

CT State Event Accessibility Guide and Checklist

Purpose

All College sponsored events either on or off campus are subject to the accessibility requirements of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as Amended (2008), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Event organizers have a responsibility to ensure accessibility for presenters and attendees with disabilities. All event organizers should be familiar with these guidelines. Event participant seeking assistance coordinating event-related access may contact the person who is responsible for organizing the event and scheduling the space and location.

Creating equal access can take time; please begin your planning early. To make your event as accessible as possible, event organizers should work proactively, which not only mitigates many access concerns but also allows organizers to identify access barriers.

Consider what aspects of the event can be made accessible in advance

A major aspect of the accessibility of any event is considering what can be done without an accommodation request in place for a person's unique needs. For example, if an organization hosts a live keynote speaker with video access, consideration for a Communication Access Real-Time (CART) specialist to provide captioning might make sense, regardless of whether there was a request for one. This is an easy way to ensure access to anyone who may identify as deaf or hard of hearing, without requiring them to disclose their disability and request accommodation.

Such proactive and thoughtful planning can help participants feel welcome and assured that the event coordinators were intentional in their planning.

Designating an Access Coordinator for your event

Each event should have a designated contact person available to assist participants with accommodation requests and answer any accessibility-related questions. This person should be listed with contact information on any promotional materials, flyers, brochures, etc. that are meant to advertise the event. This designated person should have a good understanding of the event's details and logistics.

Please consider using the following language while promoting your event:

If you require an accommodation to fully participate in this event, please contact NAME OF PERSON at PHONE and/or EMAIL as soon as possible. Some accommodations take longer to arrange and require advanced notice.

VENUE ACCESSIBILITY

When selecting a room/space for your event, please consider the following:

- Where are the nearest power operated doors, elevators, ramps, and accessible restrooms relative to the location of the space? Please ensure there is at least one accessible restroom is in the close proximity to the event room.
- Are there columns located within space that could limit line of sight and/or ability to move freely with mobility equipment (i.e., wheelchairs, walkers, crutches, canes) throughout the space?
- Is the space able to accommodate microphone/voice amplification equipment? When organizing any events, please always include a microphone for your presenter and for the Q&A section of your event. It is also best practice for a person with a microphone to repeat a question if a question was asked by the audience without a microphone. Consider setting up a microphone in the audience for participants to walk up to or have volunteers who will take the microphone to a person in the audience with a raised hand. This ensures that participants with hearing loss have access to all information during the event.
- Avoid horseshoe-shaped seating arrangements as it may create visibility and mobility challenges for participants.
- If using a large space, is there a way to ensure that participants in the back can see the event as well as the front row viewers?
- Are walking spaces free of obstructions?
- Lighting is very important for accessible spaces. Will there be any flashing lights as a part of the event? Is the lighting adjustable? Can a sign language interpreter be well-lit during the event? If flashing lights are a part of the event, please consider including this information in your advertising materials. Flashing lights may cause seizures. Participants sensitive to flashing lights should be warned in advance.
- Inspect your event space prior to the event to avoid the rooms with humming light or background noise as it may disrupt the ability to follow the event by participants with sensory disabilities. Sensory disabilities are conditions that affect how a person receives or processes information through senses such as sight, hearing,

touch, taste, smell, balance, and body awareness. Check the sound of your video/music in advance to ensure it's not too weak or too loud.

- Are there electrical outlets throughout the space to accommodate laptops and other assistive devices that need to be plugged in?
- Can a service animal be safely included in your event space? Is there space available for the service animal to rest without creating a tripping hazard for other participants? Where is the nearest space for service animal toileting and water access?

COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS

Submission of Materials

- Submit hard copies and/or digital copies of presentation materials in advance.
- Materials should be provided in larger font sizes, preferably 16–18 points, to accommodate alternative media formats.
- Information should be presented with high contrast between the background and the font color. Avoid using “busy” backgrounds as it reduces visibility for people with low vision.
- Include image descriptions to accommodate the needs of people with vision loss or low vision. Keep your description short and avoid using descriptions that might profile people.

Presentation Requirements

- Use a microphone
- Face the audience while speaking
- Use captioned media for videos or audio content
- Verbally describe all visual materials (e.g., slides, charts, images)

Written Materials

Ensure all written communication (PowerPoint slides, handouts, flyers, etc.) uses large font sizes (generally 16–18 points) and appropriate color contrast for readability. Increase line height to reduce visual crowding. Recommended fonts: Ariel, Verdana, Open Sans.

