



Inclusive Meetings, Presentations and Materials

This document is a sampling of resources that may assist Councils and others to coordinate meetings, presentations and materials that are accessible to all.



Why was this document developed?

Councils on Developmental Disabilities involve people with developmental disabilities in meetings, workgroups, committees and discussions to the fullest extent possible in all aspects of Council work. To assist Councils to meet their responsibilities, the Information Technical Assistance Center for Councils (ITACC), in partnership with the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, has put together a sampling of resources to assist Councils and their partners to provide appropriate accommodations that assist people with developmental disabilities to fully participate in Council sponsored meetings and presentations, and to design materials that are accessible to all.

How can this document be used?

Staff, Council members and others can use the resources in this document to help identify and coordinate general meeting space accommodations, accessibility of written materials, respectful language information, communication accommodations, alternative format information and accessibility considerations for people with autism. This information may help Councils and others with basic information to help include people with intellectual and developmental disabilities participate in meetings and other similar activities.

How were the materials collected and identified?

Existing resources were identified from a variety of sources to include: Green Mountain Self-Advocates, Autistic Self-Advocacy Network, The Autism NOW Center, the University of North Carolina, the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services, the National Disability Rights Network, National Youth Leadership Network, Home & Community Based Services Resource Center and Kids as Self-Advocates. Please note: These are only a sampling of resources available. The resources included in this document were identified to have broad applicability for general meetings, presentations and materials. A wide variety of resources and perspectives are represented in this collection and one viewpoint or accommodation will not meet all accommodation needs. It is important to anticipate accommodation needs and include people with developmental disabilities in the identification of individualized accommodation needs.

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Inclusive Meetings, Presentation and Materials

Respectful Language

- [People First Language](#) (Texas Council) English/Spanish
- [Youth Friendly/Accessible Language](#) (Kids as Self Advocates –KASA)
- [Disability Etiquette Checklist](#) (Green Mountain Self Advocates)
- [Respectful Language and People with Autism](#) (Autistic Self Advocacy Network)

Inclusive Meetings

- [Creating Inclusive Spaces](#) (The Autism NOW Center)
- [Guidelines for Meeting Planners](#) (Home & Community Based Services Resource Center)
- [Food Breaks](#) (University of North Carolina)
- [Tips for “last-minute” meetings](#) (University of North Carolina)

Accessible Meetings

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- [Before a Meeting](#) (NASDDDS)
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- [Written Information Checklist](#) (Green Mountain Self Advocates)
- [Clear Language Checklist for People with Intellectual Disabilities](#) (Green Mountain Self Advocates)
- [Power Point Presentations](#) (National Disability Rights Network)
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- [Generic Communication Tips](#) (Green Mountain Self Advocates)
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Alternative Formats

- [Alternative Formats Checklist](#) (Green Mountain Self Advocates)

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Section I

Respectful Language

People First Language (Texas Council) English/Spanish

Youth Friendly/Accessible Language (Kids as Self Advocates –KASA)

Disability Etiquette Checklist (Green Mountain Self Advocates)

Respectful Language and People with Autism (Autistic Self Advocacy Network)

People First Language

What do you call a person with a disability? *A person.*

What words define who you are? The color of your skin or hair? Your age? Your weight? Of course not.

When words alone define a person, the result is a label—a label that often reinforces barriers created by negative and stereotypical attitudes. Every individual deserves to be treated with dignity and respect—regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, hair color, or anything else.

People First Language

People First Language is an objective and respectful way to speak about people with disabilities by emphasizing the person first, rather than the disability. It acknowledges what a person *has*, and recognizes that a person *is not* the disability. In putting the person before the disability, People First Language highlights a person's value, individuality and capabilities.

What should you say?

When referring to individuals with disabilities, be considerate when choosing your words. Focus on The person—and never use terms that label, generalize, stereotype, devalue or discriminate. Unless it is relevant to the conversation, you don't even need to refer to or mention the disability.

The following chart has some examples of People First Language

Say This	Not This
people with disabilities	the handicapped, the disabled
people without disabilities	normal, healthy, whole or typical people
person who has a congenital disability	person with a birth defect
person who has (or has been diagnosed with)...	person afflicted with, suffers from, a victim of...
person who has Down syndrome	Downs person, mongoloid, mongol
person who has (or has been diagnosed with) autism	the autistic
person with quadriplegia, person with paraplegia, person diagnosed with a physical disability	a quadriplegic, a paraplegic
person with a physical disability	a cripple
person of short stature, little person	a dwarf, a midget
person who is unable to speak, person who uses a communication device	dumb, mute
people who are blind, person who is visually impaired	the blind
person with a learning disability	learning disabled
person diagnosed with a mental health condition	crazy, insane, psycho, mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, demented
person diagnosed with a cognitive disability or with an intellectual and developmental disability	mentally retarded, retarded, slow, idiot, moron
student who receives special education services	special ed student, special education student
person who uses a wheelchair or a mobility chair	confined to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound
accessible parking, bathrooms, etc.	handicapped parking, bathrooms, etc.

Idioma de las Personas Primero

¿Cómo se le llama a una persona con una discapacidad? *Una persona.*

¿Cuáles son las palabras que lo definen a usted cómo es? ¿El color de su piel o de su cabello? ¿Su edad? ¿Su peso? Claro que no. Cuando sólo se usan palabras para definir a una persona, el resultado es una etiqueta (una etiqueta refuerza las barreras que se crean por actitudes negativas y estereotípicas). Cada individuo merece ser tratado con dignidad y respeto, sin importar su sexo, origen étnico, religión, orientación sexual, color de su cabello, o ninguna otra cosa.

Idioma de las Personas Primero El Idioma de las Personas Primero es una forma objetiva y respetuosa de hablar acerca de las personas con discapacidades al hacer énfasis en la persona primero, en vez de su discapacidad. Reconoce lo que la persona tiene, y reconoce que una persona no es la discapacidad. Al poner a la persona antes de la discapacidad, el Idioma de las Personas Primero destaca el valor, la individualidad y las capacidades de una persona.

¿Qué debe decir?

Cuando se dirige a individuos con discapacidades sea cuidadoso con las palabras que selecciona. Enfóquese en la persona (y nunca use palabras que etiquetan, generalizan, encasillan o discriminan). No necesita hacer referencia a la discapacidad, salvo que sea relevante para la conversación.

La siguiente tabla muestra algunos ejemplos del Idioma de las Personas Primero.

Diga esto	No esto
personas con discapacidades	los discapacitados, los inválidos
personas sin discapacidades	personas normales, sanas, enteras o típicas
personas que tienen una discapacidad congénita	personas con un defecto de nacimiento
persona que tiene (o ha sido diagnosticada con)...	persona aquejada con, sufre de, una víctima de...
persona que tiene síndrome de Down	persona Down, mongólico
persona que tiene (o ha sido diagnosticada con) autismo	el autista
persona con tetraplejía, persona con paraplejía, persona diagnosticada con una discapacidad física	una tetrapléjico, un parapléjico
persona con una discapacidad física	un tullido
persona de estatura corta, persona pequeña	un enano
persona incapaz de hablar, persona que usa un dispositivo de comunicación	tonto, mudo
personas que están ciegas, personas con problemas de la vista	los ciegos
persona con una discapacidad del aprendizaje	discapacitado en el aprendizaje
persona diagnosticada con una condición de salud mental	loco, psicópata, enfermo mental, trastornado emocional, demente
persona diagnosticada con una discapacidad cognitiva o con una discapacidad intelectual o en el desarrollo	retardado mental, retardado, lento, idiota, tarado
estudiante que recibe servicios educativos especiales	estudiante de educación especial, estudiante "special ed"
persona que usa una silla de ruedas o silla para la movilidad	limitado a una silla de ruedas, constreñido a una silla de ruedas
estacionamiento, servicios sanitarios accesibles, etc.	estacionamiento, servicios sanitarios accesibles, etc. para discapacitados



Youth Friendly/Accessible Language

Youth friendly/accessible language is helpful to all audiences. The Kids As Self Advocates project advocates for using accessible language because inaccessible language is often something that stops young people from being involved in leadership.

What Youth Friendly/Accessible Language means:

- Using clear language – avoiding or explaining conceptual words [words that include a lot of ideas in one word]
 - This can be done by explaining exactly what the word means, like was done for the word conceptual in the statement above, or by explaining what you mean a different way. *See the examples at the end of this sheet.*
- Make sure to explain acronyms [an acronym is letters that stand for words. For example, KASA is an acronym for Kids As Self Advocates.
- Use examples to explain complex ideas and concepts
- Steer clear of jargon. Jargon is terms or words that are used specifically in your area of work or community.

Using youth friendly/accessible language means that all people, including young people and people with disabilities, understand the information that is being shared.

What Youth Friendly/Accessible Language Does NOT Mean:

- That a presenter needs to use slang
- That a presenter will appear to not be professional. That a presenter is going to be seen as not knowing what they are talking about or that they are not smart.
 - Often people respond in a really positive way to youth friendly/accessible language. It makes everyone more comfortable, and people can relax and really be open to learning.

Accessibility in a Presentation

There are many different ways to make presentations accessible to people with a variety of disabilities. A presenter should not worry about trying to figure out what everyone in the room can or cannot do. Instead they should focus on sharing their information in as many different ways as possible.

Ideas to Use:

- If a presenter is going to use interactive activities, [in which the group is involved in the presentation], then make sure there are at least a couple of ways to respond.
 - For example: if asking a large group to answer a question by raising their hand, also say “or by clapping or giving a shout out.”



