



## Providing Access for Everyone: Accessibility for COVID-19 Vaccination Sites

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all vaccination facilities and services be accessible to people with disabilities. This checklist highlights some of the considerations and strategies to promote effective communication and physical accessibility at vaccination events. The checklist includes links to additional information and resources and should be used in conjunction with [Guidelines for Accessible COVID-19 Testing & Vaccination Sites](#) provided to local emergency managers by NC Emergency Management for mass vaccination events. Providing access is a critical component to equitable vaccine distribution in North Carolina.

### Pre-Registration/Scheduling (via internet or phone)

- Ask about disability or other communication related accommodations on pre-registration form, so you can be prepared and have accommodations in place upon arrival.
- Accommodations to list on a registration form can include:
  - American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter
  - Materials in alternate formats, such as large print, electronic, braille
  - Mobility access
  - Captioning
  - Other accommodation \_\_\_\_\_
- If using the phone to schedule or call those on waiting list, review guidance for communicating directly with individuals with hearing loss or indirectly via relay services found in the resource list.

### Check-In/ Onsite Registration

- Confirm any disability-related accommodations in advance and ask about access needs during on-site registration.
- If an ASL interpreter is required, but not available on-site, video remote interpreting (VRI) services should be used. Do not rely on family or friends to interpret.
- A phone or tablet can be used to access [mobile communication apps](#) (speech to text, sound amplification) that can aid in communication for those with hearing or speech disabilities.
- Provide items such as white boards, pen and paper, or communication apps on a tablet or phone to assist with communication at ALL areas, including registration/check-in.
- It is best practice to provide print handouts in plain font (Arial, Tahoma or Verdana) in a reasonable size (at least 12pt) using high contrast colors to allow for easier reading by everyone.
- Signage should be easily readable with large print, high contrast colors (yellow or white background with black or dark blue text), a non-glare finish, no italics and a plain font such as Arial, Tahoma or Verdana.

### Respectful Interactions

- Use person first language.
- Speak to the individual directly, in an age-appropriate manner.
- Ask first if assistance is needed.
- Allow extra time for communication or full understanding; do not rush.
- Ask permission to assist or guide a person who is blind or has low vision.
- Allow service animals to accompany individuals and do not touch or distract them.
- Do not touch or move a person's mobility device.

- ❑ An accessible route to all vaccine areas should be at least 36 in. wide, free of stairs and steep inclines with a stable, smooth and slip resistant surface.
- ❑ All events should have available accessible parking to allow individuals to exit their vehicles.
- ❑ Accessible parking, including at least one van accessible space, should be clearly marked, include an access aisle, large enough for mobility devices, and level with easy access to curb cuts.
- ❑ Accessible sidewalks should have a curb cut or curb ramp that is at least 36 in. wide and not too steep – a portable ramp is acceptable.

### **Waiting Areas**

- ❑ All walk thru events should include multiple places for individuals to sit while waiting. Those who need to sit should not lose their place in line.
- ❑ While waiting, individuals must have access to restrooms.
- ❑ Accessible restrooms should be available and include an accessible toilet stall at least 60-inch diameter of clear space wide to allow turning radius for wheelchair, higher toilet, and grab bars.
- ❑ If portable restrooms are used an accessible portable restroom must be provided.

### **Education/Consent**

- ❑ Always ask for a person's communication or learning preferences.
- ❑ If ASL or language interpretation is needed, ensure all elements of vaccine education and vaccination process are provided using preferred communication method.
- ❑ Be aware that masks can make communication more difficult. Use a [clear face mask](#) or covering so individuals with hearing loss or speech disabilities can see facial expressions and mouth movements.
- ❑ Some people may bring their personal assistive listening or speech generating devices to communicate. Please be patient and allow time to communicate needs and ask questions.
- ❑ Identify and be prepared to move to a quiet space for individuals who have hearing loss, sensory issues, or difficulties with loud noises or distractions.
- ❑ Be prepared to ask health questions and provide instructions using different forms of communication (pictures, visual cues, written formats, verbal descriptions, etc.) depending on communication and learning needs. It is critical to ensure full understanding.
- ❑ Provide consent form or other educational materials in alternate formats (large print, electronic format, braille) and be prepared to read documents and assure understanding.

### **Vaccination/Observation Area**

- ❑ Provide items such as white boards, pen and paper, or communication apps on a tablet or phone to assist with communication.
- ❑ Provide clear step-by-step post vaccination instructions and descriptions and adapt communication method (pictures, visual cues, written formats, verbal descriptions) as needed.
- ❑ Maintain eye contact and use gestures to assist in communication if needed.
- ❑ Fully explain information on vaccination card using preferred communication method.

### **Sources/Additional Resources**

- [Accessibility at Drive-Thru Medical Sites](#)
- [ADA Effective Communication](#)
- [How to Communicate with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Patients](#)
- [Guidance on Calls with Hard of Hearing Patients](#)
- [Guidance on Relay Calls](#)
- [Accessible Print Materials](#)

## NCDHHS Contact Information

### North Carolina Office on Disability and Health (NCODH)

Division of Public Health, Children and Youth Branch

Contact: Lauren Howard, Director

Email: [Lauren.Howard@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Lauren.Howard@dhhs.nc.gov)

Phone: 919-707-5607

NCODH is available to provide support, technical assistance and resources related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), accessibility, and inclusion for local health departments and other vaccine providers to ensure access for individuals with disabilities.

### North Carolina Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH)

Contact: Donna Platt (*Primary*)

Lee Williamson

Title: Emergency Preparedness Coordinator

Communication Access Manager

Email: [Donna.Platt@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Donna.Platt@dhhs.nc.gov)

[Lee.Williamson@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Lee.Williamson@dhhs.nc.gov)

Phone: 919-578-1262

919-218-0299

DSDHH is available to provide support, consultation, resources, and training for local health departments and other vaccine providers to ensure that individuals with hearing loss receive appropriate communication access. DSDHH has [seven regional centers](#) that can provide support and consultation on a local level.

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

#### Western Region

Donna Sobotkin, M.Ed., CRC

[donna.sobotkin@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:donna.sobotkin@dhhs.nc.gov)

919-909-0146

#### Eastern Region

Carl Thompson, CRC

[carl.thompson@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:carl.thompson@dhhs.nc.gov)

910-746-6840

#### Central Region

Angela W. Boyce, M.S.

[angie.boyce@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:angie.boyce@dhhs.nc.gov)

984-239-3594

NC DVRS staff are available to provide consultation and on-site accessibility evaluations of vaccination sites. Contact the Assistant Regional Directors listed above to request assistance and they will connect you with the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Engineer covering your area.

### North Carolina Assistive Technology Program (NCATP)

NCATP provides durable medical equipment and/or assistive technology devices for use onsite during mass vaccine events. Staff can assist with identifying assistive technology resources and providing accessible solutions.

DME/AT Equipment or Accessibility Solutions:

Contact: Frank Harden

Tammy Koger

Email: [Frank.harden@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Frank.harden@dhhs.nc.gov)

[tammy.koger@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:tammy.koger@dhhs.nc.gov)

Phone: 919-664-1243 (Jabber)

919-859-3544 Office

### North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB)

DSB staff are available to provide consultation and training for local health departments/vaccine providers regarding assisting individuals who are blind, deafblind or have low vision.

Contact: Cynthia Speight

Email: [cynthia.speight@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:cynthia.speight@dhhs.nc.gov)

Phone: 984-222-4643

*This document only highlights some of the more prevalent barriers, it is not a complete list and does not necessarily indicate compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.*