



Let's Talk Accessibility

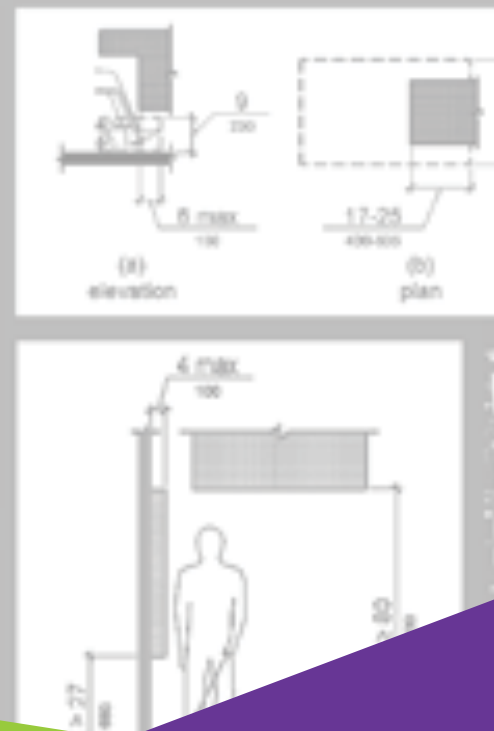


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THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

"The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law on July 26, 1990, by President George H.W. Bush. The ADA is one of America's most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities have the same opportunities as everyone else to participate in the mainstream of American life -- to enjoy employment opportunities, to purchase goods and services, and to participate in State and local government programs and services. Modeled after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin -- and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 -- the ADA is an "equal opportunity" law for people with disabilities."

https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm

When we think about equal opportunity applied to the work we do in the community as Parent Centers, we are talking about equal opportunity to access the products and services we provide in order to serve people with disabilities and their families.

Accessibility must be applied with a clear understanding, which means, we need to make enable access to our products for the community we serve. When thinking about accessibility we cannot set aside other important factors not directly related to disability, such as native language, cultural background, sexual orientation, etc.



There are two concepts inside accessibility that are very important to start thinking "accessible."

- a** Accessible design with direct access. These are the products and services we create and make accessible for people with disabilities and their families to have access without assistance.
- b** Accessible design with indirect access. These are the products and services we create for people with disabilities and their families that can be accessed through technology supports, meaning, compatible with assistive technology so they can be consumed effectively.

When working on accessibility we are immediately connecting to universal design as a way to maximize our resources in a way in which we are going to also strengthen inclusion. Universal design makes things accessible to everyone regardless of ability. Let's begin then talking accessibility, inclusion, diversity, and universal design as its foundation.

When we neglect people with disabilities' right to accessible resources and services, we immediately place barriers. Barriers that sometimes pass inadvertent or seem to be invisible, as many people with disabilities don't even have the access to realize they are inaccessible. For example, if we wait for clients to come to our door as the only way to provide services. We are creating a barrier as we know that most of them will not be able to do it, or will never realize we exist and are here to serve them.



Creating welcoming resources to people with disabilities that reflect a diverse population

Representation matters. This concept is real and very important when we think about visual content. People with disabilities comprise a very diverse community of different races, colors, abilities, ethnicities, and more.

Something we see constantly in the materials created for people with disabilities is the image of a person in a wheelchair or one with Down syndrome. In reality, none of these two images represents the majority of people with disabilities, and people with disabilities don't feel represented by them and so they may not take advantage of these resources.

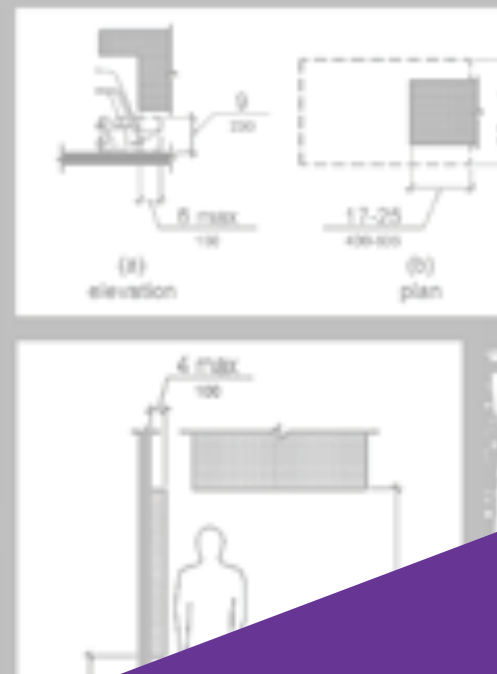
When you think about creating welcoming resources for people with disabilities, don't be afraid of using diversity. Most disabilities cannot be seen, therefore, when you use a picture of a group of diverse people you are in fact representing a big chunk of people with disabilities.

Avoid at all costs associating people with disabilities with suffering, extreme behaviors, or a specific look or race. When thinking about welcoming resources to people with disabilities think about how people feel when they are portrayed as a problem, as a behavior, or as a racial tendency.

