphones, etc.

› **Certified Deaf Interpreters (CDIs)** are individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing who have been certified as interpreters by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. CDIs may have specialized training in gesture, mime, props, drawings, and other tools. A CDI may be needed when an interpreter who is hearing does not meet a Deaf attendee's communication needs. The average cost for a CDI is between $55 and $65 per hour.

› **Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART)** is the instantaneous, word-for-word translation of spoken language into text which is displayed in various forms. English text is produced with less than a two-second delay. An accommodation for a variety of disabilities, the CART writer transcribes what is heard into text that can displayed on a computer screen for an individual or on a larger display for the entire audience. The cost for CART service varies but on average runs between $120 and $160 per hour.

> **Tip!**
>
> If there are no CART providers in your event city or surrounding area, CART services can be provided remotely via a telephone, Internet connection, and a laptop computer.

› **C-Print** is a speech-to-text system developed at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf for individuals who are Deaf, hard of hearing, or have disabilities that affect their concentration and attention. A typist—called a C-Print captionist—listens and simultaneously types an interpretation of the meeting content (including comments made by others) onto a laptop computer, which is transmitted to the consumer's laptop. A printed transcript and notes are available via email. The C-print captionist receives between $16 and $22 per hour.

> **Tip!**
>
> If you are hosting an event and need more Deaf kits than the hotel has on hand, suggest that the hotel borrow additional kits from other properties in the area.

› **Deaf kits:** Hotels offer kits to individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing that generally include a text telephone (a device—commonly known as a TTY—that allows the user to communicate through typed messages instead of talking and listening), telephone handset amplifier, visual smoke detector, multifunctioning alert system (telephone, doorbell, alarm clock, sound monitor) and other items. Hotels generally offer these at no cost to the guest. If you need to purchase a Deaf kit, the cost ranges from $400 to $700.

› **Material in alternate formats:**
People who are blind or have low vision, those with cognitive disabilities, and others may need the material you are offering to be made available in alternate formats.

Audio tapes offer a spoken version of the written material to individuals who are blind or have low vision and some people with cognitive disabilities. Audio cassette recordings cost an average of 25 cents per page and if making a digital audio recording, the cost climbs to 50 cents per page plus an additional $12 per digital cartridge.

CDs/USB flash drives provide individuals who are blind or have low vision with an electronic version of all written materials which they can access using screen readers. These can be created in-house for small quantities or out-sourced for larger orders. Costs for CDs vary depending upon size. On average, you can purchase 100 CDs for $20. Costs for a 1GB USB flash drive average around $6 each when purchased in bulk. Costs will vary depending upon the style, size, any customizations such as logos, and quantity ordered.

Tip!

If you receive a request for materials in large print, be sure to let the hotel know so they can create menus and other materials in large print.

Large print is defined as print that is at least 16 points in size and is made available to accommodate people with low vision. Large print can be done in-house by changing the font of the document being offered or it may be out-sourced, in which case the cost would vary. When creating documents in large print in-house, costs would include staff time and any special materials needed, for example, paper in larger than standard sizes.

Plain language is a clear and succinct way of writing designed to ensure that the reader understands the material quickly and completely. Creating material in plain language can often be done in-house or out-sourced to providers that specialize in editing material. Hiring a plain language consultant can cost an average of $450 to $650 per day.

› **Personal care attendants (PCAs)**— also known as caregivers, personal care assistants, patient care assistants, personal support workers, and home care aides—are people hired to help persons with disabilities with their daily activities, such as bathing, eating, etc. If you have a presenter who uses a PCA, you will need to include the PCA's travel, lodging, per diem, and if negotiated, their hourly rate. Whether or not you will need to pay for the PCA's time depends on individual circumstances. You will need to include the PCA in your count of attendees for any meals and materials. Hourly rates for PCAs can vary from $8 to $16.

Additional Resources

U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Home Page

https://perma.cc/S29R-9RKV

The ADA site offers information and technical assistance on the ADA.

ADA National Network

https://perma.cc/ST4R-H294

The ADA National Network provides information, guidance, and training on the ADA available through 10 regional centers

Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs (ATAP)

https://perma.cc/796Y-66KZ

ATAP is a resource on and link to assistive technology programs in your state.

For more information

The Center on Victimization and Safety (CVS) at the Vera Institute of Justice works with communities around the country to fashion services that reach, appeal to, and benefit all victims. Our work focuses on communities of people who are at elevated risk of harm but often marginalized from victim services and the criminal justice system. We combine research, technical assistance, and training to equip policymakers and practitioners with the information, skills, and resources needed to effectively serve all victims. To learn more about CVS, contact cvs@vera.org.

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Selecting an Accessible Venue

One of the first decisions in event planning is location. Selecting both a city and a venue requires a number of considerations: Will it be relatively easy and inexpensive for participants to travel to the area? Are there venues that are willing to work within your budget? Does the venue have the type and size of meeting space needed? It's also critical that meeting planners consider the possible access needs of participants with disabilities and Deaf attendees. If the location of the event is inaccessible, then the event itself cannot be made accessible. This tip sheet outlines a process for finding and selecting an accessible venue and hosting an accessible meeting.

