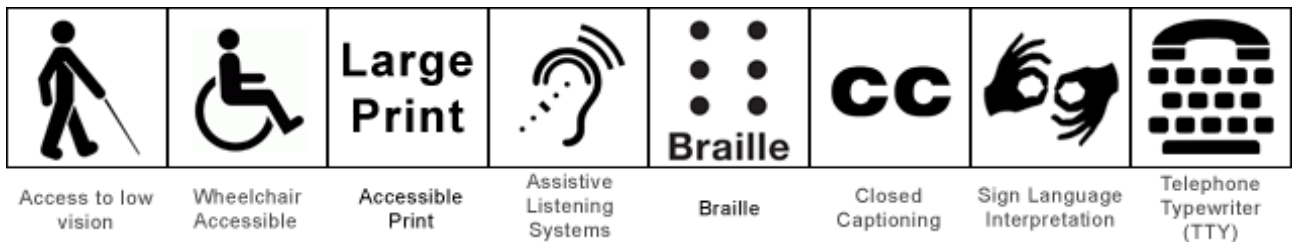




Guide to Accessible Events



Events That Are Accessible For All

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) promotes the principles of independence, dignity, integration, and equality of opportunity. All Ryerson events should be planned with accessibility in mind, and planners should take into consideration the fact that people with various types of disabilities might attend their event.

As President Levy wrote in his communication, *Accessibility for all*, “Ryerson is known for being proactive on inclusion”, and in light of this value, it is essential that we do not inadvertently exclude a person with a disability simply due to a lack of planning.

This guide provides you with several considerations for both the planning and execution of the event, including a checklist in the appendix. This guide and the checklist are also available in the Resources section of our Accessibility website, at: <http://www.ryerson.ca/accessibility/resources>.

The guide covers the following topics:

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ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

Events Open to the Public

Although not every need can be anticipated and addressed in advance, it is best practice to provide sign language interpretation, text display, and closed captioning for events involving presentations or lectures open to broad audiences, e.g. University-wide celebration and official announcement events.

Events by Invitation Only

When an event is provided to a specific group and not open to a broader audience, invitations should indicate that persons requiring assistance should contact the individual responsible for the event if they require accommodations. Departments should indicate a date by which a request for accommodation must be made to ensure the service is available in time. Please see the section on event notices for more detailed information and sample wording.

Costs of Accommodation

Accessibility should be considered part of normal business budgeting, just as food, gifts, room rental or speaker fees are. Set aside some funds early in the planning stage in case there is a request for interpretation, to have materials prepared in Braille, etc.

PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Here are some actions you can take when planning the event to make it as accessible as possible:

Accommodations

- Follow up with people who request accommodations in advance to discuss and agree on appropriate accommodation.
- If providing food, give participants the opportunity to request dietary preferences and order enough to include interpreters or support persons.
- Train volunteers on how to respectfully assist people with disabilities and to respond to any accessibility issues that may arise.

Presentation and Materials

- Provide interpreters or note takers with agendas and presentation outlines including video, music, etc in advance of the event so they can adequately prepare.
- Produce materials in large print (16-point type or larger) and have them available electronically in case of a request for such a format.
- Consider making materials available in advance upon request to persons with disabilities. Encourage and support presenters to offer copies of their material in different formats before their presentation starts.
- Consider alternate formats for materials, such as video and voice. Try to have closed captioning and descriptive text for video. Ask the presenters to describe images or slides verbally. There are some resources at Ryerson, for example the Coordinator of Library Services for Persons with Disabilities, that may be able to help with alternate formats.

CHOOSING A ROOM

When booking a location for your event, consider the following to make it as accessible as possible:

- Make sure that wheelchair access is via the main entrance. If this is not possible, post clear, legible signs at the main entrance showing alternative, safe and accessible entrances.
- Use a room where accessible washrooms are within a reasonable distance.
- Determine the nearest accessible parking and put this information on the event notice.

- Choose a room with wide aisles and plenty of space around tables to allow for easy movement for wheelchair and scooter users (you may have to rearrange furniture).
- Try to intersperse accessible areas throughout the room – front, middle and back – and not just off to one corner.
- Try to choose a location where it is possible to take dog guides outside on break when needed.
- Use a room with good lighting (bright, without glare and allows for adjustment) and good acoustics.
- If a stage or projector screen are used, they should be easily visible.

