

# DISABILITY AND INCLUSIVITY BEST PRACTICES:

A Guide for Successful Inclusion of Community  
Members in Health Education Programs

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# What is Disability?

## Defining Disability

Disability is the presence of a condition that makes it more difficult for someone to participate in activities and the world around them. Disability has three dimensions:

- Impairment in a person's mental or physical structure or function
- Activity limitations that impact life
- Participation restrictions in daily tasks



## Prevalence of Disability



In the United States, 61 million adults live with a disability.  
**That's roughly 1 out of 4 people.**

Click the light bulb for more information on  
**disability and health** ----->





# Access and Inclusion

## Why is Access Important?

Creating an environment that is accessible lets people know that they belong and there is a place for them. Accessible environments allow everyone to participate. Environment does not only refer to the physical building.

### Environment includes things like:

- Walkways and physical barriers
- Signage or marketing materials
- Noise level
- Visual stimulants



## What is Inclusion?

Being inclusive means transforming communities based on social justice principles in which all community members:

- Are recruited and welcomed as valued members of our communities
- Fully participate and learn with their peers
- Experience reciprocal social relationships

Click the light bulb for more information on the **importance of disability inclusion** ----->

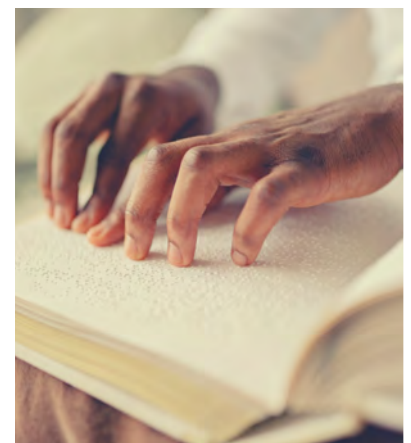




# Planning an Accessible Event

## Recruitment

- Make every effort to partner with people with disabilities to plan events
- Collaborate with organizations and advocates from within the community that represent people from diverse backgrounds, including different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups within the disability community
  - These groups may include local brokerages, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), leaders and trusted advocates from within the community, and allied health professionals such as community health workers
- Ensure flyers, advertisements, and all marketing materials are in [plain language](#)
- Consider using multiple types of media communications, such as radio, local TV stations, local newspapers, and social media
- Include contact information for interested participants to request and arrange accommodations



## Recruitment (cont.)

- Work with participants to equitably arrange accommodations to those who require them (some disabilities are not visible -- it is important to work with individuals to create solutions together)
- Ensure services are culturally appropriate and follow [trauma-informed best practices](#)
- Provide event information materials in [plain language](#) ahead of time so participants know what to expect during the event
- Ensure all registration items are readable with a screen reader by someone who has low vision or is blind



Click the light bulb for more information on **inclusion and recruiting individuals with disabilities** ----->







# Planning an Accessible Event

## Site Selection

Conduct an accessibility review of the program site. Consider barriers like:



Parking access



Building entrances and access



Environment



Accessible restrooms



Elevators/floor access

## Accessible Meeting Spaces & Environment

### Parking

- Ensure at least one out of every 25 parking spaces is accessible parking - spaces should be clearly marked, temporarily, if needed
- Accessible parking spaces must be 8 feet wide, with an 8-foot-wide access aisle and access aisle must be marked "No Parking"
- Accessible parking spaces must have a sign posted with the universal symbol of access and must also include:
  - "Vehicle ID Required" explicitly written
  - Dollar amount of fine for violating parking laws







# Planning an Accessible Event

## Accessible Meeting Spaces & Environment (cont.)

### Routes and Entrances

- Accessible routes and sidewalks must have a curb cut or ramp that is at least 36 inches wide with a stable, smooth, slip-resistant surface, with a slope no greater than 5% (1:20)
  - Portable ramps are acceptable if no ramp is permanently at the location
- Routes from vehicles to the door of the building must be clear for participants to enter and exit safely
- Paths must be clean and clear during all seasons
  - Ensure paths are shoveled and salted to prevent falls in the winter
- Signs must be readable with large, clear font, high contrast colors, and a non-glare finish
- Images on signs and materials will help people who prefer to communicate with pictures

