

The UVM Center on Disability and Community Inclusion (CDCI) Accessible Events Guide

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Why have accessible events?

Thank you for your interest in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion with the information in this guide! It offers background and action steps centering the experience of people with disabilities. All sections address both barriers to and solutions for events for individuals with disabilities.

Disability is a natural part of human diversity.

1 in 4 adults in the U.S. (61 million people) have a disability (Okoro et al., 2016). Unfortunately, people with disabilities are commonly discriminated against. This is called ableism. Ableism intersects with other forms of oppression (Kendi, 2021). Kendi notes that ableism and racism are roots of the same tree. Remember, there is also great diversity among people with disabilities.

Disability is part of the equity equation.

Not sure if something is ableist? Ask yourself if it would be okay to do or say about race, gender, or a non-disabled person. Learning and unlearning is a lifelong process.

Discrimination against people with disabilities is against the law.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) must be followed by schools, colleges, and universities. This includes all programs and activities (e.g., events), not just for students and classes (Office of Civil Rights US Department of Education, 2020). For information about how the law applies to specific programs, visit the [New England ADA Center](#).

People engage with events in different ways.

To create inclusive programs that welcome everyone, it's important to plan for ways of engaging that may be different than what you're used to. Universal Design is a strategy to make a space accessible to everyone. Universal Design for Learning is a framework for improving teaching to meet diverse learners' needs.

A disabled person may make an accommodation request to ensure full participation in the event. An accommodation is a change made for people with disabilities so they can engage with content. Some accommodations are helpful for people without disabilities as well. For example, ramps are important for people using wheelchairs as well as for parents with baby strollers. Similarly, providing presentation content before a training can help both people with intellectual disabilities and others attending the training.

Creating spaces and systems where people can ask for what they need supports access for all. Not everyone identifies as having a disability. Offering more than one way to access information is key to inclusion.

Basic Event Accessibility

Here are two crucial things to remember about disability:

1. Not everyone has a disability you can sense by looking at or talking with them.
2. No one should have to disclose their disability to you to feel welcome at your event.

As you plan your event, you know that people with disabilities will be in attendance. A little planning can help you host an event that's welcoming and inclusive for a wide variety of disabilities.

ACCESSIBILITY vs INCLUSION

Accessibility makes it possible for people with disabilities to access your event. *Inclusion* makes it possible for people with disabilities to enjoy your event. These are different things. As you design an event, think about what meaningful participation looks like for all attendees.

Online vs. In-Person Events

The best solution is an event that's available both in-person and virtually. Having events only in-person should no longer be the default option.

As a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual events have become much more popular. This has been an incredible opportunity for many people with disabilities to become more involved in their communities.

Many people – with and without disabilities – find online, virtual events more accessible than in-person events. Virtual events are inclusive for people with disabilities who might have otherwise struggled to access an in-person only event due to issues with energy, personal care attendant availability, transportation, choice of venue, or simple preference.

At the same time, many other people have missed in-person events and the opportunities they provide for easy socializing, networking, or catering to a specific learning style.

Types of Disabilities

HIDDEN DISABILITIES

Many people have “hidden disabilities.” A hidden disability is a challenge someone’s facing, either in the moment or on a long-term basis, that affects how much energy and focus they can bring to your event. It could be a chronic illness, it could be neurodiversity or autism, it could be a side effect of medication, or just stress or tiredness.

All of these situations are valid hidden disabilities. None of them are your business unless the person with the disability asks for your help. All of them are things you can plan your event to provide support for.

SITUATIONAL DISABILITIES

Situational disabilities are when people experience the world differently from normal based on a specific situation. For instance, if you are in a room with no windows, reading a paperback book, and someone turns the lights off in the room, you are in a situation where you can no longer read the book. That situation is presenting you with a disability.

Some common situational disabilities:

- Reading on a screen in direct sunlight
- Reading on paper in poor lighting conditions
- Watching a video in public -- many times it's not appropriate to have the audio on, so you might need captions.

- Listening to audio in public, or in a noisy space -- you might need headphones.
- Accessing a mobile app with a device with a cracked screen, that doesn't have all the device's normal functions.

Many situational disabilities will be far beyond your control as an event planner. The trick is to try not to create additional situations at your event.

COMMON TYPES OF DISABILITIES

- Mobility
- Hearing
- Vision
- Cognitive and Developmental Disabilities
- Neurodiversity: 1 in 5 people thinks, learns, and/or communicates differently than the so-called "typical" brain. This impacts every facet of a person's life, including all aspects of the way they interact with their environment and other people.