- o If asking people to do work in small groups, make sure the questions are clear, written down and read aloud. Ask the small groups to try and get information from everyone who wants to share.
- Information in a presentation should be given in as many different ways as possible. Some suggestions are, visually [where people can read along], verbally [reading or sharing information aloud], and time to give people a chance to share their own knowledge/experience
- Have your materials [forms/worksheets/information pages] on CD disks for those who may need items in accessible format [always make sure to have a couple, and announce you have them to the group, or offer to send people items in accessible format through email/mail].

Helpful Hints: When trying to put something in youth friendly/accessible language, just try to be as **clear** as possible. Ask a young person to review materials, or offer to go through the materials with them to make sure the materials are clear and that they think others will also understand.

When giving a presentation, be sure to assume that the young people and people with disabilities have experience with the topic, just as a presenter would assume of any non-disabled person/adult in the room.

Examples of Using Youth Friendly/Accessible Language

“Today we are here to learn effective tools in advocating for health care.”

Youth friendly/accessible language: Today we are here to learn useful ways to share our opinions and experiences about how healthcare affects us and our community, by talking to those who make decisions about healthcare.

“Formalize structure and membership of committee”

Youth friendly/accessible language: Figure out and agree on who will be involved and how the committee will be structured [who will make decisions, how will decisions be made, how the committee will work].

“Develop outreach materials to recruit participants and distribute via email. “

Youth friendly/accessible language: Put together [create] announcements and flyers to find people who want to be involved in our work and then send these out over email.

Disability Etiquette

Checklist: The Key is We! Common Courtesies....

- ✓ People prefer to be called by their name, and referred to just as a “person.”
- ✓ People with disabilities have made it clear that they do not want people to use the term “mental retardation.”
- ✓ If you need to mention a person’s disability, use People First Language. Say a “person with a disability” not a “disabled person.”
- ✓ Always ask before giving assistance and let the person tell you what you may do to be helpful.
- ✓ Treat adults as adults. Use the same tone of voice you use when speaking to anyone else.
- ✓ In general do not assume a person can’t read, but also don’t assume they can.
- ✓ Speak to the person directly, not the support person or companion.
- ✓ Don’t assume a person who has limited or no speech cannot understand what is being said. People usually understand more than they can express.
- ✓ Never pretend you understand what is said when you don’t! Ask the person to tell you again what was said. Repeat what you understand.
- ✓ Do not try to finish a person’s sentence, or cut her off. Listen until she has finished talking, even if you think you know the end or can say it faster.

- ✓ Limit the use of sarcasm or subtle humor because it might leave some people out of the conversation.
- ✓ You might not be able to see some one's disability. There are many disabilities that are hidden within a person. Relax and just be you. Let common sense and friendship guide you to break down any barriers you encounter.
- ✓ Avoid using stereotypes in your thinking. People with disabilities have different personalities and different preferences about how to do things. To find out what a person prefers, ask them directly.
- ✓ It can be difficult for people with developmental disabilities to make quick decisions. Be patient and allow the person to take their time.
- ✓ Offer compliments but avoid giving a lot of praise when people with disabilities do typical things.
- ✓ Most people with disabilities want to help others, as well as be supported, and enjoy making a difference in someone's life.
- ✓ Do not worry about saying or doing something "wrong" when you meet a person who has a disability. If you are unsure what to say try "hello" or "I'm glad to meet you."

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RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE and Autistic People

- Identify-first language verses person-first language should also be taken into consideration.
- The Autistic community prefers to be referred to as Autistic, in much the same way the Blind and Deaf communities prefer to be referred to as Blind or Deaf. To drive the point home, the terms hearing impaired and visually impaired are often offensive to the Blind and Deaf communities. Referring to an Autistic person as a person *with* autism is often offensive in the Autistic community.

ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE + FACILITATION

- Has the meeting facilitator been trained on the needs of Autistic self-advocates?
- Semantic and pragmatic understanding of oral and written language used should be maximized.
- Pre-writing questions that will be asked to the group (and making them large and visible) helps facilitate Autistic communication and participation.
- Ensure Autistic people have enough time to process what is being asked before moving forward.
- Conduct meetings online when possible (via an Instant Message chat service, such as Skype-- no phone or video, text only). Phone conversations and/or meetings can pose a problem for Autistics who have Auditory Processing Disorder and who might struggle with voice as opposed to text. IM chats also often provide a workable solution to address social anxiety issues.

Section II

Inclusive Meetings

Creating Inclusive Spaces (The Autism NOW Center)

Guidelines for Meeting Planners (HCBS Resource Center)

Food Breaks (University of North Carolina)

Strategies for Making Accessibility Real (HCBS Resource Center)

Tips for “last minute” Meetings (University of North Carolina)

Creating Inclusive Spaces

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Contents

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 - [Work to respect a person's individuality and dignity when forming a program or curriculum](#)
 - [Identify what each person on a program or event team can do to promote inclusion](#)
 - [Assess your facility to make sure that it is accessible](#)
 - [Make sure that people with autism spectrum disorders and any other disabilities are included in all print and web material](#)
-

Introduction

Inclusion is not just a philosophy, an idea, or a movement, it is also an approach and an attitude that people have that ensures that every person, regardless of ability or background, can participate in all aspects of social life.

To create an inclusive setting or program for people with autism spectrum disorder or other developmental disabilities, program developers should work to:

- Offer the same opportunities for people with and without disabilities
- Work to welcome everyone in the program and celebrate diversity in participants
- Emphasize cooperation
- Seek to understand and accommodate the various needs of any person in the program
- Promote respect, understanding, and dignity for all people
- Actively engage people who are traditionally excluded to become involved in program
- Foster friendships and a sense of community within a program or setting for all participants

How can someone create inclusive spaces, programs, or events?

Following are few considerations for any person who is working to promote inclusion in any space, program, or event.

Identify what accommodations a person with autism spectrum disorders or another developmental disability may need for any particular program and try to anticipate any challenges that may arise.

People with autism spectrum disorders have a range of unique strengths or weaknesses and may need accommodations in areas like the length of time available to achieve tasks, materials/equipment, visual or verbal cues, and transitions between activities. To determine which accommodations may be best for a person with autism spectrum disorders or any other disability, the person themselves and their families are typically the best sources of information. Additionally, when determining accommodations, it is a best practice to always assume that a person with any disability is able to do something and competent.

Work to respect a person's individuality and dignity when forming a program or curriculum.

Words can be powerful in reflecting feelings and thoughts. When discussing a person with a disability, it is a common practice to put the person first and reflect their abilities over any type of disability that they may have. For example, instead of a person being referred to as a "handicapped person", they could instead be referred to as a "person with a disability". One exception to this practice is when people who have a disability choose to empower themselves by referring to the type of disability they have in a different manner. In the autism community, specifically, many people with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities choose to call themselves "autistic". When developing a curriculum, it is suggested that a person initially use person-first language. However, it may also be a good idea to discuss what language and words a person with an autism spectrum disorder or another developmental disability would like to use.

Identify what each person on a program or event team can do to promote inclusion.

Each person on a program team from the top of an organization or developer to the staff implementing a program should work to promote the inclusion of people with autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disabilities. Board members and executive staff or program developers can do this by ensuring the program or event language reaffirms the importance and value of inclusion. Additionally, executive staff can work in collaboration with other community organizations to find training for all staff and volunteers on the importance of inclusion and steps necessary to ensure that activities are adapted to include all people, to recognize that all people's accomplishments are valuable, and to facilitate friendships and community between participants.

Assess your facility to make sure that it is accessible.

Reviewing the building plans for wherever an activity of program is located to ensure that the building and bathrooms are accessible, that equipment is adaptable to all participants' needs, and that public/accessible transportation is available to and from your program, event, or activity will help ensure that a program will be readily accessible and welcoming to people with autism spectrum disorders or other disabilities.

Make sure that people with autism spectrum disorders and any other disabilities are included in all print and web material.

Showing pictures of real-life inclusion promotes the inclusion of children with and without disabilities in any program or event that you may be having. Ensure that these materials meet accessibility guidelines and are available in alternative formats (including Braille, large print, and on CD) can help include people with autism spectrum disorders or other disabilities to access information on the program or event.

Guidelines for Meeting Planners

Removing Barriers: Planning Meetings That Are Accessible to All Participants

Other Meeting Activities

A presentation or discussion is often not the only activity that is part of a meeting. When other activities are added to the agenda, consider ways to ensure that they are accessible to everyone. While many of these activities are common at larger meetings and conferences, they can also be a part of small meeting agendas or occur during an informal gathering.

Food Breaks

Almost every meeting has some kind of food function. Rarely is even a small meeting held without offering coffee or some refreshment. It is important to take into consideration the arrangement of tables, type of food served, and how it is served to ensure accessibility for all participants.

- Tables should be no higher than 34" and two-tiered tables should not be used unless all the items are available on both levels.
- Make sure refreshments or drinks are placed within reach of someone who is seated (usually 48"). It is also helpful to provide straws and lightweight plastic cups.
- When tablecloths reach the floor, be sure to tie or tape down the corners so they don't get caught in the wheels of a wheelchair or scooter.
- If buffets are used, staff or volunteers should be available to offer assistance to those who may need help seeing what is available, reaching the food, or carrying food and drinks.
- Make sure there is an accessible route of travel between tables and aisles. (See Figure 12.)

If food is made available to participants via vending machines or cafeteria-type facilities, these areas should be assessed to make sure they are accessible. In general, vending machines should have adequate space in front and all operating mechanisms should be within reach (15" is the preferred height, and no higher than 48"). Foodservice lines should have food, drinks, trays, utensils, etc. within reach of someone using a wheelchair or other mobility device.

