



**Undergraduate
Student Government**
University of Southern California



GUIDE TO ACCESSIBLE EVENTS



2019-2020
E D I T I O N



INTRODUCTION



When organizing an event, it is important to ensure that the experience can be enjoyed by all, including those needing special accommodations. There are hundreds of different types of disabilities and each individual may experience the condition differently, which can make the task of providing reasonable accommodation intimidating. This guide is meant to help you be mindful of the needs of participants with and without disabilities when hosting your event.

Please note that although this guide does its best to be comprehensive, no list of recommendations can fully address the diverse needs of all people with disabilities.

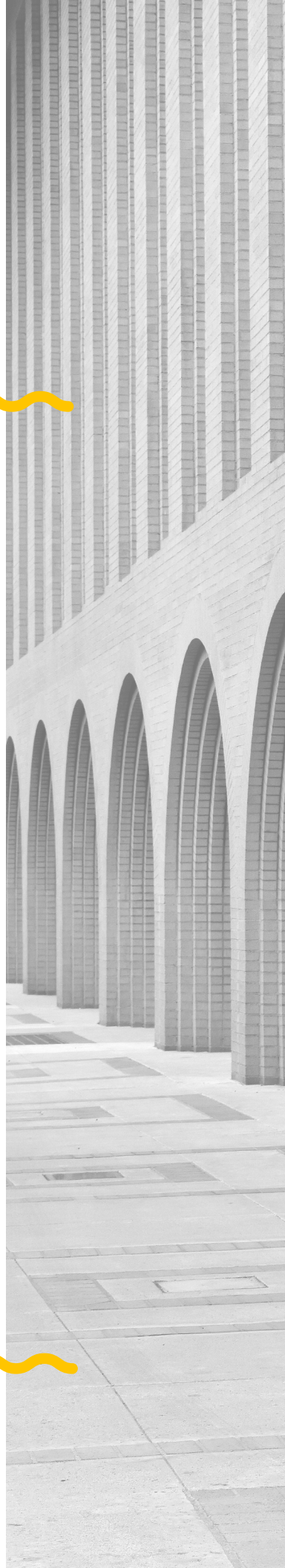


SUPPORT



"Planning events that are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities, is generally not particularly complicated, but does take careful thought and attention to details. I have been pleased to work with Undergraduate Student Government as it has taken a campus leadership role in creating this Accessible Events Guide. This guide, designed for student groups planning temporary events that are accessible to individuals with disabilities, provides key information applicable to USC's campus. Additional, more detailed information can be found through resources created by the ADA National Network, including the publication, "A Planning Guide for Making Temporary Events Accessible to People with Disabilities." Student groups with questions not covered in these guides can contact the Office of the ADA/504 Coordinator."

- Christine Street, Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Accessibility and ADA Compliance



PLANNING YOUR EVENT

The most important part of creating an accessible event is to **start your planning early**. By working proactively, you can better identify, address, and communicate access barriers. The steps below will ensure that your event reaches the greatest number of students possible and is an enjoyable experience for all.

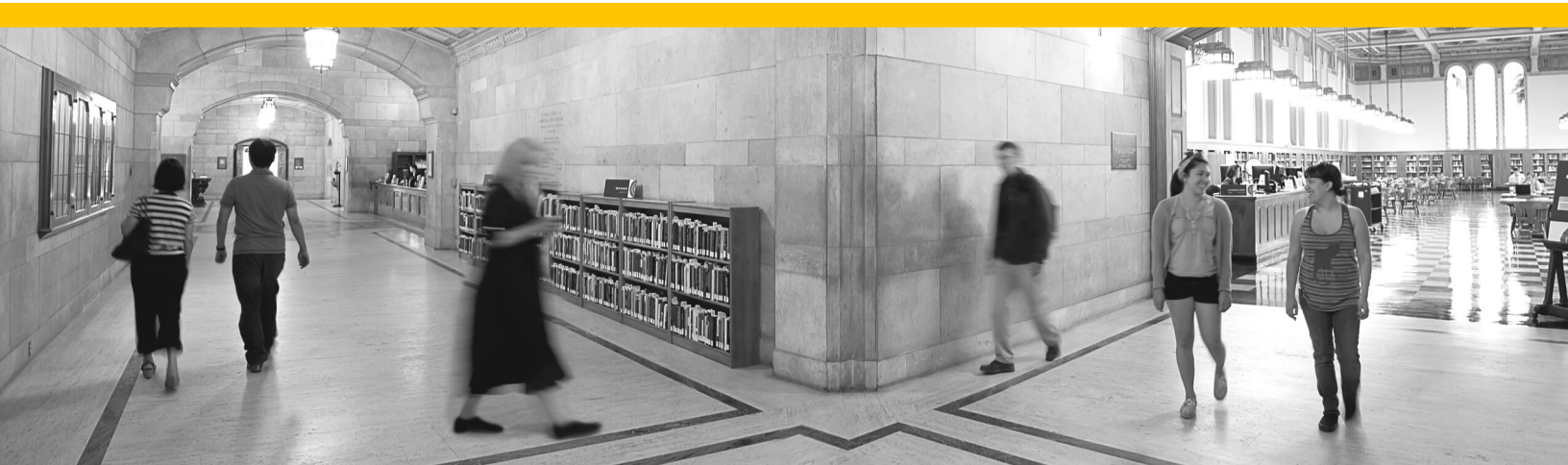
STEP 1: ASK ABOUT ACCESS NEEDS

Before hosting your event, make space for your members, guests, and participants to **safely voice their accessibility needs** at regular meetings. Remember that some access needs are invisible, so simply using observation to determine accommodations may be insufficient.

