



## BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED ACCESSIBILITY

There are a number of ways you can work to increase accessibility for Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) attendees in your programming and events.

### »» **Preparing the Space**

1. Avoid spaces with a ledge/lip or step in the entranceway or between rooms.
2. Ensure there are no physical obstacles or loose cords that could be a hazard.
3. Provide a location description to BVI participants in advance so they may familiarize themselves with the venue, how to get to the appropriate room(s), and where emergency exits are located.
4. If your event includes the provision of sleeping accommodations, offer a guided tour of the room provided to identify essentials and amenities (such as the location and workings of the thermostat). Ask the participant if they have specific requests with regard to their room, such as placement in proximity to the elevator.
5. If there are items to be picked up (schedules, items for activities), a drink station, or a buffet, consider having a volunteer available to describe the choices and/or serve individuals as desired.
6. Prepare clear, high contrast signage in a sans serif font (size 18pt or greater).
7. Have reserved seating available near the speaker and/or performance. Ensure it is clearly marked.
8. Consider offering the participant a designated area with a clean dish of water for service animals.
9. Avoid fog machines and bubble machines at events, as they may cause confusion or potential barriers for service animals, such as guide dogs.

### »» **Preparing Materials**

1. When preparing any marketing/advertising information, graphics, and imagery, ensure all information contained in the images and/or posters is also available in the event caption or description online. Prepare Alt Text for all images and graphics.

2. Ensure you have plain text, electronic copies of all handouts and documents that will be used or referenced during the event. Provide these to BVI participants in advance to allow time for review.
3. If there will be handouts or other materials used at the event, prepare additional large-print copies in a sans serif font (minimum 18pt).
4. If you have speakers at your event, advise them to prepare and deliver clear descriptions of any images used or referenced in their presentations. For any visual materials (posters, powerpoints, etc.) at the event not included in a presentation, prepare a clear description and designate someone to read it aloud during the event.
5. If there is a video or visual performance component to the event that does not fall under the above categorization, consider designating an individual that can personally describe visuals during video or performance.
6. Remember that all last-minute materials that have not been provided in advance should be read aloud at the event.

### »» **Preparing Volunteers and Speaker/Performers**

1. Begin the event (in the case of a meeting, workshop, or social) with introductions.
2. Ask all speakers to identify themselves before speaking.
3. BVI participants may wish to access a note-taker, reader, or scribe. Have individuals prepared to take on these roles as requested. Ensure their availability is made known to participants.
4. Designate one or more volunteers to provide additional support as needed, such as providing a room tour, acting as a food/beverage buddy to help serve and/or carry an individual's plate, and an evacuation guide in case of emergency.
5. Provide advance notice to speakers so they may prepare descriptions for any visual content.

### »» **Blind Accessibility Online**

1. Begin with introductions (all participants or speakers, depending on context).
2. Ensure all speakers identify themselves before they begin speaking.
3. Ensure all speakers include descriptions for visual content and relevant written content is provided to attendees in advance (see Preparing Materials above).
4. Have a designated individual ready to read all chat text or Q&A text aloud.
5. Make a clear announcement at the beginning of the event as to how participants can convey if they want to engage verbally - avoid relying (solely) on emoticons to signal a desire to speak. Have a designated individual with host controls watching for the agreed upon signal from BVI attendees. Unmute and mute the participant accordingly in case they do not have knowledge of the keyboard shortcuts.