THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO | **Office of the Provost**
Office for Access and Equity

Accessible Events Resource Guide

OUR APPROACH

The Office for Access and Equity ("OAE") in the University of Chicago Office of the Provost's Equal Opportunity Programs supports the full participation of all members of the University community in the life of the University. University events, meetings, or programs on- and off-campus are a key part of University life. The University, through OAE and other campus partners, is committed to planning accessible events and providing reasonable accommodations to support access for individuals with disabilities. By supporting the full participation of all members of the University community, including persons with disabilities, the University provides all members of its community with the opportunity to teach, work, learn, and interact in an inclusive environment.

ACCESS: WHAT IS IT?

Access means providing the opportunity for full participation free from barriers. Planning a successful event *is* planning for access. It is both anticipating the needs of attendees to the event so that it is accessible by all people to the greatest extent possible, without the need for individual modifications, and providing an effective means of responding to specific requests for accommodations, where needed. In making access a key tenet in event planning, you make a commitment to making your event inclusive and welcoming to all attendees.

In this guide you will find information on your responsibility to making events accessible, including key considerations for planning for access, frequently asked questions about access, and additional resources for planning a successful event.

OFFICE FOR ACCESS & EQUITY

Equal Opportunity Programs, Office of the Provost, University of Chicago

To request this guide in an alternative format or for more information on planning accessible events, contact the Office for Access and Equity,
773.834.6367 or equalopportunity@uchicago.edu.

Table of Contents

ROLE OF THE EVENT SPONSOR

Event sponsors are responsible for making their events accessible. This includes all University sponsored activities held off campus. Planning an event provides event sponsors with the opportunity to create an experience that is inclusive and welcoming to diverse audiences. Consider the following:

- **Plan for accessibility early**, *e.g.*, in selecting a location, budgeting, etc. This can cut down on costs as well as the need for individual accommodations.
- **Strive to create a positive experience for attendees**. Barriers to participating in an event can make attendees feel unwelcome, or decline to participate altogether. Considering access, including planning an event usable to all attendees to the greatest extent possible and having a clear process in place to respond to requests for accommodation, communicate a commitment to inclusiveness of all attendees.
- **Commit to equivalent, if not identical experiences** for people with disabilities.
- **Be knowledgeable** about the event and how to respond to questions regarding access. For additional information regarding access at events, see this resource guide and contact the Office for Access and Equity.

HOW TO PLAN FOR ACCESS.

Below is a checklist of items to consider in planning an event, including information on budgeting, selecting an accessible location, responding to access requests, communicating with presenters, and executing a successful, inclusive event.

1. **Budget for event access**.

The costs associated with disability access are considered part of the overall expense of an event. Event sponsors are responsible for the costs of making their events accessible. We encourage event sponsors to budget for access as one routine cost for planning any University-related event. Most accommodation requests can be made at little or no-cost. For additional information on common costs, *see* the FAQs section below.

Recognized student organizations may seek additional funding for access by submitting a Student Government Funding Committee request. For more information, visit the [Student Government Finance Committee](#) website.

2. **Select a location that is accessible and supports other reasonable accommodations.**

Selecting an accessible physical location for the event is one key factor in hosting a successful event. If a person with a disability registers or gives notice that the person is attending the event, then the event must be located in an accessible building. Event sponsors have an obligation to respond to requests for accommodations at the event itself and making a reasonable effort to provide access if the accommodation request is reasonable and can be readily accomplished. For more information, *see* [FAQs Section](#). **When selecting a location for the event, consider the following**:

- *Accessibility of parking and drop off areas*. Availability of accessible parking and accessible drop off areas.
- *Accessible approaches* to the event location from adjacent parking areas, walkways, and public transportation drop-off points.
- *Accessible entrance and accessible routes*, including the access to the primary entrance and access to all rooms or spaces where the event will be hosted.
    - Where is the accessible entrance? Is it the same entrance as other event attendees will use?
    - Is the door accessible, *e.g.*, is it wide enough? Does it have a door operator or otherwise meet accessibility standards (considering maneuvering space and weight of door)?