Using people's disability to gain views or clicks promote ableist discussions. In the end, all these materials serve the purpose of giving able-bodied people the right to discuss the lives and challenges of people with disabilities, depriving people with disabilities of telling their own stories and leading the conversation. For example, Using a child having a tantrum to talk about autism, or exploiting the image of a person with an intellectual disability to makes other feel touched or inspired, are common examples of this horrible practices that create barriers instead of building bridges for people with disabilities.

Good practices:

- Evaluate the possibility of joining a photo bank to have access to diverse visual materials.
- Create a board with proper representation to evaluate the materials you create or you are considering to share.



Materials

Accessibility Formats

Printed materials are still the most used way for resource distribution. Sharing flyers, brochures, handbooks, one-pagers, etc. is a great way to inform the community; however, when thinking about accessibility and people with disabilities, one way only is never accessible. That said, your prints materials can be the mainstream to provide information but they must be accompanied with accessible alternatives, such as,

- Printed materials in large print and/braille for people with visual disabilities.
- Electronic formats with ALT text (ALT text refers to the invisible description of images which are read aloud to blind users on a screen reader. Adding ALT text allows authors to include images, but still provide the content in an alternative-text based format.
- Resource Library on podcast for easy mp3 download.
- Resource Library on video for easy mp4 download.

Please note that accessible recordings are descriptive and not only include information but also a description of the imagery included in the material.

“BUT we don’t have funding for all this.” Yes, you do. You may not have a plan but the same funding that you use for printing materials can be redistributed to ensure accessibility. Alternative formats such as audio and video are created based on universal design and everyone can take advantage of them.



Oral Communication Accessibility

When providing oral presentations such as conferences or workshops, we know how expensive sign language interpretation or captioning can be. That said, we want to provide a couple of good practices to ensure accessibility while working with limited funding.

- When you are presenting a conference or workshop: Ask people to let you know in advance if they require these services. Always include a note so people know these services are available upon request.
- Create a library of accessible resources to direct participants, if necessary. For example, if you are delivering an IDEA series on Facebook live, having an archived copy of the same presentation in an accessible format can be a great way to fulfill this need, even if you are unable to provide live interpretation or captioning.
- Work alternative ways to make interaction possible when resources are limited. Can a deaf person send you his/her questions by email so you can answer them in writing if captioning was not available for the Q&A?
- Do you have a transcript of your presentations? This can be a good option as well for those unable to participate LIVE effectively. Making the information available in other formats is inclusive and respectful.

Sometimes accessibility is about taking extra time to communicate or understand. Be sure to provide one on one options for those who may need more time to process and communicate. Let the audience know this information is available and provide your contact information in an easy to read format. Keep it simple: Large print on dark ink.

A photograph of a man in a light blue shirt and dark trousers standing at the front of a room, gesturing with his hands as if presenting. He is facing a group of people whose backs are to the camera. The room has large windows, a brick wall, and a wooden shelf with various items. A green vertical bar is on the left side of the image.

PUBLIC EVENTS:

In-person training, outreach events, conferences

- **Are accessible entrances clearly marked?**
- **Is information provided in advance about how to make requests for modifications or auxiliary aids and the accessibility of the meeting?**
- **Are accessible restrooms, seating, stages, speaker platforms and microphones provided?**
- **Are assistive listening devices provided?**
- **Are interpreters for people who are deaf or hard of hearing available upon request?**
- **Are large-print or electronic formats available? Do you have an accessibility coordinator?**

WEBSITES

1. Have you evaluated your website for accessibility?

The Bureau of Internet Accessibility presents these five strategies to a quick website accessibility check

a) Check alt text for images and other non-text content.

All images and other non-text content should have a text alternative available. People access the internet a number of different ways, some of which may be through a screen reader or refreshable Braille display. In order for assistive technologies like these to properly interpret and communicate objects like graphics, they require accurate alt text. This is because those tools can't naturally read what's displayed in or the purpose of non-text content.

b) Check for closed captions and transcripts on videos

Closed captions and transcripts are vital to the accessibility of media and multimedia, like videos.

Captions are text alternatives of the audio content, synchronized with the video. They should include spoken dialogue, relevant sounds, and other contextual elements, like music, that may be critical to getting the full intended purpose or feeling of the video. What first come to mind for many people are the benefits captions have for people who are deaf or have hearing loss, and certainly they are required for that reason. However, they also have benefits for everyone at different times, likes in a quiet setting or when reading and watching together helps with understanding.

Resource. Checklist for Creating Accessible Videos.
boia.org/blog/checklist-for-creating-accessible-videos

c) Check color contrast

For digital accessibility, color contrast is as critical as it is simple. Color contrast refers to the difference in light between font (or anything in the foreground) and its background. By using sufficiently-contrasting colors, a website's font visibility is stark enough to distinguish for most people.