Strategies for Making Accessibility Real

Home and Community Based Services Resource Center

In the following sections, we provide a series of actions we can take to ensure that every meeting is truly accessible. The first section is dedicated to helping meeting and conference planners identify the needs of both participants and presenters. Second, we offer general guidance for making meetings and presentations accessible, even when the specific needs of participants may be unknown. The third section provides a series of recommendations for making meetings accessible for individuals with specific functional limitations.

Section One: Identifying Accessibility Needs of Participants and Presenters

In order to identify the specific needs of individuals attending each meeting/conference, we recommend asking participants about their needs at the time of registration. A sample registration form has been included in Appendix A. Note that registration forms themselves must be accessible; be prepared to provide the registration form in alternate formats. The registration form should query participants and presenters about dietary restrictions, services and materials they require in order to participate effectively, and whether they require a fragrance-free environment. It is important to indicate a deadline for submission of the registration form so that planners have adequate time to arrange the necessary accommodations.

In addition to asking participants about their needs for the conference itself, all participants should be provided with a hotel reservation form which outlines how many accessible rooms are available and what amenities are included with such rooms. Such forms must be approved by the hotel and include their specific policies.

Section Two: General Strategies for All Meetings and Conferences

Guidelines for Physical Space

Prior to booking any conference space, conduct a site visit to the hotel or conference center to be sure that the facility will meet the needs of meeting attendees and presenters. Note that all hotel rooms labeled “accessible” are truly accessible, and some are more accessible than others. Use a site survey tool to guide you through the site inspection. (Information on some of these tools is provided in Part Six). Never assume that a hotel or conference center is ADA compliant just because they state that they are.

Choose a meeting/conference location which provides the following:

- Fully accessible meeting rooms with good lighting and acoustics
- Meeting areas large enough to provide space for interpreters, ample room for individuals using mobility aids to maneuver, and sufficient space for all participants
- Clear signage and maps
- Limited stimuli environment (consider the “busyness” of carpeting and wall coverings)
- Multiple sets of outlets in the meeting rooms for individuals using laptops or other electronic aids

Reserve a quiet space close to the main meeting area where participants can take breaks from the meeting or conference.

Tips for an Accessible Last-Minute Meeting

University of North Carolina

So what do you do if you have a week or just a day to pull together a meeting and you don't know or have no way of knowing if someone with a disability might attend? Here are some ideas for ways you can make people feel as welcome as possible, even at the last minute.

- Have someone designated to welcome participants and be assigned to handle any requests that may surface.
- Large print materials can often be made by using a larger font on the computer.
- If a wheelchair user comes to a meeting, removing a chair or relocating some furniture can create a useable path or seating area.
- Have a staff member or volunteer available to read an agenda or any handouts to someone who is blind or has low vision or provide orientation to meeting facilities.
- A person can also help take notes for someone who is Deaf or hard of hearing.
- The meeting should always be held in an accessible location. If there are stairs, measures should be taken to provide a ramp, lift, or alternate route. Carrying someone up and down stairs is not an acceptable method for providing access.

Section III

Accessible Meetings

General Meeting Guidelines (NASDDDS)

Before a Meeting (NASDDDS)

During a Meeting (NASDDDS)

After a Meeting (NASDDDS)

General Meeting Guidelines

Structure Meetings to Facilitate Participation. The ability of persons with and without developmental disabilities to contribute to meetings and presentations is determined, or at least significantly influenced, by the meeting's purpose, format, and the manner in which business is conducted. Participation is also affected the leader's management style, the amount of decision-making shared among the meeting's members and the outcomes desired. When individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities participate both the structure and functioning of the meeting may need to change, sometimes significantly, in order to capture their unique perspectives and contributions to the discussion. Organizers may need to abandon traditional meeting formats in favor of more open, loosely structured approaches that allow more time for discussion, more frequent interruptions, and additional time for interactions between group members. Meeting schedules and rules may need to be modified to facilitate self-advocates' attendance and encourage their participation.

Make Expectations Clear. Meeting participants need to know what is expected of them and their responsibilities as group members. Problems can arise when group members do not share the same expectations regarding leadership, decision-making responsibility, anticipated outcomes, and follow-up activities. Meeting organizers must be sure to clarify the function of the group; whether it is designed to (for example): provide advice and consultation, offer recommendations regarding specific issues, answer particular questions, make decisions, or provide feedback on possible courses of action.

Determine the Meeting's Purpose. Meetings are designed and organized in order to accomplish specific purposes and achieve specified outcomes. Generally, meetings are held to:

- ✓ Present or disseminate information
- ✓ Solve particular problems or generate new ideas
- ✓ Agree upon a course of action
- ✓ Provide or receive training
- ✓ Report on and/or discuss the implications of particular topics, issues, activities, accomplishments.
- ✓ Address a combination of purposes

The meeting's organizational format may differ significantly depending on its purpose and the nature of the issues under consideration. Similarly, the roles and expectations of the meeting participants will vary to according to the desired outcomes. In order for individuals with intellectual disabilities to make meaningful contributions, meeting organizers need to be able to provide a variety of different supports to match the specific purpose, content, and format of the discussion. Meetings with multiple purposes can present a particular challenge to support staff and may require more advanced preparation of participants, alternatively structured agendas, more frequent breaks, and additional facilitators to manage the dialogue and ensure full participation.

Determine Who Should Attend. Organizations want the perspectives of persons with disabilities to be included in all relevant activities and events conducted by the Association. The question of relevance should be carefully considered to ensure the involvement of self-advocates in activities that need or would benefit from their input. Meeting planners and self-advocates alike should take great care in selecting individuals for participation. Some self-advocates, just like some professionals, may be better suited to attend particular meetings than are others.

Individuals should not be invited for the purpose of providing token representation or because they are personally well known by the meeting organizers. Preference should be given to persons whose input and involvement will add value to the discussion and further the aims of the activity. And, of course, self-advocates must receive the support and assistance necessary to enable them to make meaningful contributions.

Identify the meeting's participants and the reasons for their involvement. Individuals should be considered for membership who: (a) have information or unique perspectives regarding the topic(s) to be discussed which are necessary for successfully accomplishing the meeting's objectives or achieving its outcomes, (b) have responsibility for carrying out or overseeing the actions decided upon by the group members, (c) have the ability to influence the perception of others regarding the issues under consideration, (d) have the ability to influence other's acceptance of the decisions that are made by the group, and (e) represent key constituents who have a stake in the outcomes of the meeting. Invitations should be based on the contributions each person can be expected to make to the meeting and whether he or she has decision-making power individually or as a representative of others with respect to the issues under discussion. Meeting planners need to recognize the political structure of the self-advocacy organization(s) in their state and choose key member-elected officials or officers to participate in gatherings rather than individuals who may be better known but not be able to represent the interests of the broader group.

Identify Support Needs. Supports should be seen as investments in improving the diversity of voices that contribute to Association-sponsored activities and, by extension, the richness and inclusiveness of decisions reached by organizational leaders. Increasing meeting accessibility for individuals with specific needs improves everyone's ability to participate. Meeting organizers need to identify the nature, intensity, and duration of support required by each group member and are responsible for contacting participants and/or presenters to ensure that each person has the following:

Confirm Transportation Responsibilities. Adequate and reliable transportation must be assured to and from the meeting or conference, to and from each session or discussion venue, and to and from the restaurant, restroom, and other facilities. Problems with transportation pose some of the most frequent barriers to consistent meeting participation. Meeting organizers need to identify all individuals with transportation responsibilities and the persons available to provide back-up assistance when necessary.

Before a Meeting

Provide Support Before the Meeting. Meeting leaders and organizers must make certain that self-advocates receive adequate pre-meeting preparation to ensure they fully understand the issues under discussion and are ready and able to contribute to the group's deliberations.

1. **Distribute Background Materials.** Participants must receive all relevant background information and discussion materials in a form and format appropriate to their needs prior to the meeting. Meeting planners must recognize that many individuals with cognitive disabilities are unable to read and the issues that will be under consideration during the meeting may be complex, abstract, and confusing.
2. **Review Decisions to be Made.** Assistance must be arranged to ensure that individuals with disabilities understand the issues to be discussed and the decisions to be made. Information provided to meeting participants must be adapted to fit each person's preferred mode of communication. This means, for example, that documents, presentation slides, overheads, and PowerPoint displays need to be converted to Braille or auditory recordings for persons with visual impairments. Interpreters and/or personal assistants need to be available for pre-meeting discussions to ensure people fully comprehend the issues under consideration. And, communication devices and personal supports must be available for those who need them. Support staff should meet with participants with developmental disabilities before the meeting to review agenda items, procedures and the anticipated outcomes of the discussions.
3. **Ensure Adequate Preparation.** Organizers, leaders and support staff should meet with self-advocates for an hour or two before the meeting to prepare them for the upcoming discussion. Meeting leaders should review the issues being discussed, answer questions, and develop an understanding of self-advocates' perspectives on the topics under consideration. During this time, self-advocates may develop consensus opinions regarding particular topics or identify key concerns that they want to express during the formal meeting. Meeting leaders should be prepared to assist self-advocates in expressing their points of view during the formal discussions and to help other participants understand the self-advocates' positions on the key issues under review.
4. **Use Existing Materials.** Self-advocate representatives should determine whether their organizations have previously issued position statements or commentaries that are relevant to the meeting agenda. Self-advocates should distribute these documents to other participants prior to the meeting or have the materials included in the informational packets distributed by meeting leader prior to the gathering.

