

Disability Access & Inclusion Guide



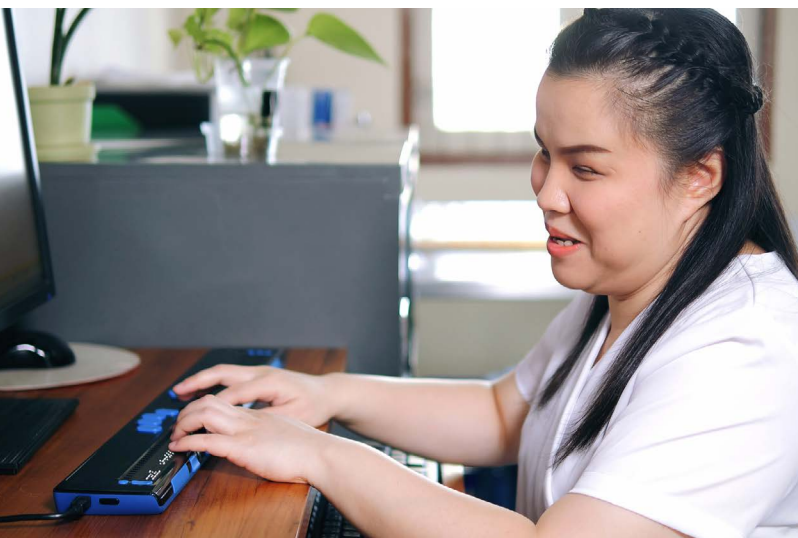
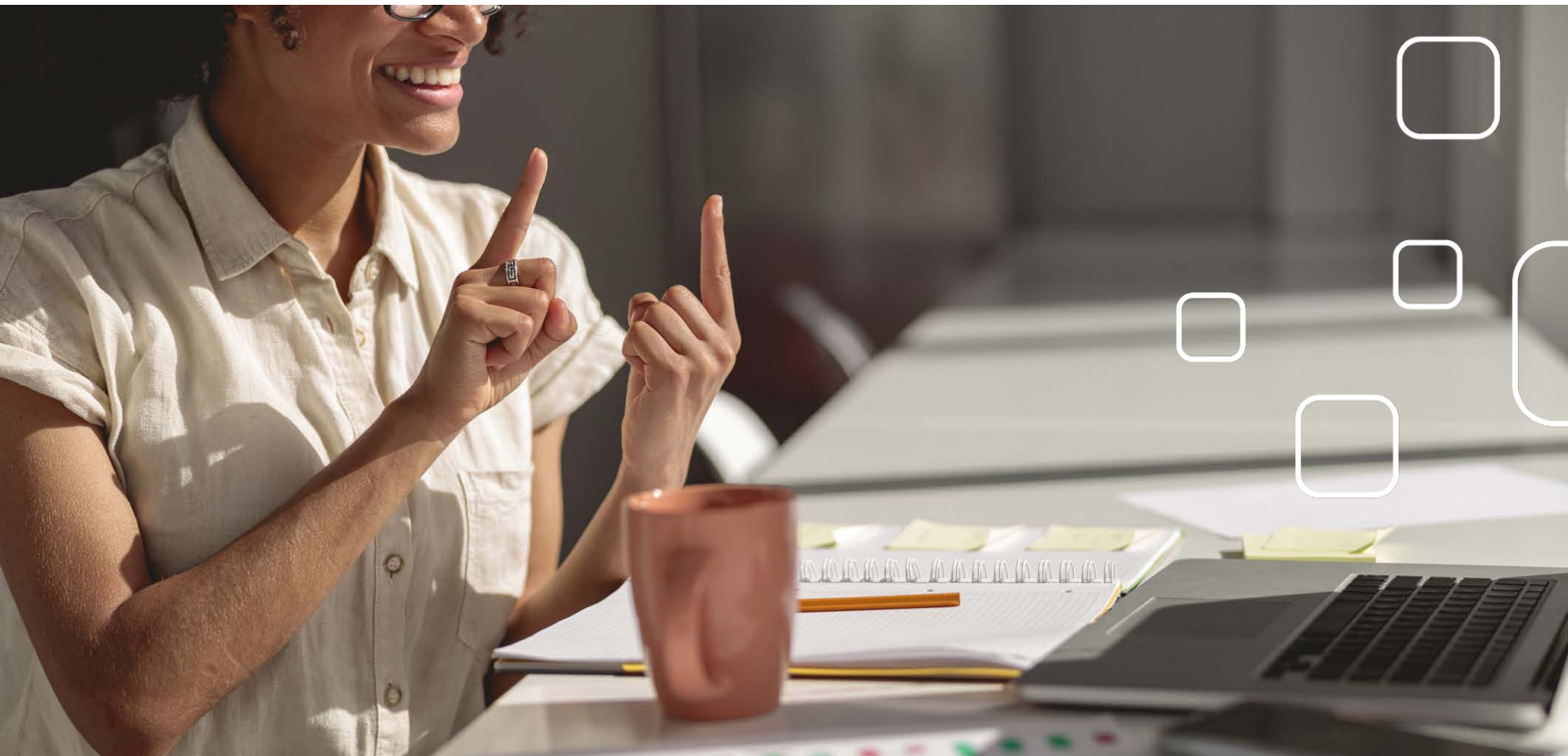
Office of
Community
Partnerships
& Strategic
Communications



