



HEALTH COALITION

OF ALBERTA

Best Practices Guide For Accessible And Inclusive Events

December 2024

INTRODUCTION

The Best Practices Guide for Accessible and Inclusive Events was developed in collaboration with members of the Health Coalition of Alberta to provide practical recommendations for creating events that are welcoming and accessible to all participants, regardless of ability. This guide serves as a comprehensive resource for event organizers, offering clear strategies to ensure that events are inclusive, from promotion and site selection to presentations and virtual events. By following these best practices, we aim to help organizations remove barriers to participation, promote equity, and create an environment where everyone can fully engage.

As an organization committed to improving public health, the Health Coalition of Alberta believes that accessibility is key to fostering inclusive communities. Our vision is to create a health care system where all Albertans have an equitable voice and access to services needed to achieve their full health potential. Together, we can work toward making every event a space that supports diverse needs and promotes full participation.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Voice of Albertans with Disabilities (VAD) for their invaluable guidance and resources in the development of this document. Their expertise and support were instrumental in ensuring that this guide reflects the most effective and inclusive practices for accessible event planning.

ACCESSIBLE EVENTS

When promoting a meeting or event:

- All promotional materials (flyers, invitations, advertisements, emails, etc.) should be available in alternative formats, such as text format, Braille, large print or electronic, if needed.
- Include an accommodation statement on promotional materials and registration forms to inform attendees that they can request accommodation services for a variety of needs. A general accommodation statement can include the following:
 - If you are attending a Health Coalition of Alberta event and have a disability or require accommodation to fully participate, please inform the Executive Director/Administrative Assistant of your requirements for accommodation by emailing director@healthcoalitionab.ca/admin@healthcoalitionab.ca.

Staff and Volunteers:

Identify staff and volunteers who can serve as readers, escorts and to perform other functions related to accommodating participants with disabilities. The Health Coalition of Alberta is responsible for providing any staff orientation for these individuals to ensure that they have training on how to work with people with disabilities.

Staff and volunteers should work with invited speakers and presenters to ensure that their presentations are accessible to persons with disabilities. They should also ask speakers or presenters if they have any accessibility needs, such as ramping or podium requests, accessibility of microphone at the appropriate height, a reverser interpreter, sighted guide for a person with limited vision, etc.

Site Selection:

Staff, along with any available Board of Director(s), should conduct a site visit to the meeting or event location well in advance to determine whether barriers to accessibility exist and how they will be addressed. They should consider accessibility for individuals with a variety of impairments (e.g., visual, hearing, mobility) and should assess all the different physical spaces that will be available to attendees without disabilities including:

- Accessibility/availability of parking, shuttles, and public transportation.
- Location of drop-off point for persons with disabilities.
- Accessibility of entrances and interior doorways
 - Width, slope of ramps, presence of automatic door openers, etc.
- Accessibility of restrooms and drinking fountains

- Navigability of corridors, doorways, and aisles
 - Width for wheelchair access, absence of protruding objects or displays.
- Elevators
 - Easy access and adequate number
- Signage
 - Clearly marked location of accessible bathrooms, entrances, exits, etc.
- Meeting and event rooms
 - Allow for extra room capacity & table space to accommodate wheelchairs & assistance animals, including in banquet/reception/meal areas.
 - Well-lit and easily accessible meeting rooms.
 - Control background noise to the greatest extent possible.
 - Choose a meeting room with good acoustics and an auxiliary sound system, if possible.
- Seating
 - Allow extra space for wheelchairs and a clear line of sight to the speaker/interpreter/captionist from an appropriate number of seats in the audience.
 - Seating for persons with disabilities should be integrated with regular seating. Don't forget to include the table for the captionist.
- Accessibility of dining facilities & catering (including ability to accommodate dietary restrictions).
- Toileting space for service animals.
- Accessible, appropriately equipped sleeping rooms for overnight events.

Presentations:

Staff and volunteers should ask the presenter(s) to ensure that their handouts and/or slides are available in large print with sharp, contrasting colours. If they will be using videos during the presentation and closed captioning is requested, staff and volunteers must request a copy of the video for captioning services in advance or ensure that the video itself has closed captioning available. If required for accommodation, presenters should also be asked to verbally describe any visual aids used during the presentation.

It is preferred that a glossary of terms with definitions should be made available to attendees prior to or at the meeting or event. Speakers and presenters should be mindful of using jargon, slang, abbreviations and acronyms in their presentations or discussions and strive to explain these terms to the audience when used.

Promoting a Safe and Inclusive Space:

If presenters or panelists will be discussing potentially triggering topics or subject matter, consider putting content warnings before the presentation of such topics.

Social Functions and Meals:

Consider implementing the following when planning social functions and meals:

- Include personal assistants and interpreters in the estimated number of participants at no additional charge.
- Make adequate provisions for integrated seating so that participants with disabilities are not marginalized (e.g., do not place persons in wheelchairs or those who use walkers or dog guides on the fringes of the dining area).
- If offering a buffet, have servers available to assist; buffets can be particularly difficult for persons with mobility or visual impairments.
- Determine the accessibility of any outside entertainment and transportation services offered to participants.

Emergency Evacuation:

In organizing an event, an emergency evacuation plan should be established for individuals with disabilities. However, persons with disabilities must ask before providing aid. This is because one should never assume that all people with disabilities need special help in an evacuation.

VIRTUAL EVENTS

- Online hosting platform must allow for both computer-based and phone-based audio listening/speaking. It should also be compatible with assistive technology (e.g., screen readers and both augmentative and alternative communication).
- Ensure that a staff or volunteer is available for troubleshooting accessibility or access issues and to communicate this with the audience prior to or at the beginning of the meeting/event.
- If needed, provide detailed, step-by-step instructions of how to both log in to the event and how to use the platform. Consider offering training sessions before the meeting/event.
- Written content that will be presented on the screen should have easy to read fonts with a large size and good colour contrast. Use plain and people-first language, and be mindful of jargon, slang, and assumed knowledge. Explain acronyms and abbreviations if necessary.
- Avoid the use of flashing or strobing animations.
- It is preferred that a recording is available post-event so that people can access and interact with the content according to their preferences and availability.
- The materials should be shared to attendees in an accessible format.

CONCLUSION

The Health Coalition of Alberta is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where all Albertans can fully participate in events and activities. By adhering to the best practices outlined in this guide, event organizers can ensure that they are creating welcoming spaces that respect and support the needs of all attendees. Whether hosting in-person or virtual events, promoting accessibility and inclusivity is essential for achieving equity and participation.

Key recommendations include making promotional materials available in alternative formats, ensuring event spaces accommodate all attendees, and preparing presenters to meet accessibility requirements such as providing large-print handouts or video captioning. For virtual events, the guide emphasizes compatibility with assistive technology, clear instructions for participants, and the importance of accessible content. Additionally, the guide provides tips for hosting inclusive social functions, ensuring accessible transportation, dining, and seating, and planning for emergency evacuation procedures.

We hope this guide serves as a valuable resource in making events more accessible and helping build communities where everyone has an opportunity to engage and thrive. Together, we can create events that are truly inclusive and provide equal access to all individuals, regardless of ability.



HEALTH COALITION
OF ALBERTA

Contact Us



director@healthcoalitionab.ca



403-605-2859



@CoalitionAB



healthcoalitionab.ca