During a Meeting

Provide Support During the Meeting. Adequate support during the meeting must be furnished to enable each person to fully participate in the discussion. Accommodations may include the presence of support staff or interpreters to assist persons with disabilities understand the content of the discussion and contribute to the discourse. Assistive technology and other supports may also be necessary to facilitate communication. Particular attention should be paid to:

- 1. Introductions.** Meeting participants typically introduce themselves by giving their name, professional or personal affiliation, and position title. Self-advocates who have not had prior experience participating in formal meetings, in contrast, may introduce themselves by describing their disability or their status as a “client” of a particular service provider agency. Meeting leaders and support staff must assist self-advocates in introducing themselves in ways that create positive social or professional status.
- 2. Start with Self-advocates.** To lessen the chance that the voice of self-advocates will be lost in the fast paced conversations that frequently take place, meeting leaders should begin the discussion by inviting self-advocates to share their perspectives on the topics of discussion. Self-advocates, in turn, should be prepared to respond at that time.
- 3. Ensure Communication and Understanding.** It is frequently the case in meetings that both professionals and self-advocates have difficulty comprehending what each other are saying. And, unfortunately, the intensity of the discussion can make it difficult for speakers to take the time to make sure all meeting participants understand what is being said. To ensure full participation, meeting leaders need to monitor the group’s deliberations to ensure that all members have an equal opportunity to express their opinions and to become involved in the conversation. Organizers may find it helpful to include a facilitator to take responsibility for keeping time, running the meeting and controlling the pace of the discussion.
- 4. Wrap-up.** Meeting leaders should set aside time at the end of the meeting to ask all participants if they have any questions about what was discussed, if they would like to receive additional information, or if they would like to meet with someone to clarify the agenda topics or the decisions that were made.

After the Meeting

Provide Support After the Meeting. Adequate support must be furnished to self-advocates following the meeting to “debrief” each individual and ensure the person understands any decisions that were made, key issues that emerged, and/or actions that were taken or agreed upon by the group members. In follow up to the debriefing, support staff should, with the individual’s permission, share his or her perspective on the issues discussed with the group’s leader and other members. These comments could be added to the meeting’s minutes or held for discussion at the beginning of the next gathering.

Determine the Need for Alternative Means of Participation. Access to alternative means of participation should be afforded to participants with disabilities who are uncomfortable expressing their thoughts publicly or are unable to take part in the typical meeting format and process of deliberation. Meeting leaders need to be prepared to restructure the gathering to ensure all group members are able to contribute to the discussion. Meetings may need to be held in less formal and more familiar locations, for example, such as a favorite restaurant, in a park or in another location. Self-advocates should invite meeting leaders to attend their own regularly scheduled association meetings to discuss issues or topics “on their turf” or in other environments that do not have the pressures associated with formal gatherings.

Identify Financial Support Needs. Organization leaders should identify the agency, group and/or individuals responsible for covering expenses related to the provision of direct support for participating self-advocates, as well as transportation, interpretation and other necessary types of assistance. Self-advocates who are not being reimbursed for attending an Association-sponsored meeting or presentation by their employer or home state DD agency should receive compensation for their time and expenses.

Identify the Responsible Individuals. To participate effectively in meetings, people with developmental disabilities need to have physical accessibility to get through the door and navigate their way around the meeting area, cognitive accessibility to enable them to understand and participate meaningfully in the discussion, and social accessibility to facilitate their acceptance by other meeting participants. Association leaders and meeting planners should designate a single individual or small group to be responsible for making all necessary arrangements for participants with disabilities. These assistants should ensure that each person with a disability has full physical access to the meeting that the presentation or other gathering is structured to facilitate understanding and participation, and that provisions are made to help the person make social connections with other participants.

Teleconferences. Telephone conference calls present significant challenges to group members with intellectual, speech, auditory and/or visual disabilities. Fast-paced conversations, poorly defined participant roles, the absence of nonverbal cues, and equipment or technical limitations can make it difficult, if not impossible, for participants with disabling conditions to make meaningful contributions. Leadership is crucial to setting an agenda and ensuring the discussion is not dominated by a few group members or limited by multiple or off-topic conversations. In general, conference calls are best able to accommodate to the needs of individuals with disabilities (and those without disabilities) when: (a) the number of participants is small, (b) the participants know each other well, (c) the participants understand what is expected of them and are familiar with the topics under discussion, (d) participation is consistent – group members do not turn over from one meeting to the next, (e) the purpose of the call is limited to reporting on a particular issue or disseminating information, and (f) all group members understand the communication needs of individuals with disabilities who are participating in the conference call.

While accommodations may be helpful, it is important to note that not all issues can be adequately addressed through this medium. Meeting organizers are responsible for selecting the format that affords individuals with disabilities the best opportunity for making their views known and contributing to the discussion (see “Access to alternative ways to participate” above). It may be necessary in some cases for the group leader to hold separate conversations with certain participants before and after the teleconference to ensure that their views are not lost or misrepresented. The leader also may need to take a more active role in managing the agenda and the input of the other participants to enable each person to have an equal chance to express their perspectives. Meeting organizers may find it helpful to designate a group member to be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the discussion during the call to ensure that the format and agenda facilitates constructive dialog and full inclusion.

Self-advocate Responsibilities. The primary focus of these guidelines is on identifying the accommodations professionals need to make to increase the self-advocates’ participation in relevant Association meetings and activities. But the actions of professionals alone will not make inclusion a reality. Self-advocates have responsibilities as well. To function as full group or committee members, self-advocates, like other participants, have a responsibility to:

- *Attend meetings on time.
- *Attend meetings regular
- *Attend meeting consistently. Group or committee membership should not rotate from one self-advocate to another unless that is the pattern for the other group members.
- *Arrive at the meeting prepared to discuss the issues or topics listed on the agenda.
- *Focus comments on the topics under discussion and be sensitive to time limitations

Section IV

Accessible Documents and Information

Information/Document Checklist (National Youth Leadership Network)

Language Accessibility Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Written Information Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Clear Language Checklist for People with Intellectual Disabilities (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Power Point Presentations (National Disability Rights Network, TASC)

Signs and Displaying Information Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Guidelines for Organization of Meeting Materials (HCBS Resource Center)

Guidelines for Presentations (HCBS Resource Center)

NYLN

National Youth Leadership Network



Accessibility checklist: Information for everyone

Are you looking for ways to outreach to more people? Are you trying to get people involved? Are you trying to keep them involved? How a document reads and looks affects whether people can understand the information being shared. This is a checklist for document accessibility. It also includes some tips to think about when making programs or services accessible to all people.

Document accessibility checklist:

- Does the title of your document explain what it's about?
- Did you use "Veranda" or "Arial" as a font?
- Did you use size 14 font on your public documents?
- If you use pictures or other visual images on your document, remember that too many pictures can make the page confusing to look at.
- Did you provide open space on your documents? (Remember not to crunch too much information on one page.)
- Did you use bullets or lists in your document?
- Did you use language that is easy to understand? (If you need ideas, look at the Language Accessibility Checklist on the next page)



Language accessibility checklist:

- Check the grade level and readability in Microsoft Word:
 - *Set it up (you will just need to do this once):*
 - *Select 'Tools' at the top of your screen*
 - *Then select 'Options' at the very bottom of that list*
 - *Then select 'Spelling and Grammar' (on the top of that screen usually over to the right)*
 - *Then select 'Show Readability Statistics' (at the very bottom of the list)*
 - *Now it is set!*
 - *Use it:*
 - *Complete your document*
 - *Then select 'Tools'*
 - *Then select 'Spelling and Grammar' (after checking the spelling and grammar, the program will show Readability Statistics window at the very end)*
 - *Your document is ready if the "Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level" is 8.0 or less.*

- Be direct. Write the main ideas you want to get across.
- Use short sentences (generally fewer than 15 words).
- Use one and two syllable words as much as possible.
- Use common words such as "car" instead of "vehicle."
- If you need to use a complicated (hard) word, explain what it means in the same sentence.

Other hints

- Did you offer documents in alternative formats?
- These formats can include:
 - Braille
 - Electronic format (CD or diskette), usually in Microsoft Word
 - Audio tape
 - Laminated copies
 - Large Print (Size 22 Text)
- Did you include a cover page to outline the main points or topics in your packet? (This would be like a Table of Contents.)
- Are you ready to describe the visuals or the words on the overhead if you are using a PowerPoint presentation?
- Did you remember to bring alternative formats of that presentation if you are using a PowerPoint presentation?
- Did you use respectful disability language?



Checklist: **Written Information**

Your writing will be easier to read if you:

- ✓ Use a clear font like Arial or Verdana. Fancy type is harder to read. Do not use handwriting or fonts that look like handwriting.
- ✓ Use a font size of 14 point or larger. People with visual impairments may need it even larger.
- ✓ Do not write in all capitals. People who have difficulty reading may think the capital indicates a new word.
- ✓ Use the left-aligned option and keep the right side unjustified (the right edge is ragged). It is harder to read right-justified text because the spacing is uneven and it may split words to another line.
- ✓ Do not split words with a hyphen at the end of a line. This makes the word harder to read. Some people will pause at the end of the line and treat the next line as a new sentence.
- ✓ Keep sentences short. Consider breaking long sentences into two.
- ✓ Do not let sentences go onto the next page. Remembering the information already read while turning the page may be difficult.
- ✓ Use bold for important information. Italics or underlining make it harder to read.
- ✓ Use clear headings, left-aligned to separate short chunks of text. Headings will help people keep or find their place.
- ✓ Use thick paper and consider printing on matte vs. glossy finish paper stock.
 - Thick paper will not show the information on the other side as much. Glossy paper will make the colors more vibrant, but matte paper can cut down on glare. This goes for laminated information, too.
- ✓ Use good contrast between paper and print. Avoid using light colored print or dark colored paper. This will make it difficult for people with vision problems. Black and white is best.
- ✓ Double-space writing. This makes the information stand out.
- ✓ Have white space between paragraphs or chunks of information. This will set important information apart.

