Mid-Atlantic ADA Center

Accessible and Inclusive Meetings and Events

Getting Together with the Americans with Disabilities Act

TransCen

1

Disclaimer

The Mid-Atlantic ADA Center, operated by TransCen, Inc., provides information, guidance, and training the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The information and/or materials provided are intended solely as informal guidance and should not be construed as legal advice. The Mid-Atlantic ADA Center is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) (grant #90DPAD0008). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These contents do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

Agenda

- The Basics: ADA and Disability
- Setting the Stage: Proactive Planning
- Accessible Meetings: Practices for Meaningful Participation

3

ADA: 1990 Civil Rights Law

- Title I: Employment
- Title II: State and local governments
- Title III: Public accommodations, commercial facilities, examinations or courses related to education or professions
- Title IV: Telecommunications
- Title V: Miscellaneous



4

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Title II and Title III: Core Concepts

- Non-discrimination
- Facility access
  - New construction
  - Alterations
  - Existing facilities
    - Program accessibility (Title II)
    - Readily achievable barrier removal (Title III, public accommodations)



5

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5



Core Concepts

- Auxiliary aids and services to facilitate communication with people who have hearing, vision, or speech disabilities, *for example …*
  - Written notes or printed materials, assistive listening systems and devices, qualified interpreters, captioned media or real-time captioning to accommodate people who are deaf or hard of hearing
  - Large print, Braille, or electronic materials; qualified readers; audio-described media or describing visual elements; verbal directions to accommodate people who are blind or have low vision

6

Core Concepts (cont.)



- Reasonable modification of policies, practices, and procedures, *for example …*
  - Give extra test-taking time when appropriate for a student with a learning disability
  - Modify emergency evacuation plans to consider needs of people with disabilities
  - Modify a “no pets” policy to allow an individual with a disability to be accompanied by a service animal

7

Disability Culture

Talk About Diversity!

8

Disability: Common Yet Diverse

Nearly **19%** of the U.S. population, or about **1 out of every 5 people**, has a disability, and more than a third of people with disabilities have more than one type*

- Disability includes apparent and less apparent conditions
  - Mobility
  - Hearing, vision, speech
  - Mental health
  - Intellectual, developmental, cognitive
  - Health (e.g., diabetes, heart disease, multiple chemical sensitivities)

*Source: U.S Census Bureau: “Americans with Disabilities: 2010” report, based on the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) of civilian, non-institutionalized population



Disability crosses *every* demographic border

- Age, race, religion, gender, language, social background, cultural heritage, education level, economic status, etc.

10

General Etiquette

Treat people with disabilities with the same respect as everyone else; common courtesy and a little patience will go a long way

- Avoid:
  - Speaking to adults as if they were children
  - Outdated language (handicapped, retarded) or terms that victimize (afflicted with, suffers from) or patronize (differently-abled, challenged)
  - Assumptions; ask if/how you can assist

11

Beware of Sneaky Stereotypes

- We know we shouldn't judge individuals based on negative assumptions and stereotypes, but "positive" stereotypes can be tempting (e.g., people with disabilities are all "heroic" or "inspiring")
- Stereotypes
  - Fail to recognize individuality
  - Cloud our judgment
  - Confuse our expectations
- Recognize and resist stereotypes!

12

Proactive Planning

Expect Diversity, Prepare for Inclusion

13

Site Selection



Consider accessibility of facility, site, and community as a whole

- How will people arrive at site?
- Is public transit available? Is it accessible?
- Is adequate parking available? Is it accessible?
- Are routes from site arrival points to facility entrance(s) accessible?
- Is signage and wayfinding information adequate and accessible?
- Is there an area for service animal relief?