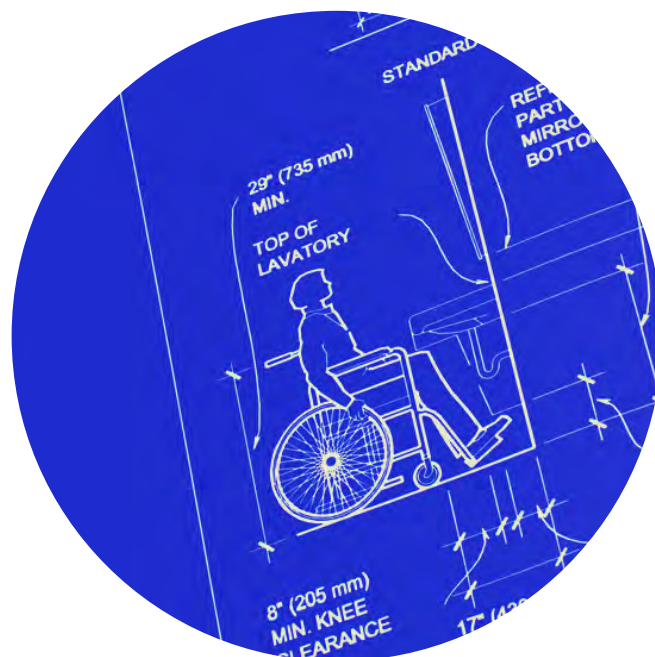


# Planning an Accessible Event

## Accessible Meeting Spaces & Environment (cont.)

### Restrooms

- Accessible restrooms include:
  - Stalls that are at least 78 inches deep and 60 inches wide
  - Toilets with a height of 17-19 inches
  - Grab bars and assistive supports within the stall for stability
- Signs with readable plain language directions to the restrooms should be strategically placed
  - Images and visuals on the signs increase accessibility
- If there are not restrooms in the event space, have a sign that states where the closest accessible public restroom is located



Click the light bulb for more information on **site selection and accessible environments**----->





# Planning an Accessible Event

## Registration



Marketing and promotional materials should include options for requesting accommodations. Example language is:

“Please let us know if you or someone you are supporting to register for this event requires accommodations in order to participate and be successful. For accommodation requests and general event information, contact [insert contact information].”

Ensure all staff who handle registration are aware of accommodation protocols





# Planning an Accessible Event

## Registration (cont.)

Include multiple types of ways to contact for registration. Provide a combination of the following:

- Phone number
  - Prepare to talk with participants with a variety of disabilities, such as hearing difficulties or intellectual disabilities
  - Use [plain language](#)
  - Eliminate or reduce background noise and distraction
  - Allow adequate time for the caller to process and respond and repeat questions, if requested
- Fax
  - Provide a standard form for requests in this format
  - Ensure font is readable and a minimum 16-point font
- Email
  - Write responses in plain language
- Social media direct messaging



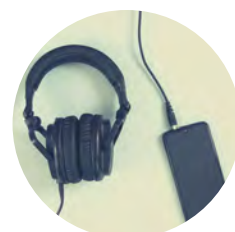


# Planning an Accessible Event

## Registration (cont.)

Common accommodations requested include:

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter
- Communication Access in Real Time (CART)
- Large print
- Braille
- Wheelchair access
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)
- Inclusion of a support provider
- Closed captioning
- Transcription
- Event materials prior to event date



Click the light bulb for more information on **accessible registration**----->



# Planning an Accessible Event

## Transportation

Before the registration process begins, identify accessible transportation options like:



Public transit



Taxi and cab services



Rideshare programs  
(Uber, Lyft, etc.)  
ent



Biking and walking routes

- During the registration process, ask if any transportation accommodations are needed
- Ensure events are held close to transportation access points to make participation easier

## Arranging Accommodations

- Ask if any accommodations are needed during the registration process and provide a deadline for requests
- Finalize accommodation requests at least two weeks before the event to ensure that everyone can participate in the first session
- Questions asked should focus on accommodation needs, not to elicit a diagnosis

Click the light bulb for more information on **considerations to make when arranging accommodations**----->







# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Effective Communication

- Be prepared to communicate in different ways such as:
  - Rephrase sentences if someone doesn't understand you
  - Use visuals or images
  - Use American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
  - Use writing
  - Use communication apps and programs
  - Work with the assistance of an interpreter, caregiver, or companion
- Speak directly to participants, not their interpreters, caregivers, or companions
- Apply the same principles with ALL program participants
- Establish open communication and build rapport with participants
- Use inclusive, plain language
- Be considerate of extra time needed
- Don't assume assistance is needed by a participant -- instead, wait before acting and offer help, if needed
- Let participants make their own decisions, as you would with anyone else
- Experiment with different teaching methods and activities
- Be aware that face masks can make communication harder





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Effective Communication (cont.)