Basic Considerations by Type of Disability

MOBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

FOR YOUR IN-PERSON EVENT:

Choose a venue that meets ADA guidelines for accessibility. For mobility, this means that at minimum, it has an elevator and ramps as well as stairs and doors that can be opened with touchpads on the walls.

Now, envision how a guest using a wheelchair, cane, or walker, is going to navigate your event.

Take the path from the parking lot to the venue and into the room yourself with the following checklist.

Notice how you move through the space. Think about height. Think about carrying capacity. Imagine how your guests might socialize.

- Is there disabled parking close to the venue?
- Are there curb cuts from the parking lot to the sidewalk?
- Where will you place any signage so it's both noticeable and doesn't block traffic? Think about both outside and inside your venue.
- The room you're using inside the venue: how will the door open? Will you opt for propping it open?
- How will the chairs and tables in your space be laid out so there's enough room between them, or between rows, for guests with mobility aids to

move safely? (Note: “safely” means not just physical safety, but in a way that does not feel stressful or dangerous).

- If your speaker(s) use a mobility aid, is the podium adjustable based on their most comfortable height? Will they be speaking from a wheelchair or a stationary chair? Are the microphones adjustable?
- If you have handouts, where can you put them so they can be grabbed by a person in a wheelchair?
- If you have refreshments, where can you put them so they can be grabbed by a person in a wheelchair?
- Will you have a greeter at or near the door who is available to clear a path or carry things for guests who might need an extra hand?
- Where will guests with wheelchairs or other mobility aids sit in the venue room? Will you reserve space up front? How much space will be between the rows of chairs provided for guests?
- If your event will feature interactive activities (such as icebreakers with physical interaction like drawing on butcher paper or sticking dots on boards), how can you craft an activity that includes people with limited mobility or mobility aids?
- If your event will feature a social activity, such as general mingling, what features of the venue lend themselves to including people with limited mobility, or mobility aids? For many people in wheelchairs to talk face-to-face with other people, the other people must be sitting. Are there ways to facilitate seated socializing at your venue?

FOR YOUR DIGITAL EVENT:

Guests with mobility disabilities might be participating with a non-mouse navigation tool, such as a head pointer, voice commands, or keyboard-only navigation.

- Ensure you're hosting the event on a platform that's compatible with non-mouse navigation tools. By default, this includes Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams.
- As you plan activities for your digital event, such as having guests introduce themselves in chat, or submit words for a word cloud, slow down. Leaving a little extra time for everyone to participate helps guests with mobility disabilities who might type or input information at a different speed than guests using a keyboard or mouse.
- Think about how much you want to ask your guests to type out during an event. For a lot of people, typing can take extra effort or time.
- If you're planning an activity at your digital event that relies on a tool outside of the videoconferencing software, make sure that tool is entirely accessible. As of Spring 2023, both Zoom's polling tool and Mentimeter work with non-mouse navigation, but neither Padlet nor Jamboard do. Do your research ahead of time!

HEARING CONSIDERATIONS

FOR BOTH IN-PERSON AND DIGITAL EVENTS:

Many hard of hearing or d/Deaf guests will need an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter and/or closed captioning for access.

FOR A HYBRID EVENT:

You may need an ASL interpreter and captioner for in-person guests, and an ASL interpreter and captioner for guests attending digitally as well.

FOR YOUR IN-PERSON EVENT:

- Try to book your ASL interpreter or captioner as early in advance as possible. If your event is small or medium-sized, include a question about ASL interpretation or captioning needs on the registration form. For a large event such as a conference, you can assume an ASL interpreter and captions will be needed and can plan for them from the start.
- Make sure your interpreter(s) and captioner(s) know who their point of contact will be for the event. Depending on the length of the event, you might have either one interpreter/captioner or a team of interpreters/captioners who take turns. Every interpreter and captioner needs to know who to talk with to make sure they have everything they need to support their clients.
- As you plan the room for your event, figure out where your interpreter(s) will need to sit or stand so they can see the speaker and their clients. Keep in mind that if the captioner for this event is remote, an amplification system will need to be used so they can clearly hear the person speaking at all times. Also realize that you will need to be flexible on the day of the event and let the interpreter(s) tell you where they want to be located and the captioner tell you where they hear the best audio. Build in that flexibility.

