

Guidelines for planning accessible meetings

Introduction

This is a checklist to help CMG locals plan accessible meetings, social gatherings, workshops or information sessions. It's a much-abbreviated version of an online resource published by the Disabled Women's Network of Ontario (DAWN). You can also check with a local disability group who has expertise in barrier free access and/or meeting planning.

The goal is to ensure that physical access to the meeting space, as well as access to the meeting contents and proceedings, are considered when meetings are planned. Use the registration form to ask participants about their minimal requirements. Request that they avoid wearing perfumes. Be sure to find out about special dietary requirements, whether participants need attendants, support persons or have other special requests.

For lengthy conferences or conventions requiring more detailed planning, consult the long version at: http://dawn.thot.net/accessible_meetings.html

Choosing a Location:

Determine if the site has been recommended by a credible local disability organization with expertise in barrier-free access.

Inquire about recent renovations or current construction that may have an impact on accessibility.

Exterior Access:

Parking

Check that a reasonable number of accessible parking spots are available. Arrangements with the owners/managers for additional spaces may be possible. A curb cut or level access from the parking area to the main entrance should be available.

Ramps, if required, should be gradual in slope and have handrails on both sides.

Sidewalks should be clear of obstruction (including snow), and clearly separated from the road and driveway for safety reasons.

Accessible Transit

Check if the location is serviced by accessible or parallel transit services. Ensure there is a drop-off area available in front of the building.

Interior Access:

Entrances and Lobbies

Make certain that an accessible entrance is available with all doorways wide enough for a wheelchair or scooter.

If the main entrance is NOT accessible, ensure there is a clearly visible sign at the front of the building indicating the location of the accessible entrance.

Ensure that entrances do not lead to locked doors with buzzers or bells that must be pushed to permit access.

Provide signs indicating where the meeting is taking place within the building. Make sure they are large enough for people with low vision.

Arrange for staff or volunteers to be available at doorways and throughout the facility to direct or assist people with disabilities to the meeting location.

Elevators

Determine that the elevators are located close to the meeting facilities and are large enough to hold power wheelchair and/or scooter users.

Accessible Washrooms

Washrooms should be large enough to accommodate scooter and power wheelchair users and equipped with at least one accessible stall. Ensure the location has at least one accessible unisex washroom on the same floor as the event.

Meeting and Conference Rooms

Ensure that the boardroom or meeting room is large enough to provide circulation and seating for an adequate or anticipated number of participants who use wheelchair, scooters, guide dogs or other mobility aids.

Ensure that the stages and speaking areas, including lectern or podium are accessible to wheelchair and scooter users.

Remind guest speakers and exhibitors to be prepared to provide printed handout materials in alternative formats should alternative formats be requested in advance.

Refreshment and Dietary Considerations:

Where beverages are being served, bendable straws and lightweight cups should be made available within easy reach of individuals in wheelchairs or scooters.

Make available non-sugar (dietary) beverages and snacks for people with dietary concerns such as diabetes.

Be aware that self-serve meals or buffets may present obstacles for some people who are visually impaired or people with a physical disability. If catering staff is not present, ensure that someone is assigned to assist those who need help getting food.

If meals are to be "on your own," determine the accessibility of local restaurants.

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