- How will attendees enter the building and navigate to and from the event (path of travel)?
- Will attendees need to navigate between multiple floors in the building (*e.g.*, to attend the event's programs, use restroom, enter building, etc.)? If so, does the location have accessible elevators or lifts?

- ***Accessible room layout and seating***, including the availability of wheelchair accessible seating and seating for individuals who may be providing or using interpreting with an unobstructed view. In addition, consider the maneuverability to and from the seating spaces, which should provide approximately 3-5 feet wide aisles and routes.
- ***Accessibility of restrooms and drinking fountains***.
  - Where are the accessible restrooms located? Accessible drinking fountains?
  - How will a person with access needs navigate to and from these locations (path of travel)?
- ***Availability of assistive listening devices (ALDs)***. For locations that accommodate 50+ persons or have audio amplification systems, and have fixed seating, then the location must provide ALDs for at least 2% of total seating. For more information on ALDs *see* the [Resources section,](#) below.
- ***Clear signage***, including directional signage regarding the location of the event, accessible entrances, restrooms, and other facilities and signage with raised and Braille characters.
- ***Adequacy of lighting and space*.**
  - Are all the lights in the space working?
  - Will the lights be turned off during the event? If so, all exit paths should remain lit.
  - Will strobe or flashing lights be used? If so, provide notice to participants in advance.
- ***Acoustics***, for example, considering the availability of assistive listening devices (*see* above), and the ability of a person providing interpreting to hear the person speaking (additional equipment, *e.g.*, a microphone or headset may be necessary for the person providing interpreting).
- ***Accessibility of outdoor space***, for example, considering the path of travel to and from the outdoor space, including whether it is clear of protrusions (*e.g.*, trees, bushes, rocks, etc.) and whether the path may be traversed in a wheelchair.

For additional information on selecting an accessible location, please *see* the Facilities Services and Getting Around notes in the [Resources section](#).

3. **Establish a Process for Event Access**.

The event sponsor is responsible for facilitating accommodation requests and implementing requests for reasonable accommodations.

- **Include an accommodation statement on all event notices,** including the name and contact information of the person responsible for responding to reasonable accommodation requests on all event materials. *Example accommodation statement*:
  - "If you have any questions about access or to request any reasonable accommodations that will facilitate your full participation in this event such as ASL interpreting, captioned videos, Braille or electronic text, food options for individuals with dietary restrictions, etc. please contact: [insert name and contact information including an e-mail or phone number]."
  - **For pre-registration**, consider asking attendees to identify any accommodation they may need, for example: "Please describe any accommodations that will facilitate your full participation in this event."
  - **Consider asking event participants to support a fragrance-free event**, by requesting that participants refrain from wearing colognes, perfumes, or other scented or chemical products to the event (including attire exposed to smoke). Scents and chemical products may exacerbate the symptoms of a person's medical condition.
- **Designate a person responsible for access and accommodations at the event**. This person may also be listed as a contact for questions or accommodation requests submitted in advance of the event. Provide both an email address and phone number as contact information.

For questions regarding accommodations requests, [contact the Office for Access and Equity](#).

4. **Market the accessibility of the event.**

- *Communications and marketing materials for the event should contain information regarding accessibility and should be accessible.*
- *Communicate important details regarding your event*, including information such as the event's location, the availability of assistive listening devices, food options for people with dietary restrictions, etc. This helps individuals to identify what accommodations, if any, may be needed and encourages participation.
- *Include an accommodation statement on all event notices*.
- *Ensure that any marketing, registration, or other materials related to the event are accessible*. The event sponsor should review online event content to ensure that it is accessible. For additional information, *see* "Center for Digital Accessibility" in the [Resources section](#) below.

5. **Train event staff regarding accessibility.**

Training regarding event accessibility for staff should include information regarding accessibility at the event and appropriate language regarding and interactions with people with disabilities.

