

Appendix D. Materials from Trainings

The following section includes the presentations from two trainings the Town of Sherborn received. Program Access training and materials were provided by Merge Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting. Digital Communications training and materials were created by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Program Accessibility Training

Building Inclusive Municipal Services: Strategies for Accessibility & Belonging

Training provided on April 14, 2025 by Lisa Drennan

Website: MERGE Diverse Abilities Inclusion Consulting | Pembroke, MA



Building Inclusive Municipal Services: Strategies for Accessibility & Belonging



Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management



SHERBORN, MA | MON 4/14/25 | 10AM-12PM



PRESENTED BY LISA DRENNAN | MERGECONSULTING.ORG

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS: Terms & Exercise

DISABILITY 101

Principles of Inclusion

Program Access Introduction

Words Matter: Using Inclusive Language

Disability Etiquette

STRATEGIES TOWARD INCLUSION

8 Essential Habits

Bonus Tip

WRAP UP: Reflections / Q&A



INTRODUCTIONS

OVER 4 DECADES EXPERIENCE EMPOWERING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO
ACHIEVE THEIR ENRICHMENT GOALS & MEANINGFULLY BELONG IN THEIR COMMUNITY

NEW ENGLAND VILLAGE



SOUTH SHORE YMCA



MERGE FOUNDER

WHERE ARE YOU AT?

ON A SCALE OF 1-10
WHAT EXPERIENCE OR
SUCCESS HAVE YOU HAD
WORKING WITH PERSONS
WITH DISABILITIES?



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE

Terms & Inclusion Exercise

WHO ARE PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES?

People with disabilities are first and foremost, people - people who have **individual abilities**, interests and needs. They are ordinary individuals seeking to live **ordinary lives**.



1 in 4

LET'S TALK TERMS.....



**DIVERSE
ABILITIES**



PHYSICAL DISABILITY

LEARNING DISABILITY

MEDICAL COMPLEXITIES

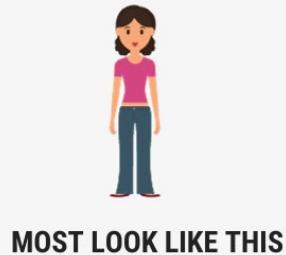
NEUROLOGICAL DISORDER

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

NON-APPARENT OR HIDDEN DISABILITY

INTELLECTUAL OR DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY

SOME DISABILITIES LOOK LIKE THIS



MOST LOOK LIKE THIS



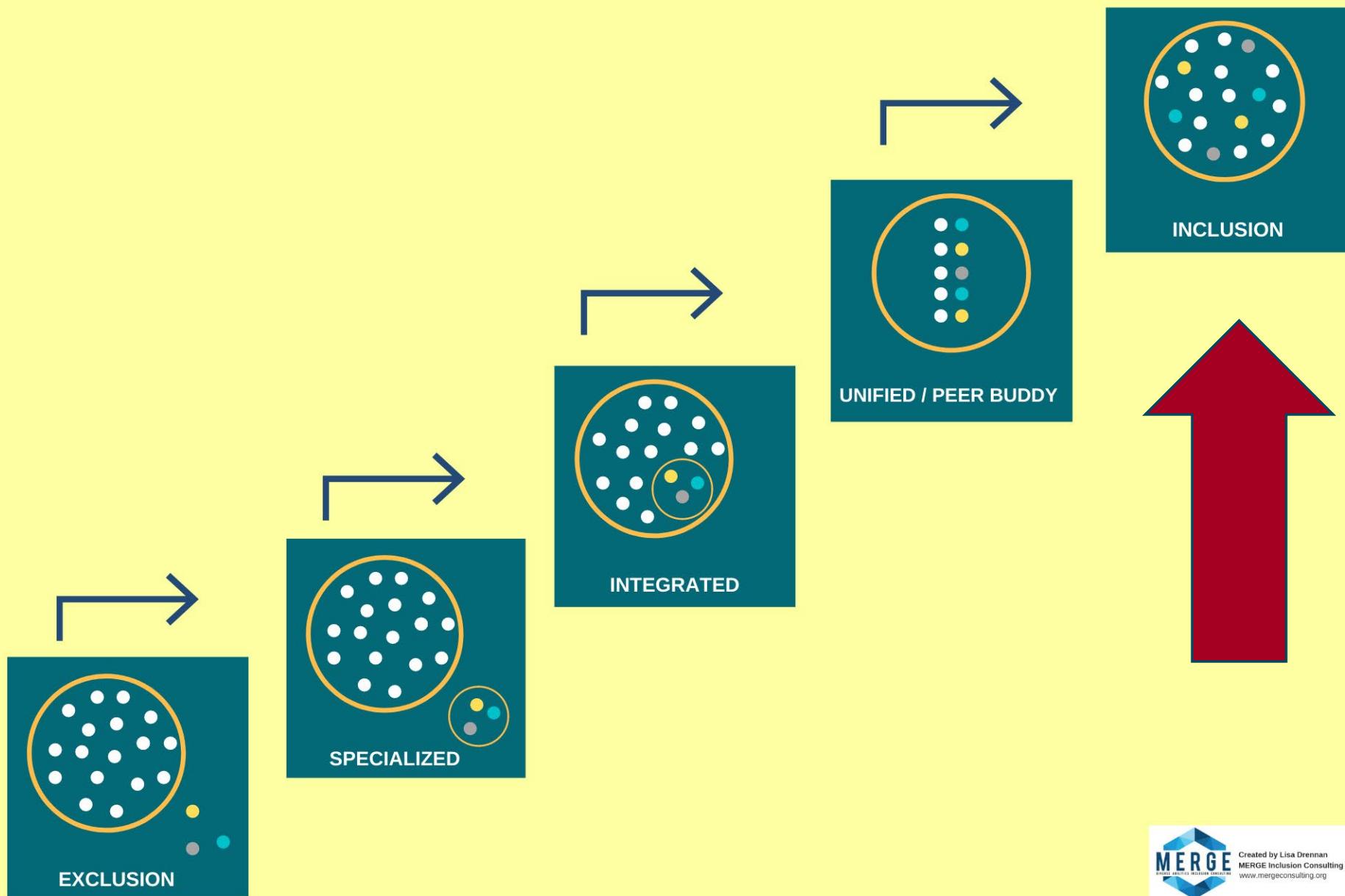
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WHAT DO YOU NOTICE
ABOUT THIS GRAPHIC
FROM A GOOGLE SEARCH:
**“IMAGES OF TYPES OF
DISABILITIES”**

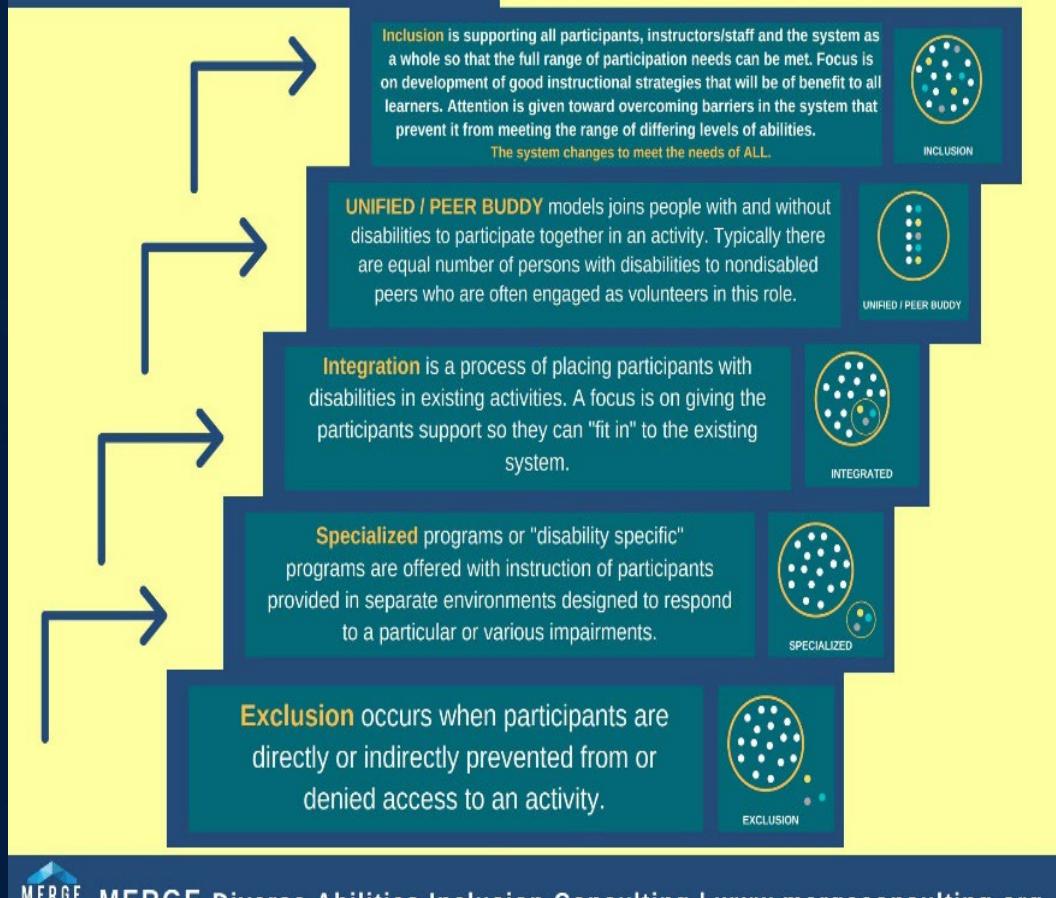
Up to 70% of all
disabilities are ‘hidden’;
they are not immediately
obvious to others.



