



A quick guide to inclusive in-person events

A vibrant, successful event, gathering, or meeting welcomes everyone, irrespective of their physical, mental or cognitive abilities, to participate fully without facing any barriers or challenges. To help organizers host in-person events, gatherings, and meetings that make everyone feel welcome, seen, and heard, the ACS Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Respect offers some suggestions and recommendations to meet the needs of all participants.

The ACS Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect is very grateful to the members of the Chemists with Disabilities committee for their expertise and insights that went into creating this guide as well as members of Community Activities for their input.

For in-person events, consider venue and staffing needs:

- For indoor venues, all participants need full access to the building (through the main entrance or clearly marked alternative), the room(s) used for the activity, restrooms, break areas, emergency exits, and all locations within the room(s). This includes unlocked elevators where necessary. Braille signage would be desirable, if possible.
- For tables or student desks, leave adequate space for participants in wheelchairs, scooters or carriages to join the table or desk and turn around.
- Check visibility of signage and demonstration materials, sight lines and auditory levels in all parts of the venue.
- Provide a sign language interpreter, closed captioning, or a personal narrator as needed for participants who indicated in advance a need for accommodation.
- If participation is on a drop-in basis without advance registration, assign one or more individual volunteer aides to work as necessary with participants with vision, hearing, mobility, coordination or neurodiverse needs. Review with these volunteers the guidelines below under “During the event.”
- Assign one volunteer (more if necessary) to ensure safety in an emergency for any participant with a disability.
- If giving away clothing, make sure to have a range of sizes, going from XXS or youth to 5XL as options.

Assess accommodation needs:

- On registration and sign-up forms, [provide space to indicate needed accommodations](#).
- If accommodations are requested, follow up to get more specific information. For example, an individual in a wheelchair may have manual or battery power for the chair, depending on their upper body mobility. Different situations will require different accommodations.
- If the event is staffed by volunteers, in addition to asking about their needed accommodations, provide a list of tasks that will be needed on the day of the event and ask them to identify those tasks they would feel comfortable doing. Many disabilities and language concerns are invisible and the individual may be reluctant to disclose them directly.

- A participant is allowed under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to bring a service dog to the venue, even for laboratory activities, but it would be acceptable and beneficial to talk with the participant beforehand to discuss the specific tasks the dog performs and the accommodations needed. Only two questions may be asked: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability (a yes/no answer only), and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform? No certification or identification is required for a service dog.
- If food will be provided during the event, ask specifically if participants or volunteers have any food allergies or other food restrictions.

Things to do during event:

- Make sure all individuals are receiving the appropriate help to participate fully and safely. However, do not assume an individual with a disability requires help. Ask first, and, if help is requested, ask the best way to supply that help.
- If necessary, provide escorts when changing locations for events and during free time between events.
- Realize that some individuals are reluctant to establish eye contact, for cultural or disability-related reasons. Don't insist on it.
- Talk directly to the audience or individual with the disability, not to the sign language interpreter/signer, aide, or other intermediary. Face the audience when speaking and, if possible, use a lapel (or similar) microphone.
- If masks are required, consider providing masks with a clear or transparent window for all volunteers to aid communication.
- As far as possible, avoid looming over seated individuals, including those in wheelchairs.
- If the information is given, use [the correct pronouns](#) provided by participants.

For more information:

The CWD publication [Teaching Chemistry to Students with Disabilities, 4th edition](#)

(<https://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1001&context=ritbooks>)

Arizona State University's [A GUIDE TO PLANNING ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE EVENTS](#)

University of Michigan's [ACCESSIBLE & INCLUSIVE EVENTS RESOURCE GUIDE](#)

The University of British Columbia's [Accessible and Inclusive Event Planning](#)

Get in touch with:

ACS Committee on Chemists with Disabilities:

<https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/about/governance/committees/chemists-with-disabilities.html>

ACS Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Respect: diversity@acs.org