- ✓ Use the same layout throughout the whole document. The format becomes predictable and easier to read.
- ✓ Do not have text go over pictures or other images. This is harder to read and becomes confusing.



Checklist: Clear Language Looks and Sounds like This

- A summary at the beginning will give the reader a preview.
- Highlight important information.
- Both 1 & 2 can be done automatically with Microsoft Word. Click on “Tools.” You will see “AutoSummarize” in the dropdown menu. Click on it. You decide if you want the summary at the beginning, end or on a separate page. You can also highlight the important ideas.
- Present information in a logical manner. This may be chronologically. This gives the reader information they need to go on.
 - Example: First, fill out the application. Then, mail it to the manager
- Write information for the widest audience first. Then explain any exceptions or conditions.
 - Example:
 - Call 802-223-0000 for information (widest audience)
 - If you use TTY, Call 802-223-1111 (exceptions/conditions)
- Do not use acronyms unless everyone knows what they stand for. Jargon refers to specialized vocabulary. Some people do not know what it means. Have a glossary of terms if they must be used. Define difficult words on the spot.
 - Example: Say “Green Mountain Self-Advocates” Do not say “GMSA”
- Use text boxes to highlight important information. Do not use too many because it can get confusing
- Use vertical lists instead of sentences.
 - Example: “You need to bring your calendar, a pen, the folder of information, money, and a change of clothes to the event on Friday.

Becomes:

- ✓ Items to bring to the event on Friday:
- ✓ your calendar
- ✓ a pen
- ✓ folder of information
- ✓ money (be specific – example “bring \$5 for lunch”)
- ✓ a change of clothes

- ✓ Use pictures to explain the main ideas. Many people depend on pictures to remember key messages.

Example: This: "Public transportation is available."
Becomes: "You can take the bus."



This example shows a picture that lets the reader know you are talking about transportation. It is important to use the same symbol every time. The pictures should be to the left of the writing. Pictures are not used to make the document flashy.

- ✓ Use People First Language. This puts the person before the disability.

Example: The retarded man crossed the street.
Becomes: The man with an intellectual disability crossed the street.

- ✓ In Vermont we use the term intellectual or developmental disability. People with developmental disabilities do not want to read or hear the word "retarded."

We want the "R" word to disappear.

It is a put down.



- ✓ Use active verbs. Use verbs in their simplest form.

Example: "The woman was attacked by a strange man." (Passive)
Becomes: "A stranger attacked the woman." (Active)

- ✓ Use pronouns like "I" and "we," as if you are talking to your readers.
- ✓ Use everyday words. Write like the person is sitting across the table from you.

Example: "commence" Becomes: "start"

- ✓ Use sentences that are short and to the point. Limit sentence to 15 or 20 words. Each sentence has one main idea.

- ✓ Do not use 2 negatives in one sentence. They cancel each other out. It is hard to figure out if the sentence is really positive.

Example: "We will go to New York if no fewer than 15 people sign up." Becomes: "We need at least 15 people to go to New York."

- ✓ Leave out unnecessary words. Fewer words make the writing clearer.

Example: "is able to" Becomes: "can"

- ✓ Use consistent wording. Use the same word for an idea or object every time.

The reader becomes familiar with the word. It helps to develop long term memory. This means the short term memory doesn't have to work as hard.

Example: An organization decides to use the word "survivor" to refer to an abused woman.

- ✓ Ask a person with an intellectual disability to read the document. They will know best how clearly it is written.



Tips for Creating Accessible Power Points

(Created January 2009)

Why use a PowerPoint?

The advantages to using a PowerPoint include:

- ✓ The process of creating a PowerPoint helps you to organize your thoughts, and be better prepared.
- ✓ A PowerPoint accommodates visual learning styles.
- ✓ It can reinforce, supplement, and clarify what you have said, and reduce misunderstandings.

More Benefits to Using a PowerPoint

- ✓ People can often listen better if they don't have to take a lot of notes.
- ✓ It helps people who arrive late to figure out where you are and what you have already covered.
- ✓ It can minimize premature questions if people look ahead to check if you will cover a particular point.
- ✓ It gives people something to remember what you talked about, and how to contact you in the future.

Best Practices for Creating Accessible Power Point Slides

- ✓ Use a sans serif font (e.g., Arial).
- ✓ Use a large font size -- at least 22 point.
- ✓ Use a dark text font and a light-colored background.
- ✓ The text on a slide should have nothing behind it.
- ✓ Provide “alternative text” descriptions for non-text items.

Instructions for creating accessible PowerPoint slides

The following instructions will increase:

- ✓ visibility for persons who have low vision, and
- ✓ accessibility for persons who are blind and use a screen reader.

The first consideration is what font to use

Accessible Fonts

- ✓ **Do not use serif fonts.**

Serif fonts have tiny details at the ends of some strokes of letters.

AaBbCc	serif	[do not use]	AaBbCc	sans*
serif	[use]			

For some individuals, serifs can cause letters to blur together and make them harder to distinguish.

Sans serif fonts include: Arial, Verdana, and Tahoma.

Please **do not** use Times Roman. Because it is a serif font, it can be harder to read.

*“Sans” means “without” in French.

USE LARGE FONTS

Handouts

- For hard copies of documents, please use at least 12 point.
- For large-print copies, we use at least 18 point.
- The text version of this Guide was created using Arial 14.

PowerPoints

- For PowerPoint **slides**, please use at least 22 point.
- For handout copies of PowerPoints, we print 3 slides per page.
- For large-print handouts, we print 1 slide per page.

Size does matter!

- Use a dark font (e.g., black) on a light-colored background.
 - ✓ A black font on a light background (e.g., white, a pale color, or a light pastel) is easier to read.
 - ✓ When printed, this also results in better handouts for writing notes.
- Do not use a design, photo, or anything behind the text on a slide.
- Do not use shadows on letters of the text.
- Do not use gradient shadings in the background.

Keep text uncluttered.**Special instructions for photos, cartoons, clip art, maps, and other non-text items**

- Some individuals who are blind use a screen reader that reads documents to them. These devices can only read text, not photos, drawings, and other non-text items.
- There is an easy way to add a text description to non-text items. You can embed an alternative text description (“alt text”) that is not visible on the slide, but which can be read by a screen reader.

Instructions for using Microsoft PowerPoint - TASC

- With your cursor on the non-text item, right click.
- Select the “size & position” option.
- At the top of the message box that pops up, choose the “alt text” tab.
- In the text box, type in a brief description of the non-text item, and close.

Example: Proper usage of non-text item



For the photo on the left, the “alt text” description that is not visible on the slide is:

“Close-up picture of a bee sitting on large orange flower.”

We also recommend that you verbally describe any non-text item on a slide, especially when it might be difficult for persons in the back of the room to see what is on a slide.

Special Instructions for Charts & Graphs

- As with photos and non-text items, charts and graphs are images that a screen reader typically cannot read.
- An “alternative text” needs to be added for screen readers.
- For example, the alt text for a chart comparing weather by season in two cities might read:

“Chart comparing weather by season in City A and City B in 2006. City A was 10 degrees colder than City B in winter, 8 in Spring, 10 in Summer, and 8 in Fall.”

We also suggest that charts and graphs be used sparingly. Make certain that your charts and graphs are really needed in your PowerPoint.

- Ask yourself whether they are necessary to convey the information you seek to present.

More tips to Enhance Visibility of PowerPoint Slides

- **Limit the use of cursive, because it is harder to read.**
- **Do not insert video clips, music, or someone talking unless the information is open-captioned.**
- **Do not justify the text.**
 - Justified text can be harder to follow for persons with low vision.
 - The PowerPoint and the text version of this Guide do not use justified text.

Note: “Justified text” adjusts the spacing between words to make all lines in a paragraph the same length (except the last line).

General tips for Effective Power Points

- **Keep it simple, to avoid distractions.**
 - Avoid multiple changes in font and font colors.
 - Use the same sans serif font (e.g., Arial) throughout. Use no more than 3 font sizes on the same slide.
 - Do not use sounds because they can be distracting.
 - Do not use animation (including text fly-in, fade-in, or fade-out).
 - Remove unnecessary words, pictures, and graphs.

Avoid information overload

- Too much information can result in no information because it decreases people’s ability to remember anything.
- Also, when you overload your audience, you shut down dialogue.

Keep it short

- Approximately 6 slides for every 10 minutes of speaking time.
- Use bullets followed by words, phrases, or short sentences.
- Do not use long sentences except when necessary (e.g., to quote an essential definition).
- ✓ **Use the “666 Rule”:**
 - **No more than 6 words per bullet, 6 bullets per slide, or 6 slides for every 10 minutes of presentation time.**

Miscellaneous suggestions

➤ **Number your slides**

- ✓ Numbered slides makes it easier to direct people's attention to a specific slide, especially if you jump over some.
- ✓ A slide number is not needed on the first (title) slide.

➤ **Include the date on the first slide.**

➤ **Provide your contact information on the last slide.**

Making Signs and Displaying Information

Finding your way around a building the first few times can be challenging. The environment will be more welcoming if it is clear where to go and where the restrooms are. Have you ever seen a sign where the print was too small to read from a distance? Some signs are hung where you do not really notice them. Being sure signs are easy to read from a distance (at least 6 feet) is important.