For special events, you may find it useful to **designate an access coordinator** to facilitate these conversations and ensure needs are met in a timely manner.

In your promotional materials and event announcements, **include an accessibility statement** like the one below to help you determine what range of needs to plan for.

"If you require any accommodation for effective communication or mobility, or other feature to fully participate in this event, please contact [name] at [contact information] with as much advance notice as possible."






STEP 2: BOOK YOUR VENUE

Besides size, cost, and availability, there are four main areas to be aware of when choosing an event space:

- **Visibility:** Is text on-screen large enough for those with impaired eyesight to read? Is there sufficient lighting? Are there brightly flashing lights?
- **Acoustics:** Can the volume of microphones/speakers be adjusted? Are there assistive listening devices available for those with limited hearing?
- **Mobility:** Is there adequate room for those in wheelchairs, or with other mobility limitations, to navigate the space? Are there barriers to mobility?
- **Service Animals:** Will the venue accommodate service or emotional support animals?
- **Parking:** For large events especially, is there an accessible garage nearby for students who commute?

Finally, only select venues that are accessible via wheelchairs or other assistive mobility devices. There are a few older classroom buildings with multiple floors and no elevators -- avoid these. SOS is an example.

Event spaces should be selected in buildings that can be accessed by individuals with disabilities.

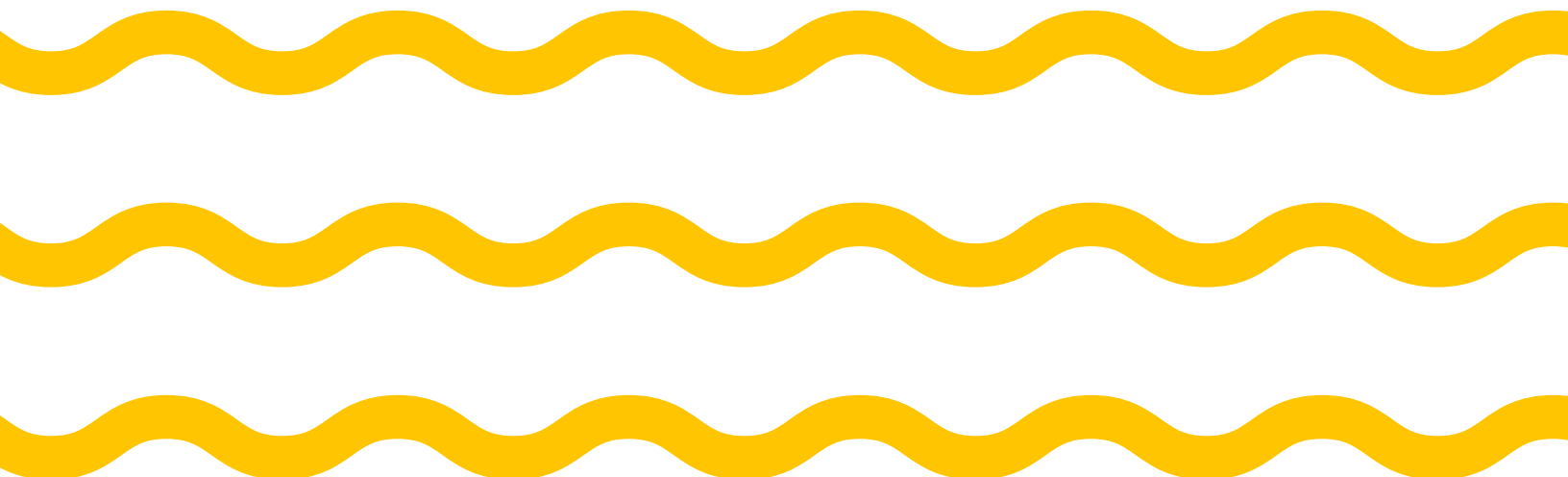


STEP 3: ENHANCE PRESENTATIONS AND PERFORMANCES

Because a presentation or performance is likely the focal point of your event, you should take care to promote effective communication.