Participation Models For Persons With Diverse Abilities



MODELS OF PARTICIPATION



**A Copy
Of This
Summary
Sheet
Material Will
Be Available
To You**



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SMALL GROUP WORK



FOLLOW DIRECTIONS TO BREAK INTO GROUPS

DISCUSS THIS QUESTION:
**WHAT DOES
ACCESSIBILITY
MEAN TO YOU?**

WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A
**4-6 WORD STATEMENT THAT
ANSWERS THAT QUESTION**

BE PREPARED TO SHARE WITH
THE LARGER GROUP





BEST PRACTICE ON INCLUSIVE (or effective?) CUSTOMER SERVICE

MERGE INCLUSION PRINCIPLES



Organizational
Commitment



Meet People
Where They Are At



Let's Get to
Success



Meaningful
Participation



Working Toward
Full Inclusion



Everyone Has a
Right to Belong

A RESOURCE TOOL FOR ATTENDEES OF A MERGE TRAINING/CONFERENCE



INCLUSION PRINCIPLES

THESE PRINCIPLES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS YOUR ORGANIZATION DEFINES, GROWS, DEVELOPS POLICIES, OR MAKES DECISIONS AROUND YOUR INCLUSION INITIATIVE.

REACH OUT TODAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT INCLUSION TRAININGS AND CONSULTING THAT CAN HELP YOUR ORGANIZATION TO WELCOME, ENGAGE AND SUPPORT PERSONS WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITHIN YOUR RECREATION OR CAMP PROGRAMS.



ORGANIZATIONAL
COMMITMENT

All stakeholders have a responsibility and role in ensuring that inclusive practices are used universally throughout your organization, and are given the resources to do so.



WORKING TOWARD
FULL INCLUSION

Supporting a person to be as independent as possible in the least restrictive environment. Adaptive or specialized programs are used as a gateway toward full inclusion, not the end of the road.



MEANINGFUL
PARTICIPATION

Opening our doors to diverse populations is a great first step, but not enough. We commit to the intentional work ensuring that every person is supported to meet their goals and to add value through their involvement.



LET'S GET
TO SUCCESS!

A change in perspective or approach. Instead of "no we can't" we think "how can we" make this work? Using "the team" to tap into all resources to explore how you can get to YES.



MEET PEOPLE
WHERE THEY ARE AT

We change the systems to support the person, by making accommodations and modifications. Understand that success is individualized and seek to learn about a person's goals and strengths.



EVERYONE HAS A
RIGHT TO BELONG

To be welcomed, engaged and supported. There are many benefits and value added to opening your doors to diversity. The ADA ensures that people with disabilities have a legal right to participate.

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lisadrennan@mergeconsulting.org | 781.724.1918 | www.mergeconsulting.org

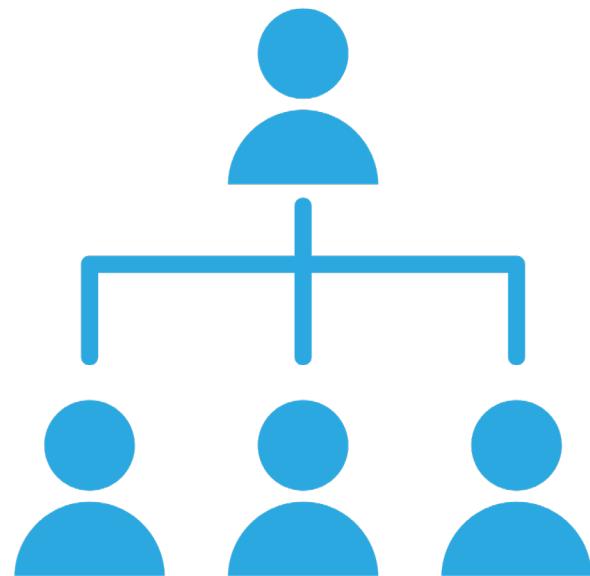
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THAT WE WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE



- buildings and spaces can be accessed** by anyone who needs or wants to
- people can find, hear, see or understand content and materials shared
- anyone can attend and take part in events and programs

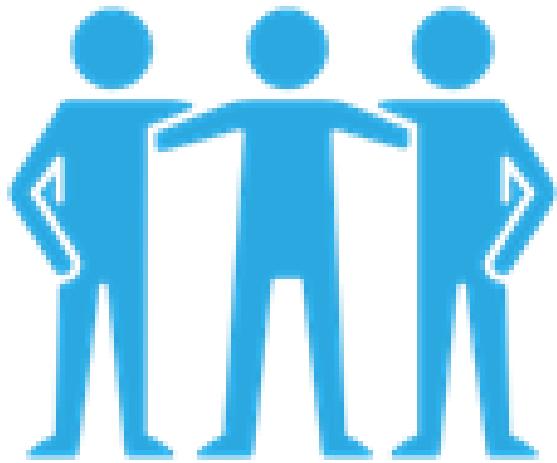
PRINCIPAL #1



Organizational Commitment

- **ALL** municipality employees have a responsibility and role
- Resources and support provided at **all levels**
- **ALL** staff understand and can share with residents what accessibility means

PRINCIPAL #2



Meaningful Participation

- Not just physical proximity..... instead focus on **participating together**
- **Intentional work** to ensure that every individual has access to all you offer
- Everyone has something of **value** to contribute **

PRINCIPAL #3



Meet People
Where They Are At

- We **change systems** to support the person
- By making **modifications** and **accommodations**
- **EXAMPLES INCLUDE....**

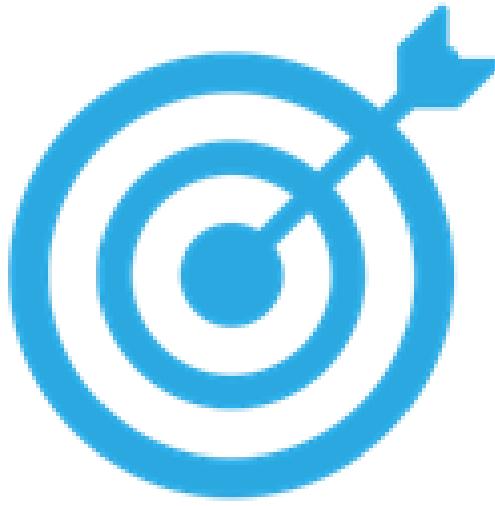
PRINCIPAL #4



Working Toward Full Inclusion

- Head toward progress not perfection. It's a **dial not a switch**.
- Supports may be different in **different situations**
- Inclusive practices **benefit everyone!**

PRINCIPAL #5



Let's Get To
Success Mindset

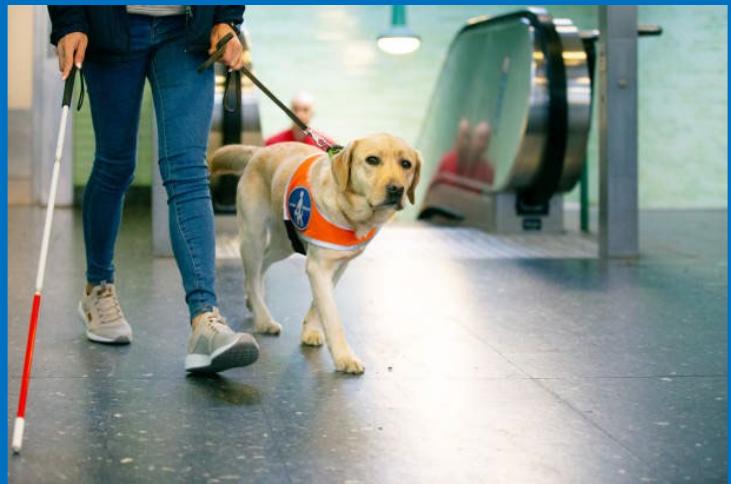
- A change in our perspective or approach
- Instead of “*no we can't*” think “*how can we*” make this work
- Tap into your tools and resources to explore how to get to YES

PRINCIPAL #6



Everyone Has A
Right To Access
Their Government

- To be **welcomed, engaged** and **supported**
- The **ADA ensures** persons with disabilities have a legal right to participate



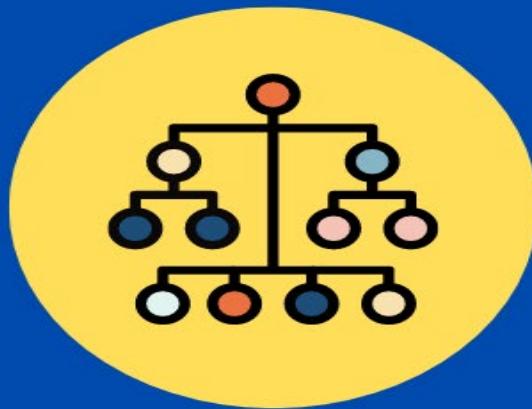
Inclusion Is About Intentionally Planning For The Success Of ALL



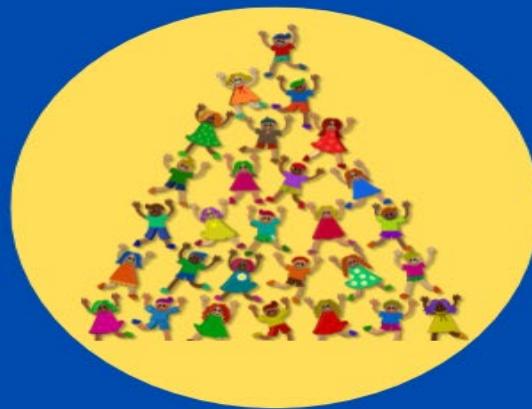
HOW DOES GOOD CUSTOMER SERVICE WORK MORE EFFECTIVELY?

