

Americans with Disabilities Act

The ADA went into effect in January 1992 and is intended to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate to end discrimination against those with visual, hearing, mobility and other disabilities.

As event planners and facility managers, we all need to be concerned with complying with the law and making events accessible to everyone. We're certainly willing to do all we can on our end to make our facilities more friendly to our guests with disabilities.

There are also several things you can do or at least need to consider in your planning process. For example, how could you make your meeting more accessible to a wide variety of attendees? In your pre-registration mailers, we recommend you provide a section that would allow individuals with disabilities to indicate what kind of aid or assistance they may need. You could request mobility and communication access information and a phone number to clarify any questions, and you should also provide your voice and TDD numbers along with the names of contact people. While an attendee's failure to disclose such information does not relieve any of us of our obligations, it can ensure more efficient allocation of resources.

By finding out what accommodations are needed, you can certainly save yourself a great deal of last minute problems by, say, forecasting seating arrangements for people in wheelchairs, budgeting for sign language, providing assistive listening systems, or preparing large print or Braille materials.

The following is a sample of language which you might find useful to include in your registration materials.

Please check any of the following services you require:

- Interpreter*
- Assistive Listening System*
- Cassette Tape of Printed Materials*
- Braille Materials*
- Large Print Materials*
- Special Diet*
- Other*

All contracts with exhibitors should contain a clause addressing their responsibilities in complying with the ADA. The key to successful compliance lies in proper planning.