



Planning Accessible Events at Ithaca College

What is an event?

- An event is any gathering of people sponsored by the College (including all offices, departments, and recognized student organizations), whether held on or off campus and whether or not members of the public are invited to attend.
- Events can be large or small, planned months in advance or with little notice. Some examples of events include:
 - Athletic events
 - Events sponsored by recognized student groups such as club meetings or activities
 - Visiting lecture series
 - IC Commencement



Why plan accessible events?

Ithaca College strives to be an inclusive community and welcomes event participants of all kinds. Therefore:

- Event planners are responsible for planning and providing required services for participants with disabilities at any event sponsored by the College.
- Anyone involved in making IC facilities available to outside groups should discuss accessibility and accommodations with the organization using the space and determine which party is responsible for different needs.

What is the goal?

The primary goal is equal access and effective participation for all, regardless of disability.

- In general, events must be planned so that everyone can fully participate (including disabled attendees).
- It is important to note that, while there might not be an accommodation solution for every situation, the key is to maintain clear lines of communication and an interactive process.





Planning Your Event



Strategies for Success

- Start planning early
- Communication is key
 - With visitors and attendees
 - With other offices
- Use the checklist
- Learn from past events and reflect and revisit

Is your plan feasible?



Do you have enough time?

It is important to make sure that you have allowed enough time to plan an accessible event. Is there enough time to schedule interpreters or live captioning? Have you allowed enough time to create accessible materials? Do you have the time needed to consider all aspects of the event to ensure it is planned accessibly?



Do you have enough funds?

Most accommodations are relatively inexpensive (if accessibility is considered during all phases of planning) but a few things, such as live captioning, might require additional funding. These expenses should be considered during the planning phase.



Do you have an appropriate venue?

Picking an accessible venue is a critical component of planning an accessible event. Is a venue available that meets your accessibility needs? Consider your needs for parking, accessible paths, accessible seating, availability of AV equipment (for projection and assistive listening).

Scheduling

Consider what other events are happening in the space at the time you plan to host the event.

- Are there any potential conflicts?
- Is there a possibility of sharing resources if a similar type of event is happening at the same time?

Whenever possible:

- Plan events at least two weeks in advance to maximize the ability to meet accommodation requests
- Provide schedules in advance of events to allow for planning
- When creating the event schedule, plan breaks during the event to give people the chance to tend to personal needs (ideally, 5-10 minutes per hour)

Budget and Financial Considerations

As mentioned above, most accessibility planning does not require much additional funding (as long as plans are made in advance and an accessible venue is available). However, some things - such as live captioning, interpretation, or post-production captioning – might require some financial input.

If you have an unexpected or specific need for event accommodations, consult ADA Coordinator, Linda Koenig (lkoenig@ithaca.edu) to determine whether institutional funds may be available.

Choosing a Physical Location

Events should be held at a location that is physically accessible unless doing so would fundamentally alter an essential function of the event (i.e., a walking tour through the natural lands).

If your event includes multiple options or locations you may want to plan accessible alternatives to ensure inclusivity.

It may be necessary to plan certain events far in advance to ensure availability of an accessible space. If you cannot identify an accessible space during the time you planned the event, consider rescheduling until an accessible space becomes available or connecting with the ADA Coordinator, Linda Koenig (lkoenig@ithaca.edu), to discuss an equally effective alternative access plan.

Physical Location (continued)

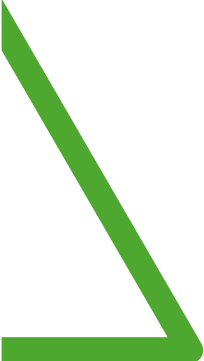

While many of Ithaca Colleges event spaces are accessible, be sure to think about the following factors when searching for a location:

- Availability of nearby parking (including accessible parking spaces)
- Stair free entrances/exits close to the event space
- Working accessible buttons
- Location of elevators if the entrance/exit is not on the same floor
- Proximity of accessible bathrooms
- Availability of handrails if stairs or ramps are present
- Availability of accessible seating
- Accessible circulation paths if event attendees are expected to move during the event (i.e., a speaker coming on to a stage, or enough spaces between tables to accommodate a wheelchair)



More Space Considerations

To improve the accessibility of your physical space, you may also want to consider additional sensory elements, such as:

- Availability of natural lighting or alternatives to fluorescent lights
 - Presence of flickering or buzzing lights
 - Loud machinery that may trigger sensory impairments (e.g., HVAC systems, vending machines, etc.)
 - Ability to control ambient temperatures or adjust airflow
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Responding to Accommodation Requests

Communication is the key to handling all requests for accommodations. It is perfectly acceptable to discuss options with requestors if there are questions or alternative options available.