- As you plan small group and interactive activities, how will your ASL interpreter and their clients be welcome in the activity? How will captions be used/audio captured?
- If you're planning question-and-answer activities, how will you make sure your interpreters can get the presenter or moderator's attention to relay questions? How will you make sure the captioner can hear questions?
- Every video you show should have large, clear, readable captions – automated captions don't count. Make sure all your presenters know this is an expectation for your event.
- If you or your presenters are planning on playing audio at the event, it should have a transcript that's universally available (such as being shown on a large screen).
- The same goes for every announcement you make at the event. What are some ways you can make announcements available in non-audio formats?
- It should be an expectation, communicated clearly to all presenters, that you use a microphone at all times during the event.

FOR YOUR DIGITAL EVENT:

- The same rules apply for digital events as in-person events when it comes to ASL interpreters and captions: for small or medium events you may want to survey guests during registration, but for large events or conferences, you should plan for them from the start.
- Make sure you're using a videoconferencing software that has live captioning available (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Google Meet) or hire a live

captioning service for your digital event. Make sure you turn captions on at the start of the meeting or clearly communicate with the remote captioner.

- Make sure your ASL interpreters and captioners know who they should contact with questions. If you're using a moderator during a digital event, how should ASL interpreters and captioners get just-in-time questions to that person? Will it be via in-platform chat, or texts?
- If you're using Zoom, most ASL interpreters and their clients will need to be made Co-Hosts of the Zoom space. This allows both interpreter and client to pin each other's video to provide uninterrupted access.
- Before the event starts, check in with your ASL interpreters and captioners to make sure they have everything they need to work with their clients. They are experts on their own interpretation/captioning needs.
- If you're using randomly assigned Breakout Rooms, you will need to manually ensure that your ASL interpreter or captioner and their client are in the same room. First, you'll need to randomly assign everyone to a room, and then go back and move your ASL interpreter or captioner to their client's room. If you have more than one interpreter or captioner and/or more than one client, you'll need to keep track of all the individuals involved and make sure you wind up with an interpreter or captioner in every Breakout Room one of their clients is in.
- If you're using manually assigned Breakout Rooms, you will still need to ensure that your interpreter and their client are in the same room. You can make this easier by asking guests for their Breakout Room preference at registration.

- All videos you show at the digital event should have captions and a full transcript available. Automated captions don't count.

VISION CONSIDERATIONS

FOR BOTH IN-PERSON AND DIGITAL EVENTS:

Ensure all visual information (e.g., signs, schedules, PowerPoint) is accessible (e.g., accessible digital versions of written information, read aloud text on slides, describe visuals, use sans serif fonts, high contrast, and good lighting).

Many people with blindness and low vision access information through assistive technology. This computer technology magnifies and/or reads information aloud. Unfortunately, not all digital content is prepared for access through assistive technology (i.e., alt text descriptions of images, accessible PDFs).

It's not always apparent if someone is blind or has low vision.

Recognize that each person's access needs, preferences, and assistive technologies vary. What works for one blind person may not work for another.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR COGNITIVE, DEVELOPMENTAL, AND HIDDEN DISABILITIES

FOR BOTH IN-PERSON AND DIGITAL EVENTS:

- Provide clear information. Use plain language. Pause for questions and be open to repeating information.

- Recognize that people process at different paces.
- Offer a “pass” or “come back to me” option for participation.
- Invite participation in multiple ways when possible (i.e., out loud, in the chat box, etc.).

FOR IN-PERSON EVENTS:

- People may have chemical or sensory sensitivities. Fragrance-free events, natural lighting, and quiet break rooms can be helpful for accessibility and inclusivity.

NEURODIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS

FOR BOTH IN-PERSON AND DIGITAL EVENTS:

- Lighting, sound, smells, and other environmental considerations that may interfere with attendees’ meaningful participation in events. This is based on people having different sensory processing needs.
- Think about the complexity of your registration workflow, instructions, reminders, and the format in which content is presented. People have different capacities for executive functioning.
- Given that all participants learn differently, with or without learning disabilities, event content should be provided using principles of Universal Design. This means offering multiple options to participate in all aspects of your event. This includes providing information in multiple formats (i.e., text, pictures, video), providing multiple modes of participation, including spoken speech, written, gestural, and technology.

- In addition to those with vision and hearing related disabilities, many neurodivergent people use closed captioning for a myriad of reasons. Captioning can support auditory processing differences in addition to focusing attention. When setting up Zoom meetings, organizers need to enable closed captioning at the time of setting up the meeting.

