JAccess | Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta

Event Accessibility Guide

Introduction: This guide provides practical steps for integrating accessibility into Jewish event planning from the very beginning.

What Is an Accessible Event: An accessible Jewish event is a gathering built on a commitment to true inclusion by removing barriers for all guests. Thoughtful planning can eliminate physical, sensory, communication, and social obstacles so everyone can participate fully and comfortably from the start. Accessibility also fosters belonging, creating a space where people feel welcomed, valued, cared for, and excited to return to the next one.

Why It Matters: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees equal access to programs and services, but meaningful event accessibility goes beyond legal compliance. When events are designed with inclusion in mind, everyone's access needs are considered and supported. To learn more about ADA, we have more information about that in our Disability 101 Guide.

"Event accessibility can benefit everyone" mindset: Event accessibility benefits everyone by making participation more comfortable to gather. Features like step-free access, clear signage, microphones, quiet areas, and labeled food create a smoother and more welcoming experience for the whole community to be together. Viewing accessibility through an inclusive mindset means understanding that accessibility plans are not special add-ons for a few people but a great design for everyone. It shifts thinking from "accommodations for some" to "universal design for everyone" which means creating environments, products, and services usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without needing special adaptation.

How To Help Plan Accessible Events: By identifying and removing barriers early, organizers, event coordinators, and partners designing the program can ensure that all guests are able to participate. Our guide will help you create Jewish programming that fosters belonging and reflects the values of inclusion and community.

The Beginning: JAccess likes to treat event accessibility planning like a recipe, so all the ingredients go in order from the start rather than interrupting the flow of the program. Planning accessibility needs to make sure everything is done from the beginning can start by:

- **Using a Timeline and Checklist:** Start planning 2–3 months before the event. We like this timeline checklist from Ford Foundations Disability Inclusion Tool Kit starting on page 24. It also includes some details on virtual programming.
- **Plan for Event Accessibility Budget:** Creating an event accessibility budget means planning for inclusion from the start. We suggest ahead of budgeting season. Setting aside funds for access needs such as: ASL interpreters, captioning, accessible transportation, sensory kits, or adaptive materials is great to include in planning. Budget's help ensure that accessibility is not an afterthought. By building these costs overtime into the overall budget, it reflects that the organization thinks of accessibility as part of their values. Budgets vary per organization; JAccess Trainings can help organizations understand event accessibility from the beginning.
- **Event Accessibility Coordinator:** Assign an Event Accessibility Coordinator to ensure accessibility is integrated throughout the program. This person plans, oversees, and implements accessibility efforts and can be anyone with strong communication skills, empathy, and a willingness to learn. While ADA Coordinator certification exists, events benefit from having a designated Event Access Coordinator. The selected person should be encouraged to use JAccess resources and training.
- **Training Team members, Volunteers, and Security:** The Event Accessibility Coordinator should work with security teams and other event staff to ensure everyone is included and supported during an

emergency and should also schedule training with JAccess to strengthen preparedness and accessibility practices.

Marketing Communications and Registration

Accessible Email Invites: As you prepare to send out your invites, make sure your emails and marketing materials are accessible. Use clear, structured, and inclusive language so every guest feels welcome and informed and avoid acronyms that may create confusion. In your emails, providing clear, upfront information helps people understand what to expect and creates a more accessible, inclusive experience that removes barriers to participation. To learn more about email marketing accessibility, please explore here.

Social media Marketing: Share event details across social media in accessible posts. You can learn more about accessible social media here.

Accessible Websites: When building your form, check whether the platform follows the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). WCAG are international W3C standards that outline how to make websites, apps, and digital content accessible to people with disabilities. You can explore introductory resources such as:

- Keep questions simple and provide information that helps guests plan their visit. If security is a concern, you can still offer general access details, such as:
    - Schedule of the program
    - Type of food provided
    - Accessible parking availability
    - Whether the building is accessible (use checklists)
    - General location (e.g., Morningside vs. Virginia-Highland; Sandy Springs vs. Dunwoody)
    - Distance from public transit, if applicable
    - Accessibility accommodations your organization will provide beyond those requested in advance

Accessible Registration Forms: On your website registration form, include an accommodation-request section and continue using plain, inclusive

language. It is completely appropriate to include this request option both in the invite and again on the form.

Accommodation Request Language Sample: Accommodation requests typically can be in the form part where someone can have the ability to type in a box and have an option to call or email:

- Do you need accommodation to participate? We are committed to providing an inclusive and accessible experience for all. This event will be captioned live. If you require ASL interpretation, seating assistance, sensory support, or other accommodations, please contact _____at _____at least two weeks in advance.
- The language can be customizable to what the organization can provide.
- You don't need to include this but here's examples of a request:
    - Step-free or ramped entrances
    - Accessible seating or space for mobility devices
    - Seating close to the front
    - Chairs are easier for inclusion than pews because you can remove and take away for someone who is with their family/friends in a wheelchair
    - Clear information about accessible parking or drop-off, entrances, and accessibility wayfinding throughout the venue such as finding accessible bathroom
    - American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation
    - Communication Access Realtime Translation (Live captioning services)
    - Large-print materials
    - Digital materials provided in advance
    - Quiet or low-sensory spaces
    - Preference for low lighting or reduced noise, if that is not possible, please let them know the type of lighting provided for the program
    - Bringing an animal service
    - Space for support worker/caregiver (if they can get included in the ticket that's true inclusion)

        - Ability to leave a note about dietary restrictions or allergies (this can be a separate area in the food section if that is part of the form)
        - Space to store medication (including refrigeration)
        - Early entry to the event space
        - Clear instructions or schedule provided in advance
        - Written or plain-language materials
        - Hybrid or virtual access when applicable
- Add a notice this is a scent-free program free of smells that can bother allergies.
- Another note about food is to add what sort of meal is being served. For dietary requests, ask guests about their specific requirements in advance. This will help you plan food orders accurately and determine how many people need each option.