THE "IN ALL - FOR ALL- BY ALL" APPROACH

IN ALL



FOR ALL



BY ALL



ACCESSIBILITY

is the practice of making **information**, **activities**, and/or **environments** sensible, meaningful, and usable for as many people as possible.

**PROJECT
GOALS**

What Municipal Accessibility Means

Can you enter the building, office, room or travel the path that you want or need to?

Can you find, hear, see, or understand the content or material that you want or need to?

Can you participate or attend an event, program, or class that you want or need to in a meaningful way?

If the answers are no, is there a set process for the Town to follow to otherwise provide you with the service?

And if the answer is still no, is there a way you can file a grievance?

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF ACCESSIBILITY?



- Share an example of accessibility in action in your town
- Or pick a card and read it out loud



WORDS MATTER & DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

BEST PRACTICE

LET'S MAKE IT THIS EASY

Helping you to be
more comfortable
and confident
talking to person
with disabilities



IT'S OKAY IF
YOU MAKE
MISTAKES

WHY WORDS MATTER



For people with disabilities, incorrect perceptions and negative attitudes (words) are often a great barrier to overcome

Sometimes the well-meaning words that others use in conversation, online and in the media have a lot to do with these attitudes

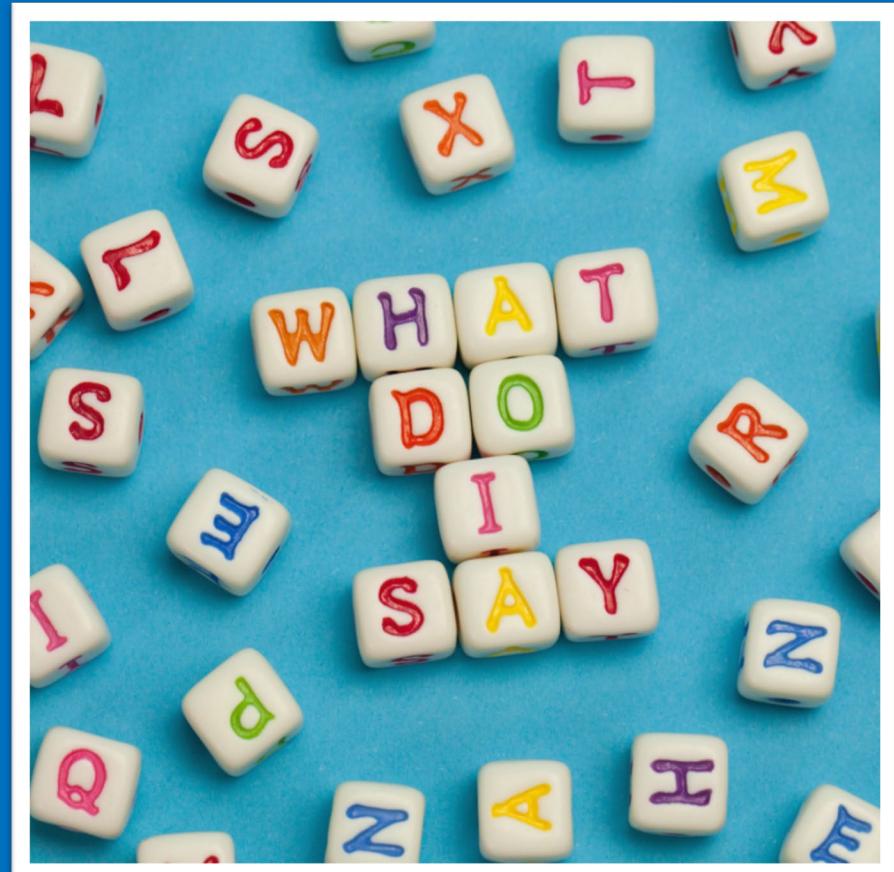
Learning and using acceptable, empowering words with a focus on positive attributes and strengths, can show respect to people with disabilities

PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

To Tell What a Person **HAS**
Not What A Person **IS**

It's An **Objective** Way
Of **Acknowledging** &
Communicating About
Disabilities

Never **Equate** A Person
With A **Disability**



PERSONS
WITHOUT
DISABILITIES OR
NEUROTYPICAL



HE IS
EXPERIENCING
BEHAVIORAL
CHALLENGES



SHE HAS A
MENTAL HEALTH
CONDITION



HE HAS AUTISM



PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES



PERSON WHO
USES A
WHEELCHAIR



PERSON FIRST LANGUAGE

ACCESSIBLE
PARKING



SEPARATE
BUS



AUTISM
SPECTRUM
DISORDER



HAD OR HAS A
DISABILITY



HIGH SUPPORT OR LOW
SUPPORT NEEDS



WORDS TO LOSE → WORDS TO LIVE BY

STUDENTS WHO
ACCESS SPECIAL
EDUCATION
SERVICES



CAMPER
WHO UTILIZES
INCLUSION SUPPORTS



WORDS TO LOSE → WORDS TO LIVE BY

MEET KENDRA



HI
KENDRA
!!!

HER NEEDS AS A
NEUROTYPICAL,
NON-DISABLED
ADULT.....

RESPECT **HAPPINESS**
INDEPENDENCE
A JOB
FRIENDS
A PLACE TO LIVE

MEET CHEYANNE



HI
CHEYANNE
!!!

HER NEEDS AS A
NEURODIVERSE
ADULT WITH A
DISABILITY.....

RESPECT **HAPPINESS**
INDEPENDENCE
A JOB
FRIENDS
A PLACE TO LIVE



Look Past The Disability Ask Questions To Get To Know Someone





DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Suggested Interactions for Specific Indications

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

SUGGESTED INTERACTIONS FOR SPECIFIC INDICATIONS



INDIVIDUAL WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- Do not touch anyone's mobility equipment without their permission or without asking.
- Be considerate of possible pain, balance, or post-traumatic stress issues during physical contact.
- Put yourself at the person's eye level when engaging in a conversation. Instead of kneeling, simply pull up a chair.



INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR LOW VISION

- Identify yourself when entering a conversation and announce when you leave.
- When serving as a sighted guide, offer your arm or shoulder rather than grabbing theirs.
- Describe the setting, environment, written material, and obstacles when serving as a sighted guide.
- Resist the temptation to pet or talk to an animal guide or service animal.



INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation.
- If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not their interpreter; keep your eyes on the individual and not on the interpreter.
- Face the person and speak in normal tones—not a raised or slowed down voice.

INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE SPEECH OR COMMUNICATION DISABILITIES

- If you do not understand what the person is saying, ask the person to repeat what they said and then repeat it back to ensure you understood.
- Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish their sentences.

If a person uses communication device:

- Communicate with the person not the device. Display your usual eye contact, body language, and speech. Respect screen privacy, unless invited to look.
- Never talk down or use a childish or unusually loud voice when speaking to someone. Talk to a communication device user as you would a person without a disability.



INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE HIDDEN OR NONAPPARENT DISABILITIES

- Engage in a dialogue to determine individual needs.
- Seek to understand their lived experience.
- Support accommodations, maintain flexible thinking.
- Honor confidentiality, and recognize that disclosing their disability in some settings comes with risk.

SPECIFIC TO:

- physical disability
- blind or low vision
- deaf or hard of hearing
- communication disorder
- non-apparent disabilities

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE LANGUAGE GUIDE

WORDS MATTER: Learning and using acceptable, empowering words with a focus on positive attributes and strengths, can show respect to people with disabilities.

WORDS TO LOSE

WORDS TO LIVE BY

the handicapped/disabled ➤ persons with a disability*

she is mentally ill/emotionally disturbed ➤ she has a mental health condition*

the Down syndrome worker ➤ an employee with Down syndrome*

confined to or wheelchair bound ➤ person who uses a wheelchair

handicapped parking ➤ accessible

stricken with, victim, suffered from ➤ had or has

special bus ➤ separate

disabled rights ➤ disability

SPED kids or Special Ed kids ➤ student who

inclusion kid ➤ camper w

differently abled/handicapable/extra-ordinary ➤ people w/

normal or healthy kids ➤ child with

*Person First Language is used to tell what a person
Exception: within the Autistic community
preference for identify first language, particularly
older teens. When working with children, use
language - but with all ages honor the preference



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DISABILITY ETIQUETTE GUIDELINES

Building Inclusive Communities Together



Disability etiquette is a set of guidelines dealing specifically with how to interact with a person who has a disability. The focus of these principles is based on treating people with respect. A basic understanding of these principles can help make community members feel more comfortable when interacting with peers with disabilities. And remember if you are not sure JUST ASK!

Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their companion, staff, aide, or family member.

Be age appropriate when you speak with an adult with a disability, as you would any other adult.

Ask before you help a person with a disability.

Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, or unfortunate.

Avoid cute euphemisms such as being physically challenged, inconvenienced or differently abled.

When communicating about a person, equally important, ask yourself if the disability is even relevant and needs to be mentioned when referring to individuals.

Look past the disability get to know someone by asking questions.

Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do = presume competence.

