## Overview

All postsecondary campuses, including community colleges, vocational training programs, and four-year universities, must ensure their programs, activities, and meetings are accessible to all visitors. This includes but is not limited to:

- Orientation sessions that are open to family members
- Public speaking events advertised to the community
- Fine arts, theatre performances, career fairs, or other extracurricular activities
- College open houses and recruitment events
- Football games or other sporting events

This mandate also applies to any activities co-sponsored or hosted with an outside organization on campus. In these instances, it is prudent to work cooperatively to best ensure event accessibility that is effective and cost efficient.

## What law applies in this situation?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended in 2008 addresses public access. The Department of Justice's Effective Communication ADA Requirement handout states, "The ADA requires that Title II entities (state and local governments) and Title III entities (businesses and nonprofit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The law's goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities."

Title III was also amended to require that effective communication to companions who have disabilities also be provided. The same document referenced above states: "The term 'companion' includes any family member, friend, or associate of a person seeking or receiving an entity's goods or services who is an appropriate person with whom the entity should communicate."

Under Title III, the covered entity is encouraged to consult with the person making the request to determine if the auxiliary aid is appropriate. The end goal is to ensure that the aid or service is effective and allows everyone in the situation an equal opportunity to participate.



## What is the institution's responsibility?

It is reasonable to establish a policy suggesting that accommodation requests be made in advance of the event. However, the person coordinating the services must make a good-faith effort to make the event accessible, even if it is a last minute request. When a request is made, primary consideration should be given to the specific accommodation requested. In some situations alternative accommodations may be considered. However, the requestor should be included in the planning process to ensure equal access to the event.

Policies regarding who arranges and pays for the event accommodations vary. At some institutions, the disability services office handles the request and payments. At other institutions, individual departments or divisions arrange for and fund needed accommodations. The individual who is deaf or hard of hearing is never responsible for the cost of accommodations.

## What are some examples of common auxiliary aids and services for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing?

- Qualified sign language interpreters in person or through video remote interpreting (VRI) services
- Note takers
- Real-time captioning
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Assistive listening devices and systems
- Telephones compatible with hearing aids
- Closed caption decoders
- Open or closed captioning
- Voice, text, and video-based telecommunications products and systems, including text telephones (TTYs), videophones, and captioned telephones or equally effective telecommunications devices
- Videotext displays

Determine your institution's funding policy and procedures for accommodation requests *before* you receive a request.

Designate the party or office that is responsible for coordinating accommodations for the event.

Include an accessibility statement in the event advertisement. The statement should provide information about how to request an accommodation and who to contact.

Consider having all your visual media captioned. Captioning provides many benefits, including the ability to understand a video in a noisy environment (resulting in access to all).

## Resources

The Americans with Disabilities Act (Videos) - https://dcmp.org/series/402-the-americans-with-disabilities-act

ADA National Network: Information, Guidance, and Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act - http://adata.org/factsheet/communication

ADA National Network: Making Temporary Events Accessible - https://adata.org/publication/temporary-events-guide

The Department of Justice's Effective Communication Guide - http://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm

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