COVID Considerations

GENERAL ADVICE ABOUT THE SPREAD OF COVID

Many members of the disability community are at higher risk for COVID complications than the general population.

This includes autistic and ADHD participants, as well as those with intellectual disability, autoimmune conditions, or any other medical conditions that impact a person's immune system. Indoor, unmasked events are not safe for these attendees given the airborne transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Events should be offered in a hybrid format when possible.

While vaccination reduces the severity of any given acute episode of COVID infection, 1 in 5 people who get infected with COVID will go on to have Long COVID. This includes healthy young people and those who had minimal or even no symptoms during their acute infection.

Given the widespread incidence of Long COVID in healthy young people, it is important to protect guests from getting infected with COVID to begin with.

Research shows that the risk of Long COVID increases with the number of times a person becomes infected with the COVID virus.

Consideration should be given for COVID risk mitigation strategies, including:

- High quality, well-fitting KN94, KN95, or N95 masks worn by all participants.
- Increasing outdoor air ventilation. Hold events outdoors when possible. If indoors, use strategies to bring in fresh outdoor air and remove stale indoor air – for example, with two window-box fans, one set to inflow, one to outflow.
- While you may not have control over filtration systems within buildings, you may consider supplementing with portable air purifiers such as HEPA filters. Consideration should also be given to confirming ventilation adequacy with a portable CO2 monitor.
- Offer events in hybrid formats whenever possible.

MASKS AT IN-PERSON EVENTS

If you're hosting an in-person event, as of spring 2023, we recommend requesting that your staff, presenters, and attendees all wear masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne illnesses.

If your event takes place on the UVM campus, you can take the following steps to get attendees to wear masks:

- Note in the registration materials that you strongly request people wear masks at the event, and why.
- If people arrive at the event unmasked, ask them to mask up at the door.

- Have a supply of disposable masks available to hand out at the door.
- Remind people during the opening remarks that you request they wear masks for the event.
- Remind your staff and presenters that you request they wear masks.
- Identify a point person who can engage in more in-depth conversations about masking, either in the moment, with an email address or phone number for follow-up.
- Post signs at the event reminding people to wear masks.

UVM has no legal ability to require masks at in-person events. That means that you can't call the police or physically remove anyone from your event who isn't wearing a mask.

But when you follow the steps outlined above, you're creating a safer and more welcoming in-person event.

You're inviting people into conversations about mask-wearing. And most importantly, you're telling staff, attendees, and presenters that you and your event care about community health.

If you have specific questions about masks and in-person events at UVM, contact Chief Compliance & Safety Officer Michael Schirling at michael.schirling@uvm.edu.

Before Your Event

As you begin to plan your event, here are some considerations for making your event welcoming and inclusive.

Choosing a Venue

IN-PERSON & DIGITAL SITE SELECTION

Choose a venue that meets ADA requirements. For a physical space, that includes elevators, ramps, and automatic doors. For a digital space, that includes access to video, audio, and captions.

Additionally, as you choose your venue, think about what kinds of activities you're planning on hosting at the event, and what your ideal physical set-up for those events is.

FOR IN-PERSON EVENTS:

Activity Spaces to Consider:

- Rooms, tables, and chairs for small group work or discussion
- Clear floor space for large group activities
- Low chairs and couches plus clear floor space for socializing
- Reserved seating for users with mobility aids, service animals, and ASL interpreters and their clients
- Chill-out space for decompression, with controllable lights, closeable door, and plain walls

- Space to hang large signs, or set them up on stands that does not block the flow of traffic
- Food service area: will it be in the same room? Is it buffet-style or sit-down service?
- Ability to move and arrange chairs and tables to preserve wide aisles for mobility users
- Indoor and outdoor spaces for eating

REGISTRATION AND ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

CHOOSE AN ACCESSIBLE REGISTRATION SYSTEM

Registering for your event should be both accessible and easy for people with and without disabilities. It should also be accessible and easy for people to create an event listing in the system.

Most event registration is done online. While there are many choices of online registration systems, we recommend UVM's Qualtrics system.

1. Log into Qualtrics at <http://qualtrics.uvm.edu>.
2. Create a new survey and add your standard event registration fields: Name, Email Address, Phone Number, number of tickets.
3. Publish the survey.
4. Under the Post-Survey section, you can create an email response that will be sent to guests when they register: "Send a Thank You Email." This will help guests know that they have confirmed a seat at your event.