14

The Facility

Check the facility for access

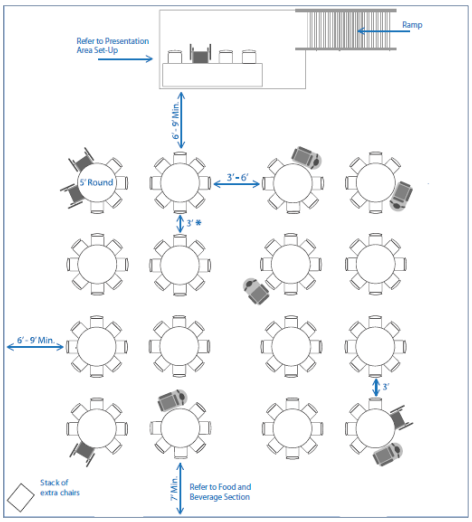
- ✓ General circulation (routes, ramps, elevators, doors, etc.); egress
- ✓ Meeting areas, including any speakers' platforms, stages, etc.
- ✓ Assistive listening systems
- ✓ Restrooms
- ✓ Food/beverage service areas, seating
- ✓ Signage, wayfinding



Outdoor and temporary events and facilities (amphitheaters, tents, portable stages, etc.) are covered, too!

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15



Make Room

Plan inclusive seating layouts that allow maneuvering space and choices of seating locations for people using mobility devices, service animals, or personal assistants

- Classroom
- Theater
- Groups/rounds
- Open/no seating (lawn seating, bring your own, etc.)

16

Access for People with Environmental Sensitivities

Consider venues that have environmentally friendly policies and practices (or will adjust practices for your event)

- Prohibit or limit smoking, including outside near entrances
- Reduce or eliminate the use of scented products (air fresheners, scented candles, etc.)
- Reduce or eliminate use of products with toxic ingredients (cleaning products, pesticides, etc.)

17

Publicizing a Meeting or Event

- Establish a non-discrimination, equal opportunity policy and include in outreach and promotional materials
  - Include a statement requesting participants to refrain from using scented products at the meeting
- Include information about access features that will be in place or available by default (e.g., “the auditorium is equipped with an assistive listening system”)
- Use a variety of publicity formats, methods, and media options to ensure information reaches the widest possible audience



18

Registration

For meetings where registration is required, you can find out more about participants' needs in advance and plan accordingly for certain types of communication access needs, dietary restrictions, etc.

- Ask for this information as part of registration; include a reasonable deadline to allow time for measures that require purchasing or arranging for services
- Remember presenters, speakers, guests, volunteers, award recipients, or others who may be attending in addition to participants

19

Printed Materials

- Design for legibility and reduce the need for other formats or individualized assistance for some people with low vision
  - Simple, easy-to-read fonts
  - Good contrast between text and background
  - Non-glare finishes
  - Uncluttered designs

20

Digital Access



Websites, web forms, social media posts, electronic documents, email, and other digital content need design features to ensure access, especially for people who use “screen readers” (assistive technology that “reads” digital text and converts it to recorded or mechanized speech or Braille output device)

21

Examples: Digital Accessibility Features

- Alternative text (simple text descriptions) in the “alt text” field of images and graphics can be read by screen readers
- Audio-description and captions for videos; transcripts for audio content such as podcasts
- Meaningful hyperlink text (Richmond Chapter of the Association of Legal Administrators, not click here or https://richmondala.org/)
- Consistent, meaningful styles (heading 1, heading 2, etc.)
- Simple tables

22

Preparing Staff and Volunteers

- Provide training and information to staff, guest speakers, docents, volunteers, vendors, etc.
  - Disability awareness and respectful communication
  - Accessible practices for presentations, speeches, interactive meetings
  - Location or availability of accessible features such as accessible toilet facilities, assistive listening devices, or service animal relief areas
  - How to get help!

23

Accessible Meetings

Ensuring Meaningful Participation

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24

Establish Inclusion

- Include access policies and information in program material and announcements, *for example …*
  - Need to use microphones when speaking to ensure effective communication for those using assistive listening devices
  - Location of accessible spaces and elements, especially if not all are accessible (e.g., restrooms, means of egress)
  - Maintain accessible features (keep accessible routes and maneuvering spaces clear, etc.)

25

Accessible Practices



- Ensure that speakers, facilitators, and participants follow accessibility policies and use accessible practices
  - Provide information, support, and tools to enable them to do it!

Great Resources

Accessible Meetings, Events, and Conferences Guide
(ADAinfo.org/hospitality/accessible-meetings-events-conferences-guide/)

Tip Sheet: Hosting Accessible Virtual Meetings, Events, and Conferences
(ADAinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/imported/ADA-VirtualMeeting-tipsheet.pdf)

27



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28