- ***Clearly communicate information regarding accessibility to event staff*** so that they may be available to assist and answer questions regarding access, *e.g.*, including information on accessible parking, entrances, restrooms, etc.
- ***Communicate appropriate language regarding disability and access***.
  - Refer to a disabled person as either "disabled" or a "person with a disability." The term "handicapped" is no longer used when referring to individuals with disabilities.
  - Refer to those using wheelchairs as "wheelchair-users."
  - Refer to access features as "disability-related access," not "special."
- ***Communicate to event staff appropriate interactions with attendees with a disability***, *e.g.*, try to create a positive experience for all attendees, and if a disabled person does not want assistance, respect their decision.

6. **Speak with and provide information to presenters about access.**

Conversations with presenters regarding accessibility should include relevant information contained in this guide. Presenters may also require accommodations; ask presenters whether they have any access needs. In addition, the presentation and materials should be accessible. Consider the following:

- ***Handouts and materials***. Offer to provide accessible materials and handouts. Consider sending electronic versions of the material to attendees or providing Braille or large-print copies.
- ***PowerPoint presentation***. Consider legibility and size of font (20+) as well as color contrast used in presentation. In addition, avoid placing content on the bottom of slides so that people may see it. When presenting, do not assume that everyone can read what is presented on the slide. Describe all charts, graphs, and images and convey all material information on each slide. If providing interpreting, request that the presenter provide the PowerPoint presentation and any handouts and material to the interpreter in advance so that the interpreter may prepare for the event. For additional information, *see* Center for Digital Accessibility in the [Resources section](#).
- ***Video and audio content***. All videos and audio content should be captioned and the captions should be enabled.
- ***Activities and exercises***. Discuss any additional activities or exercises, considering whether the activities are designed in a way that makes them accessible to all attendees to the greatest extent possible, *e.g.*, would a person with low vision or limited mobility, or who is deaf or hard of hearing be able to participate?

7. **Day of the Event.**

The event sponsor has selected an event space that is accessible, implemented processes to respond to requests for reasonable accommodation, trained event staff to respond to access inquiries, and communicated with presenters about accessibility. In preparation for the day of the event, plan for the following:

- *Signage*. Mark the entrance and exit, path of travel to and from the event space(s), elevators, parking and restroom with clear signage denoting access.
- *Space and seating*. Arrange the event space in a way in which all attendees may use common routes, which should be wide, flat or paved, and clear of debris. Arrange seats so that the accessible seating options are distributed throughout the space. Ensure that any planned breaks provide sufficient time for a person to travel to and from accessible restrooms.
- *Communications*.
  - Provide information to attendees on how to access ALDs or amplified sound.
  - Presenters (and any speakers at the event) should use a microphone. Questions from the audience should be repeated in the answer given by the presenter.
  - Try to eliminate background noise during the event.
  - Enable captions, both at the event and for any live-streaming or recording of the event.
- *Materials and Handouts*.
  - **Fonts and font size**. If providing handouts, provide a few large-print copies in at least 18+ font. Try to use clear fonts on all materials such as Arial or Times New Roman.
  - **Electronic materials**. Encourage electronic materials to be distributed in advance. Ensure accessibility of electronic formats. For additional information, *see* "Center for Digital Accessibility" in the [Resources section](#) below.

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS IN A REMOTE ENVIRONMENT

Considering the accessibility of an event in a remote environment is just as essential as access for in-person events. While the elements of an accessible event in a remote environment may be similar, in addition to the elements outlined above, consider the following:

1. **Before the Remote Event**
- Enable accessibility features of the remote hosting platform (*e.g.*, closed captioning). For Zoom, accessibility features may be found in meeting settings.
- Assign everyone to the appropriate roles for the meeting (*e.g.*, captioner, co-hosts).