ASSISTIVE DEVICES

Some rooms in the university are already equipped with presentation technology. You can find a list of these classrooms on the Media Services website:

<http://www.ryerson.ca/ccs/resources/mediaservices/classrooms/>

This site provides information on seating capacity, room layout, presentation technology available, and even has photos of the rooms from both the audience and presenter perspectives.

Media Services also provides some assistive devices for presentations, such as portable audio amplification devices. Be sure to request this technology in advance by contacting them at avhelp@ryerson.ca or 416-979-5098. Their website is <http://www.ryerson.ca/ccs/resources/mediaservices/>.

When booking facilities other than classrooms, such as the theatres, ask the person responsible for the booking about accessibility for the event.

INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Be sure to book any interpretation services such as sign language or captioning well in advance (two to three weeks *minimum*) as they are in extremely high demand.

Events that are more than two hours in length typically require two interpreters, and interpreters must be given a break every hour. Interpreting is physically and mentally draining. Resting periodically allows the interpreter to perform better and is vital to prevent cumulative motion injuries.

For events that are full days, two to three interpreters may be needed. Interpreters working in a team will allow communication to flow smoothly and thereby minimize distractions to the

presentation. One interpreter will actively interpret for 20-30 minutes while the other provides back-up to the active interpreter.

Discuss your particular needs and the requirements with the interpretation service.

We're currently looking into a standard process for arranging interpreter services and will make this information available as soon as possible. In the meantime, you can contact Ontario Interpreting Services directly at oitoronto@chs.ca, by phone at 416-928-2520 or by fax at 416-928-2544. They ask that you have the following information available when you place your request:

- Date including the day
- Start and end time
- Location – including floor number, department name, office name, nearest intersection, specific parking or entrance protocols
- Names of all the hearing and deaf consumers involved in the meeting
- A brief explanation on the purpose of the meeting (i.e. check-up, follow-up, consultation, job evaluation, review file, training session, etc)
- Phone number of the location
- Contact person's name and phone number
- Availability of print materials (i.e. agenda, past meeting minutes) for the interpreter(s)
- Billing address and contact name to send the invoice.

EVENT NOTICE

If there is a registration form for the event, provide a space for people to identify necessary accommodations or other special needs such as sign language interpretation or food allergies. Include contact information in case attendees would like to contact you directly with confidential requests.

Indicate a date by which a request for accommodation must be made to ensure the service is available in time. As mentioned above, it may require up to three weeks advance notice to secure a sign language interpreter.




Promotional material for events and invitations should include the following (or a similar) statement:



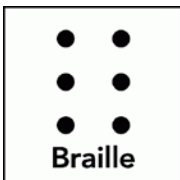

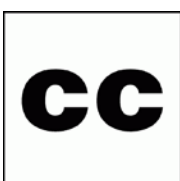



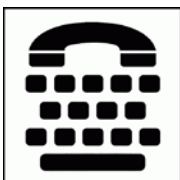

"The [department or office name] is committed to accessibility for persons with disabilities. Please contact us by [date 2-3 weeks in advance of event] if you have any particular accommodation requirements [contact email and phone number]."





Also to be included on invitations, notices, or advertisements about the event is the fees charged, if any. It must indicate if the fees will also apply to any support person accompanying a person with a disability; however it is best practice to *not* charge admission for support persons. Include the duration of the event so persons with disabilities can arrange for transportation home if necessary.

Consider including on the event notice locations of accessible parking near the event. Also consider using Universal Access Symbols to communicate any accommodations that you have already arranged. Below you will find a description of how the symbols are used.

The symbols are available for download for use in your advertisement from our Accessibility site at www.ryerson.ca/accessibility/resources. Both white on black and black on white versions of the symbols are available so you can choose the one that contrasts better on your notice.