Choosing an accessible city

The first step in selecting an accessible venue is determining the geographic location of your event. Some cities are more accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities and Deaf people than others. Consider the following when selecting an accessible city:

› Are direct flights available? Transferring between more than one flight can be difficult for people with disabilities. Additionally, many regional aircraft are unable to fit wheelchairs in their cargo carriers.

› Is accessible transportation available in the city? Many taxi fleets do not have accessible vehicles. Those that do often have few available, making them difficult to schedule. Contact transportation companies or reach out to the visitors bureau before selecting a city to determine if there will be ample accessible transportation.

› Is there anything in the neighborhood surrounding the venue that would make it difficult to maneuver, such as large hills or lack of curb cuts?

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Federal legal requirements: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires any business or organization to make all of their services available to people with disabilities. Organizations and commercial facilities must remove barriers in existing buildings where it is "readily achievable," meaning easy to do so without much difficulty or expense, given the entity's resources. Title III also specifies architectural standards for new and altered buildings.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits organizations receiving federal funding from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services.

Are there accessible restaurants, shopping, or attractions in the general area?

› Is there a reason to hold the meeting in a particular location because of attendee configuration? For example, if several Deaf participants will be attending your meeting, is there a particular region of the country where you know there are qualified interpreters?

Selecting an accessible venue

Once you've identified potential cities in which to host the event, your next step will be to search for an event property that can meet the baseline requirements of the ADA and the accessibility needs of your participants. Even properties that identify as being ADA-compliant may still have access barriers, either because of the age of the property or because of inconsistencies in their application of ADA standards. For this reason, you should not rely on the property's self-report. Instead, conduct a thorough review by following these steps:

1. Reach out to the hotel to ask about the accessibility of the event space, the public areas, and guestrooms. Ask preliminary questions about the property's accessibility.

Does the hotel provide an airport shuttle?

› Is the shuttle accessible to people with disabilities?

Definitions

A roll-in shower has a floor that is flat and rimless, allowing a wheelchair to maneuver into the shower stall.

A tub chair sits inside the tub or shower and allows the person to take a shower while in a seated position rather than standing on the slippery bottom of the tub or shower.

A room that is accessible for Deaf/ hard of hearing individuals either has permanently or temporarily installed equipment which makes auditory alerts—a fire alarm, knock at the door, or telephone ring—visual.

How many ADA-compliant guestrooms does the property have?

› How many of these rooms have roll-in showers?

› Are shower seats affixed to the wall?

› How many have tubs?

› Are tub seats available in these rooms?

Does the hotel have rooms specifically adapted to accommodate Deaf and hard of hearing people?

› How many Deaf kits (also known as ADA kits) does the property have?

› If needed, can the property obtain additional Deaf kits?

Is all the meeting space accessible for people using wheelchairs?

› Are there accessible restrooms near the meeting space?

› Is there an ADA-compliant ramp for the stage available?

› Does the ramp have railings?

2. If a property seems promising based on the venue's response to your preliminary questions, set up a call to discuss your needs in-depth. This will give you an opportunity to more fully discuss your access needs. It will also help you gauge the property's willingness to work with you to enhance their accessibility. For example, if the hotel indicates that their shuttle is not accessible, they may be willing to contract with a company that provides accessible transportation.

a. The best way to determine if a site you're considering is accessible is to see it for yourself. Schedule a visit to walk through the hotel with the property sales manager. Ask to

review all common areas, including public restrooms and the meeting space, as well as the accessible guestrooms, to ensure they meet the ADA requirements. At a minimum, review one of each type of ADA room. If time allows, review all ADA guestrooms, because there are often inconsistencies within the same property. Vera's "Considerations for Selecting an Accessible Venue" includes measurements and considerations for assessing the accessibility of a property. Plan to spend an hour and a half at each site and bring a clipboard, the considerations form, and measuring tape. During your tour of the property, point out to hotel staff access barriers that you encounter. This may be the first time the hotel has had anyone review their property through a lens of accessibility, and it's important for them to know what barriers exist so they can create a plan to remove them.

b. Although an event property may not meet all of your access needs, some may have an accessible structure in place with inaccessible features they are able to change or remove. For example, a property may be willing to change out toilets that do not comply

with ADA requirements, cover exposed hot water pipes under sinks, or move furniture around to allow for clear aisle ways.

The ADA includes minimum standards for parking and passenger drop-off areas, routes to the building entrance, routes to the event space, the meeting space itself, restrooms, and guestrooms. See the ADA Standards for Accessible Design, available at www.ada.gov/stdspdf.htm.

Working with the hotel

Generally speaking, the property has primary legal responsibility for architectural access and the event host has primary legal responsibility for the accessibility of programming. However, because the event host is contracting with the hotel and bringing guests to that specific site, the event host shares in the responsibility of ensuring physical access. For this reason, approach your relationship with the hotel as a partnership and work together to ensure you're both meeting your legal responsibilities and are providing the best experience for your guests.

