

CONNECTICUT LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

GUIDELINES TO HELP CLA PROGRAM PLANNERS ACCOMMODATE MEMBERS WITH DISABILITIES

Planning conferences that are accessible to people with disabilities involves focusing on the accessibility of all aspects of your meeting, from choosing a site through promotion, registration, presentations, and handouts. The following guidelines were developed to assist planners of CLA programs in providing accommodations for members who have disabilities. These guidelines are not all-inclusive, but are meant to be an educational tool to acquaint planners with some of the accommodations individuals with disabilities may request. In developing these guidelines, the CLA Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Task Force emphasizes that program planners should be flexible in arranging accommodations. The person with a disability is the best source for information on what accommodations he or she may need to participate fully in the program. It is imperative, therefore, that program planners engage in a detailed discussion with the person about what specific accommodations may be needed.

PUBLICITY

- All publicity related to the program or function should contain a statement to make attendees aware that accommodations can be made for a variety of needs. An example of such a statement is: “If you have a disability and require accommodation in order to participate in this program, please contact [name of person and telephone number].”
- If possible, avoid small explanatory print in flyers to make it easier for individuals with limited vision to read the program details.

ACCESSIBLE BUILDINGS

- CLA conferences and meetings sponsored by CLA must be held at facilities that are accessible to participants with disabilities.
- The building must have accessible parking (handicapped), clear paths of travel from the parking lot to the meeting room(s), and accessible public conveniences, such as handicapped restrooms, accessible drinking fountains or access to drinking water, public telephones, and TTYs. If needed, there should be curb cuts, ramps (no more than 1” rise to every 12” of length), elevators, and handrails to get from the parking lot to the meeting rooms and public conveniences.

- Entrances to the library building should have adequate clear openings or automatic doors. (The minimum clear opening is 32”, and if there are two doors, there should be a minimum of 48” of clear space between the doors when they are both open.)
- Take a look at **Meeting accessibility checklist**
<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/dsb/meetacc.htm>

REFRESHMENTS

- If refreshments are served, tables must be no higher than 34 inches. Avoid two-tiered tables unless all items are available on both levels.
- Depending upon the type and amount of food available, have a variety of foods to accommodate individuals who are on special diets (diabetic, low fat/low cholesterol).
- Small tables and/or chairs close by the refreshment table(s) are helpful for individuals who use wheelchairs, walkers, or crutches so they have a place to set their food without having to travel a long distance.
- Have someone on the planning committee stay at the refreshment table to offer assistance if needed (explaining what’s on the table to someone with a visual disability, pouring drinks or carrying items for someone who has limited strength or mobility).
- Allow plenty of space in front of refreshment tables.

ACCESSIBLE PRESENTATIONS

- The meeting rooms should be well lit and easily accessible by ramps or elevators
- The meeting room should have some accessible tables (at least 5%). Accessible tables have knee space that is 19 inches deep and 27 inches high from floor to underside of table or counters.
- There should be ample aisle space (a minimum of 36 inches) from the entrance to the meeting rooms and accessible public conveniences to accommodate individuals who use wheelchairs or have other mobility limitations. Allow ample space around tables, refreshment area, exhibits, etc.

- The meeting room should have a sound amplification system.
- Service, assistance, or guide dogs must be allowed at the meetings. (General Statutes of Connecticut Sec. 46a-44)
- If possible, try to control background noise which can interfere with someone with a hearing disability from hearing the presentation.
- Talk with the presenter(s) prior to the meeting and ask that overheads and slides be easy to read (preferably in large print) and have sharp, contrasting colors. Ask them to allow adequate time for the audience to read the visuals.
- Consider requesting that speakers explain verbally the information contained in the visuals.
- Ask speakers, if needed, to provide a copy of presentation materials well in advance to allow for large print or taping.
- Ask speakers/presenters to monitor their rate of speech and not speak too rapidly.
- Presenters who have disabilities may need special accommodations. These may include avoiding presentations that are on a stage that cannot be made accessible to those with mobility limitations, arranging for special equipment at the presenters table (readers, sound amplification system, etc.), someone to monitor time for presenters, assistance handing out any materials to attendees.

EXAMPLES OF ACCOMMODATIONS THAT MAY BE REQUESTED BY INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIFIC DISABILITIES

<u>Disability</u>	<u>Examples of accommodations</u>
Deaf or hearing limitation	Preferred seating in front of speaker; make sure person can see all individuals in a small group (circular seating); sign language interpreter; real-time captioning; copies of presentation in print format; FM listening device; close captioned video; provide assistance with note taking.
Blind or limited vision	Print materials in large type (preferably 14 point type or larger); taped or Braille copies of any handouts; someone assigned to verbally explain any videos, overheads, slides, or other projected images; provide oral description of meeting room, location of refreshment table, restrooms, etc.
Wheelchair user	Provide options for seating at various points in meeting room (don't relegate person to back of room); be ready to provide assistance, if needed, with refreshments if they are served; coat racks that are within easy reach; if tables are set up in meeting room there should be space for wheelchair user to move around tables.
Limited mobility (uses walker, cane, crutches, or has heart condition)	Provide chairs with arms to ease sitting and getting out of chair; make certain there are no loose carpets or electrical/ equipment cords strung over aisles or walkways; coat racks need to be within easy reach.
Learning disabilities	Provide assistance with notetaking and reading any projected visual materials; taped copy of presentation; assistance reading directional signs.

A final reminder, the key to providing an accessible program for members with disabilities is to discuss in detail the person's accommodation needs. When discussing an individual's accommodation needs it is helpful to begin by asking for guidance to be sure you are communicating in a way that's most effective for him or her.

If the person requests an accommodation and you are uncertain about whether or not you can provide it because of cost or availability of equipment, or if you think the request is not “reasonable” feel free to consult with CLA’s ADA Coordinator as listed on the CLA web site.

For books and materials on meeting the requirements of the ADA, contact one of the Connecticut State Library Service Centers. The Middletown Library Service Center phone number is: 800/437.2313. The Willimantic Library Service Center phone number is: 800/253.7944.

For sign language interpreters contact Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, 1245 Farmington Ave. West Hartford, CT 06107, Telephone: 860-561-0196 or 1-800-708-6796. The Commission on the Deaf and Hearing Impaired needs at least 5 working days notice to provide interpreters.

Resources about the Americans With Disabilities Act, interacting with people who have disabilities, making programs accessible to individuals with disabilities, and other information resources:

New England ADA Technical Assistance Center – select “publications” in the left menu for a list of their online and print publications about the ADA, adaptive technology, employment and the ADA, transportation, and posters on disability awareness.

<http://adaptiveenvironments.org/neada/site/home>

AbilityHub

Information on adaptive equipment and alternative methods available to help people with disabilities use computers.

<http://www.abilityhub.com/>

Meeting accessibility checklist

<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/service/dsb/meetacc.htm>

NEAT – New England Assistive Technology Marketplace

NEAT was established to provide information and access to equipment and devices that can change the lives of people of all ages, with all types of disabilities, both temporary and permanent

<http://www.neatmarketplace.org/index.html>

ADA Requirements Fact Sheet – a summary of what is required under the Americans with Disabilities Act

http://adaptiveenvironments.org/neada/site/pub_54_ada_fact_sheet

Disability etiquette – information on interacting with a person who has a disability, disability etiquette, and using words with dignity when speaking and writing about people who have disabilities.

<http://www.crinet.org/interact.php>

ADA Standards for Accessibility – from the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board - detailed descriptions of ADA standards for doors, tables, seating, counters, with a special section for libraries.

<http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm>

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