Avoid portraying a person with disability as inspirational simply because they live with disability. Implying a person is courageous or superhuman for doing everyday things can be patronizing.

Use person first language to tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS. An objective way of acknowledging and communicating about disabilities. "A child with Epilepsy" rather than "The epileptic child".

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MERGE
DIVERSE ABILITIES INCLUSION CONSULTING



DIVERSE ABILITIES IN OUR COMMUNITIES

DIVERSE ABILITIES IN OUR COMMUNITIES



HIDDEN DISABILITIES

HOW A PERSON MAY "SHOW THEIR DISABILITY" OR TRAITS THAT A PERSON MAY EXPERIENCE

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| poor social and communication skills | appears fidgety unable to focus or stimming | oversensitive to things in their environment |
| difficulty transitioning or following directions | wandering or pacing | common sounds may be painful or overwhelming |
| persistent need to know schedules | excessive amount of energy | literal thinking |
| processing delays | heightened anxiety or panic | avoiding eye contact or verbal responses |

TRAIT:

anxiety, processing delays, poor communications skills



BEHAVIOR:

JORDAN STEPS UP TO THE COUNTER AT THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE TO REQUEST A COPY OF THEIR BIRTH CERTIFICATE BUT BECOMES VISIBLE ANXIOUS WHEN ASKED TO COMPLETE A FORM WITH MULTIPLE SECTIONS. THEY START PACING BACK AND FORTH, MUMBLING TO THEMSELVES, AND STRUGGLING TO PROCESS THE INSTRUCTIONS, MAKING THE CLERK UNSURE HOW TO ASSIST.



RESPONSE:

PROACTIVE | IN THE MOMENT | AFTER AN OCCURRENCE

INCLUSION STRATEGIES

BENEFITING PERSONS WITH:



- Autism | ADHD
- Mental Illness
- Developmental Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities
- Cognitive Challenges

ALL PEOPLE

8 ESSENTIAL HABITS

TO BUILD A CULTURE
OF DISABILITY
INCLUSION

CREATE AND SHARE VISUAL TOOLS

USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

FACILITATE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

UNDERSTAND SENSORY NEEDS

HAVE FLEXIBLE THINKING

MODIFY AND ACCOMMODATE

TRANSITION & PROCESSING TIME

WORK AS A TEAM

CREATE & SHARE VISUAL TOOLS

VISUAL SCHEDULE EXPECTATION LIST

- Use pictures, text or icons
- Review together
- Make age appropriate

TEAM PRACTICE SCHEDULE

WELCOME & PRACTICE STARTS



REVIEW SCHEDULE & EXPECTATIONS



STRETCHING &
WARM UP



PASSING & CATCHING
DRILLS



STATIONS



4V4 GAMES



END OF PRACTICE
CHECK IN



Smart Recycling Guide

Your go-to reference for recycling in Massachusetts



Food and Beverage
Cans
empty and rinse



Bottles, Jars, Jugs
and Tubs
empty and replace cap



Bottles and Jars
empty and rinse



Mixed Paper, Newspaper,
Magazines, Boxes
empty and flatten

NO!



No Plastic Bags
Do Not Bag Recyclables



No Clothing or Linens
use donation programs



No Hazardous Items
no propane tanks, batteries, sharps,
or chemicals



No Tanglers
no hoses, wires,
chains or electronics



No Food or Liquid
empty all containers

Recyclopedia: Can I recycle it?

Enter name of item (ex. bottle) Search

Use our online search tool at: RecycleSmartMA.org

RecycleSmartMA.org

All recycling programs in Massachusetts
accept the items pictured above.

**CREATE & SHARE
VISUAL TOOLS**

**LET'S LOOK AT SOME
EXAMPLES**

**WHO MIGHT BENEFIT
FROM THE USE OF
VISUAL TOOLS?**

Show Me
A Communication Tool for Emergency Shelters



9 REASONS TO USE VISUALS



VISUALS ALLOW TIME FOR LANGUAGE PROCESSING



VISUALS HELP ALL PEOPLE



VISUALS HELP SOMEONE SEE WHAT YOU MEAN



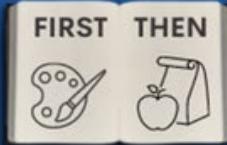
VISUALS HAVE NO ATTITUDE
• no frustration
• no tone • no disapproval



VISUALS HELP REDUCE ANXIETY



VISUALS ARE PERMANENT
(spoken words disappear)



VISUALS PREPARE SOMEONE FOR TRANSITIONS



VISUALS ARE TRANSFERABLE BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTS AND PLACES



VISUALS HELP BUILD INDEPENDENCE



USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

Focus On What You
Would Like To See
Or Occur

Rather Than
Pointing Out
The Bad

USE A HIGHER RATIO OF
PRAISE TO CORRECTION

TRY THIS:

It's time to start putting the books you were using back on the shelf. Can I help with that?

TRY THIS:

Let's take a step back and find a safe way through – I'll help you.

TRY THIS:

Take a deep breath – I'm here to help. Let's go through this one step at a time

FACILITATE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Look Past Disabilities
To Discover
Someone's Gifts

(Strength Not Deficit
Focused)

**Make Interest Based
Connections**



UNDERSTAND SENSORY NEEDS

**Some people may be
more sensitive to
sensory stimuli**

**FROM: sight, sound,
touch, smell, taste**



Asterus
@ltsAsterus

sensory overload is frustrating cause
how am i supposed to explain that i
don't want someone near me cause i
can hear the washing machine
beeping, background noise, there's
clothes in the wrong places,
everyone is too loud, there's dirty
dishes and i can feel my toes too
much

HAVE FLEXIBLE THINKING

**Think Outside The Box
“The 8 Worst Words”**

**Offer Choice To
Help Someone Feel
In Control**



MODIFY AND ACCOMMODATE

Can the time, duration, location be changed to accommodate someone's needs?

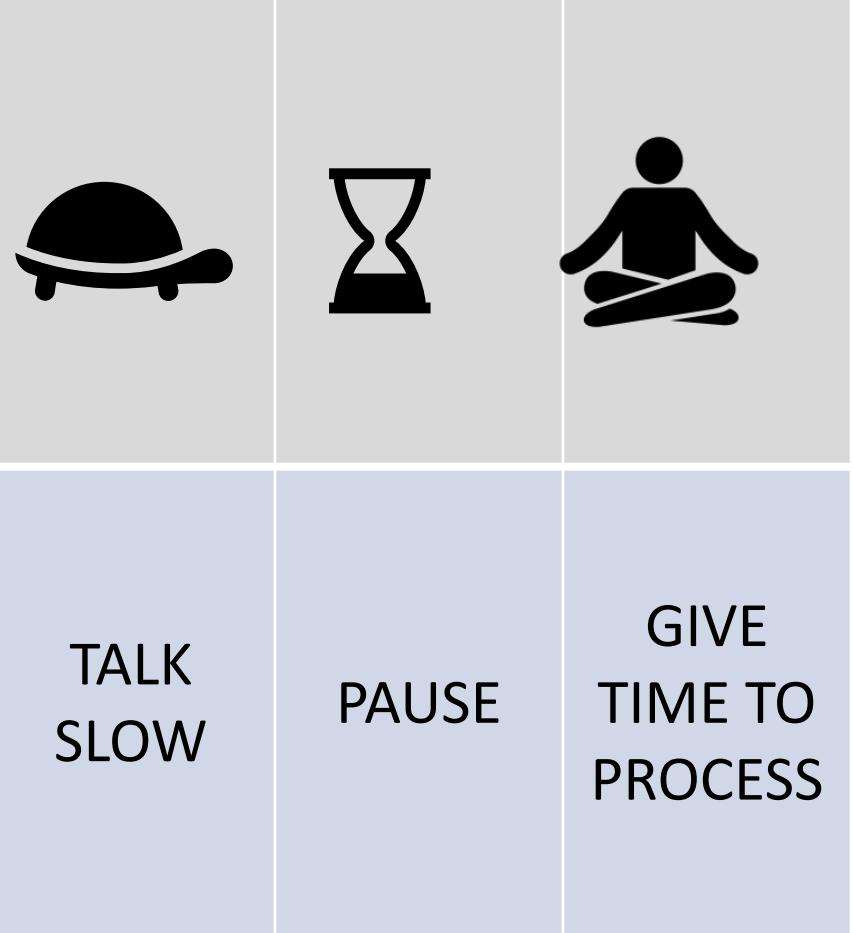
Can the way someone participates be adjusted to ensure they are included?



TRANSITION & PROCESSING TIME

Allow for processing time

Verbal & visual cue prior to transitions



WORK AS A TEAM

Internally: lean on & reach out to each other – it takes us all!

Externally: build a collaborative relationship with families and disability support organizations

**At the center:
the community member!**



BONUS STRATEGY

NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

Persons with
Disabilities
Should Have a
Seat at The Table

*(or a parent if
about children)*





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WRAP UP: Reflections | Q & A

WRAP UP AND REFLECTION

**WHAT WAS YOUR
AHA MOMENT OR
TAKE-AWAY?**

**WHAT IS ONE NEW
THING YOU LEARNED
THAT YOU WILL
IMPLEMENT?**





THANK YOU! SHARE THE LOVE

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“Effective Engagement Techniques for Citizens with Diverse Abilities”

TOP TIPS & BEST PRACTICE SUMMARY – MERGE INCLUSION CONSULTING

FACILITATE COLLABORATIVE INTERACTION

- ✓ Get to know community members likes and talents to gain common interests
- ✓ Point out or model good social interactions, “Thanks for waiting so patiently”
- ✓ Partner up community members to ensure no one is left out and all are engaged

FLEXIBLE THINKING

- ✓ Think outside the box: “this is the way it’s always been done it” doesn’t allow for flexibility
- ✓ Be less ridged with your response: think about the end result and how else you can get there
- ✓ Offer choices to help community members feel more in control: “would you rather ____ or ____?”

