

Advancing Equity through Language, Communication, and Physical Access

DID YOU KNOW?



More than
ONE MILLION
North Carolinians speak
a language other than
English at home



**ONE IN FOUR
ADULTS**
has a disability



**ONE IN
FIVE KIDS**
has a disability

These individuals often encounter barriers to accessing health care and education and experience health disparities at a disproportionate rate. Ensuring language, communication and physical access at COVID-19 vaccination sites and other health outreach events can help mitigate systemic barriers to access among historically marginalized populations and communities at higher risk.

WHAT IS LANGUAGE, COMMUNICATION, AND PHYSICAL ACCESS?

- **Language Access** means providing Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals access to the same services provided to English speakers, in their preferred language. This includes providing translated written materials and using interpreters for spoken interactions.
- **Communication Access** means that people with sensory disabilities can communicate – and be communicated with – in a way they understand. Supporting communication access can include hiring a qualified American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter for a Deaf client; providing plain language materials for people with intellectual disabilities or low literacy; providing a communication board or a writing pad for someone with a speech disorder; and Braille signage for clients who are blind.
- **Physical Access** means ensuring equitable access to public spaces, buildings, and other places where we work, learn, play, and receive services. Physical access for people with mobility-related disabilities can include curb cuts, ramps, automatic doors, and accessible restrooms; for people with traumatic brain injury or autism spectrum disorder, physical accessibility might mean a “sensory retreat” from a loud, crowded waiting area.

NCDHHS SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION ACCESS:

NCDHHS has limited funding to support language and communication access needs for COVID-19 vaccination, testing and treatment events, and COVID-19 vaccine education and outreach to targeted communities across North Carolina.

To find out if you qualify for funding support, email communication.access@dhhs.nc.gov

PLANNING FOR AN INCLUSIVE EVENT:

Below are a few tips for planning inclusive community outreach and health-focused events.

This list is not exhaustive.

- Think about access and language needs in the early stages of event planning.
- Include those with lived experience and partner with disability organizations throughout event planning.
- Promote availability of accommodations on event materials, including availability of language and ASL interpreters.
- Seek out resources and support and ask questions – you don't have to be an expert.
- Utilize the [Accessibility Checklist \(Spanish\)](#) to review needs and requirements for COVID-19 Vaccination, Testing and Treatment sites to ensure your event is accessible for people with disabilities.
- Contact communications@ncdhhs.gov for help organizing a site/facility review for physical and communication access.
- If your target audience includes people who are Deaf or speak another language at home, provide simultaneous translation in ASL and/or the target language.
- Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning is preferable to auto-generated captioning and can be used for in-person and virtual events.
- Check for up-to-date accessibility options available on your platform of choice:
 - [ZOOM Accessibility](#)
 - [Microsoft Teams Accessibility](#)
 - [WebEx Accessibility](#)
 - [Google Meet Accessibility](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- NCDHHS Accessibility Checklist (in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)) for event organizers
- [Use clear masks for effective communication](#) with people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind
- [Videos in ASL with Captions](#) on NCDHHS COVID-19 response, testing, vaccines and more
- NC Council on Developmental Disabilities [COVID-19 resource page](#)
- CDC COVID-19 [Materials for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and Care Providers](#)
- [NC Division of Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Regional Centers](#)
- [Hearing Loss Communication Guides](#) for individuals and providers

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