Disability Rights
Education &
Defense Fund



Governor's
Office of
Planning &
Research



Disability Access & Inclusion Guide



3



5



7



9



Office of Community Partnerships
and Strategic Communications
info.ocpsc@opr.ca.gov | ocpsc.ca.gov



Disability Rights Education
& Defense Fund
info@dredf.org | 510-644-2555



Disability Access & Inclusion Guide 1.1

IN-PERSON EVENTS

Everyone should be able to attend your in-person event. This guide will help you make sure that your events are inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to diverse disabled people. Accessibility benefits everyone!

1. Make a plan for accessibility

- Consult or collaborate with people who are disabled.
- Designate a team member ahead of time to be responsible for ensuring there is physical and communication accessibility – before and during the event.
- Train all staff and volunteers on access during planning and just before the event, including how to respond to requests for reasonable accommodations.

2. ASK! Find out what people need to be able to attend your event

When you send out the invitation or link to register for your event, let people know they can contact you to ask for accommodations. Here's sample language you can use:

"We want our event to be inclusive and accessible. If you need any type of accommodation, such as Real Time Captioning, ASL, large print, or braille, please contact NAME at name@domain.org (or phone number) at least seven (7) business days before the event so we have time to arrange for ASL interpreters, a captioner, or alternative formats. We will do our best to arrange for accommodations if you contact us later than seven days before the event, but we cannot guarantee that we will be successful. Thank you!"

3. Physical Access

Make sure everyone can get into the venue and participate.

- **Entry:** Make sure that the building entry is accessible to people who use wheelchairs (level entry, or a ramp that leads to the front door).
- **Meeting areas:** Any space or meeting room needs a doorway that is at least 36" wide, and there should be adequate space for people using a wheelchair, scooter, or other mobility device to have a clear path of travel and places to sit.
- **Visibility & Signage:** Lots of understandable and easy-to-read signage, clear lines of sight to stages or screens, and well-lit spaces.
- **Restrooms:** There should be wheelchair-accessible stalls with grab bars, sinks that a wheelchair rider can roll under, and hand towels or dryers that are in reach range.
- **Tables:** Registration and other tables need to be accessible to wheelchair users.

4. Program Access

Here's where asking ahead of time about reasonable accommodation comes in handy!

- **Real Time Captions** are created as an event takes place. A captioner (often trained as a court reporter or stenographer) translates spoken words into readable text. Captions can also benefit individuals who understand text better than the spoken word. Captioners can provide you with a transcript of the event!

Program Access (continued)

- **American Sign Language (ASL)** is used by D/deaf people. ASL is a distinct language with its own grammar, syntax and cultural nuances. It is not a literal translation of English. Two ASL interpreters are typically needed for any meeting over 30 minutes long.
- **Alternative Formats** can be digital copies of materials sent ahead of time, or large print (usually the 18pt font or above), or braille materials available at the event.
- **Assistive Listening Devices** amplify sound for people who are hard of hearing.
 - **Hearing loops** surround a space that is connected to a sound system. Sound can be directed into the telecoil (t-coil) of hearing aids, cochlear implants, or a portable receiver.
 - **FM listening systems** transmit from a sound system to receivers much like language interpreters use.
- To keep the environment safe for people with chemical sensitivities, refrain from using scented products.
- **Label food** for possible allergens, gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, and other options.

