

For deaf/HH attendees: Requesting access services at a conference

- When you register for a conference, indicate that you need reasonable accommodations under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). It's helpful to register as early as possible so that the conference has more time to arrange interpreting or captioning services.
- After registering, contact the conference organizer to explain that you're deaf/HoH and explain what you need – interpreters, captioning, etc. If you know an interpreting or captioning agency in the area, you can recommend that agency. If you need any other accommodations, let them know that as well.
- Request that the conference organizer send you a confirmation once interpreters or captioning has been scheduled. The organizer is dealing with many details, and you don't want to "fall through the cracks" and get forgotten. Follow up if needed.
- If you're presenting or if you have information to share with the interpreters or captionists, request their contact information or request that the agency pass on a message from you. If you're presenting – especially if you're presenting in ASL – it's helpful to send interpreters your presentation slides and/or information about your work. The interpreters may ask to meet with you ahead of time to review your presentation. This helps them provide a better interpretation.
- If you use captioning, you may know the terms **C-print** and **CART**. There are minor differences, but both C-print and CART can be provided remotely, and both allow the transcript to be sent to an individual (e.g., on a tablet) or projected onto a screen that everyone can view. Conferences sometimes provide captioning for large presentations, so they may already be familiar with this service. You may need to advocate for them to provide it in smaller break-out sessions as well as the keynote and plenary presentations.
- The conference may not know how to find interpreters and/or captionists. **Here are recommendations to find service providers:**
 - Most states have a state-level Commission for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, which may have a list of local agencies or may provide interpreters/captionists directly.
 - The host institution may know a local agency. For example, many colleges have a Disability Services Office or similar, and they may be able to refer you to the agency they use to get services for deaf/HoH students or staff.
 - To find interpreters, the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf has a directory of interpreter agencies here: <https://myaccount.rid.org/Public/Search/Interpreter.aspx>
 - To find captionists, the National Association of the Deaf recommends the National Court Reporters Association directory: <https://portal.ncra.org/Sourcebook>
 - For interpreters, it's often better to use an agency that is deaf-owned or only provides ASL interpreting (no spoken languages). If you're worried, contact an agency and ask: Have they provided interpreters for professional conferences before? Can they provide interpreters who are qualified to work in your field? If they can't meet with you or they can't answer your questions, find another agency.

Checklist for deaf/HoH conference attendees:

- ☐ **Register for the conference.** When registering, look for a checkbox or comment box to indicate that you require ADA accommodations.
- ☐ Optional: **Find an agency** in the conference location that you trust to provide interpreters or captionists.
- ☐ **Email the conference coordinator.** Explain the access services you need. If you know a local agency, send them the agency name and contact information. There is an example of this email below the checklist.
- ☐ **Request confirmation** from the conference coordinator once services have been arranged. Follow up if needed.
- ☐ If you're presenting, **contact interpreters/captionists ahead of time** and send them your poster or presentation slides. You may need to ask the conference coordinator and/or agency for the contact info of the interpreters assigned to your presentation.

Sample template of an email to send to the conference coordinator:

Dear [conference coordinator],

I have just registered for [conference] in [location] on [date] and I'm looking forward to attending. I am [deaf/hard-of-hearing] and require [sign language interpreters/live captioning services] for access to the conference. [I have also had an abstract accepted for poster/presentation and will need [interpreters/captionists] for my presentation as well. My abstract is titled "... [ID ###] and I will present it in the [...] session.]

Have you arranged access services before? I can provide guidance on how to find [interpreters/captionists], if needed. Please confirm that you've received this request and let me know if you have any questions.

Example:

Dear Dr. Clark,

I have just registered for ACS in Boston on August 19-23 and I'm looking forward to attending. I am deaf and require sign language interpreters for access to the conference. I have also had an abstract accepted for a poster session and will need interpreters for my presentation as well. My abstract is titled "Applying computational tools to genome analysis" (ID #324) and I will present it in the Chemistry session.

Have you arranged access services before? I can provide guidance on how to find interpreters, if needed. Please confirm that you've received this request and let me know if you have any questions.