Checklist: Signs and Displaying Information

- ✓ Check before the meeting to be sure there are clear signs telling people where they need to go. Put up signs if they are not there or are unclear.
- ✓ The office will be more welcoming if it is clear how to use the copier or the microwave. Do you need to dial “9” to get an outside line? Some machines come with instructions that include text and symbols. If not, you can make your own.
- ✓ Having Braille and symbols on signs is very helpful.
- ✓ Post visuals on the wall at about 54 inches high. This is a good height for people who are standing and people who are using wheelchairs.
- ✓ Brochures should be displayed at no more than 48 inches high. This will increase the chances of people seeing them and being able to reach them.
- ✓ Again, all information displayed should use People First Language, which we reviewed on pages 30-31 in the Policy and Social Environment section of this manual.

General Strategies for All Meetings and Conferences

Guidelines for Organization of Meeting Materials

Meeting/conference registration packets should include:

- A notice that provides detailed local information on the availability and costs of: transportation, home health agencies that offer personal assistants, medical equipment vendors and durable medical equipment vendors; (See Appendix C for a sample list)
- A questionnaire regarding the attendees' preferred format for printed materials (Braille, large-type, computer disk, cassette tape), as well as their need for interpreter services and dietary restrictions;
- A map of the meeting facility with indicators as to where specific events will take place;
- Information on transportation to and from the conference/meeting site; and
- A copy of the emergency evacuation plan for the hotel/meeting site.

Design of conference evaluation forms:

- Create the evaluation form in several alternate formats (including Braille, audio cassette, large print and diskette).
- Offer assistance in completing the evaluation. At registration and throughout the conference, announce that assistance is available and ensure people are designated to provide assistance.
- Having alternate format copies will give participants time to review the evaluation questions in advance. They will appreciate this and it will make things go faster as they work with an assistant to complete the evaluation.
- Put the evaluation on-line and allow participants to complete it when they return home.

Design of conference/meeting materials:

- Tab and index conference packets.
- If feasible, color code different sessions, being cognizant that certain color combinations, like black on blue, are very difficult to read.
- For longer conferences, provide a list of accessible restaurants, including their location, type of cuisine, cost, type of ambience and degree of accessibility.

- Whenever possible, mail meeting/conference materials to participants in advance of meeting. In addition or when pre-mailing materials is not possible, offer an opportunity for participants to check-in and receive materials the night before the meeting.

Alternate-format materials:

- Well in advance of meeting/conference, establish a reliable source for Braille and large-print materials.
- Once aware of participants' needs for alternate-format materials, be sure to provide all meeting materials in these formats, including flyers, menus and directions.
- Package and organize alternate materials in a manner similar to that provided to other participants. For example, if material is tabbed or organized in separate packets, do the same for the alternate materials.
- List room name and location next to each session in the index.

Nametags

Use nametags that hang around the neck instead of those requiring pins or clips. Print the nametags in at least 20 point font.

Guidelines for Presentations

- Keep the presentation clear and simple.
- At the start of the session, provide an overview of the presentation. At the end, provide a summary of the key points.
- Present key concepts in multiple ways. Keep in mind that people learn in a variety of ways. Consider presenting information using visual, auditory and tactile approaches.
- Plan presentation to allow for a Q&A break every 30 minutes.
- Use well-modulated tones and a moderate pace.
- Avoid acronyms – use real words.
- When interpreters are being used, do not walk while speaking. Also, speak at a pace slow enough to allow the interpreter to translate accurately.
- When addressing an individual that is using an interpreter, make sure to speak directly to the individual, not the interpreter.
- Always use the microphones/amplification system provided.

Presenters should adhere to these guidelines for visual aids:

- Limit slides and overheads to 3 bullets per page.
- Create slides that are uniform in color, font and layout.
- When using graphics (such as charts and pictures), explain each in words and allow extra time to look at each slide/overhead once you are finished discussing it. Remember that individuals using interpreters cannot look at the slide when they are watching the interpreter.
- Audio descriptions and closed-captioning must be provided for all videos.
- Either provide alternate formats of all visual aids, or deliver such materials to the meeting sponsors in advance of the conference so that the materials can be reproduced in the necessary alternate formats.
- Avoid flash graphics and sudden noises.

- ✓ Educate speakers about your requirements of them well in advance of the conference/meeting. Also, explain what types of functional impairments guests have so that speakers can prepare an appropriate presentation.
- ✓ Always inquire whether the individuals invited to speak at the meeting/conference have any accommodation needs, e.g., ramp, podium, type of microphone.
- ✓ Ensure that the presentation area is well lighted and that the interpreter can still be seen when the lights are dimmed.

Section V

Physical Accessibility

General Guidelines for Physical Space (HCBS Resource Center)

Distractions Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Noise Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Lighting Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Common Support Needs for People with Autism (Autistic Self-Advocacy Network)

General Guidelines for Physical Space

Experiences acute sensitivity to everyday chemicals

- When registration forms indicate that one or more individuals experiences environmental illness, issue a written statement requesting that all meeting participants/presenters refrain from wearing perfumes or scents to the meeting.
- Do not choose a facility that has scheduled renovations during the conference. Contract with the hotel that no non-emergency renovations will take place during the conference.
- Ensure that conference space is smoke-free, including the area immediately outside the entry to the hotel/meeting space.
- Ask hotel staff to avoid using caustic or scented cleaners and scented air fresheners several days before the conference commences in areas where meeting participants will be located and in designated guest rooms.
- Provide plenty of fresh air through open windows and/or by opening air intakes of mechanical vents.

Experiences fatigue easily

- Choose site location close to airport and/or other travel gateways, including public transportation.
- Arrange access to wheelchairs and scooters to help people move themselves around the conference site.
- Provide a break room close to the meeting area where individuals can rest between or during meeting sessions.
- Offer regular break times throughout the conference.

Experiences low visual acuity

- If one or more participants will be bringing a service dog, be sure hotel/meeting place has an easily accessible area to walk service dogs.
- Prior to conference, establish a reliable source of Braille and large-print materials.
- Prepare all materials in alternative formats. This may include using large fonts, Brailing printed materials or using audio cassette tapes or CD-R disks.
- If Braille renditions of materials are needed, be sure speakers get the information prepared in time for the Braille transcription to be completed (also applies for other alternative formats).
- Orient individual to the meeting site upon arrival. Provide appropriate lighting during all presentations.
- Use large-font signage or station staff to direct individuals to entrances, meeting rooms, etc. If participants use Braille, provide directions to breakout rooms, bathrooms and elevator in Braille.
- Offer the assistance of a guide.
- Remove barriers in hallways; ask hotel cleaning staff to be cognizant of where cleaning carts are left.
- Offer to read menus aloud.

- Have moderator make an announcement of when session will begin.
- Require speakers to describe verbally any graphics used.

Experiences diminished peripheral vision

- Orient individual to the meeting site. Remove barriers in hallways.
- Offer reserved seating directly in front of speakers.
- Remind presenters to maintain a clear line of sight when speaking to individuals one-on-one.
- Uses supports to maximize mobility
- (Some individuals may experience difficulty walking but choose not to use supports).
- Before reserving a conference/meeting site, ensure that ramps are installed at all access points and that there are multiple elevators.
- Choose site on mass transit lines or have wheelchair van transportation available.
- Ensure that hotel has a wheelchair accessible registration counter or inform hotel staff that they will need to come around the counter to assist some guests.
- Reserve accessible rooms and inform participants of the amenities provided in such rooms (number of beds, roll-in shower).
- Arrange meeting rooms with access to tables throughout the area.
- Leave room for an individual to have his/her chair/walker/service dog at the table. Remove barriers in hallways.
- Schedule additional time between sessions for individuals to move from one location to another.
- Avoid “buffet-style” meal service or provide assistants at the buffet table.

Uses supports to maximize hand mobility

- Serve food that can be easily managed (i.e. No spaghetti). Provide straws for beverages.
- Use tabs to divide presentation and meeting materials. Provide “roving” personal assistants.
- Use name tags that hang around neck instead of stickers or labels which require the use of pins.
- If possible, provide tote bags with long shoulder straps which can fit all meeting materials and handouts.
- Keep doors open until session begins and schedule staff person to open all doors at session end.

Experiences diminished hearing or does not hear

(Some participants may be unaware of their hearing loss.)

- Ask individuals what kind of interpreters they require or prefer and provide those interpreters for presentations, workshops and social gatherings.
- Provide interpreter with information about meeting and presentations before the event so that they can prepare.
- Provide seating facing speaker and interpreter.
- Make space for interpreter to stand on a raised platform with a dark, solid color background.⁴
- Provide adequate lighting for viewing interpreters.
- In advance of the meeting, determine how the individual wishes to communicate and what, if any, assistive listening devices will be necessary to ensure their participation.
- Require audience e to ask questions with a microphone; if none is available, have speaker repeat the question before answering it.
- Ensure that the hotel has accessible space for walking service-dog.
- Ensure that TTY phones and TV's with closed-captioning are available.
- Confirm that the facility uses both audio and visual alarms to alert participants of an emergency.
- Consider providing listening devices or provide information on where in the area these devices can be rented.

Speaks slowly or has difficulty with verbal expression

- Allow sufficient time for the individual to articulate questions. Allow written questions. If appropriate, make interpreters available to facilitate communication.
- Has a dietary need
- Ask about dietary needs on registration form.
- Ask if individuals have specific requirements (ex: refrigeration of meds).
- Uses supports to absorb complex material
- Make materials available before conference. Offer companion during the meeting. Require speakers to be clear and avoid unnecessary "ACRONYM-speak".

Requires supports to organize and/or sequence information

- Remind presenters to focus on providing clear and organized presentations. All speakers should provide an overview and summary of their presentation.
- Offer assistance after each session to go over information with the individual.
- Tab and label materials clearly.
- Offer the materials before the conference.

