

# Planning an Accessible Meeting

When you are planning a meeting or event, you want to make sure that everyone can participate, including people with disabilities. By planning ahead, you can build accessibility into every aspect of the meeting.

The two main areas you need to consider when planning an accessible meeting or event are:

- **Physical access to the meeting space**
- **Access to the meeting contents and proceedings.**

Here are some general things to keep in mind.

- Make sure that a member of your staff is responsible for making the event accessible.
- Be prepared to respond to accommodation requests in the same manner that you respond to other requests and questions about the event.
- Make sure that the invitation or notice of meeting includes information about the accessibility of the event.
- Planning for a longer event, such as a conference that will take place over several days, takes more organizing. You'll want to find out ahead of time what resources are available locally, such as:
  - Sign language interpreters
  - Accessible transportation
  - Emergency veterinarians (for service animals)
  - Wheelchair repair services.
- Before you confirm the date of the event, find out if other disability-related events are taking place in the area at the same time. This may have an impact on your event and the availability of service providers.
- As soon as you have confirmed the date of the event, book and schedule sign language interpreters and/or real time captions.
- If the event's participants are responsible for their own meal arrangements, find out what local restaurants are accessible.
- Look into the availability of installed or portable FM Listening Systems in meeting facilities for people who have a hearing loss. (An FM system consists of a transmitter used by the speaker and a receiver used by the listener.)
- Find out if telephones with auditory adjustments for people who have a hearing loss are available.
- Check to determine whether there are visual fire alarms. If not, ask about the facility's evacuation plan or create your own.
- Find out if TTY is available and make sure your staff knows how to use it. (A TTY is a device that is used by persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing to communicate by telephone.)

- Make sure there is at least one telephone that can be used by a person who is seated (for example, someone who uses a wheelchair).
- If you are promoting the conference by means of a website, make sure the site is accessible for people who use assistive technologies (such as screen reading software).
- Check to see if the customer service areas (i.e., counters, display tables, etc.) are low enough so that people who use wheelchairs or scooters can see over.
- Make sure that any additional signs specific to the event are designed using large print.
- Find a suitable area where service animals can relieve themselves.
- Provide water bowls for service animals.