- Enable captions for video content that will be shared during the event.
- Investigate and practice implementing accessibility features (*e.g.*, how to assign a person to caption, pinning, spotlighting, etc).
- Share handouts, slides, and resources via email to confirmed attendees and sign language interpreters and captioners, as appropriate. Content creators of these materials should consider [accessibility of the materials](#) shared.

2. Day of the Remote Event

- Approximately 15 to 30 minutes before the event, host a technology check with the speakers, co-hosts, sign language interpreters, and captioners.
- Designate a person (co-host) responsible for access and accommodations at the event.
- Announce any accessibility features available to attendees and how to use them during the session (*e.g.* Shortcut Keys, Captioning, Pinning ASL interpreters, etc.)
- Save the chat (if there links and important information is shared during the session) to share the chat with attendees, as appropriate.
- Remind speakers to use a microphone and to read chat messages aloud.

3. After the Remote Event

- Share handouts, slides, chats, and links via email to attendees, as appropriate. When sharing content, ensure that it is [shared in an accessible format](#).
- Include questions about access on event evaluations or assessments.
- If recorded, ensure that captioning or a transcript is included prior to sharing the recording.
- Reflect on any accessibility-related issues.

For additional considerations on accessibility of remote environments and learning, see the University's resources on [Teaching Remotely: Zoom Considerations for Teaching Students with Disabilities](#) and Zoom's [Accessibility FAQs](#).

FAQs

What are qualifying disabilities, including "invisible" disabilities?

The Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") defines a person with a disability as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, which can include self-care, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, learning, and working. In addition, the ADA also defines disability as a person with a record of such impairment or a person regarded as having a disability. There are many different types of disabilities, some visible and some not. Most architectural design standards (for consideration, for example, when choosing an accessible location) focus on the following four general

categories: 1) mobility disabilities, 2) visual disabilities, 3) hearing disabilities, or 4) cognitive and other non-apparent disabilities.

What are accessible routes and physical locations for events on campus?

The [University of Chicago Maps](#) contains information on accessible routes around campus, as well as detailed information on the accessibility features of University buildings, including information on accessible entrances, routes, and restrooms. The website also contains information on University parking lots, including accessible parking in those lots. To obtain detailed information about the accessibility of a University building or parking lot, select the building or parking lot about which you seek more information using the menu on the left side of the webpage.

What are ALDs and when should assistive listening devices be provided?

Assistive listening devices ("ALDs") amplify sound for users. ALDs must be made available in locations that accommodate fifty or more people or have audio amplification systems and fixed seating. As a general matter, ALDs should be provided to individuals upon request in lectures, classes, conferences, theater performances, concerts, sporting events, etc. Prior to the event, the event sponsor should do a trial run with the ALDs available in the event space to ensure that they are working properly. For more information on ALDs for on- and off-campus events, see the [Resources section](#), below.

What types of accommodation requests can an event sponsor expect to receive?

Accommodation requests may include requests for an American Sign Language ("ASL") interpreter, Communication Access in Real Time ("CART") captioning service, large print, Braille, wheelchair access, assistive listening devices, closed captioned videos, and alternate food options for individuals with dietary restrictions. While these aids should be provided upon reasonable request for accommodation, for some events, the event sponsor may want to consider providing ASL interpreting and captioning even without a request for a reasonable accommodation, particularly for large-scale, public events and videos shown at events.

How should an event sponsor respond to requests for reasonable accommodation?

In responding to requests for reasonable accommodation, focus on the access issue and requested accommodation, not on the person's disability. Respond to requests promptly and be prepared to engage in an interactive process, meaning that it may take several communications

to work through the details of a request. The accommodation requested by the participant should be given primary consideration. For questions regarding accommodation requests or the reasonableness of a particular request, contact the Office for Access and Equity.

Who may request an accommodation at an event?

Any participants at an event with qualifying disability may request a reasonable accommodation for participating in an event. This includes University students, faculty, other academic appointees, postdoctoral researchers, and staff as well as members of the public, including, but not limited to, prospective students, parents, family members, and other visitors with disabilities.

How should an event sponsor prepare for interpreting and CART captioning?