Uses supports to store, absorb and retain information

- Provide materials in advance when possible.
- Provide audio or video tapes of the session or allow taping. Repeat a question as it is answered, as in, "Where is registration? It is on the third floor, turn left (point to the left) off the elevator."
- Uses supports to assist with orientation and decision making
- Provide handout at hotel check-in of registration time and location.
- Offer pre-registration and orientation to the facility.
- Change the color of the paper in the conference packet to indicate morning and afternoon sessions.
- Experiences periodic interference with electronic impulses of the brain
- Avoid excessive or flickering lights, including flash photography.
- Have at least one staff person trained in seizure management.
- Ask the individual what stimuli create problems for him/her and when possible, eliminate such stimuli.

Cannot read/has trouble reading

- When presenting, use picture graphics whenever possible. When using textual materials during a presentation, provide overview of information verbally.
- Offer assistance of a staff person when reading is necessary.

Experiences diminished auditory processing

- Speak clearly and slowly.
- Do not "talk down" as if to a child.
- Speak without subtleties, inference or colloquialisms. Look at the individual as you speak.
- Manage traffic in and out of the meeting room.



Checklist: Distractions

Hearing, seeing, smelling, feeling, thinking...these are some of the ways a person can be distracted. If you have something important to talk about, consider how things happening inside and outside the room can overwhelm a person's senses. Here are some factors to consider.

- ✓ Smells can trigger memories. Perfume, scented candles, and other smells can be hard for people with respiratory problems to tolerate. Consider making your office a scent-free place, or talk with people about limiting the scents they use.
- ✓ Uncomfortable chairs, tables, and other furniture can make it harder to work. When a person is comfortable physically, it can make it easy to focus. Having chairs in a hallway or outside can create a welcoming environment. Some people choose to sit apart from a group at first. Having a choice of places to sit is comforting.
- ✓ People coming through the room, talking within earshot, and cell phone calls should be avoided. When people share a space, plan ahead to minimize these distractions. Agree to silence cell phones.
- ✓ Room temperature can effect concentration. If a room is often too hot, leave a fan in there. If it tends to be cold, get a space heater or small throw blankets for the room.
- ✓ Looking at clutter, over-flowing stacks of papers, closets, desks, and rooms can be confusing. Even if you don't notice it, some people will.
- ✓ Excessive patterns, decorations, and plants on walls, floors, and furniture can shift a person's focus away from what she needs to be doing. Some colors and patterns can even give people a headache.



Checklist: Noise

- ✓ Noises happen all the time, even when it seems quiet. Spend time in the room where you will be meeting. Listen for noises that aren't obvious, like lights buzzing and office machine cooling fans.
- ✓ Avoid having meetings in some places. Rooms near heating and cooling systems are not ideal for meetings. Meeting in public places can be nice, but it can be hard to listen and ask questions.
- ✓ If you can hear other people, they can probably hear you. If you need to talk about private things, find a private place to meet.
- ✓ There are simple things you can do to make a space quieter. Some examples are putting sound-absorbing materials on the ceiling, walls, or doors; sticking pads on the legs of chairs; or using storm windows and sealing window frames to block out street noise.
- ✓ Have a microphone available to help everyone hear and be heard.



Checklist: Lighting

- ✓ Many people are sensitive to light. Some people need brighter light. Others need dim lighting. Some prefer natural light. Give people a say about lighting if you can. Consider getting floor and table lamps in addition to (or instead of) overhead lights.
- ✓ Flashing and flickering lights can give people headaches and make it hard to focus. Check frequently and replace bulbs as needed.
- ✓ Reduce glare from the windows during meetings. Try to have even lighting in the room, so nobody is straining to see.
- ✓ Good lighting feels safer. A dark hallway can be scary. A bright window looking onto a busy street can also be intimidating. When you're working with survivors, provide a private place to meet and talk.



Common Support Needs for Autistic People

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GROUPS

- Large groups can be over-stimulating and overwhelming for Autistic people. For example, large groups can pose difficulty for Autistic people who struggle to time responses or understand other social nuances of large groups.
- Many Autistic people often share that “the right words” do not always come easily. And for some, words can be non- native to their individual mode of thinking. (Some Autistic people describe words as flattened translated inaccurate versions of what they truly wish to express.)
- For Autistic people who struggle with communication issues, and/or sensory overload, small groups can provide a much better option for meaningful participation.
- Separate rooms for small group discussions can help prevent an Autistic person from experiencing undue sensory overload.

SENSORY NEEDS (PART 1)

- Avoid holding conferences in hotels with large waterfalls or other similar types of background noise.
- Due to Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), many Autistic people report difficulty understanding auditory information, and especially so when background noise is present— separating foreground from background noise is taxing (and also poses issues for blind and/or deaf individuals who are Autistic).
- Closing doors (to shut out background noise) can be helpful.
- Designated sensory retreat rooms provide a safe space to manage overload and give people a place to go if they need to retreat from an over- stimulating and/or overwhelming situation.
- Sensory retreat rooms should be easily accessible, but free of outside stimulation (e.g. away from elevators and escalators)
- Offering disposable earplugs is another way to accommodate Autistic people with sensory sensitivities to sound.

SENSORY NEEDS (PART 2)

- Request attendees to avoid wearing perfumes or using strongly scented toiletries (e.g. shampoos, lotions, etc.) Doing so can Autistic people avoid sensory overload.
- Use non-florescent lighting, or other accommodations for reducing visual stimulus. Natural lighting is best. If unavailable, incandescent lighting would be the next appropriate option as it is much more tolerable. As for compact florescent lighting, it can cause severe sensory issues with balance, dizziness, and communication.
- Be mindful that flash photography can cause seizures in Autistic people who have seizures and/or epilepsy.
- Sound systems should also be taken into consideration. Monitor volume levels and feedback. Noisome sounds like feedback have the potential to cause some Autistic people to completely shut down.

Section VI

Communication Accommodations

Generic Communications Tips (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Asking Questions-Answering Questions Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Listening Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Surrogate or Substitute Decision Making (NASDDDS)

Supportive Decision Making Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)

Giving Directions Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)



Checklist: Generic Communication Tips

- ✓ Presume competence. All people are “smart” and have things to say.
- ✓ Make eye contact. Tell the person who you are and why you are here.
- ✓ Speak directly to the person, not to a companion or support person.
- ✓ Introduce yourself at the beginning of each meeting to make it easier to learn people’s names and roles.
- ✓ Speak slowly and clearly.
- ✓ Use words everyone understands.
- ✓ Leave out details that are not needed.
- ✓ Use a typical tone of voice, just as if speaking with a friend or coworker.
- ✓ Say important information in a logical order, one step at a time.
- ✓ Avoid assuming a person can’t read, but also do not assume they can. Ask the person if they would prefer you to read aloud any important information.
- ✓ Use the same word to describe the same things even if it sounds boring.



Checklist: **Asking Questions**

- ✓ Ask one question at a time.
- ✓ Avoid yes or no questions. Ask “what, where, when, why and how” questions.
- ✓ If stuck, ask forced-choice questions like, “Do you think we should buy new chairs or a new computer?”
- ✓ Take time. Wait for a response. Give a person a chance to explain completely.
- ✓ Ask more questions, even if it takes time.
- ✓ Avoid trying to guess what the person is saying or cutting him off. Wait until he has finished a sentence or story. Do this even if you think you know the end or can say it faster.
- ✓ Avoid abstract questions about the time or date. Steer clear of questions about the order things happened or reasons why.
- ✓ Use visual or concrete examples. Try to connect an issue to a personal experience or regular routine, such as “Did you go in the morning before work or at night after dinner?”



Checklist: **Answering Questions**

- ✓ Smile, nod your head, and say something positive to let the person know it is good to ask questions; any kind of question.
- ✓ Give correct information and then get the other person involved. If you just give an answer, it may end the conversation. By asking questions like, “What do you think?” or “What have you heard?” it will help you find out what the person knows and what they want to know about.
- ✓ Ask if they have any other questions.



Checklist: **Listening**

- ✓ Know that a person communicates things with their body. These can be important things.
- ✓ Be patient. Wait for the person to finish talking, even if it takes a while.
- ✓ Be clear when you are expecting a response.
- ✓ Respond to any attempt the person makes to communicate.
- ✓ Keep the right pace. Consider asking if you are going too fast or too slowly before moving on to another topic.
- ✓ Check to make sure that the person understands what you are talking about. This can be done by asking the person to explain in their own words. Consider asking the question another way if needed.
- ✓ Use creative ways to communicate. For example, regular phone calls personal visits, tapes, and e-mail.
- ✓ Recognize difficult or aggressive behaviors as one way people communicate.
- ✓ Do not assume a person who has limited or no speech cannot understand what is being said. People can often understand more than they can express. Using visuals (a picture, object, or drawing) can help.
- ✓ Watch for signs of frustration. Suggest taking a break. Provide short, frequent breaks. A 7-minute break every hour works better than 15 minutes after two hours.



Surrogate or Substitute Decision Making

Persons with multiple and complex support needs, of necessity, may have to rely on individuals who are authorized to speak on their behalf. It is important to understand how such proxies represent the individual. A parent or guardian acting as a surrogate takes over decision-making responsibility with a moral and at times legal duty to make decisions that are in the person's best interest based on the surrogate's own conclusions regarding the issue under consideration. A parent or guardian acting with substituted judgment, by contrast, decides an issue based on the individual's expressed preferences. In other words, in a meeting a surrogate would be expected to make decisions based on his or her opinion of what was in the best interests of the individual, while a substitute decision maker would act on the basis of what he or she believes the individual wants or desires, regardless of his or her own views or preferences. Meeting organizers need to understand the role that proxies will exercise during discussions.