Eventbrite.com does not meet UVM's standards for accessibility. Google Forms do not comply with UVM's legal requirements for gathering information.

MAKE THE REGISTRATION EASY TO UNDERSTAND

When you create your registration form, make sure it includes the following information:

- Event Title
- Start Time
- End Time
- Location
- Sponsoring Group Name

You want guests to have the most amount of information about your event right from the start.

ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

Here are some frequently requested accommodation requests:

- **Virtual event:** ASL interpretation, live captioning (of both the presenter and any materials being shown during the presentation), being sent the materials beforehand, a recording of the event afterwards.
- **In-person event:** ASL interpretation, captioning of any audio or video materials being shown at the event, Braille signs to the venue, multiple methods of signaling the start and end of the event, and a map of the venue showing elevators, ramps, and restrooms.

You can make your event run smoother by planning for these types of requests at every event you organize.

At UVM, contact the Campus Access Center to request an ASL interpreter or a live captioner. You can also choose buildings and rooms on campus that you know will be more accessible to guests.

HOW TO WELCOME ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

You should make it easy and welcoming for guests to let you know what accommodations they need before the event.

- **Easy:** it should be obvious on your registration form how to submit an accommodation request.
- **Welcoming:** no one should be made to feel bad or awkward for asking for accommodation.

You can make your registration form easy and welcoming with something as simple as:

"We will provide ASL interpretation, live captioning, advance notice of the materials, and a recording of the event afterwards. If you'd like any additional accommodations, please request them in the box below. If you have any questions on accessibility for this event, please contact This Person, at this.person@uvm.edu, or (802) XXX-XXXX."

Make sure to reach out to the person who requests accommodation, so that they know the status of their request, and so that you fully understand what they are asking for.

ADVERTISING, FLYERS, AND WEBSITES

After you open registration for your event, you want to promote it. Remember that all your event promotions, such as online ads, social media posts, printed and electronic flyers, and websites should be accessible.

At a minimum, this means:

- Alt-text for images
- Plain language everywhere
- Large, easy-to-read text with strong color contrast (see Fonts and Readability for details)
- Accessible .pdfs
- Mobile-responsive websites

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR ADVERTISING

In promoting your event, you want to include enough information to attract people to the event, but not overwhelm them with details. Include:

- Event Title
- Speaker Name (if applicable)
- Sponsoring Group Name & Logo
- Date and Time
- Location

- Virtual or In-Person
- URL for more information

Pro Tip 1: Use a URL-shortening service, such as go.uvm.edu to create a short URL for your event or your group. Short URLs are much friendlier for screen readers, easier to type in for people with hand, wrist, or arm mobility issues, and easier to remember.

Pro Tip 2: if you're printing flyers, strongly consider including a QR code. QR codes make it possible for people with hand, wrist, or arm mobility issues to avoid having to type a URL into their device. Instead, they can simply swipe the QR code to access the event information.

You can generate an independent QR code from inside Adobe InDesign. InDesign is available to use for free on computers in the Howe Library.

PLACES TO PROMOTE YOUR UVM EVENT

At UVM, if you are a registered student group, you can promote your event by:

- Creating a printed flyer to tack on bulletin boards around campus
- Running a simple, compelling message on the Davis Center video screens
- Adding your event to the UVM Campus Calendar through ETS
- Dropping off a printed announcement at the campus radio station, WRUV (in the Davis Center)
- Asking your College or Department whether they can include promotion for your event in their newsletter or social media

COMMUNICATING WITH ATTENDEES BEFORE THE EVENT

THE EMAIL FLOW

It's important to keep your guests updated about your event, and many people appreciate reminders. At a minimum, you want to email your guests:

- A confirmation email when they register.
- An email a week beforehand, reminding them they registered, and letting them know important details such as time, date, Zoom link (if applicable), Code of Conduct, parking and transportation information, and the presenter's materials. Also let them know how often you'll be emailing them.
- An email 24 hours beforehand, reminding them they registered, and letting them know you're excited they're choosing to attend.
- An email one hour beforehand, reminding them they registered, and letting them know you're excited to see them.

A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE EVENTS

Because people are busy and most online events will send you the recording afterwards, many people register for online events even when they know they can't make the event. Don't get discouraged!

