



Common Accommodations for Survivors with Disabilities: A Tip Sheet for Advocates, Law Enforcement, and Attorneys

Many victims with disabilities and Deaf victims need accommodations to fully participate in services and the legal system. You can often make small adjustments in your environment or changes to your communication style to meet victims' accessibility needs. Sometimes, you will have to get additional equipment or work with other service providers to meet victims' needs.

Some disabilities are not obvious, so it is important to ask every victim you work with if they need any accommodations.

When you ask about survivors' needs, offer examples of accommodations you can provide. This can help people with disabilities and Deaf people identify what they may need. This tip sheet provides examples of common accessibility accommodations that victims might request, organized by task or activity. It is designed to give you a sense of the range of accommodations victims may need to fully participate in services. This is not an exhaustive list of possible accommodation requests.

Consider the following recommendations from people with disabilities:

- Providing accommodations is one way to create an equitable, inclusive, and welcoming experience for people with disabilities. Many people with disabilities want to have the same or similar experience as someone without a disability.
- The tone you use when asking about accommodations can impact a person's willingness to share their needs with you. Avoid using a patronizing tone. Instead, be curious about the person's needs. Remember that you are working *with* the victim, not *for* them.
- Avoid drawing unnecessary attention to any accommodations you provide.



To learn more about providing accommodations, visit reachingvictims.org/resource/just-ask.

1-on-1 Meetings

SCHEDULING



Be flexible.

People with disabilities and Deaf people may need to meet at a particular time of day, more frequently, or for longer or shorter durations.

- **Mobility:** later meeting times or more time to work around a paratransit schedule, which can be irregular
- **Vision:** earlier meeting times because it can be easier to see more clearly and strain less in the beginning of the day
- **d/Deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind:** allow more time for sign language interpretation, captions, or Video Relay
- **Comprehension and mental processing:** shorter and more meetings to process information



Offer to send reminders.

- Victims with disabilities that impact **attention** and **memory** may request a reminder about the meeting.



Ask about communication preferences.

Victims may have communication preferences for scheduling, reminders, or following up about a meeting.

- **Mental health:** communicate by text or email instead of phone because of anxiety or trauma
- **d/Deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind:** communicate over text or email rather than by phone

1-on-1 Meetings

ATTENDING



Provide agendas.

- Victims with disabilities that impact **attention, memory, and mental processing** might request a meeting agenda or written instructions about what to expect.



Provide communication devices, aids, or support people.

- **d/Deaf, hard of hearing, or DeafBlind:** microphones, assistive listening devices, sign language interpretation, Video Relay service, or live captions
- **Mental processing and speech:** support person who understands their speech patterns



Offer longer breaks.

Victims might request breaks during a meeting to attend to emotional and personal needs, such as eating a snack, drinking water, or taking medication.

- **Comprehension and mental processing:** breaks to process and understand information
- **Mental health:** breaks to deal with trauma responses
- **Mobility:** breaks to attend to personal care needs, which can take longer for people with mobility disabilities
- **Speech:** more time for communication if using communication devices
- **Vision:** breaks to reduce eye strain



Have lighting options available.

Victims might request to dim the lighting, turn off the overhead lights, or meet in a room where the lighting is warmer.

- **Neurological functioning:** alternatives to fluorescent lighting, which can cause migraines and seizures
- **Vision:** more lighting or specific lighting that makes it easier to see

1-on-1 Meetings

ATTENDING (continued)



Provide notetaking options.

Victims may request accommodations that involve notetaking.

- **Attention, comprehension, memory, and mental processing:**
 - notepad or tablet to take notes; notetaker to assist with taking notes
 - recorder to record the meeting audibly
- **Dexterity and mobility:** clipboards or other portable writing surfaces
- **d/Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind:** a person to take notes during the meeting because the survivor will be watching a sign language interpreter, making it difficult to simultaneously take notes



Provide seating options.

