

Tips on Reaching a Reasonable Accommodation

Although this document was developed to help CLA program planners present accessible programs the advice will also be helpful to libraries as they plan accessible programs.

1. Be prepared to describe the particular elements of your program. Will there be a single speaker or a panel? Will there be small group work?
2. Think of your interview as a kind of negotiation where you and the CLA Member are trying to find a win-win solution: one that will enable her to participate comfortably in all aspects of the program while, at the same time, staying within CLA's budget constraints.
3. CLA does not require documentation as to disability.
4. CLA members attending a program are not responsible for paying any charges associated with providing a reasonable accommodation.
5. Remember, there are usually multiple solutions; explore all the options. The person with the disability usually knows what works best. However, there is nothing wrong with discussing less burdensome alternatives. The bottom line is that you may not be able to arrive at the *best* accommodation for this person; but, you are going to do what is *readily achievable* given CLA's budget. If you have any doubt about whether CLA has the capability to grant a particular request, do not hesitate to contact the CLA ADA Coordinator, for advice.
6. A word about equipment. If you plan to have an assistive device, like FM-listening, make sure you know how it works. Ask the Member to arrive a little early so that the two of you can test the equipment.

7. Don't forget to follow up with the person for whom you arranged an accommodation. It is excellent customer service.

Hypothetical Interview of CLA Member who is Hard of
Hearing
by CLA Conference Planner

Member Hi, I'm calling because you are listed as the contact person for the upcoming CLA program

Planner Yes, that's right.

Member I would like to request special accommodation due to my hearing disability. Before we go into particulars, can you tell me how the conference will be conducted? Will there be someone speaking from the podium, or are you planning to have informal roundtable discussions? The type of accommodation I need will depend on the activity.

Planner We have invited outside vendors to attend the program. Right now, I have two sales representatives lined up as speakers. They will be speaking from the podium, and I have already made arrangements to have a sound system.

Member Generally, if there is a sound system, I can hear. If you don't mind, I will sit in the front row so that I can watch the person speak. Do you know if the speaker will have visual aids, such as Powerpoint slides? The more visual aids, the better. People who have limited hearing or are deaf are visually oriented.

Planner I will encourage our speakers to use visual aids. Many other attendees can benefit from them also, as they

reinforce the verbal communication.

Member Are you planning to break up into small groups after the main presentations?

Planner Yes, attendees will be able to participate in the Roundtable of their choice.

Member Will they be scattered in different rooms? The reason I ask is that I need to be in an area where there isn't a lot of background noise.

Planner I was planning to have all groups in the same room.

Member That will be really tough for me. Can you arrange to get me real-time captioning?

Planner I'll have to check on that and get back to you.

A FEW DAYS LATER.

Planner I checked with the President of CLA about your request for real-time captioning. We're not ruling it out, but she wanted me to explore other options with you first. What if I arranged to have your group sit in a separate area where there would be no background noise. I am thinking of a conference room in this library.

Member Yes, that would help a great deal. The seating arrangement can also make a difference. If possible, please try to have chairs arranged in a circle. That way, I can look at whoever is speaking. The nearer I am to the speakers, the better I can hear. Also, let the discussion leader know that I have a hearing disability. It would be helpful for her to announce this to the rest of the group and to remind them to keep their papers down instead of covering their mouths while speaking.

Planner I think there is a table in the conference room. It's a large rectangular table, if I remember correctly.

Member In that case, can you arrange to have a note taker for me?

Planner What do you mean?

Member Someone to sit next to me and take down the main ideas so that I can follow the discussion more easily.

Planner Sure, I can arrange that. After lunch, there will be a video. Will you need assistance in order to hear the television?

Member Yes, can you find out if the video is captioned? If not, the best solution would be to use an FM-listening device; that way, I could adjust the volume without disturbing other listeners.

Planner I will check on that. I look forward to seeing you at the program.

Don't forget to follow up with the person for whom you arranged an accommodation. It is excellent customer service.

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