Event sponsors may coordinate requests for interpreting by completing the Service Request Form. The Coordinator of Communication Access Services will be in touch with the event sponsor in response to the request. Event sponsors may choose to contact vendors directly; the Center for Digital Accessibility provides a partial list of vendors used by the University for captioning. Request interpreter and captioner as early as possible in your event planning to ensure that they can be provided for the event. In addition, to prepare, we recommend the following:

- Inform the interpreter in advance if the event will be streamed or recorded. Note that there may be an additional charge.
- Provide reserved seating in the front for attendees using interpreting and their guests;
- Place sign language interpreters in the front of the room, close to both the speaker and the Deaf or Hard of Hearing attendee, so that the interpreter and speaker can be viewed by the attendee at the same time;
- There should be sufficient lighting on the interpreter;
- Try to provide the interpreter or CART captioner with materials (*e.g.*, PowerPoint presentation, handouts and materials) at least two business days in advance so that they may prepare for the event.
- CART captioners may require some space for setup, and if using projection equipment, need to be seated close to the equipment.

Are all companion animals "service animals"? What can the event sponsor do if a service animal is disruptive?

Not all companion animals are service animals. A service animal is an animal, ordinarily a dog, that is trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. These tasks may include but are not limited to: guiding individuals with low vision, alerting individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing to sound, pulling a wheelchair, carrying and

retrieving dropped items, etc. In situations where it is not obvious that a dog is a service animal, University officials may ask the following two qualifying questions: 1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? 2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

A service animal may accompany its owner on University property at all times, except under rare circumstances where health or safety may be compromised. Care and supervision of the animal is the sole responsibility of the person who owns the animal. The person is solely responsible for the actions of their animal (*e.g.*, bites, scratches, property damage, etc.) To the extent possible, the animal should not: make contact with others or their personal belongings; display any behaviors or noises that are disruptive to others; and block an aisle or passageway for fire and emergency egress. A person may be required to remove their animal if the animal poses a direct threat to health and safety, creates an undue burden to the University, or when its presence unreasonable disrupts or otherwise fundamentally alters the University program or event.

An assistance animal is an animal that provides emotional support, well-being, or companionship that alleviates or mitigates symptoms of a disability. Assistance animals are only permitted on campus with prior approval and generally only in University housing. For additional questions contact the Office for Access and Equity.

For more information, *see* the Student Disability Services Animal Policy.

Does the University provide wheelchairs for events?

The University does not provide wheelchairs for use at events. Event sponsors do not have an obligation to provide a wheelchair for participants, but may provide participants requesting wheelchairs with information on wheelchair rental services. Vendors include:

Wheelchair Rental Pros
Phone: (312) 404-8802

What are the event sponsor's responsibilities if a person with a disability arrives at a venue unannounced and requests an accommodation?

The University, through OAE and other campus partners, is committed to planning accessible events and providing reasonable accommodations to support access for individuals with disabilities at its events. *This includes responding to requests for an accommodation at the event itself and making a reasonable effort to provide access if the accommodation request is reasonable and can be readily accomplished.* Event staff awareness and sensitivity are crucial. Event staff should know both the general obligation to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities and be prepared to answer questions and provide assistance, where needed. Common questions may include questions regarding whether a permit is required to use an accessible parking space, the location of accessible restrooms and drinking fountains, information on accessible paths of

travel, whether directional signage includes Braille, and whether wheelchairs are available for use or rental.

What is the cost of providing access and accommodations?

The cost of access and accommodations can vary. Many times, access and accommodations can be provided at little or no cost. However, below is a summary of common potential costs.