Symbol	Description
 <p data-bbox="232 1003 358 1045">Access to low vision</p> <p data-bbox="423 1003 550 1045">Access to low vision</p>	<ul data-bbox="613 783 1369 1024" style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used for guided tours or exhibitions that can be touched • There is good lighting in the room • Signs and presentation materials are produced in contrasting colours and printed clearly in a large font • Low glare on screens • Sighted guides may be available to direct guests
 <p data-bbox="240 1287 345 1329">Wheelchair Accessible</p> <p data-bbox="435 1287 540 1329">Wheelchair Accessible</p>	<ul data-bbox="613 1066 1409 1367" style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a wheelchair accessible entrance to the building • The room is on the first floor or can be accessed by elevator. • NOTE: A ramped entrance is not completely accessible if there are no curb cuts, and an elevator is not accessible if it can only be reached via steps. • There is enough space in the aisles or around chairs or tables for a wheelchair, scooter, or walker to pass through safely
 <p data-bbox="245 1598 342 1640">Accessible Print</p> <p data-bbox="440 1598 537 1640">Accessible Print</p>	<ul data-bbox="613 1434 1414 1566" style="list-style-type: none"> • Materials will be provided in large type, 18 points or larger. Sans serif or modified serif font with high contrast is important, and special attention should be paid to letter and word spacing.

 <p>Assistive Listening Systems</p>  <p>Assistive Listening Systems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistive listening systems are installed and will be used; these systems transmit amplified sound via hearing aids, headsets or other devices.
 <p>Braille</p>  <p>Braille</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials, exhibition labeling, and/or signage can/will be provided in Braille
 <p>Closed Captioning</p>  <p>Closed Captioning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Captioning will be displayed for audio, whether it is closed captioning on video or real time captioning of speakers
 <p>Sign Language Interpretation</p>  <p>Sign Language Interpretation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter will be interpreting the presentation for the audience. This does not signify that interpreters will be available as a support person for individual persons with hearing disabilities.
 <p>Telephone Typewriter (TTY)</p>  <p>Telephone Typewriter (TTY)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TTY refers to either the device or the service where a telephone conversation is relayed between persons with a hearing disability or speech impairment and hearing persons. Ryerson's general TTY line is 416-979-5274.

 <p>Information</p>  <p>Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be used on signage or on a floor plan to indicate the location of the information or security desk, where there is more specific information or materials concerning access accommodations and services such as "LARGE PRINT" materials, audio cassette recordings of materials, or sign interpreted tours.
 <p>Audio Description</p>  <p>Audio Description</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This service makes television, video, and film more accessible for persons with vision disabilities. Description of visual elements is provided by a trained Audio Descriptor through the Secondary Audio Program (SAP) of televisions and monitors equipped with stereo sound.

If sending the event notice electronically, remember that images cannot be read by screen reading software unless there is “alt text” information attached to it. In Word documents, you can right click on the image, choose “Format Picture” and click on the “Alt Text” tab. When you enter a description of the image there, screen reading software will read it aloud to a person with a vision disability.

See <http://www.ryerson.ca/accessibility/resources/> for more information on how to make accessible websites, pdfs, and Word documents.

AT THE EVENT

Preparing the location

- Cover electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways so wheelchair users as well as people who use canes and walkers can traverse safely across them. This is a standard health and safety practice, and should be followed for all events, large or small.
- Post clear, legible signs showing accessible entrances, emergency exits, phones and washrooms. Indicate where dog guides can be taken on break. Announce the locations at beginning of the event as part of normal housekeeping.
- Make sure persons with a disability can reach all areas used at your event independently or with assistance from your volunteers, e.g., the registration desk, auditorium, breakaway rooms, stage, etc.

During the Event

- Make sure organizers, presenters and volunteers are aware of emergency evacuation procedures.

- Be sure the interpreters and/or captioners are introduced and explain what they will be doing during the event, but it is not necessary to draw attention to the persons they are interpreting for.
- Consider having volunteer sighted guides at the event to assist persons with vision disabilities.
- Wherever possible, try to eliminate or reduce background noise during proceedings.
- Offer reserved seating for persons requesting accommodations. Reserve also a seat for their support person if applicable. If there are sign language interpreters, seat them across from the person with the disability.
- Be sure evaluation forms include a section about accessibility of the event. This can provide valuable information for use in future event plans.

Presenters

- For presenters, lectern heights and audio visual controls need to be adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers.
- Confirm whether the presenters require any other type of accommodation.
- Inform presenters that individuals may have assistive devices that they may request the presenter to use, e.g. portable audio amplification devices.
- During the session, presenters should verbally describe contents of videos, or any written materials, including overheads or chalkboard notes for audience members with vision disabilities.
- Remind presenters to end meetings or presentations on schedule, as people making transit arrangements often have very little flexibility.

