

Plan Accessible Events ^[1]

June 12, 2025 by Megan.Harris@cu.edu ^[2]

Accessibility means a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability in an equally effective and equally inclusive manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use. Are you doing everything you can to make your events accessible to all? These best practices are in addition to the general digital accessibility best practices for images, alternative text, contrast and color, fonts, headings, and hyperlinks outlined in [Accessibility Best Practices](#) ^[3].

Registration

The registration page of your event website presents the initial opportunity to gather information about any accommodations or preferences your attendees might have. By inquiring about specific needs during the registration process and/or reaching out to individuals who have indicated special requirements, you will establish that you are doing everything you can to make your event accessible and allow yourself more time for planning.

Event Registration Questions

Add a question to your Cvent registration form to capture accommodation requests as soon as possible. Your campus ADA expert will be able to support you with meeting these requests.

Question 1

- Do you or your guest require accommodations related to accessibility? | Yes or No

Question 2

- If the person selects yes, display this message with the appropriate dates and contact information for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) expert.
- Accommodation requests related to accessibility should be made [3-5 DAYS BEFORE EVENT] to [CAMPUS ADA EXPERT NAME/EMAIL/PHONE NUMBER].

CONTACT THE EXPERTS

CU Boulder | Digital Accessibility Office, DigitalAccessibility@Colorado.edu [4]

CU Denver | Disability Resources & Services, disabilityresources@ucdenver.edu [5]

CU Colorado Springs | Disability Services, dservice@uccs.edu [6]

CU System | Ashley Eschler, ashley.eschler@cu.edu [7]

CU Anschutz | See the [Event Accessibility Guide](#) [8] for further information and who to contact

Post-Registration Emails

Give your audience another opportunity to request accessibility accommodations with your post-registration communications. Check out the language we advise you to include in those messages.

Registration Confirmation Email

- Accommodation requests related to accessibility should be made [3-5 DAYS BEFORE EVENT] to [CAMPUS ADA EXPERT NAME AND EMAIL or PHONE NUMBER].

Know Before You Go Email

- Send questions including accommodation requests related to accessibility to {[P-EMAIL]} or call {[E-PHONE]}

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Event Website Best Practices

- Using color to indicate an error is not accessible. It's fine to use color but add context. For example, make the field red for an error and add an error message to say "First Name is Required".
- Give multiple options for contacting the event planner (phone, email, etc.). Just giving a phone number isn't accessible for people with hearing disabilities.
- Complex websites can be overwhelming to some people. Use simple, easy-to-use navigation and layouts. Avoid bright, contrasting colors. Use bullets and simple sentences.

- Avoid large blocks of text. Use images and diagrams to support text.
- Avoid justified text.
- Show progress in the registration process. Ex. Instead of the button to the next page saying 'Next' indicate what step the registrant is on by saying Step 1 of 2.

Review [Accessibility Best Practices](#) ^[3] for additional guidelines on digital accessibility.

Virtual Event Best Practices

Presentations

The conference/meeting planner should work with invited speakers and presenters to ensure that presentations are accessible to persons with disabilities.

- Don't have the interpreter in front of a busy background and interpreters should be well lit.
- Control background noise to the greatest extent possible.
- Provide written materials (handouts, overheads, etc.) disseminated at the meeting in a variety of formats as requested by participants, (e.g., raised print, large print, Braille, captions, etc.)
- Discuss with each presenter before the meeting the importance of developing a presentation that will be accessible to all participants.
- Instruct the presenter to include the key points of the presentation on slides. Be sure they are completely legible, with large print and sharp, contrasting colors. In addition, ask the presenter to limit the number of other visual aids used in the presentation and to allow adequate time for the audience to read the visual aids.
- Ask the presenter to accompany materials, including presentations and handouts, with a complete verbal description. If slides, videos, or other visual aids are used, the speaker must describe them orally.
- Ask the presenter to provide a copy of presentation materials well in advance to allow for any needed accommodation requests.
- Check for the needs of presenters with disabilities.