When people register for your event, you can let them know up front if it's okay if they just want the event recording. Make that an option on your registration form, so you can get a more accurate idea of the number of people who are really planning on attending.

With free online events, on average, only half the people who register will actually show up.

On the plus side, you're building your email list for your next event!

Codes of Conduct

WHAT'S A CODE OF CONDUCT? AND WHY DO YOU NEED ONE?

Events run smoother when everyone agrees upon a set of rules or expectations.

Recently, this has come to be known as a “Code of Conduct,” which is a document outlining behavioral expectations for an event. This is not just for safety, but also so everyone can feel comfortable and welcome at an event.

We suggest that every event should have a Code of Conduct for guests, as well as a Code of Conduct for presenters and organizers.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR GUESTS

Guests should know what is expected of them in terms of behavior at an event. Post the Code of Conduct for guests on your registration website and email it directly to guests as they register.

Here is our suggested Code of Conduct for Guests:

- Be kind to your own body, and to the bodies around you.

- Please feel free to move around the event space freely as you attend to the needs of your body.
- No one is watching you if you need to leave the space to go to the restroom, stretch, get some air, or chill out. Everyone is much more focused on their own bodies.
- Unwrap and eat your snacks with our blessing. The wrapper might crinkle, but we need you to stay fed and well throughout.
- If you prefer wearing noise-dampening or other types of headphones to the event, please feel free to do so.
- Everybody brought a different kind of body to this event. Be respectful of other bodies and their needs and experiences.
- Keep your hands off other bodies unless given explicit consent by another person. This includes mobility aids such as wheelchairs, canes, and walkers, or headphones, all of which are extensions of another person's body.
- If you see a service animal at this event, that animal is hard at work. Please do not pet it or otherwise disturb it from doing its job without express invitation.
- To facilitate the discussion portion of the event, we're going to be using a system of hand-raising. To participate, raise your hand and wait for the moderator to call on you. When the moderator calls on you, they'll hold a wireless microphone up to your face so that you can ask your question loudly enough to be heard by most guests.
- This event is fragrance-free, and nut-free. This is so we can provide a welcoming space for guests with sensitivities to those items.

- This event is intersectionally anti-racist. We will not tolerate any language or actions that hurt people based on race, ethnicity, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, class, caste, or preferred language.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR PRESENTERS

Play fair with your presenters.

As you bring presenters to your event, it's helpful to give them a Code of Conduct as early as possible in the process, so that they can plan content that creates a welcoming environment.

Here is our suggested Code of Conduct for Presenters:

- This event is intersectionally anti-racist. We will not tolerate any language or actions that hurt people based on race, ethnicity, physical ability, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, class, caste, or preferred language. Please review your content for any language or attitudes that might conflict with this important guideline. This includes potentially outdated terms, such as "special needs" for people with disabilities, or phrases with racist or sexist origins.
- If you are sharing resources created by other people, please review those resources through this intersectionally anti-racist lens.
- Please design activities that do not require physical contact between guests as much as possible.
- Please be respectful during audience participation, and do not touch guests' bodies without their consent. This includes mobility aids such as

wheelchairs, canes, and walkers, or headphones, all of which are extensions of another person's body.

- If you see a service animal at this event, that animal is hard at work. Please do not pet it or otherwise disturb it from doing its job without express invitation.
- We expect you to use the microphone for your presentation. We will also have ASL interpreters and captioning at the event.
- We will need the contents of your presentation 7 calendar days before the event so we can send that to attendees in advance. As you prepare your materials, please consider that some of your attendees may wish to print materials to bring with them. We will also have several printouts of your materials for guests at the event.
- To facilitate the discussion portion of the event, we're going to be using a system of hand-raising. You will have a moderator who will roam the audience with a wireless microphone, while you stay at the front of the room. The moderator will ask guests to use the microphone for presenting their questions.
- This event is fragrance-free, and nut-free. This is so we can provide a welcoming space for guests with sensitivities to those items.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ORGANIZERS

Go over the ground rules with your staff.

It's helpful to have all event staff on the same page about how you want your event to run. Do you want staff to greet people at the door? Are you asking them

to make sure everyone has a physical copy of the program? Go over what you want from staff and listen when they tell you what they're comfortable doing. There are all kinds of needs and roles at an event, so there's no need to force a shy person into greeting, when they'd rather be hooking up the audio-visual equipment and vice versa.

A great way to go over roles and expectations with your event staff is by going over the Code of Conduct for Guests as a group. This gives you a place to start a discussion around event expectations. Take turns reading aloud each expectation and ask if anyone has questions or concerns.

