

# Best Practices: Accessible Events

Rhodes College

Rhodes College strives to provide events that are welcoming and accessible to everyone. This checklist was developed to help faculty, staff, and student leaders anticipate and plan for the access needs of our diverse community, including those with visible disabilities and non-apparent disabilities.

To better serve all members the Rhodes community, please consider the following elements when creating an Access Plan for your event.

## LOCATION

Consider these aspects when selecting your event space.

### Physical Space/Mobility

- 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, 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 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?
- Is there a lit area for a sign language interpreter, if needed?
- Is there seating available near the presenter for lip reading?
- If the video being shown does not have captions provided, 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.?

### 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 this a service animal?" and (2) "What task is the service animal trained to do?"

## 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 or notice inviting attendees to share accommodation needs by a specific date. For example, “For access accommodations or questions, please contact [johndoe@rhodes.edu](mailto:johndoe@rhodes.edu) or call 901-843-XXXX by October 10th.”

### Materials

- For printed flyers, use font no smaller than 10 pt.
- For digital promotions, make sure all text can be read by screen-reading software, and use alternative text for images. Use the Check Accessibility features to review and correct any access issues. Test out how screen-reading software would read the content.

### 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 screen reading software.
- Make sure important information and links are posted in the body of your posts. **Pro Tip:** Screen readers can help students read information from social media, but they cannot read information posted in graphics.
- Include alternative text for all images posted on social media for users with visual impairments. **Pro Tip:** Adding alternative text gets easier with practice. Google is full of guides for alternative text settings for social media (e.g., [Twitter Instructions](#), [Instagram Instructions](#)).

## PRESENTATIONS

- Ask presenters to do the following:
  - Wear a microphone (even if they say they are loud enough).
  - Submit materials in accessible digital format in advance (to be distributed to attendees with visual impairments and learning differences upon request).
  - Use videos with closed captions turned on.
  - Verbally describe any visual materials (e.g., slides, charts).
  - If microphone is not available for audience questions, ask speaker to repeat each question before answering.
- Make the presentations and handouts available in alternative format upon request (e.g., Word, accessible PDF, braille). For documents, use a sans serif font (e.g., Arial, Calibri or Comic Sans). **Pro Tip:** For PowerPoints and Word documents, use the built-in Check Accessibility tool to help make your materials fully accessible. For PDFs, use the [SensusAccess](#) tool for easy conversion.

## DAY OF EVENT

- Double check the meeting space for relevant location access issues—visibility, acoustics, mobility, technology needs. Designate reserved accessible seating at front of room or near exits, if needed.
- 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.

## 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, SES, etc.
- Minimize extraneous sounds (e.g., shut the door to keep out ambient noise) when possible.

## FOOD/REFRESHMENTS

- Ask guests about potential food allergies or dietary restrictions prior to the event.  
**Pro Tip:** Have a plan for vegan, halal, kosher, gluten-free, non-nut, or other types of dietary restrictions. Check 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, clearly indicate allergens. Clearly label gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, or other options.

## EMERGENCY PLANNING

- Have you established an emergency evacuation plan for all participants? **Pro Tip:** Never assume that all individuals with impairments need special help in an evacuation. Have a plan in place just in case.
- If your event is not on the first floor, have you identified 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. They will come to that area and get them to safety. Do not try to get these individuals down stairs yourself.

For questions about best practices for accessible events, contact:  
Student Activities at [studentactivities@rhodes.edu](mailto:studentactivities@rhodes.edu) or  
Student Accessibility Services at [accessibilityservices@rhodes.edu](mailto:accessibilityservices@rhodes.edu).

Adapted from: Associated Colleges of the South Disability as Diversity Grant; Cornell University Division of Human Resources Accessibility Meeting & Event Checklist; Rooted in Rights How to Make Your Social Justice Events Accessible to the Disability Community.