Website visitors who have low vision, low-contrast vision, or color vision deficiency especially benefit when content has adequate contrast, and most people (even with strong vision) appreciate not having to unnecessarily strain their eyes to read material.

d) Make sure your site is keyboard-friendly

Many people can't or choose not to use a mouse to navigate the web, and instead use a keyboard, keyboard emulator, or other alternative input device. For this reason, it's essential that every link, control, and feature that can be operated with a mouse is accessible using only a keyboard. Additionally, there needs to be clear visual indication of the current element in focus, so website visitors know where they are on a page and which link or control they might select. This extends to all functionality, including the ability to make selections in drop-down menus, as well as completing and submitting forms.

e) Make sure your site can be zoomed without loss of content or functionality

It's a WCAG, Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, requirement that content can be zoomed to 200% and still work without assistive technology. Additionally, screen magnification should not interfere with other accessibility requirements.

Fortunately, testing for this to some extent can be pretty easy. Zoom your web browser to 200% and see what happens to the content and layout of the webpage. Do you notice that content elements overlap or disappear, or do they stack and adjust nicely? Can all the tasks still be performed with both a mouse and keyboard? Do navigation elements and menus still work well? Performing this preliminary testing isn't exhaustive or comprehensive, but it can help you identify some obvious accessibility issues with the display.

Reference,

www.boia.org/blog/5-quick-ways-to-self-check-the-accessibility-of-a-website

Looking for more information on web content accessibility guidelines?
Visit, www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/



Accessible Webinars, On-line Meetings and Trainings.

Platforms like Zoom and Google Meetings offer accessible features, such as, keyboard-accessibility and screen-reader support. Zoom offers live captioning, transcription, and closed captioning to its premium users. Google Meet also includes a closed captioning feature. That said, when we talk about online accessibility, the right provider can help us achieve that goal through the different features they have available.

Still, we have work to do on our end to ensure accessibility is achieved as accessibility comes as a response to individual needs.

These are some easy strategies to ensure accessibility when delivering an online training or webinar, or when hosting online meetings.

1. **Live Transcription or Closed Captioning** makes your webinar accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, to non-native English speakers, and to people who may be unable to used audio due to different circumstances and so, can benefit from reading the information.
2. **Send participants an agenda in advance**, if you are hosting a meeting, or slides copies and materials if you are presenting a webinar or training. For people with challenges processing the information or following up with complex concepts, receiving a copy can help them prepare and know what to expect. Also, it can give them time to think and get their questions ready in advance for a more interactive session and full participation.
3. **High Contrast Colors** are crucial to ensure everyone can read them, including those with visual disabilities such as low vision or color blindness, as well as those with technical challenges such as low-resolution monitors or small devices such as cell phones.

Good practices:

- When hosting a meeting, ask the participants if they need any accommodations due to special circumstances, such as a disability or native language.
- When hosting a webinar or training, be sure to announce accommodations can be provided upon request. Market it in accessible ways to ensure everyone's access to the information.



Accessible Webinars, On-line Meetings and Trainings.

4. Limit the amount of text on the slides. Choose to use large text and clean visuals instead of long paragraphs or complicated graphics.
5. Use simple language, speak slowly and use practical examples and visuals to support more complex ideas.

6. Be descriptive as you present information, meaning, consider including a brief description of the visual you are using to support your presentation. For example, [To support this concept I am using this graphic illustrated in two different colors that represent the highest percentage of 80% in red, and the lowest percentage of 20% in yellow.]
7. Check the sound, your internet connection, and be sure the space you are using is well lit. Check your surroundings as well and avoid crowded spaces, bright colors and distractions for the viewers. People with attention deficit or challenges to process information may get easily distracted or anxious.
8. Record the presentation and inform the participants where to find it. Provide your personal information at the beginning and at the end of the presentation, and be sure people can contact you in the most accessible way to them, that may include, phone call, text, email, and video chat for those with communication impairments or intellectual disabilities.

MORE RESOURCES,

7 Design Considerations for Accessibility

<https://evolvingweb.ca/blog/7-design-considerations-accessibility>

Free Contrast Checker <https://contrastchecker.com/>

Learn more,

ZOOM ACCESSIBILITY

<https://zoom.us/accessibility>

GOOGLE MEET ACCESSIBILITY

<https://support.google.com/meet/answer/7313544?hl=en>

RESOURCES

Guidelines and Resources for Developing 508 Compliant PDFs, Websites, and other Media

Includes:

- Checklists and Guidance for Assessing Word, PowerPoint, and Excel Documents
- Guidelines and Resources for Developing 508 Compliant PDFs, Websites, and other Media

Learn more, <https://osepideasthatwork.org/resources-grantees/508-resources>

Rewordify.com is powerful, free, online software that improves reading, learning, and teaching. This site can:

- Intelligently simplify difficult English, for faster comprehension
- Effectively teach words, for building a better vocabulary
- Help teachers save time and produce engaging lessons
- Help improve learning outcomes

Learn more, <https://rewordify.com/>

Resource. Creating Accessible Presentation in PowerPoint.
<https://www.washington.edu/accessibility/documents/creating-accessible-presentations-in-microsoft-powerpoint/>

