

## **GETTING READY**

### **Pre-Planning Considerations**

Depending on the size and length of your meeting, the planning process should start anywhere between one month (for smaller, shorter meetings) to one year (for large, multi-day meetings) prior to the meeting. Early on in the planning process, you will want to determine the agenda as this will inform your space requirements and set-up. You will also want to have some idea about who your intended participants are. As you begin the planning process, ask yourself the following questions:

- What size will your meeting be?
- Will you need overnight accommodations for your participants?
- Will your participants be driving in? Using public transportation? Flying? If they are flying in, you will want to ensure they are flying into an accessible airport. You will also want to compile a list of accessible public transportation options available from the airport to your venue.
- Will you be providing meals or refreshments? If you are providing meals, you will want to ensure that you collect dietary restriction information from your participants. If you are not providing meals but your meeting lasts for more than two hours, you will want to ensure that there are some meal options near your venue.
- What is the format of your meeting? Will all of your sessions take place in one room or will you need breakout rooms? If you will be using breakout rooms, you should try to get all meeting space on one floor.

### **SELECTING A LOCATION**

Depending on the size of your meeting, you may need to hold the meeting at a small, medium, or large venue. Also, if you are planning a meeting that will require sleeping accommodations, you will need to choose the hotel where your participants will be staying.

If you are holding a larger meeting or one that will require sleeping accommodations, consider sending out a request for proposals. Your request should delineate your needs and should include the following information:

- Number of participants
- Size and space needs
- Food and beverage requirements (i.e., Will there be a continental breakfast? Plated lunch? Beverage and snack breaks?)
- Audiovisual needs

- Number of sleeping rooms needed, if any

You should also consider attaching a questionnaire to the proposal that will help you pre-screen possible facilities.

### **Considerations for Small Venues**

Regardless of the size of your venue, you will want to ensure that the meeting space you choose is accessible. In addition, you will want to ensure that the location of the space is accessible – i.e., does it have accessible entrances (that are NOT service entrances), accessible restrooms, adequate lighting? You should review the following to ensure that the space you choose is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- Is there at least one entryway without steps?
- Is the path to the “no steps” entrance at least 36” wide?
- If there are doors to the venue, how heavy are they and can they be opened with a closed fist?
- Is the space large enough to accommodate 36” between rows and 36” aisleways in the center and on both sides?
- Are the bathrooms accessible? Are they near the space you intend to use for your event?
- If there are water fountains and public telephones, are there also accessible fountains and telephones?
- Is there an adapted restroom stall that opens outward?
- Is there a large bathroom stall with grab bar and side transfer – 42-48” wide?
- Is the toilet in the accessible stall set 17-19” from floor with clear space underneath of 30” wide by 45” deep?
- Does the public restroom have at least one sink set no higher than 29” from floor?
- Has all exposed piping under the accessible public restroom sinks been wrapped?
- Is the men’s bathroom accessible urinal no higher than 17”?

### **Considerations for Outdoor Venues**

When conducting a site visit of an outdoor venue, you should review the following areas of the venue to ensure that it is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- Is the path to the venue free from barriers and at least 36” wide?
- Is the terrain easily navigated using a wheelchair or other mobility devices?
- Would inclement weather increase barriers? For example, would the pathway become muddy, very slippery, blocked by fallen objects?
- Is there at least one entryway without steps?

- Is the path to the “no steps” entrance at least 36” wide?
- If there are doors to the venue, how heavy are they and can they be opened with a closed fist?
- Is the space large enough to accommodate 36” between rows and 36” aiseways in the center and on both sides?
- Are the bathrooms accessible? Are they near the space you intend to use for your event?
- If there are water fountains and public telephones, are there also accessible fountains and telephones?
- Is space for resource tables and information tables ample enough to avoid limiting access once they are set up?
- If you are planning interactive activities (ie, art therapy), is there enough space to allow for an accessible table?
- Is there an adapted restroom stall that opens outward?
- Is there a large bathroom stall with grab bar and side transfer – 42-48” wide?
- Is the toilet in the accessible stall set 17-19” from floor with clear space underneath of 30” wide by 45”deep?
- Does the public restroom have at least one sink set no higher than 29” from floor?
- Has all exposed piping under the accessible public restroom sinks been wrapped?
- Is the men’s bathroom accessible urinal no higher than 17”?