Reflect best practices in the contract

Before signing the contract, ask the hotel to specify the rooms you will be using during the event. Have them create a diagram of the meeting space using your anticipated set-up and 36-inch aisle ways to accommodate people using wheelchairs. Detail the configuration

> ### Tip!
>
> People-first language puts the person before the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. For example, "a person with or who has a disability" is preferable to "a disabled person."

requirements for the meeting space, including sufficiently wide pathways and the provision of an ADA-compliant ramp if you will be using a stage. Hold ADA rooms as part of your room block and designate the number of Deaf kits you may need for the event. Specify your expectations regarding ADA compliance. Additionally, include a relocation clause stating that, in the event the hotel is oversold, the guests requiring ADA rooms will not be relocated to another property.

Train hotel staff

Hotel staff can have a significant impact on any guest's experience, including those with disabilities and who are Deaf. To ensure the hotel is prepared, request that the heads of different departments are trained on how to increase staff's comfort and capacity to work with guests who have disabilities and Deaf guests. Include general tips for working with people with disabilities, such as using people-first language. Also include tips specific to each department. For example, department heads should ensure that the valet and front desk staff have pen and paper available for written communication with Deaf participants if needed, and remind housekeeping staff to not move accessibility devices in guestrooms.

Accessible rooms

Hotels are required to have accessible rooms available to guests with physical disabilities and rooms that are accessible for Deaf or hard of hearing guests. For example, doors must be at least 32 inches wide; routes within the room must be at least 36 inches wide; and toilets should be between 17 and 19 inches from the floor to the top of the seat. Hotels must offer two types of accessible guest

rooms, which differ based on the design of the restroom.

› **Accessible room:** Standard accessible guestrooms generally have a tub with a seat that can be securely attached to the tub for a person who cannot stand in the tub to bathe.

› **Accessible room with roll-in shower:** The shower in these rooms has a flat, rimless floor and a seat permanently attached to one of the shower walls that a person using a wheelchair can transfer to.

Hotels must also offer rooms that are accessible to Deaf or hard of hearing guests, including devices that create visual notifications for door knocks, phone calls, and smoke alarms. This can be done through permanent modifications to a room, or through the addition of a Deaf kit, which also generally includes TTYs (text telephones) and bed shakers that attach to the alarm clock. If a hotel doesn't have enough Deaf kits available, they can likely borrow them from other properties in the area.

Contract language

The following sample language can be added to hotel contracts to outline your expectations regarding access.

ADA compliance

Each party agrees to use good faith efforts to ensure that it complies with its obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the act's accompanying regulation and guidelines (collectively the "ADA"). Each party further agrees to indemnify and hold the other party harmless from and against any and all claims and expenses, including attorney's fees and litigation expenses, that may be incurred by or asserted against the other party or its officers, directors, agents, and employees on the basis of the indemnifying party's non-compliance with any of the provisions of the ADA. The Vera Institute of Justice ("Vera") agrees to provide Hotel with reasonable advance notice about the special needs of any attendees of which Vera is aware. Hotel agrees that all necessary staff will attend a training on "Disability Etiquette" that Vera will schedule and provide within one month of the program.

Additional Resources

Vera Institute of Justice, Center on Victimization and Safety, Designing Accessible Events for People with Disabilities and Deaf Individuals Tip Sheet Series

https://perma.cc/LLM3-Q4T9

Vera Institute of Justice, Center on Victimization and Safety, End Abuse of People with Disabilities website, Creating Inclusive Movements

https://perma.cc/B5ML-FBDJ

United States Access Board, Guide to the ADA Standards

https://perma.cc/4E4J-PSQP

U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Home Page, Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field

https://perma.cc/ZJ8X-ANFU

For more information

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Creating an Accessible Meeting Environment

The environment you create for an event sets the tone for participants' overall experience. Event planners help set this tone by determining the set-up of meeting rooms, the look and placement of signage, and the types of materials to provide. When designing an accessible and inclusive meeting environment for people with disabilities and Deaf people, it's important to think about their experience so they will be able to fully engage in and benefit from the meeting content. This tip sheet addresses the key considerations for a welcoming environment, such as signage, on-site registration, materials, meals and refreshments, room set-up, and meeting agenda and activities.

Signage

One of the key ways to enhance participants' comfort in the meeting environment is to ensure they know where to go when moving throughout the event property. Providing robust signage and wayfinding throughout your meeting enables participants with disabilities to take the most direct route to the event spaces and have visual cues to confirm they're going the right way. In addition to navigation, signage also allows you to communicate important information to participants, such as the location of accessible restrooms and the service dog relief area, and brief agendas. Consider the following tips:

› Signage is intended to offer a quick reference, so it should be simple, short, and easy to understand. Avoid decorative fonts, use contrasting colors, and supplement text with images. Where relevant, include international symbols for access, which are easily recognizable.

› Provide signage with important meeting information, such as session locations

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Federal legal requirements: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires any business or organization to make all of their services available to people with disabilities. Title III also requires public and private entities to provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to ensure people with speech, hearing, and vision disabilities understand what is said or written and can communicate effectively.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits organizations receiving federal funding from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services.