- If you do not understand a participant, do not pretend -- instead, ask them to repeat information, then repeat the information back to them for confirmation
- Do not speak for a participant or attempt to finish their sentences
- Access communication apps and programs on a phone or table to facilitate simpler communication
- Provide written materials in high-contrast, large print:
  - Dark print on a light background
  - Light print on a dark background
  - 16-point font minimum
- Create and provide an electronic format for program delivery and materials, if this is an available option

Click the light bulb for more information on **creating an accessible environment through communication**----->





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Plain Language

Familiarize yourself with both person-first language and identity-first language. Both are used, but there isn't a consensus on best practices. Consider the preferences of the individuals with disabilities attending your event.

- Person-first: Person with disability
- Identity-first: Disabled person

Use an active voice when speaking and writing rather than a passive voice. Using active language makes it easier to read and digest.

- Active voice: The dog bit the man
- Passive voice: The man was bitten by the dog
- Avoid using overly academic terms
  - If an uncommon term is used, clearly define it at reading level no higher than sixth grade
- Avoid commonly-used harmful terms and speech







# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Plain Language (cont.)



### Words to Avoid

Able-bodied, normal

Abnormal

Handicap

Wheelchair-bound

Mentally Challenged



### Words to Use Instead

Person without disability

Atypical

Person with a disability

Person who uses a wheelchair

Person with an intellectual disability

Click the light bulb for more information  
on **plain language**----->



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# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Hearing Accessibility

Everyone communicates differently. Some common forms of communication include:

- Speech
- Text-to-talk programs or apps
- American Sign Language (ASL)
- Writing
- Lip reading
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)
- A combination of methods



Communicate with the following tips in mind:

- Face light or keep face well-lit
- Keep hands away from face
- Speak clearly
- Look directly at the person





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Hearing Accessibility (cont.)

- If the participant uses an ALD, familiarize yourself with the device prior to the event
  - For an ALD overview, see the [National Association of the Deaf](#)
- Gain attention of a participant before starting a conversation
- Ask the participant what access needs they have to help improve the communication process
- Do not talk to someone at the same time as writing them a message
- Communicate directly with the participant, even if they are using an interpreter
- Unless the person's hearing is limited and they ask you to speak louder, do not raise your voice above a normal volume
  - Speaking loudly may be disrespectful or even harmful to those who have sensory sensitivities
- Point or gesture to appropriate objects or use visual aids if needed
- If face masks are worn, consider having clear masks available for staff to communicate with people who would benefit from reading lips or seeing a face more clearly

Click the light bulb for more information on **effective communication with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing**----->





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Vision Accessibility

- People who have low vision or are blind need provide a clear path of travel that is smooth and free of barriers
- Identify yourself when you approach someone to speak with them and clearly state who you are
- Never touch or distract service animals without first asking and receiving confirmation from the owner
- Let people know what you are planning on doing next, and when you are reaching towards them, asking permission before touching them
- Learn human guide techniques to assist someone as they walk from one place to another if they request assistance

Click the light bulb for more information on **effective communication with individuals who are blind or have low vision**----->







# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Best Practices for Different Disability Types

### Physical Disabilities

Ensure the space is easy to get to, and easy to navigate for people with mobility limitations who use mobility assistance devices such as wheelchairs or walkers.



Do not assume someone needs help and do not help unless asked by the participant.



Click the light bulb for more information on **eliminating possible physical barriers**----->



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# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Best Practices for Different Disability Types (cont.)

### Sensory Sensitivity

People may be sensitive to lights, sounds, or the physical touch that healthcare facilities or wellness programs might require.

- Limit the time individuals wait
  - Limiting wait times is crucial for participation
- Prepare a separate, more private space for waiting and communicating
- Be patient and sensitive, taking each person's individual needs into consideration



Click the light bulb for more information on **identifying potential sensory sensitivities**----->





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Best Practices for Different Disability Types (cont.)