5. Presentations

People are at your event to learn, have fun, network, and more. Make sure everyone can benefit from what's happening.

- Send materials ahead of time to people who may not be able to see screens or flip charts.
- Verbally convey any text and describe visual materials like charts and images on slides.
- Use large print on presentations that can be seen from a distance.
- Always use a microphone – presenters and audience members.
- Videos must be captioned.

6. Respect everyone's needs

Be open when other accessibility issues come up. You might not have anticipated every access need—don't panic! It is inevitable. Do your best to make your event as accessible as possible!

Resources Abound on the Internet

These resources provide more detailed and really helpful information about accessibility. Check them out!

ADA National Network: [A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities](#)

Autistic Self-Advocacy Network: [Holding Inclusive Events](#)

Web Accessibility Initiative: [Making Events Accessible](#)

University of Kansas: [Best Practice Guidelines for Planning an Accessible Event](#)

**Office of Community Partnerships
and Strategic Communications**

info.ocpsc@opr.ca.gov | ocpsc.ca.gov



**Disability Rights Education
& Defense Fund**

info@dredf.org | 510-644-2555



Disability Access & Inclusion Guide 1.2

VIRTUAL EVENTS

Everyone should be able to attend your virtual event. This guide will help you make sure that your online events are inclusive, accessible, and welcoming to diverse disabled people. Accessibility benefits everyone!

1. Make a plan for accessibility!

- Consult or collaborate with people who are disabled.
- Make sure that the online meeting platform that you use is accessible – popular accessible platforms include Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and WebEx.
- Designate a team member ahead of time to be responsible for ensuring there is accessibility – before and during the event.
- Train all staff on access during planning and during the virtual event, including how to respond to requests for reasonable accommodations.

2. ASK! Find out what people need to be able to attend your event.

When you send out the invitation or link to register for your event, whether it's on Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, or any other online meeting platform, let people know they can contact you to ask for accommodations. Here's sample language you can use:

"We want our event to be inclusive and accessible. If you need any type of accommodation, such as Real Time Captioning or ASL, or need us to send you materials before the meeting, please contact NAME at name@domain.org (or phone number) at least seven (7) business days before the event so we have time to arrange for ASL interpreters, a captioner, or alternative formats. We will do our best to arrange for accommodations if you contact us later than seven days before the event, but we cannot guarantee that we will be successful. Thank you!"

3. Online Meeting Platform Accessibility

The online meeting platform that you use needs to be accessible to people who are blind so they can use the same tools as people who see; people with dexterity limitations who use keyboard shortcuts or joy sticks; and people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing who rely on captions. Fortunately, widely used platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Webex, have integrated accessibility. If you use a different software, ask for their accessibility guide.

4. Program Access

Here's where asking ahead of time about reasonable accommodation comes in handy!

- **Live Captioning.** Captions are used by people who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to know what's being spoken. People who understand text better than the spoken word also benefit.
 - **Automated Captions** are generated and displayed at the bottom of the video window using the platform's speech recognition technology. Auto captions are free in Zoom, Teams, and other online meeting software. Make sure that they are enabled before your meeting and turn them on when the meeting begins. You can save the transcript before you close the meeting.

Program Access (continued)

- **Real Time Captions** are created by a captioner who translates spoken words into readable text. Captioners can provide you with a transcript of the event.
- **American Sign Language (ASL)** is used by D/deaf people. ASL is a distinct language with its own grammar, syntax and cultural nuances. It is not a literal translation of English. Two ASL interpreters are typically needed for any meeting over 30 minutes long.
- **Alternative Formats** can be digital copies of materials sent ahead of time, or large print (usually the 18pt font or above), or braille materials available at the event.
- **Assistive Listening Devices** amplify sound for people who are hard of hearing.
 - **Hearing loops** surround a space that is connected to a sound system. Sound can be directed into the telecoil (t-coil) of hearing aids, cochlear implants, or a portable receiver.
 - **FM listening systems** transmit from a sound system to receivers much like language interpreters use.

5. Presentations

People attend your event to learn. Please make sure everyone benefits from what's happening by making your presentations accessible.

- Send materials ahead of time to people who may not be able to see screens.
- Verbally convey any text and describe visual materials like charts and images.
- Use large print to make your slides easy to read.
- Make sure all videos have captions.