Venue & Site Visit: Tour locations that are easy to access, drive to, and take public transit as well. Here's a great resource to determine of a venue is accessible: **Making temporary events accessible .**

- Some questions to ask on a site visit:
    - "Can you show me the accessible entrances?"
    - "Is there an accessible restroom available?"
    - "Do you have automatic doors, accessible bathrooms, what's the walk time to and from spots, and elevators that work with people onsite to help if something goes wrong?"
    - "Do you have accessible seating options?"
    - "What is your emergency plan for disabled guests?"
    - "What are the security plans for people with disabilities?"

Accessibility Vendors: Finding reliable vendors ahead of time for accessibility and accommodations can save you time and stress. Build relationships with local vendors by talking to disability organizations and disabled community members. They often know who is reliable. Contact vendors early and share basic event details when you book them. Keep a list of vendors for future events so you don't have to start from scratch and

can plan your access budget more easily. We have a list, and we can refer anytime ahead of your planning. Please contact me about that. However, below are some different types of accessibility vendors you may be working with:

- Braille Document providers
- Disability accessible hotels
- Accessible port-a-potty rental companies
- Ramp and lift providers that you can either purchase from or rent
- Disability accessible venue providers
- Wheelchair accessible van and bus rentals
- Wheelchair/scooter rental companies
- Plan to book American Sign Language Interpreter (ASL) if requested, Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) early if possible.
    - CART provides live captioning by a real-time captioner who can be remote or in person. For Hebrew-speaking events, we recommend giving the captioner all relevant materials: such as prayers, song titles, names of participants, and any spoken content so they can accurately transliterate the English version. JAccess suggests training on how to plan for CART captioning and to learn more about CART and what it looks like you can view this video What is CART Captioning.
    - ASL interpreters are ready to go with basic information given before the program they normally interpret what is saying live and research ahead of time.
    - For sensitive topics like October 7, giving them a description of the program and anything else you think would be helpful is okay to do. We also suggest requesting a Jewish interpreter, if possible, but all ASL interpreters are required to interpret the expected words spoken at the program.
    - Training awareness may be needed for AV technology staff members. JAccess can provide guidance on best practices on inclusive leadership and planning for events with different partners.
- We also suggest using microphones for all programs as that can help anyone hear the content of the program clearly.

A Few days Before the Event: Before your event begins, proactive communication can make a meaningful difference. Sharing key accessibility details a few days in advance helps attendees feel prepared, supported, and confident about participating. Use this time to provide clear information about what they can expect when they arrive. Many Jewish organizations share a "Know Before You Go" guide by prepping attendees on what to expect. Consider adding accessibility section with information to that email. The sample email is customizable:

> Subject: Know Before You Go – Accessibility Information for Our Upcoming Event
>
> Hello,
>
> We're looking forward to welcoming you to our upcoming event. To help you feel prepared, we're sharing key accessibility details in advance. Please review the information below so you know what to expect when you arrive.
>
> - **Entrances & Parking**: Our venue has step-free access at the main entrance. Accessible parking and a drop-off zone are available near the front doors.
> - **Communication Access**: CART captioning and hearing loops will be provided. If you requested ASL interpretation, it has been arranged.
> - **Sensory Information:** Lighting will remain steady throughout the program, and a designated quiet area will be available for anyone who needs a low-sensory break.
> - **Restrooms**: Accessible and gender-neutral restrooms are located near the main event space.
> - **Accessibility Contact:** If you need support during the event, please reach out to our accessibility point person at [name], [phone], or [email].
>
> We're committed to creating an inclusive and welcoming experience for everyone. If anything has changed with your accessibility needs, feel free to let us know. Looking forward to seeing you soon.
>
> Warmly,
>
> [Your Name / Organization]

- If someone reached out about accommodation or submitted it, you can confirm with them that it has been arranged well in advance before the email is sent out.

During the Event: Today is the day! The Accessibility Coordinator should arrive early, stay flexible, and be prepared to adapt as needed—especially when working with the AV team. A smooth, welcoming experience starts with strong coordination and clear communication. You can support this by:

- Arriving early and preparing the space
- Being ready to collaborate with all venue staff, including facilities, AV, security, and other onsite teams
- The Accessibility Coordinator is also responsible for monitoring accommodations during check-in and supporting the arrival and setup of accessibility vendors such as ASL interpreters and captioners. Because this can be a lot to manage at once, we recommend:
- Offering accessible early seating by opening doors ahead of time to support communication flow and reduce pressure during busy moments
- Setting up large-font and braille signage to support clear wayfinding
- Ensuring trained staff or volunteers are available to assist guests and vendors

After the Event: Gather feedback and use the feedback to improve future accessibility and share a brief report with the team. Continue learning and receive continued training from JAccess.

Final thoughts: Inclusive planning means creating Jewish events in Atlanta that everyone can join and enjoy. It takes a team to plan a successful and accessible gathering. Inclusive planning makes sure no one is left out and helps everyone feel like they truly belong.

Further Learning

Recommended Checklists
Making Temporary Events Accessible
In Person Events
Ford Foundations Disability Inclusion Tool Kit

Safety and Security
Bomb Threats, Anxiety & People With Disabilities
Active Shooter Guidance

Hosting and hospitality best practices
Holding Accessible Events and Meetings

Accessibility vendors local to Atlanta
Heidi Thomas - Real Time Captioning Service
SOS Agency - ASL
Live Captioning for Events - Understanding more about live captions

To learn more about Event Accessibility please book a training with the Training Coordinator at lflax@jewishatlanta.org