

A Quick Checklist for Planning Accessible Meetings

It is important to note that the majority of steps that need to be taken to make events accessible cost nothing and simply require planning, care and attention. Here's a quick checklist to get you started with that planning. This is not an all-inclusive list, because each event is different, and you'll need to ensure that everyone at your event can participate in all of the activities.

- Parking:** Enough accessible parking spaces for the event.
- Onsite routes:** Accessible path of travel (with ramps, curb cuts and elevators where needed) from the parking area to meeting rooms to restrooms to other sites for the event, including a minimum 32 inches of actual clear passage through doorways (usually a 36-inch doorway).
- Access statement:** In press releases, advertisements, publications and other information about the event, include a statement such as this: The meeting site is accessible. Those attending the meeting are requested to refrain from using heavily scented personal care products in order to enhance accessibility for everyone. People with disabilities requiring additional services or alternative formats for printed material to participate in the meeting should contact (name) at (phone) or (e-mail) by (date).
- Generous timeline:** Publicize the meeting early enough for people needing accommodations to request them, and for you to provide them. Know when people will actually receive the meeting announcement.
- Seating:** Designate barrier-free seating locations for people with disabilities. Have adequate open spaces for individuals using wheelchairs, seats with a clear view of sign language interpreters for people who are deaf, and seating close to the podium or stage for individuals with limited vision.
- Room layout:** Should allow full participation in planned activities. For example, if activities require moving from table to table, allow enough space between tables for people using a wheelchair or scooter.
- Accessible information throughout the event:** This includes speeches, presentations, flip charts, handouts, films, videos and other information. For example, accommodations may include sign language interpreters, assistive listening systems, and/or real-time captioning for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. People who are blind or visually impaired may need materials in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, audiotape, and/or computer disc.
- Appropriate terminology:** Ensure that "people first" language is used both orally and in written form when referring to people with disabilities (for example, "people who are deaf" rather than "the deaf").
- Considerate communication:** For example, when speaking to a person who is blind, say "to your left" instead of pointing.
- Just ask:** If you aren't sure whether a person needs assistance, just ask. And if you need more information on how to plan accessible meetings, just ask one of these LARA resources: Amanda Brooks, LARA ADA coordinator, BrooksA3@michigan.gov; Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns, (517) 334-8000 (T/V) or toll-free (877) 499-6232 (T/V); Michigan Commission for the Blind, (517) 373-2062, (517)-373-4025 (TTY), Lower Peninsula toll-free (800) 292-4200, Upper Peninsula toll-free (800) 323-2535; or Michigan Rehabilitation Services, 1-800-605-6722 (voice) or 1-888-605-6722 (TTY).