



GUIDE TO PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS: Victim Advocates

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 places of public accommodation, including non-profit organizations, to ensure their services are accessible to victims with disabilities.² An important way to increase access to services is by providing victims with accommodations.

Ask Everyone and Ask Often

Why ask everyone?

One in 4 Americans has a disability. For many, their disability may not be visible. For this reason, it may not be possible to tell if someone needs accommodations just by looking at them. Best practice is to ask everyone you work with if they need any accommodations.

When?

Ask during your first interaction with a survivor. Continue to ask at every new step in the process or new activity/service the victim will participate in.

Why ask often?

Survivors' needs may change over time based on the services they receive. They may also feel more comfortable talking about their needs as they build trust with an advocate.



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



Set the stage.

Explain why you are asking about accommodations.

For example: “We want to make sure every survivor in our community gets the help they need, including people with disabilities and Deaf people. We know that some disabilities may not be visible and some people may not feel comfortable asking for accommodations on their own, so we ask everyone if they need any accommodations.”

Describe your services.

Provide a brief overview of your services, including any activities or tasks the victim will need to do. This will help the victim determine if they need any accommodations. For example, if doing an intake, let the survivor know they will need to fill out paperwork and ask if they need help reading or completing forms. If they will be staying in shelter, inform them of shelter policies and ask if they need any changes or supports to follow them.

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 or Braille materials, to ensure equal access. It also includes making reasonable modifications to policies, procedures, and practices. Together, we refer to these as accommodations.

When explaining what an accommodation is to a victim, use plain language. For example:

“Some people with disabilities and Deaf people need service providers to make changes to the way we work with them so that the person with a disability can participate in services. These changes can include providing the person with equipment, such as a portable ramp; getting a sign language interpreter; or doing something to support the person like reading forms out loud. We call these changes accommodations.”



Ask and listen.

Ask.

1. Start by asking if the person needs any accommodations. Here are some examples of how to ask:

- Is there anything I can do to make it easier for you to participate in services?
- Are there any additional supports you need to participate in services?
- Are there any changes or modifications we can make to the way we do things so you can fully participate?
- Do you need any accommodations to fully participate in services?

2. If the person needs more context to understand what you are asking, ask more specific questions, such as:

- Do you need any additional supports to read and understand the paperwork?
- Is there anything I can do to make it easier for you to talk to me about your experience?
- Are there any changes or modifications we can make so that you can participate in our support group?

3. Give examples. Here are some things you can say to help survivors identify accommodations they may need:

- I can write down what we talked about if it's hard to remember or focus on what I'm saying.
- We can meet in a quiet space to reduce distractions if you're having a hard time concentrating.
- I can read written information out loud.
- I can get a sign language interpreter so we can communicate.
- We can take breaks during our conversation if you start to feel overwhelmed or tired.

Listen.

Just as survivors are experts on their lives, people with disabilities and Deaf people know best what they need and how to meet those needs. People with the same disability may have different needs, so do not make assumptions about what will work for a person.

STEP 3



Provide accommodations.

Provide the requested accommodations as soon as possible, keeping in mind that some survivors may not be able to stay safe and heal without them. Cover any costs associated with providing accommodations.

STEP 4

Check in and make changes.

Finding the right accommodation can take time. After providing an accommodation, check with the victim to see how it is going. Is the person able to fully participate in services? If not, what would work better?

Did you know?

Many accommodations are free and easy to provide and can make a significant impact on a victim's ability to receive services. For more examples of accommodations, refer to our **Accommodations Tip Sheet**.

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

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