

Best Practices: Accessible & Inclusive Events

Rhodes College strives to provide events that are welcoming to everyone. This checklist was developed to help faculty, staff, and students anticipate and plan for the needs of all community members. Event planners should consider the following elements when organizing an event.

LOCATION

Physical Space

- Is the primary entrance accessible by ramp, lift, or curb cut sidewalk?
- Where are the closest accessible parking spaces? Is there a level, accessible path from parking to the building entrance?
- Are doorways wide enough to accommodate wheelchairs/scooters (at least 32 inches wide with door open full 90 degrees)?
- Are there barrier-free interior pathways (at least 3 feet wide)?
- Is the elevator fully operational? **Pro Tip:** If the building has a second elevator location, be prepared to direct guests in the event of an unexpected mechanical issue.
- Are there accessible seating options at various locations in the room?
- Where are the nearest accessible single-use or all-gender restrooms?

Visibility

- Is there clear signage identifying the building and room location?
- Is the meeting space well-lit?
- Is the screen visible from all seats?

Acoustics/Technology

- Is there a microphone, PA system, and/or availability of assistive listening devices?
- Does the video being shown have captions provided? **Pro Tip:** If not, you can create captions for the video (such as on YouTube) or through specific applications like Live Caption.
- Are there electrical outlets in accessible seating areas to accommodate adaptive devices, laptops, etc.?
- Is there a lit area for a sign language interpreter, if needed?
- Is there seating available near the presenter for lip reading?

Service Animals

- Where are the nearest accessible toileting and watering facilities?
- Pro Tip:** If you have a question or concern about whether an animal is a service animal, be aware you're only legally allowed to ask two questions: (1) "Is the dog required because of a disability?" and (2) "What work or task is the dog trained to perform?"

March/Parade Routes

- Are there even, smooth surfaces?
- Is there sufficient seating for rest breaks and/or cover in the event of rain?
- Are there accessible all-gender toilets nearby?

PROMOTION

Access Statement

- Include a statement on the poster, invitation, event description, social media caption, or notice inviting attendees to share accommodation needs by a specific date. For example, “For access accommodations or questions, please contact [event planner’s email address] or call [phone number] by [date].”

Scheduling

- Review the online events calendar before selecting a program day and time. Avoid choosing the same time as another previously scheduled event that would compete for attendees.
- Avoid major religious holidays and religious rhythms. **Pro Tip:** Review the world religions calendar and consult with the Office of the Chaplain if needed.

Materials

- Choose easy to read, sans-serif fonts (e.g., Ariel, Calibri, Helvetica, Verdana) with appropriate color contrast ratio (at least 4.5:1 for small text, 3.1 for large text). **Pro Tip:** Use the [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#) to see if your materials meet this color contrast requirement.
- For printed posters, use a minimum font size of 12 pt.
- For digital materials, include [alternative text](#) for images and make sure text can be read by text-to-speech software. **Pro Tip:** Test out how text-to-speech software would read the content.
- Provide a detailed description of the event. Include the schedule of activities, directions, parking information, whether food will be provided.

Social Media

- When using hashtags, capitalize the first letter of every word. **Pro Tip:** This is called Camel Backing (e.g., #ScreenReaderDemo vs. #screenreaderdemo); it makes hashtags easier to read, especially for text-to-speech software.
- Make sure important information and links are posted in the body of your posts. **Pro Tip:** While text-to-speech software can help read information from social media, it cannot read information posted in graphics.
- Include alternative text for all images posted on social media. **Pro Tip:** Alt text does not need to be incredibly detailed. Check out these guides: [Instagram instructions](#) and [X instructions](#).

PRESENTATIONS

- Ask presenters to do the following:
 - Wear a microphone (even if they say they will talk loud enough).
 - Verbally describe visual materials (e.g., slides, charts).
 - Use videos with closed captions turned on.
 - Repeat each question before answering.
- Provide presentation materials available in alternative formats upon request (e.g., Word, accessible PDF, Braille). **Pro Tip:** For PowerPoints and Word documents, use the built-in Check Accessibility tool to help make your materials fully accessible. To ensure PDF accessibility, use a conversion tool (e.g., Ally, Adobe Acrobat Pro, SensusAccess).

FOOD/REFRESHMENTS

- ❑ Ask guests about food allergies or dietary restrictions prior to the event. **Pro Tip:** Have a plan for vegan, halal, kosher, gluten-free, nut-free, pork-free, or other dietary restrictions. Review the world religions calendar to check if specific religions are practicing fasting or if a holiday includes specific food restrictions.
- ❑ For food and beverage stations, indicate allergens and ensure food provided is not at risk of cross-contamination. Clearly label gluten-free, nut-free, vegan, vegetarian, pork-free, or other options.

EMERGENCY PLANNING

- ❑ Establish an emergency evacuation plan for all participants. **Pro Tip:** Do not assume individuals with visible disabilities will need assistance during an evacuation. Have a plan in place just in case.
- ❑ If your event is not on the first floor, identify the nearest area of refuge for participants needing evacuation assistance. **Pro Tip:** In the case of an emergency, using the elevator is ill advised for safety reasons. Instead, guide these individuals to an area of refuge and call emergency officials. Emergency personnel will go to that area and take them to safety. Do not try to help individuals downstairs yourself.

CLUB/ORGANIZATION MEETINGS

- ❑ Provide written notification of important meeting notes or changes to event dates.
- ❑ Repeat or rephrase questions or comments from the group before responding.
- ❑ Face the group when speaking.
- ❑ During group discussions, use examples that include a variety of characteristics with respect to ability, race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, socioeconomic status, etc.
- ❑ Minimize extraneous sounds (e.g., shut the door to keep out ambient noise) when possible.

DAY OF EVENT

- ❑ Double check the meeting space for previously covered elements—visibility, acoustics, physical space, and technology needs. Designate reserved accessible seating at front of room or near exits. Test technology and captions to make sure they are working properly.
- ❑ Designate someone to be responsible for answering attendee questions, maintaining clear pathways, assisting with seating, accommodations, and providing microphone to audience members asking questions.
- ❑ Minimize extraneous sounds (e.g., shut the door to keep out ambient noise) when possible.

For questions about best practices for planning accessible and inclusive events, contact:

- [Office of the Chaplain](mailto:chaplain@rhodes.edu) at chaplain@rhodes.edu
- [Office of College Events](mailto:smythes@rhodes.edu) at smythes@rhodes.edu
- [Office of Student Accessibility Services](mailto:sas@rhodes.edu) at sas@rhodes.edu
- [Office of Student Engagement](mailto:engagement@rhodes.edu) at engagement@rhodes.edu