



Planning Accessible Meetings and Events

The ADA/Section 504 Coordinator (hereinafter “Disability Coordinator”) in the Equal Opportunity Office is available to assist members of The University of Georgia Community in planning events. You may contact the Equal Opportunity Office by e-mail at eo.uga.edu or by calling (706) 542-7912.

Plan Ahead

Thoughtful planning will minimize surprises and allow you to efficiently and effectively respond to accommodations requests. Inviting participants to let you know in advance what accommodations they need is always the best practice. Invite participants to make requests for accommodations in all of your communications (registration forms, flyers, web pages, e-mails, etc.).

The person(s) or office sponsoring the meeting or event should assign a contact person for accommodations requests. When the contact person cannot answer a question about an accommodation need, s/he should note the question and the contact information for the individual and get back in touch with a timely response. The Disability Coordinator is available to assist in locating resources and implementing accommodations.

Budget

When budgeting for meetings and events, include accommodating people with disabilities. For example, you might need to allot funds for a sign language interpreter, assistive listening devices, video captioning, printed media in an alternate format (e.g., copies of a PowerPoint presentation or handouts in large print, Braille or on a flash drive). The Disability Coordinator can help you anticipate costs and identify resources so that you are not addressing these needs at the last minute.

Promotion and Registration

When promoting your meeting or event and planning for registration:

- Arrange for all promotional materials (flyers, advertisements, emails, etc.) to be available in alternative formats, such as text format, Braille, large print or electronic.
- Include an accommodation statement on your promotional materials and registration forms notifying participants that accommodations can be made for a variety of needs (e.g., (visual, hearing, mobility) and informing them how to request accommodations.
- Examples of such general accommodation statements include the following:
 - If you have a disability and require assistance, please inform (planner) by attaching your requirements to this form or call (planner & their contact information.)
 - If you have a disability and require accommodation in order to fully participate in this activity, please check here. You will be contacted by someone from our staff to discuss your specific needs.
 - For questions about accessibility or to request accommodations please contact (name) at (include phone and an e-mail address so that someone with a hearing or verbal disability can make inquiries). Two weeks advance notice of need for accommodations is requested.
 - If any accommodations are needed, please contact (individual’s name) at (telephone number and TTY). Requests should be made as soon as possible but at least (time frame) prior to the scheduled meeting.

If using a general statement such as one of those above, staff responding to requests should be prepared to ask detailed questions so that appropriate and effective accommodations can be provided.

- A more detailed registration form requesting information on specific accommodation needs can also be used, such as the following:

I will need the following accommodations in order to participate:

American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter

Note taker

Assistive listening device

Captioning

Large print

Braille

Flash drive containing printed materials

Wheelchair access

Reserved seating

Orientation to facility

Dietary restrictions. List: _____

An assistant will be accompanying me: Yes _____ No _____

A service animal will be accompanying me: Yes _____ No _____

Other: _____

Site Selection

A site visit to the meeting or event location should be conducted well in advance to determine whether barriers to accessibility exist and how they will be addressed. This visit should be conducted even in instances where the facility is well-known in order to identify any modifications or temporary barriers. The event coordinator(s) should consider accessibility for individuals with a variety of impairments (e.g., visual, hearing, mobility) and should assess all of the different physical spaces that will be available to attendees without disabilities including:

- Accessibility/availability of parking, shuttles, and public transportation.
- Location of drop-off point for persons with disabilities.
- Accessibility of entrances and interior doorways – width, slope of ramps, presence of automatic door openers, etc.
- Accessibility of restrooms and drinking fountains.
- Navigability of corridors, doorways, and aisles – width for wheelchair access, absence of protruding objects or displays.
- Elevators – easy access and adequate number.
- Signage – clearly marked location of accessible bathrooms, entrances, exits, etc.
- Meeting and event rooms – allow for extra room capacity & table space to accommodate wheelchairs & assistance animals, including in banquet/reception/meal areas.
- Seating - allow extra space for wheelchairs and a clear line of sight to the speaker/interpreter/captionist from an appropriate number of seats in the audience; seating for persons with disabilities should be integrated with regular seating.
- Accessibility of dining facilities & catering (including ability to accommodate dietary restrictions).
- Toileting space for service animals.
- Accessible, appropriately equipped sleeping rooms for overnight events.

Links to detailed check lists are provided in the “Resources” section below.

Staff

When planning for who will be working at the event or meeting, identify individuals who are willing to serve as readers, escorts and to perform other functions related to accommodating participants with disabilities. Be sure that these individuals are included in any staff orientation and ensure that they have training on how to work with people with disabilities.

Social Functions and Meals

When planning social functions and meals:

- Include personal assistants and interpreters in the estimated number of participants at no additional charge.
- Make adequate provisions for integrated seating so that participants with disabilities are not marginalized -e.g., do not place persons in wheelchairs or those who use walkers or dog guides on the fringes of the dining area.
- If offering 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.

Presentations

The conference/meeting planner(s) should work with invited speakers and presenters to ensure that presentations are accessible to persons with disabilities. Depending on the accommodations requested, these are some of the considerations that may be required:

- 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.
- Ask the presenter(s) to include the key points of any presentation on handouts or slides, preferably with large print and sharp, contrasting colors.
- Ask the presenter(s) to provide a copy of the presentation materials well in advance to allow for preparation of alternative format versions (large print, Braille, etc.).
- Videos to be used during the presentation should be captioned in advance.
- Ask the presenter to verbally describe any visual aids, including slides and handouts, used during the presentation.
- Check for the needs of speakers or presenters with disabilities (e.g., ramping or podium requests, accessibility of microphone at the appropriate height, a reverse interpreter, sighted guide for a person with limited vision, etc.).

Emergency Evacuation

Establish an emergency evacuation plan for individuals with disabilities. Never assume that all individuals with disabilities need special help in an evacuation. Always ask before providing assistance. See UGA's "Emergency Procedures for People with Disabilities" at http://www.prepare.uga.edu/EE/Emergency_Plans/991.

Resources

University of Georgia's Disability Coordinator
Equal Opportunity Office
<http://eoo.uga.edu>

Accessible Information Exchange: Meeting on a Level Playing Field

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section
<http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm>

Planning Accessible Meetings Tool Kit

American Bar Association's Commission on Disability Rights

http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/administrative/mental_physical_disability/Accessible_Meetings_Toolkit.authcheckdam.pdf

Hospitality: Planning Accessible Meetings

Mid-Atlantic ADA Center

<http://www.adainfo.org/content/hospitality-planning-accessible-meetings>

Planning Accessible Meetings

Rocky Mountain ADA Center

<http://www.adainformation.org/training/training-tips/planning-accessible-meetings>

Making Accessibility Real: A Guide for Planning Meetings, Conferences and Gatherings

The Home and Community-Based Services Resource Network

<http://www.aucd.org/docs/HCBSAccessibleMeetings.pdf>

Accessible Best Practices (resources for accessible science centers, museums, exhibits, displays, presentations, tours, and meetings):

Association of Science and Technology Centers

<http://www.astc.org/resource/access/best.htm>