



Providing Access for Everyone

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Accessibility for COVID-19 Vaccination, Testing and Treatment Sites

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that all vaccination, testing and treatment 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 to ensure access for everyone. One in four adults and one in five children in NC have a disability that affects mobility, communication, speech, vision, hearing, cognition, or mental health^{1,2} and some disabilities may not be visible. Providing access is a critical component to an equitable COVID-19 response in North Carolina.

Respectful Interactions

Share this checklist with **ALL** staff and/or volunteers and provide additional training if necessary, to ensure equitable interaction with people with disabilities. Important things to keep in mind include:

- [Use people first language](#)
- Always speak to the individual in an age-appropriate manner.
- If speaking to an individual that is using an ASL Interpreter, speak directly to the person not to the interpreter.
- Look directly at a person when speaking so they can see your facial cues and lip-read if needed.
- Do not provide assistance without asking.
- 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 or personal items without asking.

Pre-Registration/Scheduling (via internet or phone)

Ask about any disability or specific accommodations needed during pre-registration, so you can be prepared and have accommodations in place upon arrival.

- Always provide specifically requested accommodations and seek expert guidance when needed. For example, if an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter is requested, provide a licensed interpreter, not just someone who knows some sign language.
- Accommodations to list on a registration form can include:
 - American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter
 - [Tactile or Close Vision interpreter for DeafBlind individuals](#)
 - Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) captioning on a tablet

- Materials in alternate formats, such as large print, electronic, braille
- Mobility access
- [Clear mask](#)
- Assistive listening devices
- Other accommodation _____

- For assistance finding ASL, Tactile and Close Vision interpreters or CART providers and for information on best practices for working with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind individuals please contact the nearest [NC Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) Regional Center.
- Staff or volunteers receiving calls should review guidance for [communicating with individuals with hearing loss](#) ([Spanish](#)) on the phone or via [relay calls](#) ([Spanish](#)).

Check-In/Onsite Registration

Ask **everyone** about access or assistance needs during on-site registration or check-in. Accommodations might include: a quiet space, help moving around the site, assistance reading or filling out forms, or other communication needs.

- Offer a quiet space to support individuals who have hearing loss, sensory issues, or difficulties with loud noises or distractions. This can be an important accommodation for young children or children and adults with Autism or other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
- In-person ASL interpreter is the best option for communicating with Deaf individuals. If you are unable to secure an in-person ASL interpreter, [video remote interpretation \(VRI\)](#) is an acceptable alternative. A list of licensed agencies who may offer VRI can be found [here](#).
- 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 materials](#) in plain, sans serif font (ex: Arial, Tahoma or Verdana) in a legible size (at least 12pt) using high contrast colors to allow for better readability. If you serve an older patient population, consider providing large print versions of forms and patient takeaways using at least 14pt. The contrast and boldness of the print and background is more important than the size.
- Temporary signs should be easily readable with large print, bold, high contrast colors (ex: yellow or white with black or dark blue), a non-glare finish, no italics, and a plain font such as Arial, Tahoma or Verdana (for signs in Braille, use Grade 2 or Contracted Braille).

Facility or Site Access

All sites or facilities used for vaccination, testing or treatment must provide the same level of access for everyone and remove barriers for people with disabilities.

- An [accessible route](#) to all vaccination, testing, or treatment areas should be at least 36 in. wide, free of stairs and steep inclines with a stable, smooth and slip resistant surface.
- All events, including drive-up 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.
 - ❑ All events should include multiple places for individuals to sit while waiting. Those who need to sit should not lose their place in line.
 - ❑ 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.
 - ❑ Permanent signs should be readable, with high contrast colors, bold print, raised letters and Braille (Grade 2 or Contracted Braille), and a non-glare finish.
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Education/Consent

Always ask for a person's communication or learning preferences, recognizing that people give and receive information differently. **When providing testing, vaccination, or treatment for children, ensure that the language, learning or communication needs of parents or caregivers are addressed.**

- ❑ If ASL interpretation is needed, ensure all elements of vaccination, testing and treatment education are provided using the person's preferred communication method.
 - ❑ Be aware that masks can make communication more difficult. Use a [clear face mask \(Spanish\)](#) 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.
 - ❑ Move to a quiet space to accommodate individuals who have hearing loss, sensory issues, or difficulties with loud noises or distractions. This is especially important for children and adults with Autism or other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
 - ❑ Provide items such as white boards, pen and paper, or [communication apps](#) on a tablet or phone to assist with communication.
 - ❑ Be prepared to ask health questions and provide step-by-step instructions using different forms of communication ([pictures](#), visual cues, gestures, 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 upon request (large print, electronic format, braille) and be prepared to read documents and assure understanding.
 - ❑ To better meet the needs of older adults, consider providing high contrast, bold, large print (at least 14 point) versions of educational materials and take-home documents.
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Sources/Additional Resources

- [Civil Rights Considerations During COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution Efforts](#) - FEMA checklist
- [Accessibility at Drive-Thru Medical Sites](#) - (Spanish)
- [ADA Effective Communication](#) - (Spanish)
- [How to Communicate with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf/Blind Patients](#) - Factsheet
- [Southeast ADA Center](#) - ADA Technical Assistance (Spanish)
- [NC Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) - Communication Access Assistance
- [North Carolina Office on Disability and Health](#) - Accessibility Resources
- [Effective Communication with Deaf/Blind Patients](#)
- [Mobile apps to aid Communication Access for Individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf/Blind](#)
- [How to Create ADA Compliant Signs](#)

¹ 2020 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) <https://schs.dph.ncdhhs.gov/data/brfss/2020/nc/risk/funcdisp2.html>

² 2019-2020 National Survey of Children's Health <https://www.childhealthdata.org/browse/survey/results?q=8577&r=35>

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.