Accommodations for d/Deaf, Hard of Hearing Attendees or participants with Reduced Hearing

The term “d/Deaf” is used to reflect both the medical understanding of hearing loss and the cultural identity associated with Deaf communities. It acknowledges that some people

with significant hearing loss may not identify with Deaf culture, while others strongly embrace a Deaf cultural identity. This terminology is commonly used in academic, advocacy, and disability services settings to honor the wide range of experiences and identities within the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

To make your event accessible for persons who are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, the following services might be incorporated:

- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters or CART Services. A professional ASL interpreter translates spoken English into American Sign Language (and vice versa) in real time.
- CART (Communication Access Real-Time Translation) is facilitated through a trained CART specialist who converts spoken language into live, accurate text displayed on a screen or device.

Both services have to be scheduled in advance. Usually, event participants/presenters with this need would reach out to the event organizers to proactively request these services. However, best practices recommend scheduling CART services for all public events to ensure accessibility for participants with undiagnosed/undisclosed disabilities. Many people without disabilities also benefit from CART/captions: non-native language speakers, people with focus/attention challenges, people for whom certain terminology might be new, and others. Proactively accommodating the needs of the majority of people without them requesting accommodations in advance aligns with Universal Design practices.

Etiquette for working with ASL interpreters:

- For events lasting longer than 90 minutes, a team of two ASL interpreters is recommended to ensure effective and continuous communication throughout the event.
- ASL interpreters should be positioned where they can be clearly seen by participants using their services. For in-person events, interpreters should stand or sit at the front of the room facing the audience. For virtual events, interpreter video feeds should be pinned or spotlighted so they remain visible at all times. For in-person events, please consider providing a chair for each interpreter and offering bottled water as a courtesy.
- Interpreters must remain fully visible to the individuals they are supporting, with no physical obstructions that could interfere with the visual communication process.

- Appropriate lighting is essential. Please ensure that the interpreter's face and hands are well illuminated and clearly visible. Avoid placing interpreters with their backs to windows or in locations where glare, shadows, or other objects may obstruct the view of their face or hands.
- When interacting with individuals who are d/Deaf, hard of hearing, or have reduced hearing, please speak directly to the individual rather than the ASL interpreter. Maintain eye contact with the person and communicate naturally, allowing the interpreter to facilitate the conversation.
- Please be mindful of the ASL interpreters' scheduled service times. Respecting these time commitments supports interpreter effectiveness and ensures high-quality communication access throughout the event.

If you need to schedule ASL interpreters or CART for your student-facing events, contact the Office for Disability and Accessibility Services (ODAS) Campus Director on your campus; For faculty/staff-facing events, please contact HR office on your campus.

Event Publications and Advertising

All advertising, invitations, and brochures must include an accessibility statement and contact information for the organizing party.

Accessibility Statement (please add your details):

If you require an accommodation to fully participate in this event, please contact NAME OF PERSON at PHONE and/or EMAIL as soon as possible. Some accommodations take longer to arrange and require advanced notice.

All publications must indicate availability in alternate formats upon request.

Accessibility for Virtual Events:

Advanced Access to Presentation Materials

- File types compatible with screen readers (use Docx instead of PDF)
- Materials emailed/virtually delivered in advance when possible
- Place questions into the Chat when possible

Video Meeting Settings

- Check settings for captions, state aloud/write in the chat at the beginning of the event how attendees can toggle captions in the video platform

- If using ASL interpreters, check settings for whether interpreters can pin video or if the event organizer needs to pin their video to the top of the page
- If using ASL interpreters, make sure ASL team joins the same breakout room as the d/Deaf event attendees

Participant Contribution

- If event attendees are welcome to raise hand or unmute, build monitoring of the chat into facilitation.

Speaker/Presenter Guidance

- Re-identify verbally when answering a question, especially if there are multiple speakers (ex. “This is John Doe, XYZ”)
- Start with a brief visual description during introduction ; "For anyone who benefits from visual descriptions, I'm a middle-aged White woman with shoulder-length gray hair and rectangular glasses. I'm wearing business attire today and am standing at the front of the room. I'll be referencing slides during the presentation, and I'll describe any important images, charts, or visual information aloud."

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

- Link to Main Website for Campus Maps and Directions which identify location of accessible parking.
- Make sure that there are ample accessible parking spaces, marked with a symbol of accessibility located on the shortest route nearest the accessible entrance, and make sure there are visual and audible signals at crosswalks.
- Identify closest accessible parking depending on location of event and share information with vendors, volunteers and attendees.
- This may seem self-explanatory, but having enough reserved and accessible parking for those with disabilities is necessary. For some event spaces, like an outdoor field, there may not be designated accessible parking spaces. Therefore, event staff may need to intentionally designate these spaces during event set-up.
- Additionally, reminding your venue, vendors, staff, and volunteers not to use these close-to-door parking spaces for loading and unloading is essential.
- Ensure that doors are easy to open (working automatic/push button door openers, lever handles) and lightweight (no more than 5 pounds). Be mindful that revolving doors are not accessible. Be sure that glass doors have contrasting door frames, stickers, or bright signs.
- If weather conditions might affect participants’ mobility from the parking lot to the event venue, please ensure you have a plan for addressing these needs.

