



PREPARING TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATIONS: Recommendations for Victim Advocacy Organizations

People with disabilities and Deaf people are victims of violent crime at three times the rate of people without disabilities.¹ They also experience some of the greatest barriers to getting help. Too often, victim services are not accessible to people with disabilities, making it difficult for them to get the help they need to stay safe and heal. Federal law requires government agencies and non-profit organizations to ensure their responses and services are accessible to victims with disabilities and Deaf victims.² An important way to increase access to services is by providing victims with accommodations.

What is an accommodation?

Titles II and III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require government agencies and places of public accommodation to make all services available to people with disabilities. This includes providing and paying for auxiliary aids and services, such as sign language interpreters and Braille materials, to ensure equal access. It also includes making reasonable modifications to policies, procedures, and practices. Together, we refer to these as accommodations.

This document is part of a toolkit that includes a how-to guide for asking about and providing accommodations. Before staff begin implementing those recommendations, it is essential that your organization has the resources and supports in place to help staff seamlessly provide accommodations. Being unable to meet a victim's accommodation request can create a barrier for them to get the help they need. Additionally, it can damage your organization's relationship with that individual and others in the disability and Deaf communities. This document outlines several actions your organization can take to make sure staff are prepared to provide accommodations to survivors in a timely manner.

How to prepare your organization to provide accommodations



Develop or revise an accommodations policy

Because it is often not possible to tell if someone has a disability just by looking at them, your accommodations policy should require staff to ask all victims if they need any accommodations. An effective accommodations policy communicates to your staff and survivors your commitment to helping victims with disabilities and Deaf victims access the support they need. It should also describe when and how to ask; outline the steps to take when a request is made, including how to meet requests in a timely manner; and explain how to confirm if the provided accommodations are effective. When developing or revising policies, it is important to work with disability rights advocates, including people with disabilities whose lives will be directly impacted by the policy.



Budget for accommodations

Your organization will likely receive more accommodation requests once your staff start asking every victim about the need for accommodations. While some of these requests will not have any costs associated with them, such as reading written information out loud, others will have costs that may not currently be outlined in your budget. Include a dedicated line item for accommodations in your budget to ensure you have money available to meet the needs of victims with disabilities and Deaf victims.

How to prepare your organization to provide accommodations (continued)



Develop partnerships

Disability and Deaf service agencies can provide a wealth of information, including how to increase a person's access to your services and identify community resources from which your organization can rent or buy equipment to support communication or mobility, such as a medical supply agency. They can also help you create or enhance your accommodations policy and build relationships with the disability and Deaf communities. Establishing a connection with sign language interpreting agencies or individual interpreters will help your staff more quickly fill interpreter requests and ensure consistency in working with interpreters who are familiar with your services and language used by your organization.



Train staff

Once you have developed or revised your policy, train staff on how to implement it. It is also important to provide staff with basic information on working with survivors with disabilities and Deaf people, such as common barriers to safety and justice, types of disabilities and functional limitations, disability etiquette, and Deaf culture. A disability or Deaf service organization may be able to provide this training for your staff or support your organization in developing a training.



Monitor and re-assess

After you have implemented your accommodations policy, develop a plan to regularly monitor its effectiveness. Check in with survivors who have received accommodations and staff who have provided them about what has and has not worked. Track how many and what types of accommodation requests your organization receives. This information will help your organization strengthen your policy and more accurately budget for accommodations in the future.



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

1 Erika Harrell, Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009–2014 - Statistical Tables (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

2 Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990).

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