

NYLN

National Youth Leadership Network



Kids As Self Advocates

Accessibility and Accommodations: **Making opportunity accessible to all**

“Disability is a natural part of the human experience...”
— U.S. Developmental Disabilities Act & the Bill of Rights Act

Why We Chose to Write This

The disability community includes many different people. People with disabilities are in all age groups, all genders, all cultures, all religions, and from all financial backgrounds. People can be born with a disability or they can get a disability later in life, but people in this community have one thing in common: we often face barriers when trying to be involved in activities such as education, employment, health care, social events, and more. This document explains ways to make sure people with disabilities can participate in different activities.

Why Accommodations and Accessibility Are Needed

Often, a person will see a sign or a flyer saying: “All are welcome.” But the question is: “Will everyone be able to participate?” Our society is proud of saying that everyone can do everything. It’s known as the “American Dream.” However, this thought of a community that is all-inclusive (where everyone can participate in activities, have access to things, and be equally respected) is not happening yet in our country. People need accommodations and support to be independent.

We must educate ourselves and others about accommodations and accessibility. This is the main way to let people know that they are welcome to participate. These accommodations will be helpful for everyone, not only for those with disabilities. For example, many non-disabled people use automatic doors and ramps to enter a building. Also, clear and summarized documents are easier to read rather than pages and pages of difficult terminology. These are examples of accessibility accommodations that can be helpful for everyone.

General Accommodations and Ideas for Presentations and Events

The following accommodations can be used as a guide or a checklist to make our society respectful and inclusive for everyone.

- Whenever possible, prepare. Send out a form ahead of time asking what accommodations people may need. Follow up directly with the person if there is anything unclear about what she or he needs.
- Prepare the presentation or event to be as “barrier free” as possible. Being “barrier free” means finding space that is physically accessible. For example, this means: no stairs, wide enough doorways (32 inches), enough space for a wheelchair user to sit as part of the group, and not having objects in the way (this may mean moving furniture, clutter, chairs, etc.). This applies to places such as the entrance, the meeting space, and the restrooms. Also if American Sign Language Interpreters are requested, reserve seating in the front of the audience for Deaf or Hard-of-hearing participants.
- Information should be provided in as many ways as possible. For example, present things visually (where people can read along), verbally (where people can listen to what is being read), and interactively (where people have a chance to share thoughts and work with each other).
- When doing group activities, make sure people can be involved in many different ways. For example, if asking a group to answer a question by raising their hands, also give them a chance to respond verbally or by clapping.
- Use clear language. Avoid using difficult words and/or explain what a word means. For example, explain what you mean in different ways or use examples to be sure that everyone understands what is being said. [For more details, see KASA Youth-Friendly/Accessible Language document.]
- Make sure to explain acronyms and letters that stand for words. For example, KASA is an acronym for **K**ids **A**s **S**elf **A**dvocates or NYLN means **N**ational **Y**outh **L**eadership **N**etwork.
- It is okay to ask if what you are presenting on or talking about is clear. Then you can be sure that your audience understands what you are sharing.
- Remember that people with disabilities can be experts. They can share their skills and experiences just like people without disabilities when there are accommodations available for them.

General Ways to be Accessible for Different Kinds of Disabilities


Ask people what they need or announce that accommodations can be provided. This makes a presentation or an event accessible to everyone. Here are some examples of accommodations that people might need. There may be other kinds of accommodations requested such as avoiding perfumes, scented soaps, or florescent lighting. Accommodation requests may be different for different people.

<u>Disability</u>	<u>Sample Accommodations</u>
Blind or Visual Impairment	Braille, Electronic CDs or Diskettes (preferably in Microsoft Word), Audio tapes, Large print, Verbal expression (explaining visual aides and charts)
Deaf or Hearing Impairment	Real Time Captioning or CART (presentations transcribed and projected in a screen for reading), American Sign Language interpreters, Oral Interpreters, Printed materials for verbal presentations
Speech/Communication Disability	Letter sheets, Extra time to express thoughts (person might use technology to communicate)
Learning Disability/Cognitive Disability	Easily understandable and clear language, Outlines around the main points, Clear examples by using language that is easy to understand, Willingness to talk through things in more detail
Mental Health Disability	Breaks, Willingness to talk through topics
Mobility Limitation/Physical Disability	Physically accessible/barrier-free activities, Activities that can be done in multiple ways
Cognitive Disability	Language that everyone can understand, Support talking through topics

This document was co-written by
the National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN)
and Kids As Self Advocates (KASA).

NYLN

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For more information:
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The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is a voice for young leaders with disabilities. We live across the United States and its territories. This is a place where young leaders come together to support (help) other youth with disabilities. We believe youth can do a lot! NYLN tries to help youth at national, state, and local levels. We link them to opportunities for education, employment, and independence. NYLN also talks about things important to youth with disabilities, such as policies (laws) affecting our lives.



Kids As Self Advocates

For more information:
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KASA is a project of 

Kids As Self Advocates (KASA) is a project created by youth with disabilities for youth. Young people who work with KASA are from all over the United States. KASA knows youth can make choices and advocate for themselves if they have the information and support they need. KASA believes young people with disabilities will have control over their own lives and futures. We will help make this happen by teaching youth about their rights, giving peer support and training, and changing the systems that affect our lives to include us.

NYLN and KASA decided to co-write this document because:

- KASA works with youth ages 13-24 and NYLN with youth 16-28.
- Both groups reach out to national networks.
- Both KASA and NYLN work hard to be accessible to youth with disabilities. They wanted to share what they have learned “for youth with disabilities, by youth with disabilities.”