ADA Paratransit Services

Individuals who have a disability that prevents them from using the public transit bus service in Connecticut, may be eligible for ADA Paratransit service. Refer to the following link for further information regarding available paratransit services.

https://portal.ct.gov/dot/ctada/paratransit-service?language=en_US

DIETARY CONSIDERATIONS

- When planning your event menu, please be mindful of food allergies some participants might have. Avoid top 9 allergens, if possible:
 - ☐ Milk
 - ☐ Eggs
 - ☐ Fish (e.g., bass, flounder, cod)
 - ☐ Crustacean shellfish (e.g., crab, lobster, shrimp)
 - ☐ Tree nuts (e.g., almonds, walnuts, pecans)
 - ☐ Peanuts
 - ☐ Gluten/Wheat
 - ☐ Soybeans
 - ☐ Sesame
- “Build your own” food options to allow attendees to avoid foods for dietary or sensory reasons
- Request ingredient lists from food vendors

Recommended fonts: Ariel, Verdana, Open Sans (as large as possible)

Use of common allergen symbols

QR Codes with lists of ingredients

- Provide Kosher and Halal food options, when possible
- Ensure ingredients for all campus equipment such as popcorn machines, etc. are nut free

SENSORY CONSIDERATIONS:

Sensory mindfulness is an important aspect of creating inclusive and accessible events. Although everyone may experience sensory overload at times, some individuals are especially sensitive to stimuli such as lighting, noise, scents, textures, and crowded spaces. Considering these diverse sensory needs during the planning process demonstrates respect for all attendees and helps create an environment where everyone can participate comfortably and fully enjoy the event.

- Provide agendas and maps, including alternative routes to the event that would avoid high-stimuli areas
- Provide built-in movement breaks, state the option for attendees to take breaks as needed during the event, clearly mark “quiet areas”
- Provide remote access options
 - Do not require cameras
- Provide sensory/ regulation tools
 - Sunglasses, blue light glasses, ear plugs, sensory tools, or sensory room if possible
- Provide warning for events that include things such as flashing lights, loud noises, large crowds
- Remind people to be mindful of not wearing perfume/cologne, when possible

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Every campus follows their own evacuation/emergency procedures. Assign a person knowledgeable about evacuation/emergency procedures at the event location to be in charge of emergency procedures during the event. Make sure everyone on the organizers’ side knows who that person is. In case of emergency, this person will lead evacuation procedures.

[CT State Emergency Notifications](#)

CT State Event Accessibility Checklist

Planning and Coordination

- ☐ Assign accessibility contact person
- ☐ Include accessibility statement/contact on promotions
- ☐ Plan accommodations proactively
- ☐ Review event using [Universal Design principles](#)

Venue Accessibility

- ☐ Accessible entrance, elevators, ramps, restrooms
- ☐ Clear pathways and seating access
- ☐ Microphones for presenters and audience
- ☐ Adequate lighting and minimal sensory distractions
- ☐ Service animal accommodations
- ☐ Electrical outlets available

Communication and Materials

- ☐ Share materials in advance
- ☐ Use accessible formats and large fonts
- ☐ High contrast design
- ☐ Include image descriptions
- ☐ Caption videos and describe visuals

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Access

- ☐ Arrange ASL interpreters if needed
- ☐ Arrange CART captioning
- ☐ Provide interpreter visibility and lighting

Virtual Events

- ☐ Share accessible materials beforehand
- ☐ Enable captions
- ☐ Pin/spotlight interpreters
- ☐ Monitor chat and identify speakers

Transportation and Parking

- ☐ Accessible parking available
- ☐ Accessible route to venue
- ☐ Weather contingency plan

Dietary Considerations

- ☐ Provide ingredient information
- ☐ Offer allergy-conscious options
- ☐ Consider Kosher/Halal options

Sensory Accessibility

- ☐ Provide agendas/maps
- ☐ Designate quiet spaces
- ☐ Offer breaks and remote access
- ☐ Warn about flashing lights or loud noises

Emergency Procedures

- ☐ Identify emergency coordinator
- ☐ Review evacuation procedures
- ☐ Include accessibility in emergency planning

Final Review

- ☐ Accessibility requests reviewed
- ☐ Accommodations confirmed
- ☐ Technology tested
- ☐ Staff briefed on accessibility procedures
- ☐ Accessibility feedback collected after event

If you have questions about planning an accessible event or would like guidance on implementing these recommendations, please contact your campus Office for Disability and Accessibility Services (ODAS). While ODAS is available to provide consultation and help identify accessibility considerations, our office may not be able to directly provide or coordinate every accommodation, resource, or service listed in this checklist. Depending on the nature of your event, you may also need to work with other campus departments, such as Facilities, Information Technology, Public Safety, or other appropriate offices, to ensure accessibility needs are met.