At the end of the list, turn to roles. Make a list as a group: what kinds of roles do you want or need for this event?

At an in-person event, for instance, you might need the following roles:

- Sign-hanger (including carrying sawhorses to parking lots, taping up signs, and tracking the route from the parking lot to the venue)
- Driver (if you have a lot of supplies, you might want one person to be in charge of bringing a vehicle, and packing it with supplies from the staging area, and then driving to the venue)
- Announcer
- Greeter
- Information Desk (can be mobile; you can have a loving extrovert on hand holding a sign reading, "Questions? Ask me!")
- Audio-visual technician

- Gift-bag stuffer
- Room arranger (can be someone who simply makes sure the reserved wheelchair seating stays available, or helps move and remove chairs to make room for additional mobility aids)
- Catering liaison (can be someone who works to make sure your caterers have everything they need or can be someone who's making the run to the grocery store for veggie trays)
- Holder of keys
- Promoter
- Designated guest (can be someone who shows up in a guest role and is willing to provide feedback after the event)

There are so many ways to include people who like taking part in events.

During Your Event

What should you do to create an accessible and inclusive space during your event?

On-site Support

FOR BOTH IN-PERSON AND ONLINE EVENTS:

- Arrive early to review access features, travel routes, and accommodations. This is true for in-person and remote events. Often there are unexpected and last-minute barriers to accessibility (e.g., locked doors, boxes stacked in hallways, chairs setup too close, microphones with dead batteries, questions about technology or links).
- Communicate about event accessibility in multiple ways (i.e., printed signs, verbally in opening remarks).
- Let attendees know who they can reach out to with access questions during the event. Even the most careful planning cannot anticipate every situation!
- Be aware of the event's purpose. Is it interactive? Is it a presentation or performance?
- Not everyone is comfortable speaking in front of a group. Create more than one way for people to ask questions or provide input. Consider arriving early and staying late for 1-1 conversations.

- When important decisions are being made, provide ample time for all participants to review information and ask questions before the decision time.

DURING PRESENTATIONS

- Accessible presentation guideline resources are available online. Several are highlighted in the resource section of this document.
- Prepare accessible materials and presentation slides.
- Designate someone to monitor accommodations during presentation.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Avoid rushing even if you feel nervous or short on time.
- Face the audience, some people read lips and facial cues.
- Use a microphone even if you think your voice is loud.
- If there is an interpreter, wait for them to be ready before beginning.
- Not everyone can identify who is speaking. State your name before speaking. Ask attendees to introduce themselves before speaking as well. This practice aids in clarity for transcripts.
- Give your audience a clear outline or agenda. Provide this information in more than one way (i.e., in writing or spoken aloud).
- If there are opportunities to ask questions or interact, let people know how and when that will happen. Ask people to speak one at a time and wait for the microphone before they start speaking.

- Not everyone accesses chat boxes or other digital features. For interaction in digital spaces, invite participants to use the chat box, electronic raised hand, or video/audio engagement.
- Spell out all acronyms.
- Ensure text and images (i.e., photos, graphics, charts) are large enough to be viewed by those who access information visually.
- Often less is more. Slides are for key points, not presenter notes.
- If you present any text, read it for the audience. Avoid directions such as: “I’ll let you read this while I talk about...”
- Recognize that too many words present a barrier for some participants.
- Describe any images, figures, charts, or other visuals that provide important information.
- Make sure all videos are captioned. Avoid computer generated auto captions as these can be inaccurate and lack punctuation.

After Your Event

How will you know whether your event has been accessible and inclusive?

This is where you want to follow up with both guests and presenters to find out how they enjoyed the event, and whether there were any barriers for them. You can use this data to inform your next event.

Getting Guest Feedback

It's important to reach out to the people at your event to find out how well you did in creating an accessible and inclusive space. While you want to be available for feedback during the event if a guest encounters an issue, most of the time it's easiest to collect this type of feedback after the event.

SURVEYS

The easiest way to collect feedback on an event is by sending out a survey to your guests. You can use a digital survey tool such as SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics, or a manual survey, such as short lists of questions printed on paper that guests can pick up or be handed as they leave.

For both digital and manual surveys, you'll need to provide multiple ways for guests to give you feedback. Some disabilities make writing more challenging or make it difficult or impossible to see the words on printed paper, and some guests might simply prefer more of an interview-style feedback format.