UNDERSTANDING SENSORY NEEDS

- ✓ What sensory issues may be occurring? Avoiding or seeking with temperature, touch, noise, light?
- ✓ Be proactive, give an option to avoid large groups. Know if a quiet space is available
- ✓ Mood regulation: ask where they are at “Is it getting too loud for you?”

MAKE MODIFICATIONS

- ✓ Can the time, location, duration be changed to accommodate someone’s needs?
- ✓ Can the way in which they participate be adjusted to make sure they are included and valued (but still safe)?
- ✓ Focus on someone’s strengths – if good at organizing have them help with a task like that

USE VISUAL SCHEDULES OR CHECKLISTS

- ✓ Written and/or icons spell out what is coming next, cross off tasks/events when done
- ✓ Can be used for overall group schedule for that day or given to an individual community member
- ✓ Being able to see the sequence of events helps community members to feel comfortable and in control of their day

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS DEFINED

- ✓ “Rules” created for participation, reviewed and available for the group and/or an individual community member
- ✓ Use written text and/or icons as age appropriate, generally 5 expectations, framed in the positive
- ✓ Allow for processing time, have them repeat or read back to assure they received the info

PROCESSING & TRANSITION TIME

- ✓ A time monitoring strategy that gives community members a concrete visual of the passing of time
- ✓ Allow processing time to digest information and get ready for the next event/task
- ✓ Having community members involved helps them to learn to manage their time

THINK LIKE A TEAM

- ✓ Identify the caregiver, family member or other support person – introduce yourself
- ✓ Be proactive: if possible, obtain any suggestions or tips ahead of time
- ✓ Give breaks when able “can I sit with them for a bit so you can get some time alone”

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- ✓ Keep confidentiality: written, verbal & electronic
- ✓ Information sharing on a “need to know basis”
- ✓ When giving direction: few words as possible, calm demeanor, low voice, be aware of your body language

POSITIVE LANGUAGE

- ✓ Focuses on what we would like to see or occur, rather than pointing out the bad
- ✓ When giving direction or instructions, use a higher ratio of praise to corrections
- ✓ An opportunity to reinforce expected interactions and to model appropriate problem-solving

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TO SUCCESS!

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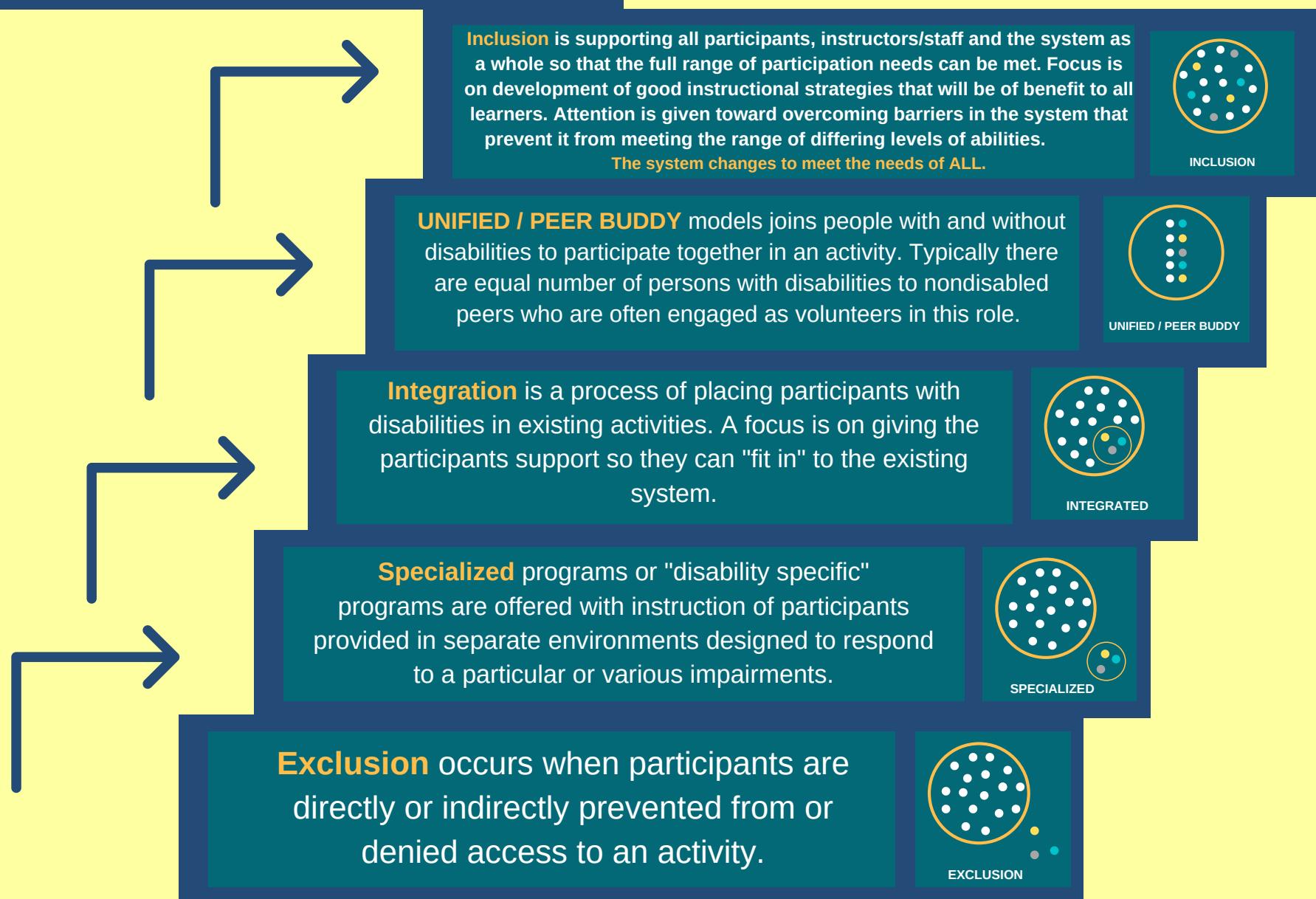
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EVERYONE HAS A
RIGHT TO BELONG

To be welcomed, engaged and supported. There are many benefits and value added to opening your doors to diversity. The ADA ensures that people with disabilities have a legal right to participate.

MODELS OF PARTICIPATION



DISABILITY ETIQUETTE LANGUAGE GUIDE

WORDS MATTER: Learning and using acceptable, empowering words with a focus on positive attributes and strengths, can show respect to people with disabilities.

WORDS TO LOSE

WORDS TO LIVE BY

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| the handicapped/disabled | ➤ | persons with a disability* |
| she is mentally ill/emotionally disturbed | ➤ | she has a mental health condition* |
| the Down syndrome worker | ➤ | an employee with Down syndrome* |
| confined to or wheelchair bound | ➤ | person who uses a wheelchair |
| handicapped parking | ➤ | accessible parking |
| stricken with, victim, suffered from | ➤ | had or has a disability |
| special bus | ➤ | separate bus |
| disabled rights | ➤ | disability rights |
| SPED kids or Special Ed kids | ➤ | student who accesses special education services |
| inclusion kid | ➤ | camper who accesses inclusion services |
| differently abled/handi-capable/extr-ordinary | ➤ | people with disabilities or neurodiverse |
| normal or healthy kids | ➤ | child without a disability or neurotypical |

*Person First Language is used to tell what a person has not what a person is.

Exception: within the Autistic community, there is a trending preference for identify first language, particularly with adults and older teens. When working with children, start with person first language - but with all ages honor the preference of the individual



DISABILITY ETIQUETTE GUIDELINES

Building Inclusive Communities Together



Disability etiquette is a set of guidelines dealing specifically with how to interact with a person who has a disability. The focus of these principles is based on treating people with respect. A basic understanding of these principles can help make community members feel more comfortable when interacting with peers with disabilities.

And remember if you are not sure JUST ASK!



Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their companion, staff, aide, or family member.

Be age appropriate when you speak with an adult with a disability, as you would any other adult.

Ask before you help a person with a disability.

Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, or unfortunate.

Avoid cute euphemisms such as being physically challenged, inconvenienced or differently abled.

When communicating about a person, equally important, ask yourself if the disability is even relevant and needs to be mentioned when referring to individuals.

Look past the disability get to know someone by asking questions.

Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do = *presume competence*.

Avoid portraying a person with disability as inspirational simply because they live with disability. Implying a person is courageous or superhuman for doing everyday things can be patronizing.

Use person first language to tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS. An objective way of acknowledging and communicating about disabilities. "A child with Epilepsy" rather than "The epileptic child".