> **Tip!**
>
> The larger your venue, the more signage you will need. For events at large venues consider turning the hotel's floor plan into a sign for easy navigation.

and start and end times, so that meeting participants are not required to carry meeting materials throughout the event, which can be cumbersome.

› Place signage in the hotel lobby to serve as a visual indicator that people have arrived at the correct location, and to indicate where to find registration and meeting rooms. Place additional signage at all decision points, such as near elevators and at corners to confirm for people that they're moving in the right direction.

› Ensure that signs do not protrude into pathways and create obstructions or trip hazards.

On-site registration

On-site registration is likely the first in-person interaction participants will have with event staff and can set the tone for the rest of the event. Use the following tips to demonstrate your commitment to access at this critical juncture:

› One of the most important ways to make participants with disabilities feel welcome at your event is for the staff greeting them to be knowledgeable

about working with people with disabilities and Deaf people. If staff is not accustomed to working with people with disabilities and Deaf people, provide them with training on disability etiquette and Deaf culture, such as using people-first language.

› Schedule an adequate number of staff to be available during registration in case any participants need additional assistance.

> **Tip!**

> People-first language puts the person **before** the disability, and describes what a person has, not who a person is. For example, "a person with or who has a disability" is preferable to "a disabled person."

› If Deaf participants have registered for the event, have interpreters available during registration. In the event that interpreters are busy working with other Deaf participants, be sure to have pen and paper available at the registration desk so that staff can communicate with a Deaf participant while waiting for the interpreters to become available.

› If people who are blind or have low vision will be attending your meeting, ensure that staff know to review materials out loud, describe the surroundings, and offer to help participants to the room.

› Prepare to connect participants with any accommodations they requested during online registration. The process you use to check people into the event should indicate any accommodation requests, and staff should know how to meet those requests. For example, a staff member should know if an attendee has requested materials in large print and have those materials already available when that person arrives.

› Ensure that staff at registration are aware of important access features, such as the location of accessible restrooms and the service dog relief areas, and any areas in the building that may have mobility barriers.

Meeting materials

It's likely you will be distributing meeting materials during on-site registration and at other times throughout the event. Some meeting materials cover important information about the event, such as an

agenda and workshop descriptions. Other materials are designed to supplement the content areas being explored. To ensure these materials are useful to all participants, design them to be fully accessible and available in alternative formats.

› Consider strength and mobility variations when deciding how to provide the materials. For example, binders can be difficult to open for people with limited mobility.

› Design printed materials with a sans-serif font in a size no smaller than 14 point and use contrasting colors to make them accessible to the widest range of participants, including those with low vision.

› During online registration, you will ask people if they need materials in alternative formats, such as an electronic text file or hard copy of materials to be available on site, materials in Braille, and materials in fonts larger than 14 point. Be sure to have the requested alternate formats available at the registration desk.

› Include information in the event program about local resources available to attendees with disabilities, such as accessible transportation and where to find medical devices.

› Include meeting guidelines in the program that promote an accessible and inclusive environment, such as encouraging participants to use people-first language, always using a microphone when available, and pushing their chairs under the table when they leave the room to allow adequate pathways for people using mobility devices.

Meals and refreshments

If you will be providing food and refreshments at your event, there are a number of considerations about how to make dining accessible, outlined below:

› Buffets often create access barriers for people with disabilities affecting mobility or dexterity, so plated meals are preferable for lunch and dinner.

› If you'll be offering plated meals, be sure to ask about dietary restrictions and requirements during online registration, including the need for pre-cut meals.

› For continental breakfast, coffee service, and light snacks, make sure nothing is on risers and do not stack cups more than two high.

› Provide room on the table for people to rest their plates while serving themselves.

› Avoid heavy containers for serving beverages and ensure everything is within reach of the edge of the table.

› Make bendable straws available for people with limited mobility.

› Have staff available to assist any participant, if needed.

Room configuration

A number of factors contribute to how a meeting room will be set up. One is the size of the space relative to the number of participants. Another is the type of learning environment you want to create. For example, do you want participants to be able to interact and network with others at their table? Or is the style of presentation more conducive to having all participants face the presenter? When creating accessible and inclusive events, there are additional factors to consider. For example, for people who are hard of hearing, they may need the option to sit anywhere in the room where the sound is most clear. If a person has a disability that impacts her or his dexterity, she or he may require a hard surface to write on. For this reason, it's critical to set up the room in a way that allows for flexibility of use so people with disabilities or Deaf people can determine where and with whom to sit to optimize their learning and networking.

For all event areas, ensure 36-inch pathways between all obstacles to allow adequate room for people who use mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, and provide at least some tables to allow for a hard writing surface for those who require it. Additional layout considerations, outlined below, are affected by the size of the

Room size

Venues generally attempt to fit as many people as possible into a meeting space and provide estimates that do not account for people with disabilities. For this reason, you should secure a meeting space that, according to the venue, can accommodate 30 percent more people than you anticipate attending. For example, if you're planning an event with 100 participants, tell the venue you need space that can seat 130 people. This will generally allow for adequate aisle ways for wheelchair access and an accessible room set-up.

room and can look significantly different in plenary and breakout sessions.