Accessible Event Planning Checklist

When planning an event, please consider the following to ensure it is accessible to all attending.

ADVERTISING, OUTREACH AND REGISTRATION FORMS

- Give ample notice for your upcoming event – this allows people to arrange for transportation, assistants or other supports they may require.
- Provide space on your registration form or on the event notice for people to identify their accommodations or special needs.
- Include contact information (e.g., phone number and e-mail address) so that attendees can contact you with their special, confidential requests.
- Follow up with people who request accommodations to discuss and agree on appropriate accommodation.
- Indicate whether there are any fees for admission or materials, in particular if fees will also be charged to any accompanying support persons.
- On the posters or information sheets, include accessibility symbols and the duration of the event.
- Promote a scent-free practice for all events.
- If you are serving food, give participants a chance to request dietary preferences, and be sure to order enough for interpreters, child minders, and support persons.

PLANNING AHEAD

- Train your volunteers for the event about how to respectfully assist people with disabilities and to respond to any accessibility issues that may arise.
- Make sure that volunteers are easily identified (use name tags and/or other identifiers).
- Book English/American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters or computerized note taker / real time captioning, if these services have been requested.
- Provide interpreters and note takers with agendas and presentation outlines in advance of the event.
- At the event, be sure the interpreters and/or captioners are introduced and explain what they will be doing during the event.

- Depending on the nature of your event, you may want to think about offering child care services if many of your attendees have children and the event is held during non-business hours.
- If food is provided, make sure the total count includes interpreters, note takers, attendants and child-minders.

SELECTING AND SETTING UP THE ROOM(S) FOR YOUR EVENT

- Allows for easy movement for wheelchair and scooter users (You may have to rearrange furniture). For example, choose a room with wide aisles and plenty of space around tables.
- Includes accessible areas interspersed throughout the room – front, middle and back.
- Good lighting (bright, without glare and allows for adjustment).
- If a stage is used, it is easily visible. Projector screen is easily visible.
- Good acoustics. Arrange for Assistive Listening Devices (e.g., an FM system), if requested.
- Provides for seat reservations for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing people.
- Accessible washrooms within a reasonable distance.
- Cover electrical cables or cords that cross over aisles or pathways so wheelchair users as well as people who use canes and walkers can traverse safely across them.
- Know the location of public telephones that are accessible (i.e., with volume control, with a TTY, and for wheelchair users, the coin slot should be 1.22m above floor level).
- Wherever possible, try to eliminate or reduce background noise during proceedings.
- Make sure organizers, presenters and volunteers are aware of emergency evacuation procedures.

HELPING PARTICIPANTS GET TO THE SPACE YOU ARE USING

- Make sure transport options for getting to the venue are realistic for people with disabilities.
- Determine the location and approximate distance for nearest accessible parking.
- Make sure that wheelchair access is via the main entrance. Alternatively, post clear, legible signs at the main entrance showing alternative, safe and accessible entrances.

- Make sure people with a disability can reach all areas used at your event independently or with assistance from your volunteers, e.g., the registration desk, auditorium, breakaway rooms, stage, etc.
- Preferably, elevators should have low buttons for wheelchair users, Braille/ raised number markings or audible floor announcements for people with low vision and visual floor indicators for people who are Deaf, deafened or hard of hearing.
- Post clear and easy-to-read signs showing locations of accessible washrooms, elevators, phones, etc.

SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PRESENTERS

- Remind presenters to end meetings or presentations on schedule (people making transit arrangements often have very little flexibility).
- Produce materials in large print (16-point type or larger) and have available electronically in case of a request for such a format.
- It is always good to have a few print copies on hand. Encourage and support presenters to offer copies of their material in different formats before their presentation starts.
- For presenters, lectern heights and audio visual controls need to be adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers.
- During the session, presenters should verbally describe contents of videos, or any written materials, including overheads or chalkboard notes for those audience members with vision loss
- Encourage presenters to use captioned videos.
- Organizers or presenters should check with the audience about the need for breaks.

BUDGETING FOR YOUR EVENT

- Set aside some funds early in the planning stage in the event a request for ASL/English interpretation or to have materials prepared in Braille.

EVALUATING YOUR EVENT

- Be sure evaluation forms includes a section that about accessibility of the event. This can provide valuable information for use in future event plans.