You should also consider the following to ensure accessibility:

- Is the venue well-lit to ensure that interpreters are visible?
- Is the lighting adequate to accommodate people with low-vision?
- If there is a stage, is there a wheelchair-accessible ramp leading up to it? If not, can the facility provide one? If not, is there an area other than the stage where you can hold your event?
- Does the facility provide an adequate sound system?

### **Considerations for Conference Centers**

When conducting a site visit of a conference center, you should review the following areas of the venue to ensure that it is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:

- Is there at least one entryway without steps?
- Is the path to the “no steps” entrance at least 36” wide?
- If there are doors to the venue, how heavy are they and can they be opened with a closed fist?

- Is the space large enough to accommodate 36" between rows and 36" aiseways in the center and on both sides?
- Are the bathrooms accessible? Are they near the space you intend to use for your event?
- If there are water fountains and public telephones, are there also accessible fountains and telephones?
- Is space for resource tables and information tables ample enough to avoid limiting access once they are set up?
- If you are planning interactive activities (ie, art therapy), is there enough space to allow for an accessible table?
- Is there an adapted restroom stall that opens outward?
- Is there a large bathroom stall with grab bar and side transfer – 42-48" wide?
- Is the toilet in the accessible stall set 17-19" from floor with clear space underneath of 30" wide by 45" deep?
- Does the public restroom have at least one sink set no higher than 29" from floor?
- Has all exposed piping under the accessible public restroom sinks been wrapped?
- Is the men's bathroom accessible urinal no higher than 17"?

### **Additional Considerations**

You should also consider the following to ensure accessibility:

- Is the venue well-lit to ensure that interpreters are visible?
- Is the lighting adequate to accommodate people with low-vision?
- If there is a stage, is there a wheelchair-accessible ramp leading up to it? If not, can the facility provide one? If not, is there an area other than the stage where you can hold your event?
- Does the facility provide an adequate sound system?

### **Considerations for Hotels**

- When conducting a site visit of a hotel, you will need to review its public spaces, lobby area and guest rooms to ensure that it is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- In addition to conducting a thorough site visit, you will also want to work closely with the hotel staff to ensure they interact appropriately with guests with disabilities and who are Deaf. We provide you with tips for [working with the hotel staff](#).

### **Public Spaces**

- Level front entrance or ramp?

- Free of any obstacles – gravel, curbs or stairs?
- Is the grade very steep?
- Entrance doors have a clear width of 32”?
- Elevator doors open a minimum of 36” wide and 48” deep?
- Elevators have low buttons and Braille markings?
- Elevators have auditory signals?
- Elevators have an automatic safety reopening device?
- Adapted restroom stall that opens outward?
- Large bathroom stall with grab bar and side transfer – 42-48” wide?
- Toilet set 19” from floor with clear space underneath of 30” wide by 45” deep?
- Public restroom sinks no higher than 29” from floor?
- Are all exposed piping under public restroom sinks wrapped?
- Men’s bathroom urinal no higher than 17”?
- Public telephones that are accessible?
- Public telephone with coin slot 54” above floor?
- Public telephone with volume control? where?
- Public telephones with raised lettering instructions?
- Hotel corridors a minimum of 36” wide?
- Drinking fountains no higher than 35” from the floor?
- Can you post larger signs that indicate the location of accessible washrooms, elevators and any other service?
- How has the staff been trained to handle messages and wakeup calls for blind and hard of hearing/Deaf guests?
- Is there a public TTY on property?

### **Lobby Area**

- Condition of lobby (seating areas, etc.)?
- How close is the front desk to the entrance?
- Is the front desk well-staffed?
- Do guests seem to be waiting in line for check in/check out?
- Are a concierge and bellman readily available?
- Are elevators easily accessible from lobby?

- Is there a lowered registration counter accessible to those who utilize a wheelchair?