Plenary sessions

› Many organizations use round tables in their plenary sessions to allow for networking and discussion among participants at their tables. Generally, event venues attempt to fit as many people as possible around a table, but doing so creates access barriers. For an 8-foot table, request that no more than 10 chairs be placed around the table. For a six-foot table, no more than eight chairs should be used.

› For larger meeting spaces, you will likely need a stage to ensure clear lines of sight among participants, presenters, and interpreters. Stages must have an ADA-compliant ramp with handrails, be at least 36 inches wide, and have a slope of one foot per inch

Tip!

Your contract with a venue should include language that requires all your function space to have 36-inch aisle ways between tables and all obstructions.

(for example a stage that is 12 inches high will require a 12-foot ramp).

› If presenters will be using visuals, such as PowerPoint presentations, you may need two separate screens to allow for a clear line of sight in a large room.

› Because of the size of the room, it's critical to use microphones during plenary sessions so that participants and interpreters are able to hear the presenter and questions or comments from other attendees. Ensure the audiovisual cart doesn't impede access.

Breakout sessions

› Because breakout sessions are generally held in smaller rooms, the room style must be different than a plenary session layout to maintain access.

› It's difficult to set up smaller rooms with round tables, so meeting planners will often opt for classroom style, which allows each participant a hard surface on which to write. However, it can also be difficult to maintain 36-inch aisle ways with this style of seating.

› If classroom style isn't possible, theater style allows you to create more space in the room. If you select this style of seating, provide at least

one row of tables to allow for a hard writing surface.

› It may be necessary to use microphones in smaller breakout rooms if the acoustics are bad or if someone indicated on their registration form that they use an assistive listening device.

Confirming your event configuration

Once determined, your preferred set-up and access considerations should be reflected in the hotel contract. Include set-up instructions and access considerations in the audiovisual and room set-up list you send to the hotel. Ensure that preferred set-up and access considerations are reflected in the banquet event orders (commonly referred to as BEOs). The night before the event, visually check for the presence of an ADA-compliant ramp and stage and other layout considerations. Make sure all cords are taped down to minimize trip hazards. Confirm that there are no items blocking anyone's line of sight and move obstructions out of the way. Doing this the evening before the event allows time to solve with the hotel any issues that may arise and reconfigure the room, if necessary.

Agenda

When creating the agenda, event organizers determine the event schedule and learning activities to be used during presentations, both of which affect the learning experience of participants with disabilities and Deaf attendees.

Event schedule

› People with disabilities may have morning routines to prepare for the day, including working with a personal care attendant, managing medication, and physical therapy. Because it can be difficult for people with disabilities to adjust their morning schedule, meeting planners should establish a start time that works for the widest array of participants, generally no earlier than 9 a.m.

› Because participants may rely on similar routines throughout and at the end of the day, it's important to closely follow the established event schedule and begin and end the day as you previously indicated.

› The length of the meeting is also an access consideration for some people with disabilities. For example, Deaf

> ## 💡 Tip!
>
> If your venue is large or your meeting space is spread out across multiple floors, allow for longer breaks for participants to have down time and to be able to get to where they need to go.

participants, who rely on interpreters to participate in the meeting, must concentrate harder and may experience eyestrain.

› Providing longer breaks, ranging from 15 to 30 minutes depending on the size of the meeting, is also important. People with limited mobility may need additional time to tend to their personal needs, such as using the restroom, getting refreshments, and finding a quiet space to make urgent

calls. If breaks are shorter, people with disabilities may arrive after the meeting has started or resumed, because they didn't have sufficient time to attend to these needs.

Interactive activities

An optimal learning environment generally includes a variety of activities to engage participants' different learning styles. It's important to consider the barriers that such activities could create for people with disabilities. Activities that rely on visual or audio cues, dexterity, or physical movement will likely need to be altered to ensure access. If presenters from other organizations are responsible for any of the meeting content, it's the role of the host organization to work with those presenters to ensure they're addressing the possible access needs of participants.

Additional Resources

U.S. Department of Justice, ADA Home Page, Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field
https://perma.cc/ZJ8X-ANFU

For more information

The Center on Victimization and Safety (CVS) at the Vera Institute of Justice works with communities around the country to fashion services that reach, appeal to, and benefit all victims. Our work focuses on communities of people who are at elevated risk of harm but often marginalized from victim services and the criminal justice system. We combine research, technical assistance, and training to equip policymakers and practitioners with the information, skills, and resources needed to effectively serve all victims. To learn more about CVS, contact cvs@vera.org.

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Working with Sign Language Interpreters for Events

Communication access is essential to any event, but especially those with Deaf or hard of hearing participants. Most events with Deaf or hard of hearing participants achieve effective communication through the help of qualified sign language interpreters. Choosing qualified interpreters—who are able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, and who are familiar with the content and terminology of your event—helps the event's host meet the legal requirement for accessibility. It also allows everyone—Deaf and hearing participants, presenters, and staff—to communicate and engage with one another fully and, ultimately, to contribute to and learn from the experience.