Provide different options: have some printed surveys on hand for guests to pick up or be handed, but also have a digital version that you can email to guests afterwards as a reminder. Print out some QR codes for the survey and post them up around the event or include them in the printed programs. Have a general email address attached to the organizer's name, where guests can follow up directly for interview-style feedback, whether via email or through arranging a face-to-face or videoconferencing interview.

The more feedback you collect, the better you'll be able to make your next event.

Getting Presenter Feedback

The other people you want to get feedback from are your presenters.

With roughly 1 in every 4 people in the United States having some kind of disability, the odds are high that some of your presenters are people with disabilities (Okoro et al., 2016). There are two reasons it's important to get their feedback on your event.

One is that you want to be able to support people with disabilities in leading events in this way. You want to support them as presenters, so you must create events where there are no barriers preventing their success. This is part of dismantling ableism. Every time you get feedback from presenters, you're learning more about how to create accessible and inclusive events.

Two is that having conversations like these with presenters, make those presenters more likely to call out ableist events in the future. They're going to present in other spaces, with other people and they'll know more about accessible events themselves; and hopefully feel more comfortable advocating for accessible events. This process – having conversations about accessibility and empowering other people to ask questions about it and to talk about their expectations for an inclusive event – also dismantles ableism.

You can develop a survey specifically for presenters or you can just email them after and invite open feedback.

Here are some good questions to include in surveying presenters:

1. Did you encounter any barriers to presenting?
2. Is there anything you would do differently next time?
3. Is there anything we should do differently next time?

Use Your Data

Most people wind up organizing or helping with multiple events in their lives, whether through work, school, or community and civic organizations. Knowing how to host an inclusive event is a great skill, but knowing how to get better at hosting inclusive events is invaluable.

After you've collected feedback on an event, look at the feedback and ask yourself and your team where you can do a better job with inclusion next time.

Resources for Accessible Events

Basic Information and Etiquette

- [Ableism & Racism: Roots of the Same Tree](#) - Ibram X. Kendi
- [Accessible Meetings and Chemical and Electrical Sensitivities](#) - Mid-Atlantic ADA Center
- [A Guide to Universal Design](#) - National Disability Authority of Ireland
- [AUCD Guidelines for Accessible Presentations](#) - National Association of University Centers for Disability (AUCD)
- [Commemorating 30 Years of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (video)
- [An Overview of Hosting Accessible Events](#) (video) - Inclusive Arts Vermont
- [How to Describe Images](#) - Virginia Tech
- [Inclusive Arts Vermont Quick Checklist for Accessible Meetings & Events](#) (.pdf) - Inclusive Arts Vermont
- [Managing Captions in Zoom](#) - Zoom.com
- [The Spoon Theory](#) - Christine Miserandino
- [Visibility Metrics](#) (.pdf) - Lighthouse International

Event Resources at UVM

- [Event Planning Tools](#) - UVM Event Services
- URL shortener: go.uvm.edu. Use this service to create friendly short URLs to promote your event.
- Create event registrations:
 - Qualtrics: qualtrics.uvm.edu

- Aventri: email Tracey Gauthier
- [How to promote your event at the Davis Center](#)
- [Request an ASL interpreter](#) (Center for Academic Access)
- [Request live-captioning services](#) (Center for Academic Access)

Accessible Events 1.0

During the early part of the pandemic in 2020, the UVM Center on Disability & Community Inclusion (CDCI) director, Jesse Suter, wrote the first version of this accessible events guide: [Accessible Events](#) (.pdf). We now refer to this first .pdf as "Accessible Events 1.0."

The Accessible Events Guide you are now reading is version 2.0. It came about after members of the organizations listed in the credits recognized there is a growing need for resources on making events accessible.

We will continue to update this Accessible Events Guide on an annual basis, and welcome people with disabilities, their families, and organizations who want to make events more accessible to get in touch and take part in crafting the next edition.

Next Steps

This guide is a living document, supported by the people and organizations who created it, as well as the UVM CDCI as a whole. We welcome feedback on this guide.

- How are you using it?
- How would you like to be using it?
- What or who, is missing from the document?

We hope this guide provides helpful information and resources as you take steps to increase inclusion of people with disabilities in your programs.

Credits

This accessible events guide is a collaboration between:

- UVM Center on Disability & Community Inclusion
- Inclusive Arts Vermont
- UVM Division of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and
- All Brains Belong VT

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