9 REASONS TO USE VISUALS



VISUALS ALLOW TIME FOR LANGUAGE PROCESSING



VISUALS HELP ALL PEOPLE



VISUALS HELP SOMEONE SEE WHAT YOU MEAN



VISUALS HAVE NO ATTITUDE
• no frustration
• no tone • no disapproval



VISUALS HELP REDUCE ANXIETY



VISUALS ARE PERMANENT
(spoken words disappear)



VISUALS PREPARE SOMEONE FOR TRANSITIONS



VISUALS ARE TRANSFERABLE BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTS AND PLACES



VISUALS HELP BUILD INDEPENDENCE

Digital Accessibility Training

ADA and Communications: Digital Accessibility Training

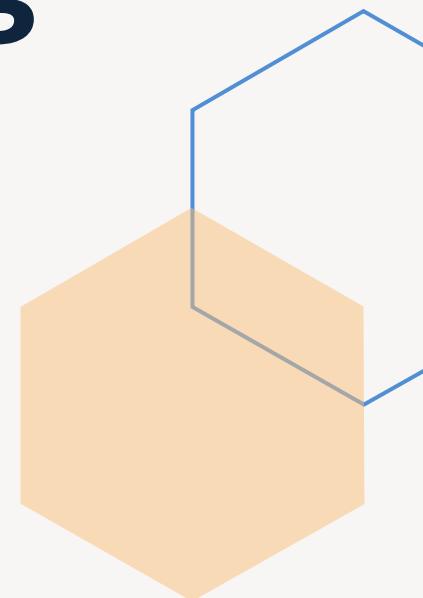
Training provided on May 7, 2025 by Kelsey Edmond

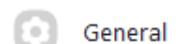
Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management at the University of Massachusetts, Boston

ADA and Communications: Digital Accessibility Training

Collins Center for Public Management

May 7, 2025





General



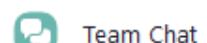
Video



Audio



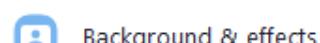
Share screen



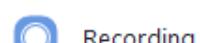
Team Chat



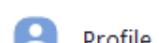
Zoom Apps



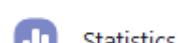
Background & effects



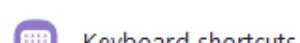
Recording



Profile



Statistics



Keyboard shortcuts



Accessibility

Closed caption

Font size: (14)
Small Large

Caption color: ● ● ● ● ● ●

Translation color: ● ● ● ● ● ●

Closed captioning will look like this

Translations will look like this

Always show captions [?](#)

Dim screen share video

Automatically dim video when flashing images or visual patterns (such as stripes) are detected.

Chat display size (ctrl+/-)

100%

Screen reader alerts

[Restore defaults](#)

| Description | Enable |
|-------------|--------|
|-------------|--------|

Captions

Caption language: English [»](#)

[View full transcript](#)

[Caption settings](#)

Host controls

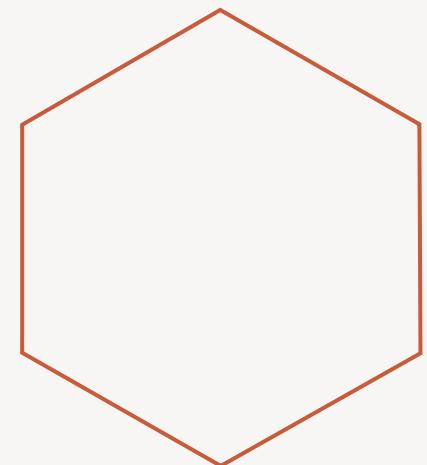
[Set up manual captioner](#) [»](#)

[Host caption control settings](#)

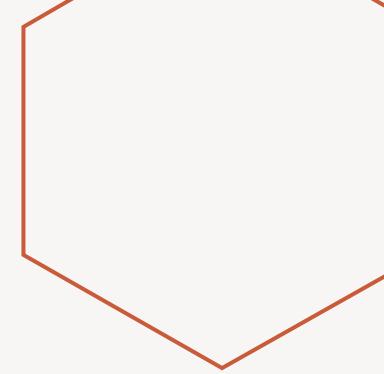


Agenda

- Definitions
- ADA Title II
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)
- Digital Accessibility
 - Written Content – Write, Display, and Upload
 - Color Contrast
 - Accessible Images - Alternative Text
 - Video Accessibility
- Putting it into Practice
- Questions



Disability:

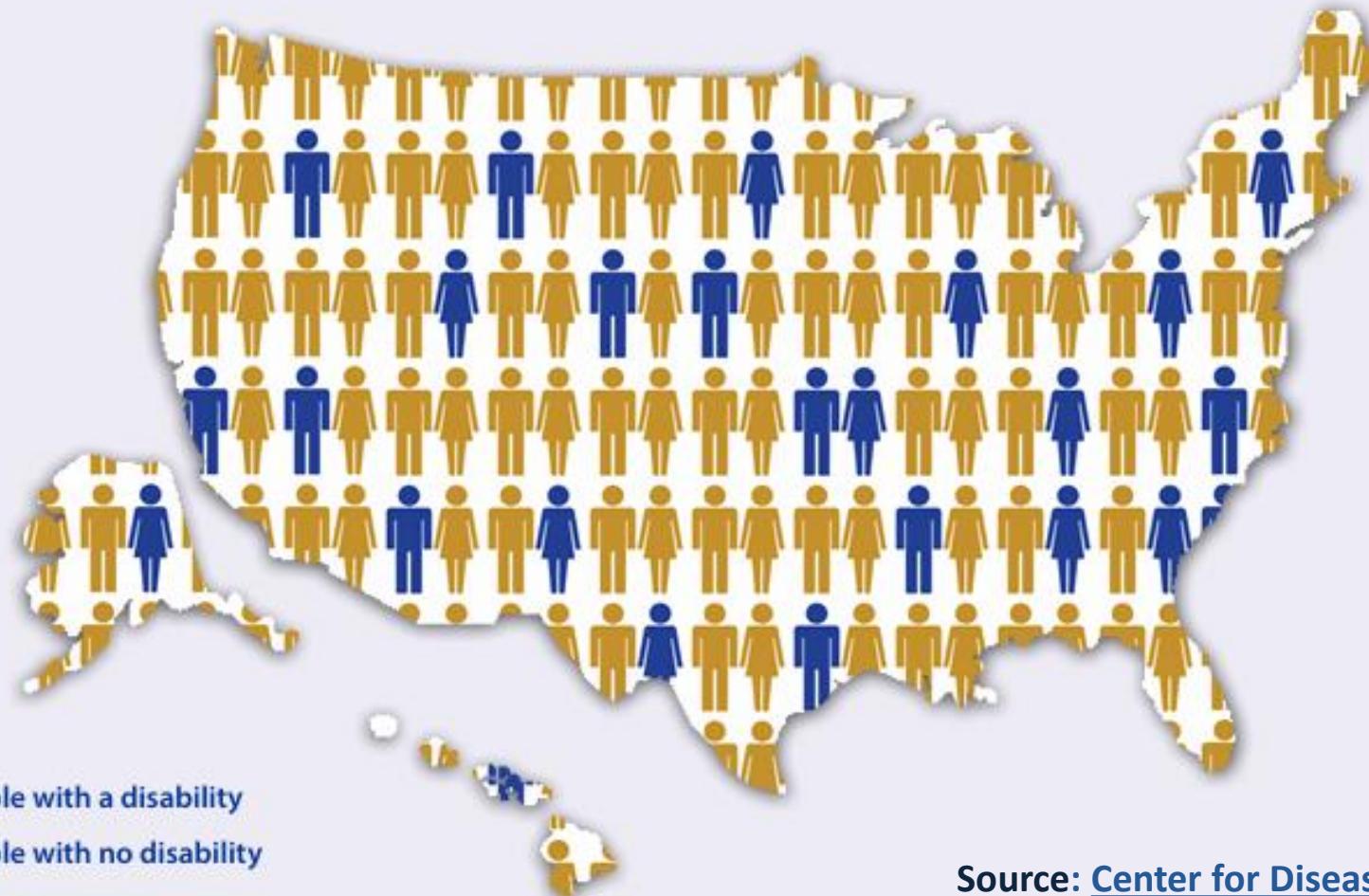


any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them.

Source: [Center for Disease Control](#)

- Disabilities may impact vision, hearing, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communicating, mental health, or social relationships.

More than **1 in 4**
(28.7%) adults in the United States
have some type of disability

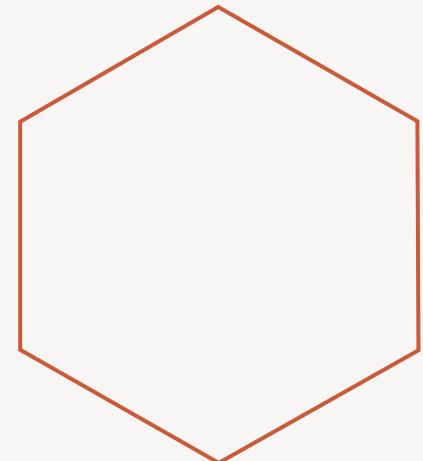


Source: [Center for Disease Control](#)

Accessibility:

people with disabilities can get the same information, take part in the same activities, and use the same services as people without disabilities

Source: [Office for Civil Rights](#)



Communications are...

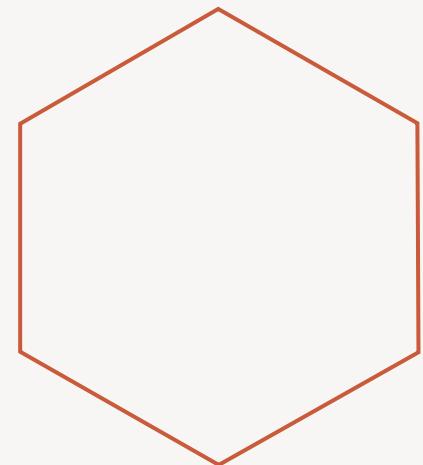
- Websites
- Social media
- Press releases
- Emergency alerts and notifications
- Flyers and posters
- Events calendar
- Application forms
- Town warrant
- Meetings
- And more!

