

Making Accommodation Requests

What is an accommodation?

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act, any business open to the public shall make reasonable modifications in policies, practices, or procedures when the modifications are necessary to afford goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations to individuals with disabilities, unless the public accommodation can demonstrate that making the modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages or accommodations.

Why should the organization include accommodation statements?

Accommodation statements are necessary to ensure that persons with disabilities have facility access and effective communication (alternate formats, interpreters, etc.) for programs and services. It also lets persons with disabilities know that your organization is willing and ready to serve individuals with disabilities, and informs them of the policies and procedures for requesting reasonable accommodations.

Step 1: Create Accommodation Statement

What content should be included in the accommodation statement?

- **Who** to contact for an accommodation
- **What** the accommodation statement is intended for ... “in need of accommodations ...”
- **Where** does the person with the disability go to receive assistance: “Please call xxx-xxx-xxxx or email xxxx@xxxxx ...” (Ensure you are providing methods for different types of disabilities. For example, if your phone is not TTY compatible, ensure you also provide email address and ensure your flyer/website is compatible with a screen reader for persons who may be blind or have low vision.)
- **When** should the person with the disability request by ... “4-5 business days”

Examples of Posted Notification from a covered entity

- The National Disability Institute encourages persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation or have a question about the physical access provided, please contact (Name, Title, telephone number, should include TTY number if available). Please allow at least 3-5 business days' advance notice; last minute requests will be accepted, but may be impossible to fulfill.
- Accommodations for persons with disabilities are available upon request. Please allow at least 3-5 business days' advance notice; last minute requests will be accepted, but may be impossible to fulfill. Call (Applicable number) (voice) or (Applicable number) (TTY)

On a common flyer or where space is limited: "For more information or to make a reasonable accommodation request, please contact ... (phone/email)"

Step 2: Post Accommodation Statement

- **When:** Post an accommodation statement anytime you are promoting services or activities.
- **Where:** Anywhere you are providing information (e.g., notice for special events, flyers, organization brochures, bulletin boards, websites, places where known barriers exist).
- **What:** Providing a method of communication between persons with disabilities and your coalition to ensure services are available to everyone.
- **Why:** So that persons with disabilities know they are welcome to participate in your services and you will work to ensure their needs are met.

Step 3: Fulfilling an Accommodation Request

- **Who is making the request?** Consult the individual with a disability FIRST.
- **What do they need as an individual?** Don't be afraid to ask questions to find out about their specific needs. Consider their individual preference, but don't be afraid to also make alternative suggestions. Just ensure their needs are met as the end result.
- **When?** As soon as you receive the request, to allow time to adjust or make arrangements to fulfill it.

Step 4: Other miscellaneous important tips

Identify who on your team will be responsible for fulfilling accommodation requests. Ensure everyone is aware of where to direct any advance or last-minute requests. (Incorporate into your VITA training.)

Collaborate with a “team” attitude, ensuring everyone in the organization knows this is something to be done to guarantee inclusiveness and should never be thought of as a burden.

Examples of Accommodations

There are many services available to assist persons with disabilities. Some of the most common types of accommodations include the following:

- Physical changes, such as installing a ramp or rearranging furniture for better accessibility
- Sign language interpreters for people who are Deaf
- A quieter workspace or other changes to reduce noisy distractions for someone with an intellectual disability
- Written materials in an accessible format for individuals who are visually impaired (e.g., Braille, audio tape, computer disk or reading aloud to the individual)