- **ASL Interpreting**. ASL interpreting costs approximately $70-$75 per hour (per interpreter), and there is a two-hour minimum charge. Programs longer than an hour in duration will require two interpreters. In addition, there may be an additional charge if the event is streamed or recorded. For additional information regarding interpreting, contact the Communication Access Coordinator

- **CART and captioning**. Captioning costs approximately $100-$145 per hour with a two-hour minimum. University students, faculty, and staff may borrow laptops for free from the IT Services Techbar, and may rent other A/V equipment (*e.g.*, microphone, speakers, screen, projectors, etc.) from Audio-Visual Services ("AVS"). In addition, if the event sponsor requests support from an AVS technician, the technician's services costs approximately $87 per hour.

What if the event sponsor cannot afford providing access and accommodations?

It is the event sponsor's responsibility to make events accessible, and we encourage all event sponsors to budget for access when planning any event. However, **if you have concerns about the financial cost of an accommodation or providing access for your event, contact the Office for Access and Equity**.

KEY RESOURCES FOR PLANNING ACCESSIBLE EVENTS.

- **Assistive listening devices**. Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) are available upon request through IT Services' Audio-Visual Services.

- **Audio-Visual Services**. University students, faculty and staff may rent equipment from ITS Audio-Visual Services (AVS), including microphone, speakers, screen, projectors, etc. In addition, AVS is available to provide support to users requesting ALDs, which are available upon request at no charge. AVS is also available to answer questions and provide training and support on using its equipment. Event sponsors also may request on-site support from an AVS technician for approximately $87 per hour.

- **Center for Digital Accessibility**. The University's Center for Digital Accessibility provides digital accessibility consulting, assessment and training for students, faculty, other academic appointees, staff and postdoctoral researchers at the University, including consulting, testing and training upon request. The CDA's resources on Accessibility for Content Creators may support event sponsors and presenters in designing accessible event content, including, for example, presentations and invitations. In addition, University students, faculty, and staff may borrow laptops for free from the IT Services Techbar.

- **Facilities Services**. Event sponsors may contact Facilities Services with any building accessibility concerns by submitting a service request online, by emailing work-center@uchicago.edu, or by calling Facilities Services at 4.1414 (campus phone) or 773.834.1414. For **urgent facilities services requests** (*e.g.*, inoperable wheelchair lifts), call 4.1414 (campus phone) or 773.834.1414. For additional questions regarding physical accessibility of buildings on campus, contact Glenn Okazaki, Accessibility Specialist, Facilities Services, by email at gdokazak@uchicago.edu who can provide support during business hours.

- **Getting Around**. University of Chicago Maps provides information on building accessibility (including the location accessible entrances, restrooms, and accessible routes). Ongoing construction may temporarily impact accessibility. Information about ongoing construction projects, including a map of current construction, is available online. For additional information, contact Facilities Services.

- **Interpreting and Captioning**. To request assistance coordinating interpreting or captioning, please complete the Service Request Form, and the Communication Access Coordinator will be in touch with you in response to your request. For captioning, you may also choose to contact vendors directly.

- **Parking and Transportation**. University of Chicago Maps provides information on accessible spaces in University parking lots. In addition, all campus bus and shuttle transportation is accessible to individuals with disabilities, including the Chicago Transit Authority Routes 170, 171, 172, and 192. The Evening Shuttles and Safe Ride also provide accessible transportation. The University also offers transportation services for students with disabilities and injured students. For information on how to access these services see the Getting Around resources available through the Department of Safety and Security or contact the Office for Access and Equity.

For additional information on planning accessible events, *see also* ADA National Network, A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities (2015).

CONTACT

Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity Programs
Bridget Collier
Section 504/ ADA Coordinator
bcollier@uchicago.edu
773.834.6367
Accommodation requests for review and discrimination complaints

Director, Office for Access and Equity
Liz Honig
ehonig@uchicago.edu
773.702.4913
Access, generally, and faculty, other academic appointees, and postdoctoral researchers accommodations

Communication Access Coordinator
asl.cart@uchicago.edu
ASL interpreting and captioning

Student Disability Services
disabilities@uchicago.edu
773.702.6000
Student access and accommodations

Employee and Labor Relations
elrelations@uchicago.edu
773.834.7345
Staff access and accommodations