Budget

When budgeting for virtual meetings or conferences, include accommodating people with disabilities as a budget item. You might need a sign language interpreter, captioning, or media in an alternate format, i.e. a copy of the PowerPoint presentation or handouts in large print or Braille.

Staff

When you plan for moderators and facilitators, identify individuals who would be willing to

volunteer to do functions related to accommodating individuals with disabilities, within reason and ability. For example, most employees will not be equipped to be a live captioner of an event. Be sure that these volunteers are included in any staff orientation and ensure that they have training.

Have communications and other assistive devices regularly available for the use of individuals with disabilities. Consider the size and nature of your event and participants and the possibility of reserving interpreters, captioners, and/or transcriptionists as soon as you have selected the event dates. Familiarize yourself with the cancellation deadlines for the various agencies.

In-Person Event Best Practices

Check-In

- Microsoft Translator ^[9]—a free application that translates text and voice in over 70 languages—is a helpful tool for in-person check-in at events. Translator's features are useful for deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals.

Seating

- Reserve front seats for those who are deaf or hard of hearing for in-person events so that they can easily view captions, interpreters, etc.
- Personal Care Assistants must be able to sit next to the person they're accompanying. It's also a best practice if guests are allowed, to allow guests to sit with the person requiring accommodations. The number of guests will be dependent on the event and venue. For example, if someone is in a wheelchair and requires seating accommodations at an event, they shouldn't have to sit alone away from their guest.
- Avoid floor-length tablecloths on tables. This can be hard for people with physical disabilities to navigate.
- Beware of only having cocktail (high-top) tables at an event.

Presentations

The conference/meeting planner should work with invited speakers and presenters to ensure that presentations are accessible to persons with disabilities.

- Don't have the interpreter in front of a screen or busy background at the event and interpreters should be well lit.
- Choose well-lit and easily accessible meeting rooms.
- Control background noise to the greatest extent possible.
- Choose a meeting room with good acoustics and an auxiliary sound system, if possible.
- Provide written materials (handouts, overheads, etc.) disseminated at the meeting in a variety of formats as requested by participants, (e.g., raised print, large print, Braille, captions, etc.)

- Discuss with each presenter before the meeting the importance of developing a presentation that will be accessible to all participants.
- Instruct the presenter to include the key points of the presentation on slides. Be sure they are completely legible, with large print and sharp, contrasting colors. In addition, ask the presenter to limit the number of other visual aids used in the presentation and to allow adequate time for the audience to read the visual aids.
- Ask the presenter to accompany materials, including presentations and handouts, with a complete verbal description. If slides, videos, or other visual aids are used, the speaker must describe them orally.
- Ask the presenter to provide a copy of presentation materials well in advance to allow for any needed accommodation requests.
- Check for the needs of presenters with disabilities (ramping or podium requests, a reverse interpreter, a sighted guide for a person with limited vision, etc.)

Social Functions & Meals

When planning social functions and meals, planners should:

- Include personal assistants and interpreters in the estimated number of participants at no charge to them.
- If you choose a buffet, have servers available to assist; buffets can be particularly difficult for persons with mobility or visual impairments.
- Determine the accessibility of any outside entertainment and transportation services offered to participants.

Budget

When budgeting for meetings or conferences, include accommodating people with disabilities as a budget item. You might need a sign language interpreter, assistive listening devices, or amplification of the speaker or media in an alternate format, i.e. a copy of the powerpoint presentation or handouts in large print or Braille.

Staff

When you plan for moderators and facilitators, identify individuals who would be willing to volunteer to do functions related to accommodating individuals with disabilities, within reason and ability. For example, most employees will not be equipped to be a live captioner of an event. Be sure that these volunteers are included in any staff orientation and ensure that they have training.

Have communications and other assistive devices regularly available for the use of individuals with disabilities. Consider the size and nature of your event and participants and the possibility of reserving interpreters, captioners, and/or transcriptionists as soon as you have selected the event dates. Familiarize yourself with the cancellation deadlines for the various agencies.

Related Content

- Accessibility Best Practices [3]

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