Victims may request specific seating types and arrangements.

- **Dexterity, balance, and mobility:**
 - chairs with or without arms and/or wheels
 - seating arrangements that allow for independent movement
- **Mental health:** seating arrangements that make it easier to move about and exit the room
- **d/Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind:** seating arrangements that make it easier to see interpreters and reduce distractions



Offer meeting room options.

Victims may request accommodations that involve modifying spaces. Victims might also ask to see the meeting space in advance to confirm it is accessible.

- **Attention, hearing, mental health, and mental processing:** private space with reduced distraction and noise
- **Dexterity, mobility, mental processing, and vision:** extra space to accommodate a personal care attendant, support person, or service animal
- **Vision:** opportunity to access the meeting room in advance to orient themselves to the space. Once this has been done, do not change the room set.

Paperwork



Provide paperwork in alternate formats.

Victims might request alternate formats for paperwork.

- **Comprehension** and **mental processing**: paperwork in plain language or with pictures that correspond to the concepts
- **Vision**: large print and Braille formats; and electronic (PDF or plain text) formats to use with screen readers and other assistive technologies



Offer to assist with paperwork.

- **Comprehension** and **mental processing**: read the paperwork aloud or assist with writing the victim's responses
- **Dexterity**: assistance filling out the paperwork by writing the victim's responses



Arrange materials in order of use.

Victims with disabilities that impact **mental processing** and **organization** might request that the materials are ordered in a logical way to help them stay on task.



Provide writing surfaces.

Victims with disabilities that impact **mobility** may not be able to access a table in the room and need an alternative writing surface, such as a clipboard or portable surface.

Paperwork (continued)



Allow extra time.

Some victims may request more time to complete the paperwork.

- **Attention, comprehension, and mental processing:**
 - more time to read, ask questions about, and understand the paperwork
 - the use of a timer to help them stay on task
- **d/Deaf, hard of hearing, and DeafBlind:** extra time for interpretation and communication



Send materials in advance or in alternate formats.

Victims might request that you send them the paperwork to review before the meeting. Do not make changes to the materials once they have been sent.

- **Attention, comprehension, and mental processing:** paperwork in advance to review without time pressure or with a support person
- **Vision:** electronic formats of paperwork in advance to test the format with a screen reader

Group Activities and Events

See “Scheduling and Attending Meetings” on pages 2-4 for details about each category.



Provide communication devices and aids.

Victims may request a variety of communication-related accommodations.



Inquire about lighting.

Victims might request to dim or brighten the lighting.



Provide materials in advance or in alternate formats.

If you plan to share any materials during the group activity, victims with disabilities may ask you to share the materials before the activity or provide the materials in alternate formats.



Consider activities.

Ensure there is enough space for people who use mobility devices and for interpreters. Avoid competitive or timed activities, which can be difficult for people with cognitive disabilities. Offer to send materials in advance.



Provide notes.

Victims may request accommodations that involve notetaking.



Modify meeting space.

Victims may request the room be rearranged to allow for independent movement.

Communal Living: Shelters and Group Homes



Be flexible with tasks and chores.

Victims may request accommodations for assigned tasks and chores.

- **Attention, mental processing, mobility, and dexterity:** more time to complete tasks
- **Neurological functioning:** victims with chemical sensitivities may need to avoid certain activities that involve laundry or cleaning products
- **Mobility and dexterity:** may request alternative tasks/chores to those that require dexterity and mobility



Allow alternative pick-up and drop-off locations.

Victims with disabilities that impact **mobility** may request pick-up/drop-off locations closer to the shelter or group home than the typical location.

Other common accommodation requests might include:

- Adjusting the temperature of a room for victims with disabilities that impact **circulation and temperature regulation**
- Using stress management objects (fidget spinners, tactile objects) for victims with disabilities that impact **attention**
- Assisting with opening/closing doors for victims with disabilities that impact **mobility and vision**

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