### Intellectual Disabilities

- Be patient, flexible, and supportive of participants
- Take time to understand the participant and confirm they understand you
- Reduce distractions and consider moving to a quiet or private location, if needed
- Give clear information about what will be done and how it will be done
- Explain steps one at a time
- If you are going to touch someone, let them know when and how
  - Receive consent before proceeding





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Best Practices for Different Disability Types

### Intellectual Disabilities (cont.)

- Offer assistance with completing forms or understanding written materials or instructions
  - Wait to extend assistance until the participant has accepted the offer
  - Do not over-assist or be patronizing
- Provide extra time for decision-making
- Use plain language, using simple sentences, steps, and words
- Ask questions that require a brief answer
- Give participants time to process and understand the information
  - Each person is different, with some taking longer than others to respond
- Understand that each person is different in their individual needs, and ask what works best for them

Click the light bulb for more information on **involving people with intellectual disabilities**----->







# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Hosting a Virtual Event

- Introduce leaders and presenters, including the following information:
  - Name
  - Pronouns
  - Physical Description
  - Location Description
  - Example:
    - My name is Jane
    - I use she/her pronouns
    - I am a white woman in my 40's with blonde hair, and I'm wearing a blue sweater
    - Behind me, I have bookshelves and some houseplants
- Set ground rules and etiquette, identifying expectations like:
  - Stay on mute unless sharing
  - Prepare participants for unexpected interruptions (pets, other people, audio/video problems)
- Use icebreakers as an opportunity to troubleshoot technical questions and have participant practice:
  - Muting and unmuting
  - Turning their video on and off
  - Raising and lowering their hand or using reactions





# Hosting an Accessible Event

## Hosting a Virtual Event (cont.)

- Encourage the use of consent when using virtual tools, and ask participants:
  - If it is okay to record the session, if applicable
  - If it's okay to share your screen
    - Reorienting the screen can be a difficult shift for some participants
  - For permission to unmute a participant or turn on a participant's video
  - If it's okay to switch to breakout rooms, if applicable
- Use transcription or closed caption features
- Utilize both the audio and chat features to facilitate participation
- Ensure resources and handouts provided are screen-reader friendly

Click the light bulb for more information on **making virtual meetings accessible**----->



## Involving Support Providers

- Some participants may rely on support providers to participate
- Create opportunities to offer support providers lessons, information, and ideas for adaptation
- Work as a team with support providers and find the solution that works best for the participant
- Never charge a fee for a support provider who attends an event for the purpose of support





# After an Accessible Event

## Providing Event Materials

Provide any materials, lessons, instructions, and activities that were used during the event to participants after the event. This may help individuals with limitations retain and digest information. Consider distributing items as able.

## Feedback

Gather feedback from individuals with or without disabilities who attended your event to help improve accessibility in future sessions. Consider gathering contact information to distribute opportunities for feedback, like surveys.





# Schedule and Checklist

Timeline	Task	Due Date
Event Planning	Conduct an accessibility review of your event site.	Prior to event materials being distributed
Event Planning	Create accessible marketing, registration, and event materials.	Prior to registration opening
Event Planning	Gather accommodation requests.	At least two weeks before the event
Event Planning	Provide accessibility assistance and ensure availability of needed items and arrangements.	At least 24 hours prior to event
Event Hosting	Ensure communications used in trainings and events are inclusive of participants.	Ongoing
Event Hosting	Provide communication accommodations and supports like translators or interpreters.	Ongoing
Event Hosting	Provide physical, sensory, or cognitive accommodations if requested.	Ongoing
Event Hosting	Involve support providers in event activities and information.	Ongoing
Post Event	Provide available event materials to participants that request them.	Within a week of the event
Post Event	Create and distribute a post-event survey to gain participant feedback.	Within a week of the event







# Supplemental Questions

Ask yourself these questions to reflect on accessibility changes you can make to support participation in your health promotion program:

- What are the things you can do for your event to ensure there are no barriers for people, including those with disabilities?
- Does your site and environment provide access to the broadest range of participants?
- What are ways you can reduce the physical barriers or limitations for your event?
- What are ways you can effectively communicate with participants with disabilities?
- Before your event, what are ways you can reduce barriers in participation?





# Stay Connected

For additional assistance with disability best practices and successful inclusion of community members, please contact the Oregon Office on Disability and Health:

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