This tip sheet provides information to help you meet your legal obligations for communication access and to create an inclusive and equitable experience for Deaf participants.

American Sign Language and Interpreting 101

In order to effectively use interpreters to ensure that an event is inclusive, it is important to understand some basics about American Sign Language (ASL) and interpreting. ASL is a complete, complex language that employs visual signs made by moving the hands combined with facial expressions and postures of the body. ASL is the primary sign language used by Deaf people in the United States.

ASL has its own grammatical structure and rules that dictate the way signs combine to form phrases and sentences. It is important to note that not all Deaf and hard of hearing people use ASL. Some communicate using a combination of ASL signs and English signs; others communicate using home signs, which are unique to a particular family; others use a foreign sign language; and others may not use sign language at all.

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Federal legal requirements: the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA requires that state and local governments and businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public offer Deaf and hard of hearing people an equal opportunity to benefit from and participate in the services they offer. These entities are required to provide auxiliary aids and services, including qualified interpreters, to ensure effective communication with Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits organizations that receive federal funding from excluding people on the basis of disability or denying them an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services. Programs receiving any federal funding, therefore, must afford Deaf and hard of hearing people the same opportunities to engage in their services as those who are not Deaf or hard of hearing.

ASL interpreters are highly skilled professionals who are able to facilitate cross-cultural communication between Deaf and hearing people. Interpreters must be able to understand a person's spoken English as well as their intent and be able to accurately, quickly, and comfortably communicate them via ASL to a Deaf person. They must also be able to understand a person's signs and intent and be able to accurately and quickly communicate them via spoken English.

The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), a national professional association, certifies interpreters. To receive certification, interpreters undergo tests on their expressive and receptive signing, sign-to-voice, and voice-to-sign skills. RID maintains a list of interpreters who have the necessary certifications. It supports its members and encourages the growth of the interpreting profession through the establishment of a national standard for qualified sign language interpreters, ongoing professional development, and adherence to a code of professional conduct.

Types of sign language interpreters

The most common types of interpreters are:

› **American Sign Language interpreter:** An ASL interpreter translates from spoken English to American Sign

Language (ASL). When a Deaf participant responds in ASL, the interpreter then voices for that person.

There are two common sub-types of ASL interpreting:

a. Tactile interpreting: Tactile interpreting is sign language received by sense of touch with one or both hands, commonly used by deaf-blind individuals. A tactile interpreter signs or fingerspells to a person by placing a hand under the hand of that person to convey the information being shared by feel.

b. Low-vision interpreting: Low-vision interpreting is sign language at a close visual range and/or within a limited space, commonly used by people with vision loss who can only read signs at close range. Steps may also be taken to ensure a Deaf person can see the interpreter as clearly as possible, such as setting up a black drape behind the interpreter.

› **Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI):** A CDI is a person who is Deaf or hard of hearing and has been certified as an interpreter by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. A CDI is fluent in both English and ASL and can provide cultural and linguistic expertise.

As a native signer, a CDI can identify subtleties and nuances in a Deaf person's communication, particularly for those who didn't grow up learning ASL. Most often, a CDI and hearing ASL interpreter will work together.

Interpreter standards and finding qualified interpreters

According to the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, basic standards that interpreters should meet include:

› accuracy and fidelity to the original message and intent;

› confidentiality;

› impartiality;

› respect for persons;

› maintaining role boundaries;

› accountability;

› professionalism; and

› continued competence.

The ADA requires public entities to provide Deaf and hard of hearing people with qualified interpreters. In the domestic and sexual violence fields, at a minimum, this means finding an interpreter who is familiar with key terms and concepts, or even better, an interpreter who has

received in-depth training on understanding domestic and sexual violence and the impact of trauma.

Because of the additional skill set needed to interpret in a domestic and sexual violence setting, it can take two-to-three months to find and secure interpreters with the expertise to meet your needs.

Providing effective interpreting for your events

As soon as you determine the location, format, and size of your event (https://perma.cc/5QVM-JUXQ), start identifying potential interpreters. Ask your Deaf faculty or Deaf colleagues if they have recommendations for qualified interpreters in the geographic area where you will be hosting the event. Once your participants register, reach out to Deaf participants and ask them for their preferred interpreters. Additionally, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf has a searchable database of interpreters and interpreter referral services (https://perma.cc/J3G4-GHR7).

There are a number of considerations you should keep in mind in order to provide effective interpreting for Deaf and hard of hearing participants. These considerations—including asking participants

about their interpreting needs when they register, figuring out the appropriate number of interpreters to hire, and preparing interpreters for your event—are discussed in the following sections.

Registration for your event

When designing registration materials, make sure to include questions about what accommodations your participants will need. Getting this information at the preliminary stage will allow you to prepare for this essential area of accommodation. Here is sample language you can use to learn about your attendees' interpreting needs:

> Please indicate your interpreting needs from the list below:
>
> › American Sign Language
>
> › certified/Deaf Interpreter
>
> › close/low vision interpreting
>
> › tactile interpreting
>
> › other (Please specify.)

