

Frequently Asked Questions about Planning Accessible Programs

Am I required to provide accommodations?

All events that take place on the University of Northern Colorado campus must be accessible to eligible persons with disabilities. Also, adequate notice must be given so that eligible persons can make their accommodation needs known in a timely manner.

How much notice does a participant with a disability have to provide to be entitled to an accommodation?

There is no “cutoff” point after which the event sponsor has no obligation to provide accommodation due to short notice. An event sponsor is required to make a good faith effort to timely provide an appropriate accommodation upon request. What is considered a reasonable accommodation depends in part with the amount of time to secure the accommodation the event sponsor has been given. At the earliest stages of planning an event, a sponsor should consider how the organization intends to respond upon receiving a request for commonly requested accommodations, e.g., interpreters, captioning, wheelchair access, etc. On the other hand, requests for accommodation made only a few days before an event may mean that no qualified interpreters/captioners are available. Whenever an event sponsor becomes aware that the organization is going to be unable, for any reason, to satisfactorily respond to a request for accommodation to a University event, the event sponsor should immediately notify the Disability Resource Center.

We haven't received any accommodation requests yet for our event. Am I legally required to provide an accommodation (e.g., interpreters, wheelchair access, etc.) in the absence of a request from a specific individual with a disability?

Although in general the duty to be accessible is triggered by an actual person with a disability making a request for accommodation, the larger the number of folks expected to attend an event, the stronger the legal presumption that the event sponsor has planned in advance upon the possibility that such a request will be received and there is an expectation that the sponsor is "ready to go" when such a request for accommodation is received, even on short notice. It is therefore especially important that, even before an actual request for accommodation from an individual is received, the sponsor of a University event develops a plan for how to provide accommodations (e.g., to someone who is Deaf) with respect to an event held in one of the campus's large facilities. Thus, whenever possible public events should not be scheduled at a location that is not wheelchair accessible. Please note that public events scheduled to be held in facilities that are not wheelchair accessible are required to have an alternate wheelchair accessible location in mind should a request for wheelchair access be made.

If I need a sign language interpreter where do I go to get one?

To request a sign language interpreter or real time captionist for your on-campus event, contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to make the necessary arrangements.

Should I just go ahead and book ASL interpreters for my event? Better safe than sorry, right?

Individuals who are Deaf or have other hearing impairments (i.e., hard-of-hearing, oral) may need a different kind of accommodation. Not all Deaf persons are fluent in sign language, so it cannot be assumed that simply providing an American Sign Language interpreter will be an appropriate accommodation for everyone. Therefore, there are many reasons that knowledgeable sponsors wait to actually receive a request for accommodation before committing to a specific approach to accommodation. Specifically, many in the disability community look with disfavor on generically just having sign language interpreters hired to sign to an “empty seat” if no Deaf individuals have indicated they plan to attend. In addition, hiring interpreters when there may not be Deaf people in attendance can end up tying up a scarce resource (interpreters) and keeping others from engaging interpreters in situations where a Deaf person actually will be in attendance. In the absence of a specific request, it may be more effective to secure real-time captioning for your event. If you end up making accommodation arrangements without a request from an individual with a disability, take extra steps to let those in the UNC and local Deaf communities know that this accommodation is definitely being offered. In this way, they may be more encouraged to attend, and you will have made the most of the accommodation resource.

Who pays the cost of disability accommodations at extracurricular events?

The sponsoring department, unit, or organization of an event pays the expense of an accommodation necessary for any participant with a disability

to attend (just as the sponsor bears all the other costs related to putting on the event).

What is the responsibility of the Services for Students with Disabilities in event planning?

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is funded to provide (and pay for) accommodations to enable students with disabilities to access their academic program. Due to its expertise acquired in the foregoing service, DRC is often asked for advice and assistance by other campus departments/units and student organizations when they receive a request for accommodation from an event participant with a disability.

The DRC is limited to providing “technical assistance” to sponsors of events who have been asked to provide a requested accommodation (e.g., many event sponsors don’t know how to arrange for a captioner or sign language interpreter at events they are putting on). There is no charge for this technical assistance. However, please keep in mind that the cost of the actual accommodation is billed to the event sponsor.

In other words, the cost of accommodating participants with disabilities is simply one of the many costs of putting on an event, such as renting a room, obtaining video/technology, and printing promotional materials.

The ultimate responsibility for ensuring that event participants with disabilities are appropriately and timely accommodated always rests with the event sponsor. The DRC is simply a valuable resource to assist the event sponsor in fulfilling its responsibility.