

Guide to Planning an Accessible Event at SUNY Oswego

Inclusion is one of the core values of SUNY Oswego. For persons with disabilities, inclusion means designing an event that is free of barriers so that they can participate fully in any campus events. One important aspect of being a caring community is to think about how a person's disability will affect their attendance and enjoyment of a program or workshop and to plan ahead so that they will feel welcomed and valued.

The purpose of this guide is to provide information for event planners about the elements of disability access that will foster full participation. Planning for access in advance will optimize the opportunity for a well-planned accessible event and minimize the need to make last minute changes. SUNY Oswego is also responsible under federal and state laws to ensure disability access for program participants. A well-planned event ensures that participation of all.

What are disabilities?

Disabilities are physical or mental impairments that limit one or more major life activities such as walking, seeing, or hearing. Disabilities present themselves in many forms. Some are visible but most are not apparent. Non-visible disabilities include partial sensory impairments such as low vision or hearing loss, chronic medical conditions, mental health conditions, and learning disabilities. According to the U.S. Census, 20 million of the 68 million families in our country have a member with disabilities. People with disabilities are the largest minority of the U.S. population.

What is SUNY Oswego's disability compliance obligation?

SUNY Oswego is obligated by federal and state disability laws to ensure program accessibility to persons with disabilities, to provide reasonable accommodations to afford access, to remove barriers to full participation and to modify policies, practices, or procedures as necessary to afford access for an individual. Designing accessible events is also a good business practice because it enhances the ability of all to participate.

It is the obligation of the event planner to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. Taking the necessary steps to make an event accessible for all of the participants can be easy when done in the early stages of planning. Pre-planning for accessibility often reduces the need for individual accommodations.

There is no single way to provide accessibility and the type of need may differ among persons with the same condition. It is often necessary to explore access alternatives and to consult with the individual who needs access to determine how best to accommodate for a specific circumstance.

What programs must be accessible?

Every type of program, meeting, exhibit, tour, and event-whether held for the SUNY Oswego community or open to the public-must consider the access needs of persons with disabilities. This includes all SUNY Oswego sponsored activities held off campus.

There is also an obligation to ensure accessibility to events that are sponsored by an outside person or organization that is held at a SUNY Oswego facility. If you are involved with coordinating the use of SUNY Oswego facilities with outside groups, you should discuss whose responsibility it will be to ensure accessibility and accommodations. Agreements for using SUNY Oswego facilities should clearly specify which party will assume responsibility for these obligations at the event.

Who is responsible for disability access to an event?

Event planners are responsible for planning and providing for the accessibility needs of participants with disabilities at any event sponsored on behalf of SUNY Oswego. Advance planning for accessibility will maximize the opportunity for all to participate and minimize the need for last minute and perhaps costly changes. For instance, if an event requires a bus in advance. If an accessible bus is not requested but a participant requires a wheelchair accessible bus, alternative transportation options will have to be provided and usually will not result in an equitable experience for the participant with a disability.

Who is responsible for any expenses associated with providing disability access?

The costs associated with disability access are considered part of the overall expense of the event. Event planners should include the expense of any anticipated accommodations as a budget item in the event planning. Most accommodations can be made at little or no cost, such as choosing a wheelchair accessible venue for the event. Accommodations such as sign language interpreting will incur a cost. Event planners who think the cost of the accommodations cannot be supported by the event should discuss alternative funding sources with their supervisor or advisor. Before denying any accommodation requests, event planners should consult with a member of the SUNY Oswego ADA Coordinator Team (the ADA Coordinator for Facilities, the Director of Student Disability Services, or the Associate Vice President for Workforce Diversity and Inclusion).