Checklist: **Supportive Decision Making**

- ✓ Avoid speaking for others. Encourage a person to speak on their own behalf. If you must restate something, be careful not to change the meaning.
- ✓ Remind the person often what topic you are talking about. Try not to suddenly change the topic.
- ✓ Because people like to please others, it is important to be mindful of your body language, tone of voice, and other gestures that may influence a person's decision.
- ✓ Have your support of the person be low-key, almost "invisible" to others.
- ✓ Keep in mind what the person said they do not want help with. Don't "over-support." Too much help may not be helpful.
- ✓ Let a person make their own decisions. Don't take over and make decisions for them.



Checklist: **When Giving Directions**

- ✓ Give one direction at a time.
- ✓ Make sure the person understands before moving on to the next direction.
- ✓ Give the person lots of time to follow a direction.

Remember



It can be helpful to do something together while you are communicating. A routine or activity can make it easier to have a conversation. Pace the activity so a conversation can happen. Next, we have an activity that focuses on how it feels to have difficulty when communicating.

Section VII

Accessibility Considerations for People with Autism

Accessibility Needs: Notes on Accessibility (Autistic Self-Advocacy Network)



Autistic Access Needs: Notes on Accessibility

Looking for ways to meet the access needs of Autistic individuals? Do you wish to avoid dropping the ball at your function, get-together, or meeting? The autistic spectrum includes a wide variety of persons with a wide variety of support needs. Planning ahead for your Autistic guests will help establish equal participation.

Important points to consider

- The lists below consist of access needs, and are not conveniences or luxuries.
- Misunderstanding and unnecessary obstacles have often limited Autistic participation in the national self- advocacy movement. This causes frustration and discourages Autistic individuals from learning about and engaging in self-advocacy activities—both personally and in larger society. Our subset of the Developmental Disability (DD) population is decades behind the Intellectual Disability (ID) community in terms of development of a self-advocacy movement, and more accommodation from others is necessary to support our growth.
- Unfortunately, there is widespread critical misunderstanding of the needs and abilities of DD individuals who achieve socially or culturally recognized competency in a publicly visible way.

Common Support Needs

GROUPS

- Large groups can be over-stimulating and overwhelming for Autistic people. For example, large groups can pose difficulty for Autistic people who struggle to time responses or understand other social nuances of large groups.
- Many Autistic people often share that “the right words” do not always come easily. And for some, words can be non- native to their individual mode of thinking. (Some Autistic people describe words as flattened translated inaccurate versions of what they truly wish to express.)
- For Autistic people who struggle with communication issues, and/or sensory overload, small groups can provide a much better option for meaningful participation.
- Separate rooms for small group discussions can help prevent an Autistic person from experiencing undue sensory overload.

AGENDAS

- Providing agendas and materials in advance, in addition to sticking closely to agendas can go a long way in terms of accommodating an Autistic person.
- Changing agendas pre or mid-meeting can throw Autistic people off, as well as cause access issues.

SENSORY NEEDS

- Avoid holding conferences in hotels with large waterfalls or other similar types of background noise.
- Due to Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD), many Autistic people report difficulty understanding auditory information, and especially so when background noise is present— separating foreground from background noise is taxing (and also poses issues for blind and/or deaf individuals who are Autistic).
- Closing doors (to shut out background noise) can be helpful.
- Designated sensory retreat rooms provide a safe space to manage overload and give people a place to go if they need to retreat from an over- stimulating and/or overwhelming situation

- Sensory retreat rooms should be easily accessible, but free of outside stimulation (e.g. away from elevators and escalators)
- Offering disposable earplugs is another way to accommodate Autistic people with sensory sensitivities to sound.
- Request attendees to avoid wearing perfumes or using strongly scented toiletries (e.g. shampoos, lotions, etc.) Doing so can Autistic people avoid sensory overload.
- Use non-florescent lighting, or other accommodations for reducing visual stimulus. Natural lighting is best. If unavailable, incandescent lighting would be the next appropriate option as it is much more tolerable. As for compact florescent lighting, it can cause severe sensory issues with balance, dizziness, and communication.
- Be mindful that flash photography can cause seizures in Autistic people who have seizures and/or epilepsy.
- Sound systems should also be taken into consideration. Monitor volume levels and feedback. Noisome sounds like feedback have the potential to cause some Autistic people to completely shut down.

SOCIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

- Autistic Network International (ANI, <http://www.autreat.com/>) created color-coded interaction signal badges consisting of plastic name badge holders with a piece of red paper on one side, and a piece of yellow paper on the other. People needing to restrict interaction could wear a badge with the red side facing out to signify, "Please do not interact with me," or with the yellow side facing out to signify, "Only people I already know should interact with me, not strangers." Another color option could be used to signify, "I am fine with interaction." These badges have been used for over 10 years at Autreat, the Autistic community's annual conference.

RESPECTFUL LANGUAGE

- Identify-first language verses person-first language should also be taken into consideration.
- The Autistic community prefers to be referred to as Autistic, in much the same way the Blind and Deaf communities prefer to be referred to as Blind or Deaf. To drive the point home, the terms hearing impaired and visually impaired are often offensive to the Blind and Deaf communities. Referring to an Autistic person as a person with autism is often offensive in the Autistic community.

ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE + FACILITATION

- Has the meeting facilitator been trained on the needs of Autistic self-advocates?
- Semantic and pragmatic understanding of oral and written language used should be maximized.
- Pre-writing questions that will be asked to the group (and making them large and visible) helps facilitate Autistic communication and participation.
- Ensure Autistic people have enough time to process what is being asked before moving forward.
- Conduct meetings online when possible (via an Instant Message chat service, such as Skype-- no phone or video, text only). Phone conversations and/or meetings can pose a problem for Autistics who have Auditory Processing Disorder and who might struggle with voice as opposed to text. IM chats also often provide a workable solution to address social anxiety issues.

Further specific meeting accommodations to consider (copied from an article written by Dora Raymaker on Change.org):

- Make it possible for someone else to register and/or pick up registration information for people on the spectrum that are easily overwhelmed by crowds, noise, communication, and massive (usually early morning) overstimulation.
- Provide conference schedule information in advance.
- This should include information about who is presenting when and about what, which in turn helps in the planning of necessary breaks and downtime, as well as helps make the event more predictable and less stressful.
- Note bathrooms, exits, and retreat rooms in bold.
- Are there power outlets, flat surfaces, or any other items needed to operate necessary assistive technology throughout the duration of the event?
- Provide alternative modes of participation to real-time face-to-face. For example, group conference IM chat via Internet.
- Offer sensory friendly areas. Even though large meeting locations typically come under the strobe-and- buzz of florescent lights, there is usually some room or area that can be set aside to be bright light & florescent free, and quiet, for people to retreat to as needed. Better yet, use meeting sites that offer incandescent or natural lighting, neutral walls and carpeting, a quiet setting, and otherwise are just sensory friendly in general.

- Slow down! It can be really, really hard or impossible to process the amount of information that is typically thrown out in a conference or workshop. It's better to fully understand a smaller amount of ideas than to not understand any ideas at all.
- Have a clearly stated protocol for how to participate-- how will everyone who wants to get a turn to speak communicate during the meeting?
- Give information in more than one way. Don't just present with the blah blah blah--use images, movements, demonstrations, provide written information.
- Communication is an active dynamic process between two or more people. It is not something a single person does or does not do; it is something people do together. Yes, those of us who communicate in non- standard ways should make an effort to make communication easy for others--if only because it in turn will make the exchange easier for us since there will be less confusion and resistance from our communication partners. But also, others need to make that same (and sometimes a bit extra) effort for us. We like things to be easy too. And sometimes it's not even a question of ease--we may need others to make that extra effort to communicate with us on our own terms because otherwise we can't find our way to the common ground where communication can occur at all. Communication is a two way street.

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The Autistic Self-Advocacy Network (ASAN) is a non-profit organization run by and for Autistic people. ASAN's supporters include Autistic adults and youth, cross-disability advocates, and non-autistic family members, professionals, educators and friends. ASAN was created to provide support and services to individuals on the autism spectrum while working to change public perception and combat misinformation by educating communities about persons on the autism spectrum. Our activities include public policy advocacy, community engagement to encourage inclusion and respect for neurodiversity, quality of life oriented research and the development of Autistic cultural activities and other opportunities for Autistic people to engage with others on the spectrum.

The Autistic Self Advocacy Network seeks to advance the principles of the disability rights movement in the world of autism. Nothing About Us, Without Us!

Section VIII

Alternative Formats Checklist (Green Mountain Self-Advocates)



Checklist: **Alternative Formats**

- The easiest way to enlarge a few pages is by photocopying at 120%.
- Use 18 point type if you are word processing. Short sentences are important for comprehension.
- An audio tape or CD may work for people with low vision or who have reading difficulties.
- Digital format is quickly becoming the most frequently asked for alternative format. Using this format allows a person to use a screen enlarger, screen readers and software that zoom in on areas. Zoomtext is one program a person can buy. “Imagezoom” from Foxfire is a free tool to zoom in or enlarge text from the toolbar. If your information is on web pages, there are many tools to help evaluate accessibility. You can find a complete listing online at <http://tinyurl.com/y9mcklk>.
- These are just a few of the tools available. New ones are developed all the time. The Web Accessibility Initiative also offers a great resource for making presentation accessible. This is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/34n488q>.
- You can put a symbol on information you have in alternative formats to let people know. There are a series of symbols that you can download and use for free from the Graphic Artist’s Guild at <http://tinyurl.com/3txk53e>.
- Think about having your organization’s forms in alternative formats. Imagine how a registration or intake form in alternative formats could be a more welcoming environment right from the beginning of a relationship.