Any questions about how to respond to accommodation requests for events can be directed to the ADA Coordinator, Linda Koenig, at lkoenig@ithaca.edu

Remember to also discuss accommodations with presenters, as they may also have accessibility needs!

Event Promotion



Event Promotion and Marketing

An event cannot be considered accessible if not all participants are able to perceive and interact with the promotional materials. Promotional materials should also provide accessibility information about the event and contact information so they can follow up if they have additional questions.

- Use the [Accessibility Guide for Promotional Materials](#) as a reference to create accessible invitations and announcements.
- Promote the event online to create a searchable (and digitally accessible) record of event details (e.g., Intercom, social media platforms).
- Provide an email address and phone number for people to contact the event organizer if they have questions (about accessibility specifically or about the event in general).
- Let people know what accommodations will be available at the event (i.e., ASL interpreter, CART, etc.)
- If there are known accessibility barriers or possible issues, make that known to attendees (i.e., a planned two-mile nature hike during a conference break or a detour around sidewalk construction between accessible parking and the event location).

Accessibility Statements

- All promotional materials must include an accessibility statement that provides information about how to make accommodation requests.
- Accessibility statements must include a mechanism for participants to communicate their request (i.e., contact information for a specific person and/or a link to a request form).
- These statements can also include a suggested timeframe by which participants are asked to make their requests. However, ALL requests must be considered, even if they are made after the suggested deadline.
- Examples of Accessibility Statements

Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations should contact [name of contact person and their email and phone number]. We ask that requests for accommodations be made at least two weeks prior to the event.

Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations can submit requests using our Accommodation Request Form. We ask that requests for accommodations be made as soon as possible.



Don't Forget About Presenters!



Presenters might also need accommodations!

Be sure to check in with them with enough time to meet their needs. Participants may need:

- An accessible path or mechanism to access a stage (such as a lift or ramp)
- An adjustable podium or microphone

Signage and Navigation

Provide accessible navigation signs (if not already present). Added signage should be free-standing without obstructing pathways and must comply with IC signage policy.

Signage should make it clear where to find:

- Accessible parking
- Accessible entrances and exits
- Accessible bathrooms and quiet spaces
- Elevators and alternative paths for access



Accessible
Entry



Food and Beverage Service

If your event includes food and beverage service

- Position tables to allow effective moving paths and proper height that accommodates a wheelchair
- Provide multiple food and beverage areas
- Provide accessible seating areas (e.g., wheelchair access, room for service animals, avoid fixed seating, etc.)

Whenever possible

- Label food ingredients or have staff available to answer questions
- Share information about food options ahead of the event
- Avoid common allergens and provide choice of gluten free, dairy free, etc.
- Avoid self-serve when possible or ensure staff are available to help with seating



Consider Communication Access

A key component
of any event

Communication Access

A major component of hosting an accessible event includes planning for and providing accessible communication. This can include some (or all) of the following things:

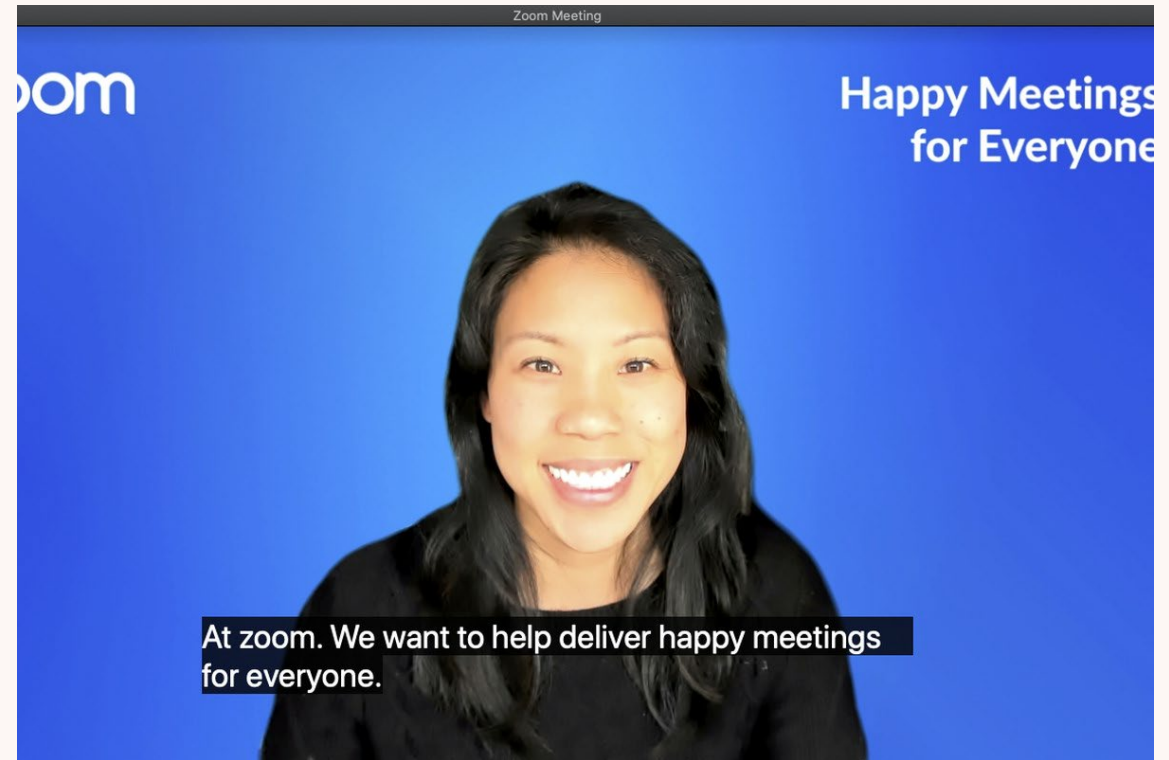
- Captioned media
- Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)
- Live captioning or transcription services (e.g., CART)
- ASL interpreters



Captioning Services

Captioned Media

Also called post-production captioning, this is the process by which captions are added to pre-recorded media. ALL videos shown during events should be captioned, whether or not captioning is specifically requested by an attendee.

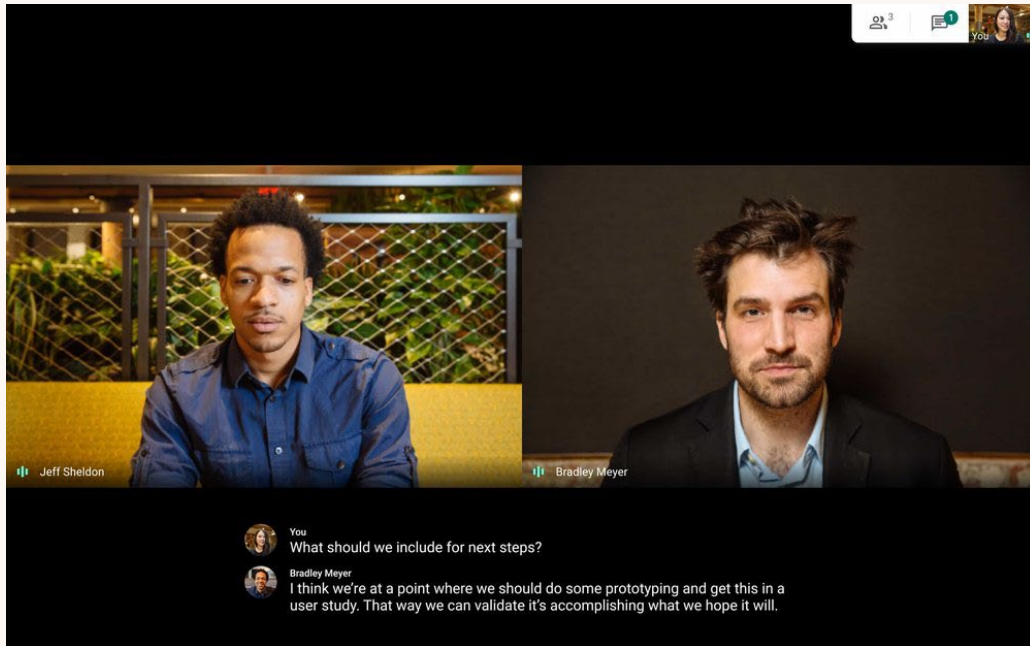


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Captioning Services (con't)

Live Captioning (or Live Transcription)

Live captioning (or live transcription) is the means by which captions are provided for live lectures and other events. Captions are generated in real time so attendees can read along on a screen or personal device. There are two types of live captioning: captions created by humans and captions created by automatic speech recognition (ASR). Human-created captions are the **ONLY** method that meets accommodation standards.