### **Guest Rooms**

If you will be providing overnight accommodations, it is critical that you ensure that the hotel you select is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Conduct a thorough site visit of the hotel, reviewing at least two of each type of room (ADA Room with Tub with Double Beds, ADA Room with Tub with King Bed, ADA Room with Roll-In Shower with Double Beds, ADA Room with Roll-In Shower with King Bed, Deaf Accessible Rooms).

#### *Questions to consider during your site visit:*

- How many total ADA rooms does the property have?
- Are ADA rooms near elevators on each floor?
- Have the bed packages in the ADA rooms been replaced in the last year and are they comparable to those in the standard guestrooms?
- If not, how many years has it been since they were replaced?
- Of the total ADA rooms:

How many have roll-in showers? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these (roll-in shower rooms) have double beds? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these (roll-in shower rooms) have king beds? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these are suites? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these are smoking? \_\_\_\_\_

How many have tubs? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these (w/tubs) have double beds? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these (w/tubs) have king beds? \_\_\_\_\_

How many are suites? \_\_\_\_\_

How many of these are smoking? \_\_\_\_\_

- In all ADA rooms are the toilets between 17-19 inches from the floor to top of the seat?
- Are restrooms equipped with grab bars and a clear turning space?
- Is the telephone located close to the bed?
- Are the accessible rooms near the elevators?
- Are the light switches, peepholes and locks low enough?
- Are the closet amenities low enough (including iron, hangers, etc.)?
- Are the mini bar and safe low enough?

- Is there a clear opening in rooms of 36" – hallways, around bed, etc.? <
- Does the door to the bathroom opens outward?
- Is the sink no higher than 29" from floor?
- Showers:

Roll in?

Clear turnaround space outside?

Stall 3' by 3'?

Are shower seats affixed in each ADA roll-in shower room?

- Are tub seats always available in ADA tub rooms or must they be requested and brought up after check-in by housekeeping?
- How many additional shower/tub seats does housekeeping have on hand?
- Does the hotel have rooms SPECIFICALLY (not ADA also) adapted to accommodate persons that are Deaf or hard-of-hearing?
- If no, are you able to install kits in standard guestrooms that make them accessible to guests that are Deaf?
- If need be, could you obtain additional kits from other properties?

### **Considerations for Promoting your Event**

Prior to sending out any information about your event, you should determine who on your staff or planning committee will be responsible for creating handouts and other materials in alternative formats. Use the appropriate standardized symbols on all conference promotion, registration forms, information materials, and facility signage. These symbols may be downloaded from the [Graphic Artists Guild](#) .

### **Registration**

Registration materials should be available in alternate formats. This is your opportunity to collect as much information about your participants as possible, so be thorough. In addition to asking standard questions such as name, title, agency, and contact information, be sure to ask a question about accommodations. You may simply ask what accommodations are needed to participate or you may want to list possible accommodations. Carefully consider the nuances of your meeting and create a registration form that addresses those nuances.

If there are registration fees for your meeting, you should decide as a committee whether you will charge for Personal Care Attendants (PCAs). Even if you decide not to

charge Personal Care Attendants, you will want them to complete a separate registration form so that your participant count is accurate

### **Recommendations for Meeting Space Set-Up**

Once you have identified the number of attendees, speakers, staff, ASL interpreters, and personal care attendants, you are ready to set up your meeting space. You will need to consider the following:

- Plan for 20-30% more space to accommodate people with disabilities.
- Meeting room tables should have a 30-inch clearance between the floor and table apron.
- Aisles should be at least 36 inches, but preferably 62 inches.
- Provide ample space between chairs and tables to enable people with mobility devices to maneuver.
- Plan for the whole space to be accessible rather than having one area reserved for people with disabilities or Deaf participants. People should be able to sit where they want and with whom they want.
- Be sure to factor in the seating needs of your sign language interpreters. Your meeting set-up and the number of Deaf participants will determine the number of interpreters you will need. In breakout rooms, you will want to create space at the front of the room for interpreters. As a general rule, you should always have a minimum of two interpreters for each session.
- If using a speaker's platform, be sure the facility provides a safe ramp with railings that connects to the platform.
- Be sure that microphones are used at all times, regardless of the size of the meeting rooms. Not only is it courteous to others to be able to hear the question, it also helps people using assistive listening devices hear the question and it helps the ASL interpreters provide quality interpreting for Deaf participants.