6. Respect everyone's needs

Be open when other accessibility issues come up. You might not have anticipated every access need—don't panic! It is inevitable. Do your best to make your event as accessible as possible!

Resources to Help Make Online Meetings More Accessible

These resources provide more detailed and helpful information about online meeting accessibility. Check them out!

GSA – Section 508.gov: [Create Accessible Meetings](#)

Web Accessibility Initiative: [Holding Accessible Remote Meetings](#)

Platform Accessibility Information

[Zoom](#) | [Microsoft Teams](#) | [WebEx](#)

**Office of Community Partnerships
and Strategic Communications**

info.ocpsc@opr.ca.gov | ocpsc.ca.gov



**Disability Rights Education
& Defense Fund**

info@dredf.org | 510-644-2555



Disability Access & Inclusion Guide 1.3

OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

Implicit bias about disability affects everyone. In communications we need to recognize and avoid common stereotypes and portray disability as a part of the human condition. Disability is intersectional – it crosses age, gender, gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, race, language, and economic status. No single strategy for outreach or communication will work for everyone, but thoughtful planning can address the issues needed to engage people with all types of disabilities and their families.

1. Use Multichannel Communication

Using a range of communication channels and methods will maximize the number of people with disabilities, and others, who you reach. Consider communicating over varied channels with printed materials (flyers, posters, doorhangers), audio (podcasts, radio, audio files), and captioned videos with audio description.

2. Accessible Communications

Ensure all formats of your materials are accessible to people with different disabilities, including people who are deaf/hard-of-hearing; people who are blind or have low vision; people with cognitive or intellectual disabilities; and people with learning disabilities. Examples:

- **Print materials.** Use a **readable** font (never smaller than 12pt Arial), and make sure there is good contrast between text and background colors. You can check contrast using the [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#).
- **Video.** Make sure videos have captions (for people who are deaf/hard-of-hearing) and audio narrative for people who are blind. Audio descriptions (AD) help blind people. AD is an audio narrative of key visual elements.
- **Audio.** Podcasts and radio are great options for people who are blind. Make sure that text transcripts accompany your audio communications.

3. Authentic representation through imagery

- **Include images of disabled people in your materials!** Whether using photographs or graphics, use images that show disabled people as active participants in the world, and not passive recipients of aid (such as sitting in a wheelchair pushed by an aide in a uniform). Images should celebrate intersectionality. The Disability Collection at Getty Images is a great (expensive) resource for photographs. Also check [Disabled and Here](#).
- **Alternative text for images (Alt-text).** When images are included in digital materials they must have Alt-text so blind users' screen reading software can announce the content in the image. Alt-text is embedded in an image using Word or HTML (or other software). [WebAIM's Alternative Text Guide](#) is an excellent resource. [Canva.com](#) (Nonprofits are eligible for a free account!) has a good collection of disability icons.

4. Disability culture & identity

Disability culture grew out of the shared experiences of disabled people and the coalitions emerging out of the disability rights and independent living movements. It is global and includes the arts in all their forms.

Disability identity is how a disabled person views themselves, their connection to other people with disabilities, and their place in the world. This [short piece by Anjali Forber-Pratt](#) provides a good explanation of both disability culture and identity.

- **Person first vs. Identity first language.** When referring to people who have disabilities, there are at least three acceptable ways:
 1. Person first language uses, “person with a disability.”
 2. Identity first language uses “disabled person.”
 3. In specific situations, ask the person if their preference.
- **#SaytheWord: Disabled!** “#SaytheWord was coined by Lawrence Carter-Long to use language to confront the invisibility of people with disabilities. Disabled do not use euphemisms like, “differently-abled,” “physically challenged,” or “Special Needs.” (A need isn’t special if somebody else gets to take the same thing for granted.)

5. Avoid “inspiration porn”

The late Australian disability advocate Stella Young, introduced the concept of “Inspiration Porn.” Informally defined, inspiration porn may use sentimentality, pity, or depict disabled people as heroes for doing the same thing non-disabled people do every day. It objectifies disabled people. Andrew Pulrang’s [“How to Avoid Inspiration Porn,”](#) is good primer.