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Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs)

Assistive listening devices (ALDs) are typically requested by people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Ithaca College has a number of spaces with built in systems that have assistive listening capabilities and several offices have portable ALDs available for short-term loan.



ASL Interpreters



Event attendees who are deaf or hard of hearing may request a sign language interpreter. It may take up to a few weeks to schedule an interpreter (either in-person or remote) and could cost up to \$75-150 per hour. Some agencies require a 2-hour minimum for in-person services.

In rare cases, an attendee may request BOTH live captioning and an interpreter. These accommodations are not interchangeable and such requests should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Have questions?

Remember, any questions about event accommodations can be directed to ADA Coordinator, Linda Koenig (lkoenig@ithaca.edu).

Be sure to consult with Linda BEFORE making any final decisions about how to respond to accommodation requests, especially if your first inclination is that they would be difficult to meet. Linda can help determine what is reasonable and what might constitute an acceptable alternative to the original request if the original request cannot be met.





Companion Considerations

Participants may arrive with a service dog or personal care attendant

- Ensure staff are adequately trained around service animal etiquette
- Provide spaces for service dogs to lay comfortably next to or under their handlers during the event
- Provide seating for personal care attendants upon request
- Identify areas for service dogs to be walked, watered, and relieve themselves



Modifying Policies, Practices, and Procedures

It is possible that policies, practices, and procedures may need to be modified in order to accommodate a person with a disability. For example:

- A policy prohibiting animals at an event should be modified to allow a person to attend with a service dog.
- A policy prohibiting a participant from bringing a bag into an event may need to be modified if that bag contains essential medical supplies.
- It might be worth considering allowing early access or preferential seating considerations at an event.

Consider Opposing Accommodation Needs

Opposing Needs	Possible Solutions
A service animal and an allergy	Preferential seating to allow for maximum separation, identify multiple paths of travel, allow for breaks, provide alternatives to in-person events, use portable air purifiers in event spaces
Need for increased lighting due to low vision and a request for low light due to migraines	Provide high-contrast or digitally accessible materials in advance, allow for a personal lamp, use natural lighting where available
A speaker with a strong accent or altered speech and an attendee with difficulty processing speech	Allow for audio recording so content can be reviewed, provide live captioning, pair the attendee with an aid who can provide clarity as needed

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of scenarios nor possible solutions. Providing access and accommodation may require individualized and unique solutions.



Guidelines for Presenters & Event Staff

Presenters Remember to...



USE A
MICROPHONE



REPEAT
QUESTIONS



DESCRIBE
VISUALS



FACE THE
AUDIENCE



INTRODUCE
SERVICES

Staff Training

Ensuring that staff are prepared to handle accessibility issues is an essential part of any event

- Staff should be aware of any accessibility requests and be trained to respond to requests for assistance
- Appoint one staff person to be the main contact for any accessibility questions

All staff should know where to find

- Accessible bathrooms
- Quiet rooms
- Elevators
- Dedicated areas for service animals

As well as how participants can:

- Find and use assistive listening devices
- View captions, live transcription, and ASL interpreters

Resources for Event Planning

- Accessibility Guide
 - Information on Event Planning
 - Links to resource documents
 - Information about office that can assist with planning and accommodation requests
- ADA Coordinator, Linda Koenig (lkoenig@ithaca.edu)
 - Contact Linda with any questions or to help negotiate accommodation requests





During the Event

Put together a day-of checklist for staff that includes:

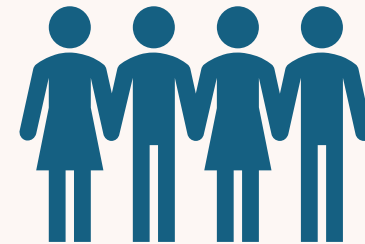
- Paths of travel are clear
- Check all AV equipment
- Check table and seating arrangements
- Check signage

Add additional items as needed to account for all aspects of your particular event.

After the Event



Revisit and revise



Follow up to see if people got
what they needed

Let's Keep the Conversation Going

Remember: Questions
about event accessibility
can be directed to ADA
Coordinator, Linda Koenig
(lkoenig@ithaca.edu)

If you are a student
planning an event: Dan
Rogers
(drogers@ithaca.edu)

If you are faculty or staff
planning an event:
Conference and Event
Services (ces@ithaca.edu)