### **Basic Styles**

Basic styles for room set-up include:

- Theater style – Theater style is characterized by rows of chairs set with no tables. When setting a room in theater style, be sure to include one row of classroom in the back for people who prefer or need a tabletop. Theater style is not recommended for large spaces as most people will have their backs to one another.

- Classroom style – Classroom style is characterized by rows of tables set with chairs. In a smaller space, it is very difficult to ensure that classroom style is accessible. However, classroom style is not recommended for large spaces because everyone will have their backs to one another.
- Round table style– Round table style is characterized by large round tables set with chairs. If you are going to set your rooms with round tables, you should do crescent rounds of 5-6 chairs so that nobody's back is to the speaker.
- Conference style – Conference style is characterized by a large conference table set with chairs. This style works best in small meetings.

### **Tips for Accessible Presentations**

Your presenters may or may not be familiar with accessibility needs and disability etiquette. It is a good practice to provide all of your speakers with information prior to their presentation about your expectations and policies around accessibility. You may want to include information about "people first" language and tips on making their presentation accessible. Some of those tips are:

- Presenters should be prepared to fully describe any graphics or pictures used in their presentation.
- Any films, slide shows, and video-tapes should be closed or open captioned.
- If possible, they should provide an outline of their presentation in advance so that ASL interpreters can be familiar with the material.
- Presenters should always use the microphone.
- Presenters should avoid facing away from the audience when speaking.
- Be sure to ask the presenter if they have any accommodation requests.
  - **Accessible Activities**
  - Some of your events may be more interactive and will require more care and attention to accessibility. For instance, if you are planning a march or arts and crafts event, you will want to consider how to make these events accessible to people with varying disabilities. For instance, how will you ensure that people with mobility disabilities feel included in the march? How will you make sure that the arts and crafts materials are accessible to people with sight disabilities? If you are planning to have a rally that allows survivors to share their stories publicly be sure to have ASL interpreters available for Deaf survivors to participate.
  - In general, you should work to ensure that people with disabilities serve on your planning committees. However, this is especially important when planning

activities such as marches, arts and crafts, or speak outs. In fact, if you do not already have an existing collaboration with your community's disability providers and Deaf community, this would be an ideal way to begin building one.

### **Recommendations for Meal Set-Up**

If you are serving food at your event, it is very important that it be accessible to all. The following guidelines should be followed strictly:

- Make sure continental breakfast and break buffets are set with all items flush on tabletops (no risers). Avoid high stacks of cups/dishes. A general rule is to ensure that cups are stacked no higher than two each.
- Be sure that all items on the buffet are pulled close to the edge of the table.
- Walk around the buffet to make sure there are no extension cords or other obstacles on the floors.
- Beverages such as milk, soy milk, and cream should be in cartons rather than heavy pitchers.
- If juices ordinarily are served from pitchers, request that they be served in individual cartons instead.
- Servers must be present during continental breakfasts/breaks to assist people with disabilities.
- Set buffets and any plated lunches with flexible straws.
- Ensure there is a minimum of 36 inches between the tables and nearest obstacle.
- If serving lunch or dinner, avoid buffets if possible. Instead, work with the facility to provide a plated lunch or dinner.
- If serving a plated meal with any type of meat, request that the hotel pre-cut those meals and have them available upon request.
  - **Considerations for Planning Your Agenda**
  - When planning your agenda, keep in mind that typical conference start times – for example 8 AM – may prove too early for people with disabilities. Instead, consider having your meeting begin at 9 AM with your continental breakfast beginning at 8 AM. This will provide enough time for people to get downstairs, register, and navigate the breakfast buffet prior to the official start time of the meeting. Additionally, you should also allow time in your agenda for lengthier breaks. The typical 10–15 minute break is not enough time for people with certain types of disabilities. A more reasonable break time is 30 minutes.