Resources

[UN Disability-Inclusive Communications Guide, 2022](#)

[Inspiration porn and the objectification of disability: Stella Young at TEDxSydney, 2014](#)

**Office of Community Partnerships
and Strategic Communications**
info.ocpsc@opr.ca.gov | ocpsc.ca.gov



**Disability Rights Education
& Defense Fund**
info@dredf.org | 510-644-2555



Disability Access & Inclusion Guide 1.4

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has become central to communications across the world. It is used by for-profit businesses, governments, nonprofit organizations, and individuals. It's used for commercial purposes, to share critical public information (such as extreme heat warnings, public health updates, and more), to raise awareness about social justice issues, to connect with our friends and family, and for fun and entertainment. To make sure that everyone is engaged, social media must be accessible to disabled people, which takes some thought and planning, but pays off because accessibility benefits everyone. Be proactive by making your social media accessible using these tips:

1. Use Multiple Social Media Platforms

If possible, use more than one social media platform to broaden your reach and engagement with diverse disabled people. There's evidence that social media plays a critical role in amplifying messages and people tend to migrate to the platform they're most comfortable using. Experiment with image-focused platforms like Instagram and YouTube, and platforms that incorporate text and images like Facebook, Threads, or X (formerly Twitter).

2. Social Media Post Accessibility

Many people who are blind use screen reading software on their computers or text-to-speech on cell phones and tablets to listen to print on the screen. Screen readers and text-to-speech read text out loud, but they cannot describe images that do not include alt-text, and multi-word hashtags are often nonsensical without accessibility adjustments.

- **Images: Include alternative text.** When images are included in digital materials they must have alt-text so blind users' screen reading software can announce the content in the image. Alt-text is embedded in an image and read by the software. [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#) all have settings where you can add alt-text to images.
- **Hashtags: Use Title Case.** Screen reading software will try to read a multiple word hashtag that uses all lowercase letters as one long word instead of reading the words separately (consider how a computer might read #bumpusup versus #BumpUsUp). To make hashtags more readable for people who have print disabilities and to ensure that screen reader software pronounces the hashtag correctly, capitalize the first letter of each word – often referred to as Title Case. Examples: **#ExtremeHeat**, **#SaveOurWater**, **#VaccinateAll58**
- **Emojis: Access may be built in, but use with caution.** Emojis are used across platforms and in everyday texts between people. Emojis typically have alt-text embedded in their Unicode, so a screen reader says, “red heart,” when it comes across a ❤️. When it comes across a string of ❤️s, it repeats, “red heart, red heart, red heart, so use emojis sparingly. Check the alt-text using the tools in the platform you're using to make sure it makes sense – you can always add, “Yellow smiling face,” for the 😊 emoji. Also, do not assume that the emoji you choose to represent a feeling holds the same meaning for all readers.

Social Media Post Accessibility (continued)

- **Colors: Contrast.** Make sure there is good contrast between text and background colors in all graphics. You can check contrast using the [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#).
- **Video.** Make sure embedded videos have captions (for people who are deaf/hard of hearing) and audio narrative for people who are blind. Audio descriptions (AD) help blind people. AD is an audio narrative of key visual elements.

3. Authentic representation through imagery

Include images of disabled people in your materials! Whether using photographs or graphics, use images that show disabled people as active participants in the world, and not passive recipients of aid (such as sitting in a wheelchair pushed by an aide in a uniform). Images should celebrate intersectionality. The Disability Collection at Getty Images is a great (expensive) resource for photographs. Also, check [Disabled and Here](#).

4. Language

- **Person first vs. Identity first language.** When referring to people who have disabilities in social media posts, there are at least at least three acceptable ways:
 1. Person first language uses, “person with a disability.”
 2. Identity first language uses “disabled person.”
 3. Name the disability when appropriate, for example, “deaf actors,” or “website testers who are blind.”
- **#SaytheWord: Disabled!** “#SaytheWord was coined by Lawrence Carter-Long to use language to confront the invisibility of people with disabilities. Do not use euphemisms like, “differently-abled,” “physically challenged,” or “Special Needs” (a need isn’t special if somebody else gets to take the same thing for granted).

Resources

[Accessible Social](#)

[Hootsuite: Social media accessibility – inclusive design tips for 2023](#)

[Sprout Social: 8 guidelines to make social media posts more accessible](#)

**Office of Community Partnerships
and Strategic Communications**
info.ocpsc@opr.ca.gov | ocpsc.ca.gov



**Disability Rights Education
& Defense Fund**
info@dredf.org | 510-644-2555