Deaf people are experts in their individual communication needs. Once you receive an interpreting request, reach out to the Deaf participant to make sure you identify an interpreter with the matching skill set.

How many interpreters should you hire?

A variety of factors determine the number of interpreters you need to hire for your event. The first consideration is that interpreters work in two-person teams. Sign language interpreting can be physically, emotionally, and mentally demanding for interpreters. The industry standard is to have two interpreters work as a team, allowing one to take a break while the other is interpreting, thereby increasing the accuracy and quality of interpreting.

There are two general approaches to determining how many interpreters you need:

› Have one team of interpreters for each Deaf participant. This allows Deaf participants to sit anywhere in the room and increases opportunities for them to network with colleagues.

› Have one team of interpreters per session if all of your Deaf participants require the same type of interpreting. This requires Deaf participants to sit in a specific area of the room to ensure a clear line of sight to the interpreters and may limit networking opportunities.

Other factors, such as the size of your event, the number of co-occurring sessions, and types of interactive activities also affect how many interpreters you need. Below are several scenarios to give you a sense of how the above factors determine the number of interpreters needed at an event.

Example A: A specialized training

An organization is hosting a one-day training on technology and safety. The training will take place from 9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. The curriculum uses a mix of lecture, small group discussion, and interactive exercises. One Deaf person registered for the training and requested American Sign Language interpreters.

Number of interpreters needed:
Two ASL interpreters

The two interpreters will work together as a team to interpret for the Deaf participant. Since there will only be two interpreters on site, the host organization will need to coordinate with the interpreters to ensure they are able to take breaks during the training and that the Deaf participant will receive interpretation during networking breaks.

Example B: A curriculum development meeting

An organization is hosting a two-day meeting to develop a curriculum for a national law enforcement training. Three experts who are Deaf will be invited to participate. Two Deaf participants requested ASL interpreting and another Deaf participant required low-vision interpreting. The meeting will take place from 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. on both days. During the meeting, the organizers will facilitate large group discussions to generate training goals, topics, and a draft agenda. They will also divide the group into small workgroups to identify learning objectives and activities for each session.

Number of interpreters needed:
Four ASL interpreters; two ASL interpreters with expertise in low-vision interpreting

In this case, two of the Deaf experts require ASL interpreting while another Deaf expert requires low-vision interpreting. Because the meeting will break into small workgroups, best practice would be to hire two interpreters per Deaf person to allow each Deaf person to attend the desired small workgroup session.

Example C: A conference

An organization is hosting a two-day national conference on ending sexual violence. The conference will take place from 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m. on both days with a film showing occurring from 6:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. on the first day. On both days, the conference agenda comprises a morning and afternoon plenary session and six morning and afternoon workshops. Three Deaf people registered for the event and requested American Sign Language interpreters.

Number of interpreters needed:
Six ASL interpreters at peak times for the conference agenda; two ASL interpreters for after-hours activities

In this complex scenario, the organization has several options in terms of the number of interpreters needed. As

a general principle, it's best to break down the conference into its distinct components and identify the number of interpreters for each. In this example, there are three components: plenary sessions, workshop sessions, and after-hours activities.

›   **plenary sessions**
    (two-to-six interpreters):
If the event will provide reserved seating for Deaf people at the front of the room, two interpreters will be needed for on-stage interpreting. On the other hand, if event hosts want to offer seating choice to the Deaf participants so that they can easily network with their colleagues, six interpreters would be needed for interpreting conversations around tables.

›   **workshop sessions**
    (six interpreters):
If all participants are asked to register for workshop sessions in advance of the conference, the event organizer can use that information to determine which workshop sessions will need interpretation based on which sessions the Deaf participants plan to attend.

This type of polling is not a common practice. Moreover, using this information to secure interpreters may create a differential experience between Deaf attendees and their hearing counterparts, as Deaf attendees would not be able to change their mind onsite. A better option is to assume the highest number of interpreters. In this example, six interpreters would allow for each of the three Deaf participants to attend their own workshop session.

›   **after-hours activity**
    (two interpreters):
If the event hosts are organizing after-hours activities, they are responsible for ensuring those events are accessible to people with disabilities and Deaf people. For film screenings, if the films are not captioned or if there will be any discussion accompanying the films, two interpreters are needed. In this case, it's probably best to contract with two additional interpreters (not those who interpreted throughout the day).

Should you hire an interpreter coordinator?

When hosting larger events, or events at which you anticipate a large number of Deaf faculty and/or Deaf presenters, you may want to consider hiring an interpreter coordinator, who can help you:

> identify and recruit qualified interpreters for your event;

> figure out how many interpreters you need and your interpreting schedule for the event;

> ensure that you are matching your Deaf attendees' needs with interpreters who have those skills;

> set up your space to optimize the interpreting experience; and

> problem-solve during the event as interpreting needs or issues arise.

