



## **Making ISAAC Conferences Accessible**

The following tips have been taken from and, in some instances, adapted from resources developed by the Ontario's Accessibility Directorate and the ADA. NAACA has added items that are specific for people who use AAC and others who may attend ISAAC conferences.

### **Venue**

Visit the site of a potential venue. Make sure you invite people who have mobility and sensory disabilities to join you in touring the facility.

### **Accessible transportation**

The venue should be close to public transportation, with para- transit vehicles serving that route.

Inform delegates where the passenger drop-off areas are located.

### **Outdoor and indoor surfaces**

Are there any barriers along outdoor and indoor paths that might cause problems for people who use canes, crutches or wheelchairs?

Are there ramps where steps exist? Are the ramps at appropriate angles for safe use?

Are edges beside drops in levels clearly marked for people to see them?

Make sure that things like garbage cans and sandwich boards can be moved so there is at least a one-metre wide path of travel for people using wheelchairs or walkers.

Check if surfaces are level, as well as firm and stable.

Avoid soft, thick pile carpeting or loose mats.

## **Doors**

Are automatic doors available? If not, make sure you can prop doors open, or at least make sure there will be volunteers who can help people trying to go through.

## **Washrooms**

Are the washrooms accessible?

Are there sufficient numbers of washrooms for the number of participants you anticipate?

Is there room on the floor area beyond the swing of the door for a wheelchair or walker?

Check also that there are grab bars, and that a person using a wheelchair can reach the sink, soap and paper towels.

Is there a washroom for people who need changing facilities?

Accessible restrooms should be on the same floor as meeting rooms. If accessible restrooms are not on the same floor, increase break times between sessions.

Are there gender neutral washrooms?

## **Lighting**

Are lights adjustable so you are able to control the brightness of the room?

In addition, check that you can adjust the amount of natural light for daytime events. Direct natural light can cause shadows and glare, making it difficult for people with low vision to see.

## **Acoustics**

Does the main room have a loud echo? Environments with significant echo create barriers for people who are hard of hearing.

## **Quiet space / Sensory break rooms**

Is there a quiet, low sensory, relaxing space for delegates?

## **Charging stations**

Designate one wall or zone outside meeting rooms for attendees to recharge their batteries and devices.

## **Communication assistance**

Position trained communication assistants at doors of all sessions.

Provide assistants as readers at poster sessions.

Inform delegates about how to connect with assistants as needed.

## **Room set up**

Make sure there are spaces without chairs at the tables for every person using a wheelchair.

Provide a variety of chairs with and without armrests.

Reserve seating upfront for people who have difficulty hearing or seeing presentations.

Provide seating for those who can't stand for long periods at events where people will be mostly standing.

Offer accessible seating locations throughout the room so individuals with disabilities have choices similar to the choices available to others.

Have event staff or volunteers in attendance at the start of each session to assist with last-minute changes (moving chairs, etc.) that may be needed.

When possible, include both "horizontal" (side to side) and "vertical" (front to back) aisles to improve access and flow.

Make aisles or space around tables wide enough for people using mobility aids such as wheelchairs or walkers to easily move. An aisle width of about one metre or more is recommended.

If possible, leave room at the rear of the meeting space for attendees to stand or stretch.

Circulation space (including aisles) should be at least 36 inches and preferably 60 inches wide so that passing room is available for people using mobility devices. **A six-foot width (72 inches) is recommended whenever feasible.**

Cover electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways so everyone can safely get across them.

## **Signage**

Use common words and simple, short sentences and graphics for wayfaring.

## **Accessibility "Go to" area**

Assign a volunteer to troubleshoot and resolve accessibility barriers during the conference.

## **Registration tables**

Make sure there are chairs for people who use canes or crutches and find it hard to stand in lines for long periods. Provide volunteers to stand in their place.

Make sure there is enough room for a person using a wheelchair or scooter to approach and maneuver in front of registration tables.

## **Name badges**

Make name badges high contrast and use large print for easy reading.

## **Invitations and Promotion**

Provide delegates with information about the accessibility features provided by the conference.

Give them a contact and date to let you know when/ if they have specific accommodations needs. For example:

- Attendant services (male / female / gender neutral)
- Sign language interpreting (specify presentations)
- Communication support (if they are not bringing someone to assist them)
- Assistance at meals and snacks
- Any food, environmental allergies

Make the event perfume free and inform delegates not to wear perfume, cologne

## **Food and Refreshments (if appropriate)**

Consider the following points when planning to serve food or refreshments:

- If it is a buffet-style event, be sure to place food, drinks and utensils in easy reach of a person using a wheelchair.
- Provide bendable straws as well as some cups with handles.

## **Accessible Presentations**

Use a sans serif font that is at least 22 point.

Use a light-colored background with dark text.

Use a plain background without any watermark, photo, or design behind the text.

Use a PowerPoint theme to structure your presentation, with only short sentences and/or bulleted phrases (about 4 lines of text/40 words per slide).

Keep it short - as a rule, one slide for every two minutes of speaking time.

## **When Presenting:**

- If there is a sign language interpreter, please wait for him/her to be in place before beginning your presentation.
- Always face the audience; this is especially helpful for audience members who are speech readers (lip readers).
- Speak at a normal rate, neither too slowly nor too quickly
- All the information on your slides should be part of your spoken presentation; do not read the text to the audience, but be certain that all information is addressed.

- Caption videos, if possible
- If someone has requested visual accommodations, describe all meaningful graphics in your presentation (such as photos, images, charts, and illustrations).
- Use felt tip markers free of scents and solvents and replace the cap when not in use.
- Use lasers to point only; resist the urge to wiggle the light around the screen (this can be problematic for people with a variety of conditions, including vision disabilities), and turn it off when not in use.
- If you are asked a question by someone not using a microphone, repeat the question into the microphone.
- Always use a microphone.
- Time presentations to give people who use mobility aids to get to the next session.

### **Handouts**

- Provide options for alternate formats (large print, electronic copy, accessible PDFs, compatible with screen readers etc.,)

### **Service Animals**

Make sure there is a relief area for these animals, and make sure their owners know where it is. Have water bowls available for service dogs.