Effective communication means that **whatever is written or spoken must be as clear and understandable to people with disabilities as it is for those without disabilities.** This may require prior communication with talent so that they submit their materials in advance or know what to expect. Examples that provide for a better experience include:

- Large print material for those who can't read from a screen or see small text
- Braille materials
- Ensure speakers use microphones
- Repeat questions for the audience during Q&A before responding
- Assistive listening systems
- Sign language interpreters, especially for performances
- Open/closed captioning on videos
- Encourage hourly breaks from lectures or conferences



STEP 4: ORDER YOUR FOOD AND SNACKS

If you plan on distributing food or refreshments at the event, try to provide a **variety of options** for people with different dietary restrictions. When the time comes, make sure to indicate potential allergens and gluten-free, vegan, and vegetarian food.

STEP 5: PREPARE YOUR STAFF AND VENDORS

Everyone in attendance should have a basic awareness and understanding of disability. It should be obvious, but make sure to remind staff and volunteers (especially those who may be new to your organization) of the expectation to **treat people with disabilities the same as all other event participants**. They should also be familiar with the locations of accessible bathrooms, drinking fountains, and ramp locations.



SETTING UP THE VENUE

Whether you're working within a pre-arranged space or creating your venue from scratch, there are always steps you can take to maximize accessibility.



IF YOUR EVENT IS IN A CLASSROOM

Some events, especially lectures, meetings, and discussions, are held in classrooms. These spaces are usually small and the modifications you can make are minimal. However, you should **try to re-arrange rows of tables and chairs** so that a person using a wheelchair at least one path to navigate in and out of the room. If your activity requires a surface area for writing or drawing, **ensure that there's adequate knee space** for people using wheelchairs to pull up under the table.

Sometimes, rooms will have fixed seating areas. In these settings, there may be seats designated for people with wheelchairs. However, it's generally better to avoid these rooms so that people with wheelchairs can freely choose their seating.

IF YOUR EVENT IS IN A THEATER, AUDITORIUM, OR STADIUM

These locations will have fixed seating. If you're selling tickets at different price points, try to ensure that the wheelchair seating locations are dispersed so that patrons have a choice of their ticket price. These venues will usually feature stairs, so take care to **have signs pointing towards the nearest elevator or ramp**.

IF YOUR EVENT IS OUTDOORS



If your event is outdoors, then you likely have lots of control over the design. You should try to ensure that your space is ADA-compliant. Below are some tips to help you get started!

- To park a wheelchair in a stationary position, a space must be 30" wide by 48" long. To make a 180-degree turn, a diameter of 60" is necessary. Use these dimensions to help create a viewing area for wheelchair users. These **areas should be sectioned off** for a specified period of time before others may occupy the area. **Ensure that the space has a view of the stage from a seated position, and is large enough to accommodate extra friends, family, and service animals.**
- Walkways and paths should be at least 36" wide for comfortable movement. This includes lines for entry!
- Avoid areas with abrupt changes in floor/ground level unless there is a ramp or elevator nearby.
- Cover all wires with cable ramps to ensure that no one trips and that wheelchair users can still pass through.
- If portable toilets are provided for the event, **ensure that there is at least one toilet that is accessible** (has enough maneuvering space, grab bars, etc.). If this isn't possible, **make accommodations to allow individuals with disabilities to leave and re-enter the event space** to access another nearby toilet.
- If your event features vendors, games, or booths, consider the height of tables and equipment to prevent barriers to participation.

PROMO MATERIALS

You've done all of the planning and its time to market your event. As mentioned before, its important to make the text on your promotional materials large enough that people with impaired eyesight can see. Having **image descriptions for social media posts** can also be valuable!

Because issues of accessibility are often overlooked (especially on college campuses) many people with disabilities assume that events will not be accessible. It's important to **include statements about access on informational material.** Let people know that upon request you will accommodate additional needs, such as providing directions to accessible parking, toilets, or where to obtain other aids and services.

RESOURCES

USC Disability Services
and Programs

- ability@usc.edu
- (213) 740-0776
- GFS 120

Christine Street,
Associate Vice Provost
for Institutional
Accessibility and ADA
Compliance

- streetc@usc.edu

Undergraduate Student
Government, Director of
Accessibility Affairs

- TCC 224

It is highly encouraged that you take advantage of disability resources on campus to help plan your event. Disability Services and Programs offers a variety of resources, including assistive devices and expertise on ADA-implementation. The Undergraduate Student Government's Director of Accessibility may also have insight on how to provide accommodation. The ASL club on campus may also be helpful at recruiting interpreters for your event.



3,500+

The number of
undergraduate students
at the University of
Southern California
living with one or more
disabilities.



In hosting events, take time to consider what accommodations are necessary and how you can better serve the needs of the student body. Even if you can't physically see their disability, someone may still have access needs. In planning accessible events, it is not only important to think of students, but also those who are performing. Consider bringing speakers, athletes, artist and performers with disabilities to campus -- representation is critical!

Thank you for your effort to make USC's campus more inclusive of individuals with disabilities. While accessibility may not be an area you are familiar with, it is one that deeply impacts the student experience.