Contracting with interpreters

When contracting with interpreters, be as explicit and detailed about your event as you can be. Address the following when contracting with an interpreter:

> Clarify interpreters' rates and terms. In advance of your event, ask the interpreter for rates and terms. According to the Center on Victimization and Safety at the Vera Institute of Justice, many interpreters work on an average hourly rate ranging from $55–$85. For conferences, interpreters may charge a day rate. Ask about terms (such as cancellation policy, assignment minimum of hours, etc.) and once agreed upon, clearly state these terms in your contract.

> Spell out event details. In addition to providing the address for the event in the contract, include details such as parking location, floor and room number(s)/name(s), and dress code.

> Detail the interpreting schedule. Provide a detailed schedule of your event in the contract. Be sure to schedule interpreters not only for the training sessions, but also for registration, after-hours events, and networking periods. Be sure to allow time for meals for your interpreters.

> Include travel time compensation rates. Should interpreters be traveling to your event, compensation for travel time is an industry standard. Clearly lay out the travel compensation in the contract.

> Remember to have a cancellation clause. Pay particular attention to the cancellation clause so that you know how far in advance you need to cancel interpreters without incurring any fees.

Preparing interpreters in advance

To improve the quality of the interpretation process, ensure that your interpreters are prepared. There are several ways you can do this:

> **Send materials in advance.** E-mail copies of PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and the event agenda in advance of the event to allow the interpreters to familiarize themselves with the material and terminology that they will be using.

> **Conduct an interpreter orientation.** Before the event, review your approach to communication access, expectations and schedule, common terminology and signs used in the domestic and sexual violence field, and any other relevant information. This could take the form of a one-hour meeting on the first morning of or the evening before the event.

> **Host a meet-and-greet event for interpreters and Deaf participants.** A meet-and-greet gives interpreters an

opportunity to learn about the communication needs of the Deaf participants and for Deaf participants to share sign choices and establish a shared vocabulary with the interpreters. It also gives interpreters an opportunity to communicate to the Deaf participants the host organization's approach to and philosophy of interpreting, including such details as whether there will be interpretation during scheduled breaks.

On-site considerations

As part of the planning process, there are several important on-site considerations for creating an optimal interpreting environment.

> **audio-visual aids** – Microphones ensure that everyone, especially those who are hard of hearing and may be using assistive listening devices, can hear the information presented at your event. In addition, microphones ensure that interpreters can dedicate their full attention to interpretation without straining to hear. Tripod screens are also often used at events for PowerPoint presentations, videos, or broadcasts of the event. Multiple screens may be needed to ensure all attendees, including Deaf and hard of

hearing attendees who rely heavily on visual information, have a clear line of sight to the screens.

› **adjustments to the backdrop** – Many event spaces have intricate wallpaper and other decorations, such as mirrors, that can be distracting to and cause eyestrain for Deaf participants. Consider bringing in a solid-colored backdrop if a significant portion of your event is occurring in an area with extremely busy walls.

› **lighting** – Florescent bulbs can cause a great deal of eyestrain for Deaf people. If you're using a small meeting space with florescent lighting, you may want to bring in other types of lighting to reduce eyestrain. Additionally, if you dim the lights during a presentation, for example to show a video, make sure attendees can still see the interpreters.

› **placement and line of sight** – Deaf participants need a clear line of sight to interpreters and speakers. Before the event, discuss these placement issues with interpreters and Deaf people to ensure there are no obstructions, such as pillars.

› **frequent communication and check-ins** – The best way to know if you're meeting the communication needs of Deaf participants is to ask them directly. Check in with Deaf participants throughout the event to see if there's anything you can do to improve their language access.

Evaluating interpreters

One vital aspect of ensuring effective interpreters for events is routine post-event evaluation. Ask Deaf participants for their impression of their interpreters and review all valuable feedback.

Include a question on your evaluation form about the quality of interpreters and how you might improve language access in the future. Also consider directly following up with Deaf participants about their experience after the event. This information can help you determine whether to contract with a particular interpreter in the future. Interpreters should also receive Deaf participants' constructive feedback after each event.

Additional Resources

Designing accessible events for people with disabilities and Deaf people, Center on Victimization and Safety, Vera Institute of Justice
https://perma.cc/5QVM-JUXQ

End Abuse of People with Disabilities
https://perma.cc/Z8AR-ZS2Y

This resource, created by the Vera Institute of Justice, addresses domestic and sexual violence among people with disabilities.

Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID)
https://perma.cc/J3G4-GHR7

Interpreters' national professional organization that maintains an interpreter referral service and provides information on standards of practice.

National Association of the Deaf (NAD)
https://perma.cc/P59K-HDEB

NAD is a national civil rights organization for Deaf and hard of hearing people.

For more information

The Center on Victimization and Safety (CVS) at the Vera Institute of Justice works with communities around the country to fashion services that reach, appeal to, and benefit all victims. Our work focuses on communities of people who are at elevated risk of harm but often marginalized from victim services and the criminal justice system. We combine research, technical assistance, and training to equip policymakers and practitioners with the information, skills, and resources needed to effectively serve all victims. To learn more about CVS, contact cvs@vera.org.

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