ADA Title II

Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to make sure that all their services, programs, and activities are accessible to people with disabilities.

This includes digital spaces, such as:

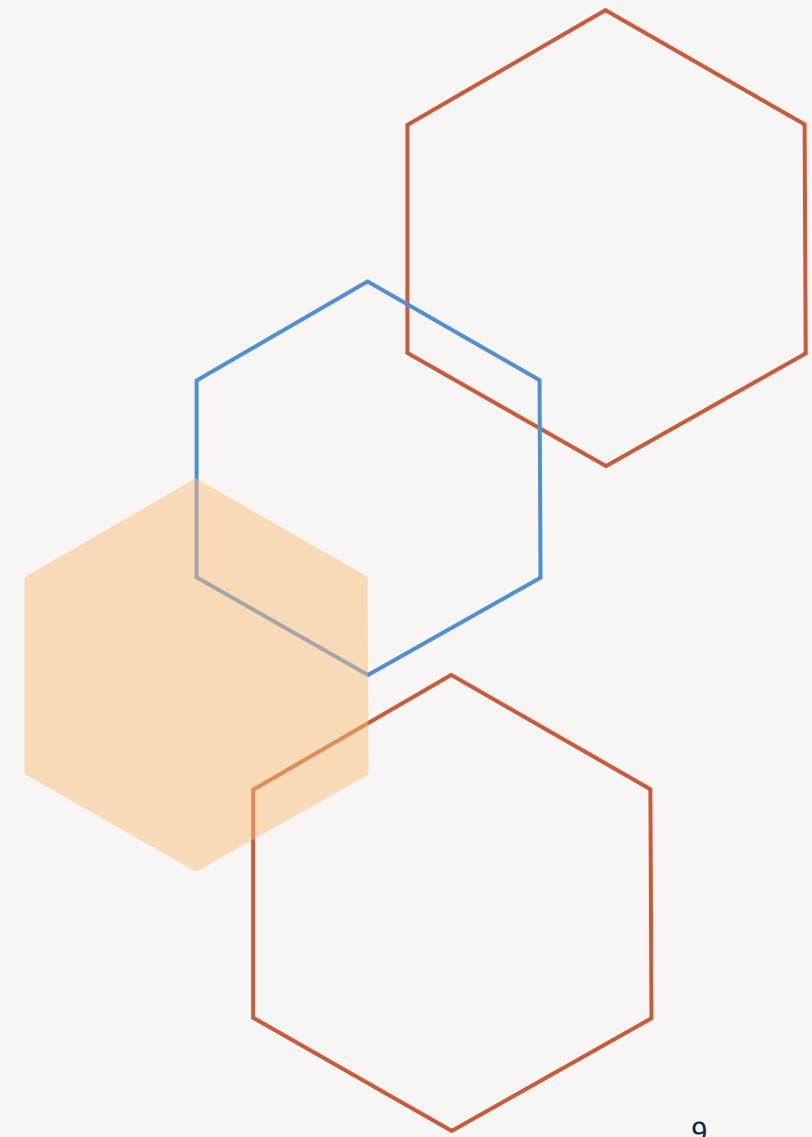
- Websites
- Mobile apps
- Online forms and documents
- Social media communications
- Videos and livestreams



ADA Title II

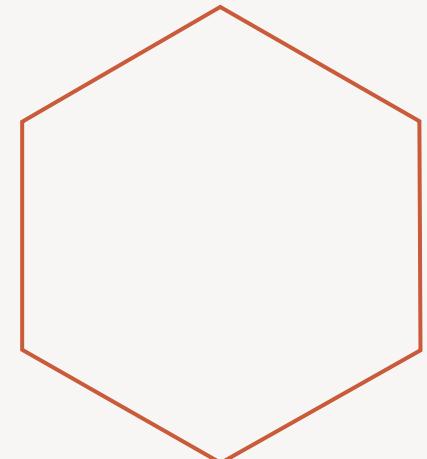
Third party content that Sherborn does not control is not required to meet Title II requirements.

However, any vendors hired to create or manage digital content on the Town's behalf are subject to those standards.



Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

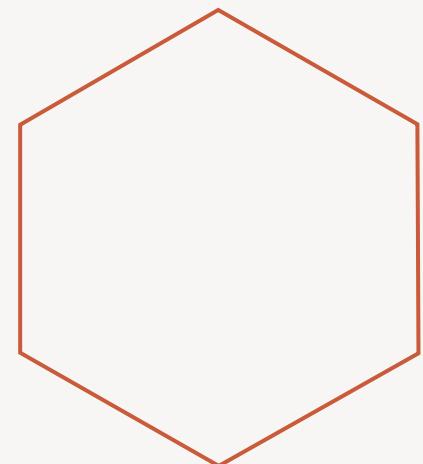
- Governments must make their websites and apps meet the WCAG 2.2 Level AA standard
- Sherborn's compliance deadline is April 26, 2027
- [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.2](#)



Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Digital Accessibility

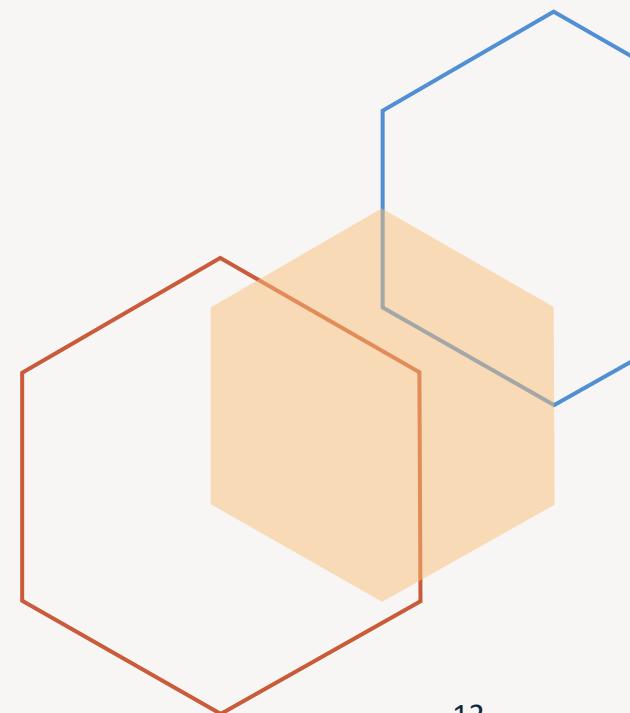
- Written Content
- Color Contrast
- Alternative Text
- Video Accessibility



Written Content

Communications needs to be written and displayed in an accessible manner, which means that you should publish information in ways that make it easy to:

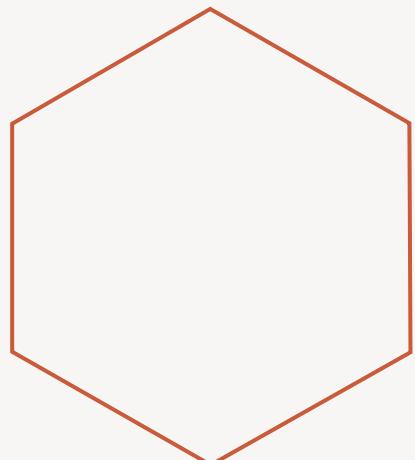
- Find
- Access
- Share
- Distribute



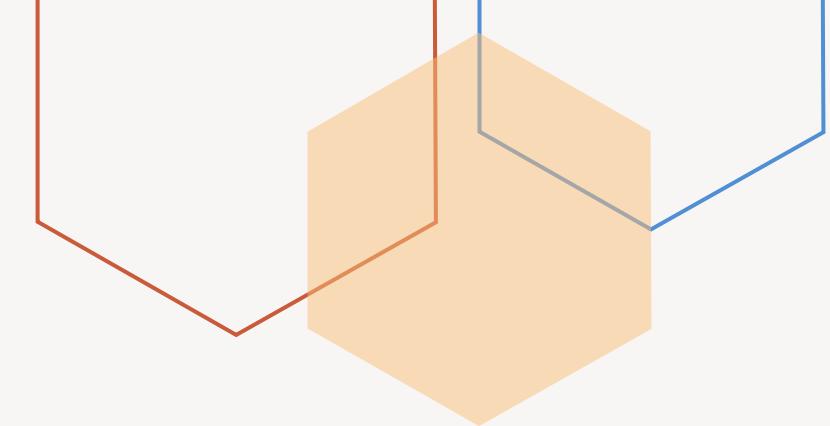
Plain Language:

writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.

