

During the Event

During the Event: For Access Teams, Participants, and Everyone!

Communicate!

Announce and show what is available in terms of food, drink, medical supplies, and other supports.

Announce and show evacuation routes. Give disabled people the opportunity to tell planners how they would like to be assisted in the event of an emergency.

Give an audio description and physically point to pathways to important locations like bathrooms and medical tents.

Announce where a smoking section is. Ask that anyone wearing fragrances go to a certain area so as to not aggravate people with sensitivities.

Go over safety plans, emergency exits, and evacuation routes. Allow time for disabled people to ask questions and request accommodations after outlining evacuation routes.

Allow people the opportunity to be themselves and move in a way that feels comfortable to them. Encourage sitting, laying, stimming, and stretching.

Scan your environment to look for potential barriers or access needs and how you may be able to help if needed. For example, have the access team maintain clear pathways and unobstructed entrances, bathrooms, and seating areas. Have the access team ask attendees to move themselves or their belongings to reduce obstruction, self-seclude to smoke, and other accommodations listed throughout this guide.

Trust that disabled folks - and all folks - know what they need better than you do, and listen when they tell you their needs.

Ask for consent before touching someone or offering any other type of access support. Get creative with solutions. As long as the person you're supporting can communicate their needs (remember, there are many ways to communicate!) and you are physically capable of meeting that need, you can often find a solution even if it's something you haven't done before.

Recognize your limits, acknowledge when you don't know how to help, and find a buddy, access team member, or other organizer to support you when you're beyond your knowledge zone

Don't assume somebody wants your support, even if they seem to be struggling

Don't assume you know someone's access needs just by looking at their body, their medical apparatus, or their mobility aid.

Don't leave anyone behind. Don't let a disabled participant get arrested alone without an access support person, if at all possible.

During the Event: Potential Scenarios

Below is a non-exhaustive list of some disability and health-related scenarios you may encounter, created by a group of disabled activists. It's helpful for every participant to have an access-centered mindframe while attending an action. There are infinite disabilities and access needs, and it would be impossible for this guide to prepare you for every single one. We've tried to focus here on potential scenarios in which it may not be obvious how to accommodate the person whom you're trying to support and to correct common frustrations among disabled people who historically do not get their needs met often.

Ask First!

EDIT: We need to be clear that this section is not a broad recommendation to ask people to share vulnerable and personal information with you, most especially information related to diagnosis, disclosure of disability, etc. Disabled people are tired of strangers asking them personal questions. It's traumatic, disturbing, paternalizing, too forward, and often creates uncomfortable power dynamics. To be clear, this section is advice for people who know how to establish [access intimacy](#) (link to awesome, essential blog post by Mia Mingus), for people in care worker roles, and for people who follow the leadership of disabled people.

Always establish consent before offering accommodations, feedback, and the like. People with connective tissue disorders, such as Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome (EDS), are especially sensitive to physical interventions like eye rinsing. Always ask before providing help and let them guide body movements, such as tilting their head back. Remember, these types of disabilities aren't immediately visible, so always ask first. If you spot behavior that seems out of place, consider kindly asking, "Do you have accessibility needs?" This may open conversation to let people say whether their behavior is or is not related to disabilities and to let them share their needs.

Communication

A note on accommodating nonspeaking people:

- ◆ Remember not to speak down or speak condescendingly to nonspeaking people, in both tone and language used.
- ◆ Do not assume that nonspeaking people are less capable because they're not speaking.
- ◆ Do not speak over nonspeaking folk.

- ◆ Remember to embrace pausing, taking breaks, and allowing ample time for communication.

When assessing an injury, don't be afraid to ask, "What is normal for you?" to get a baseline.

When giving treatment, ask, "Is there any accommodation you need or anything you need access-wise?"

Disabled people are happy to be asked "Is this impairment or something else?" by legitimate questioners like medics.

Autistic Support

Learn how to spot an autistic meltdown and offer support.

- ◆ [Meltdowns -- The 3 Stage Model](#) by Autistic Blog
- ◆ [How to Spot & Support an Autistic Meltdown](#): a break-out guide created from crowdsourced information from autistic activists.

Learning how to support autistic people during high-stress moments can quite literally save their lives. Please make sure at least a few people on your team are comfortable with these guides and reach out to autistic people in your community to learn more about their needs. Remember, autistic people are the best experts on the autistic experience.

Blind Participants and Visual Impairment

You may encounter someone who is blind or visually impaired who wants/needs assistance finding their way. This is especially likely in scenarios in which someone experiences temporary vision loss due to tear gas. Always ask for consent before offering assistance.

Wayfinding and Signage

- ◆ Again, it's important to have accessible wayfinding signage.
Proper height, braille, large signs, legible fonts, high contrast color combinations like black and yellow, or no-signal blue and white.

Sight Guiding

- ◆ [Listen: How to Sight Guide with Dr. Amy Kavanaugh](#)
- ◆ Follow #DontGrabJustAsk on Twitter
- ◆ Introduce yourself. "Hello, my name is [NAME]. Would you like some assistance?"
- ◆ Offer verbal descriptions.

Example: "The cars have stopped to let you cross. There is a curb cut with a raised surface on the other side of the street."

- ◆ Hold a shoulder, or the crook of someone's arm to offer physical guidance. You may also need to physically support the person by placing your arm under their arms.

D/deaf & Hard-of-Hearing Participants, and Participants with Hearing Loss

In general, hearing aids and assistive listening devices amplify sounds, but do not necessarily make sounds clearer.

Tips for speaking to a person who is hard of hearing, [sourced from Camisha L. Jones](#):

Lightly tap on their shoulder to get their attention, or wave.

Face them with your mouth in clear view for lipreading if possible.

Wear a clear mask to unobstruct as much of your mouth as safely possible.

If a clear mask is unavailable, communicate by typing on a phone or writing on a piece of paper.

Be cognizant of speed. Speak at a slower pace and try to enunciate, but not condescendingly so.

Feel free to check in every once in a while to check that the person is hearing what you're saying.

Be willing to repeat yourself when requested.

Before raising your voice or shouting, ask if increasing volume would be helpful.

People with hearing aids are at risk because hearing aids can be knocked off. Be aware of this at protests, marches, or events that could include shoving or chaotic movement.

Download speech to text apps on your phone so you can communicate with d/Deaf folks and folks with hearing loss.

It's good to have an interpreter or someone who knows BSL so d/Deaf people can communicate with you. Do your best to learn a few basic BSL phrases, even if it's just "yes" "no"?"