Source: [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#)



Plain Language



Ensures users can

- Find what they need
- Understand what they find the first time they read or hear it
- Use what they find to meet their needs

Plain Language

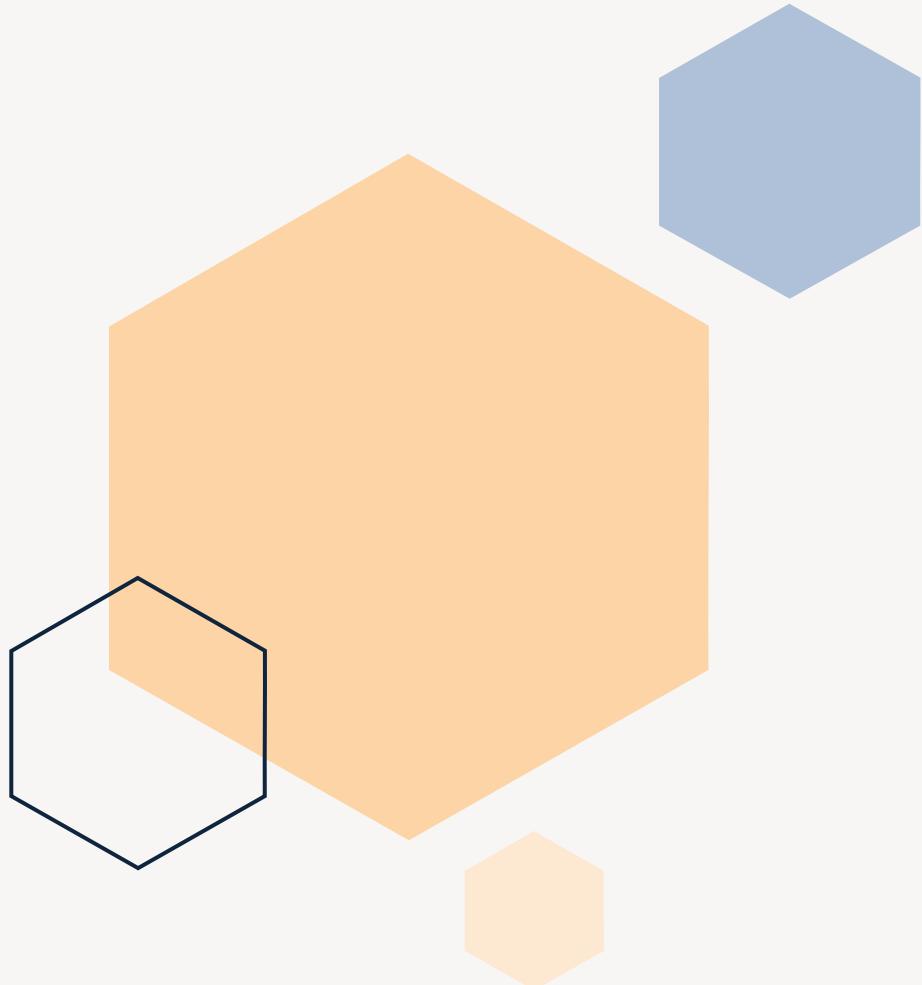


Use:

- Common, everyday words
- Short sentences and paragraphs (<20 words)
- Active voice (not passive)
 - "The Town will fix the sidewalk" instead of "The sidewalk will be fixed by the Town."
- Personal pronouns (2nd person "you")

Avoid:

- Legal or technical language
- Long blocks of text



“The application must be completed by the applicant and be received by the financial office no later than June 1st.”

“Submit your application by June 1st.”

- [Hemingway Editor](#)

Other Written Content Tips

- Spell out acronyms on first use
- Use #CamelCase for multi-word hashtags
- Use meaningful hyperlink descriptions

✓ **GOOD**

Visit [WebAIM's Link Text article](#) for details.

✗ **BAD**

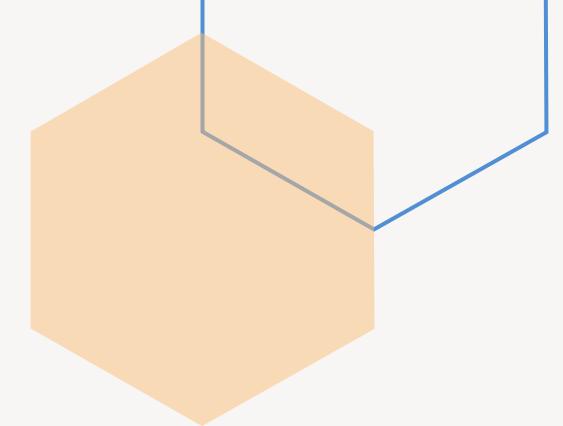
[Click Here](#) for details.

✗ **UGLY**

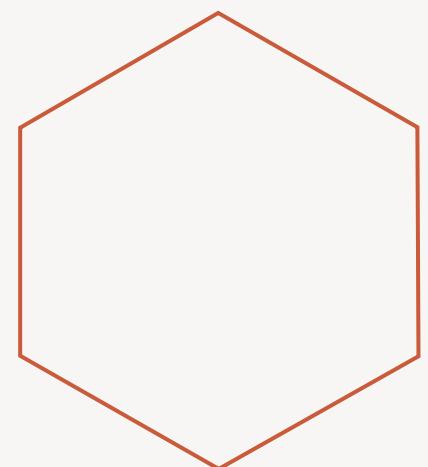
(and unclickable)

https://webaim.org/techniques/hypertext/link_text

Structuring Written Content



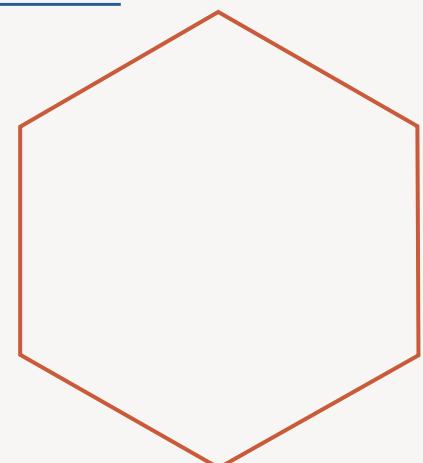
Accessible communications have structured and consistent formatting, which allows compatibility with different assistive technologies



Screen Reader:

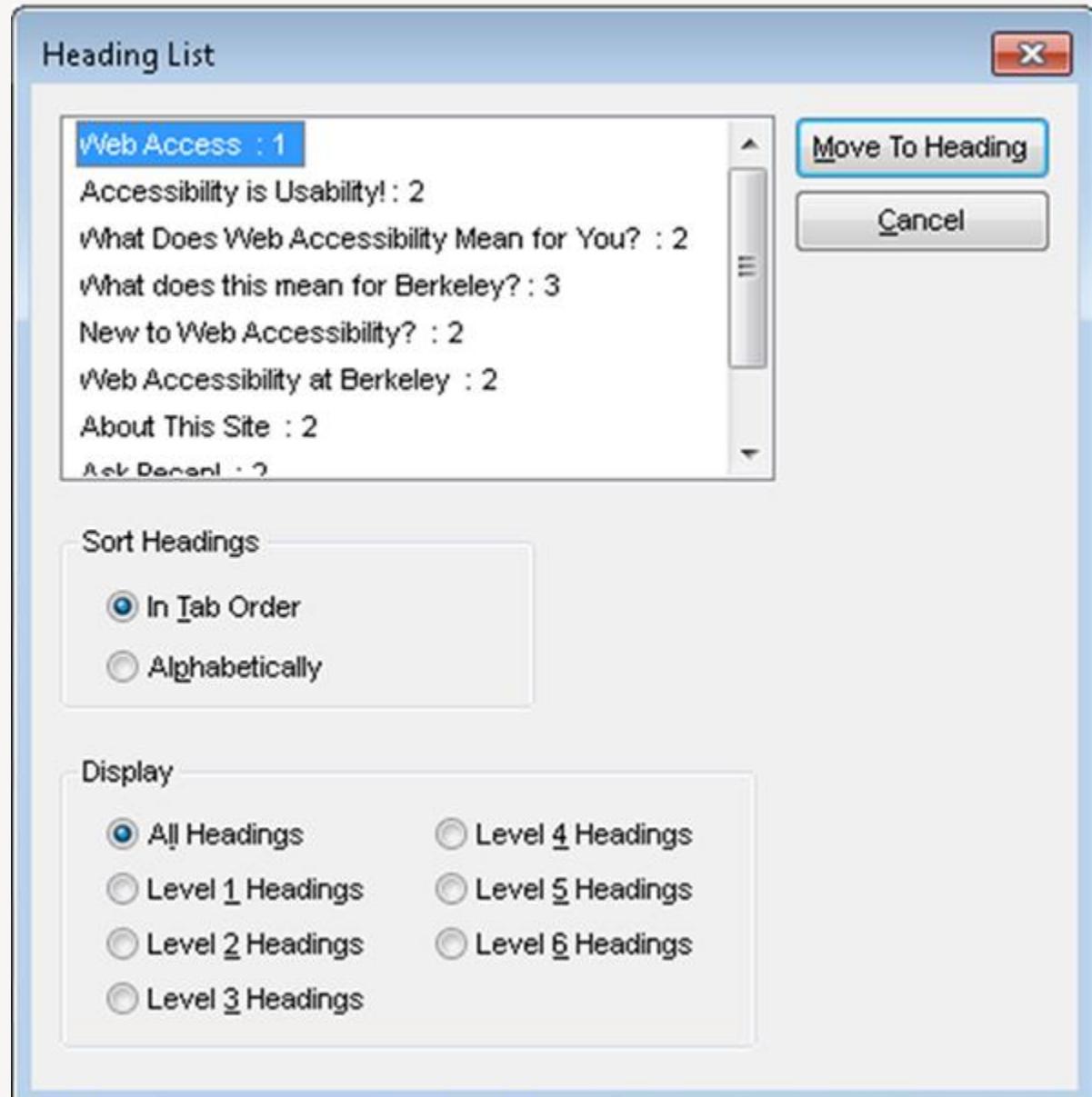
a form of assistive technology that renders text and image content as speech or Braille output.

Source: [American Foundation for the Blind](#)



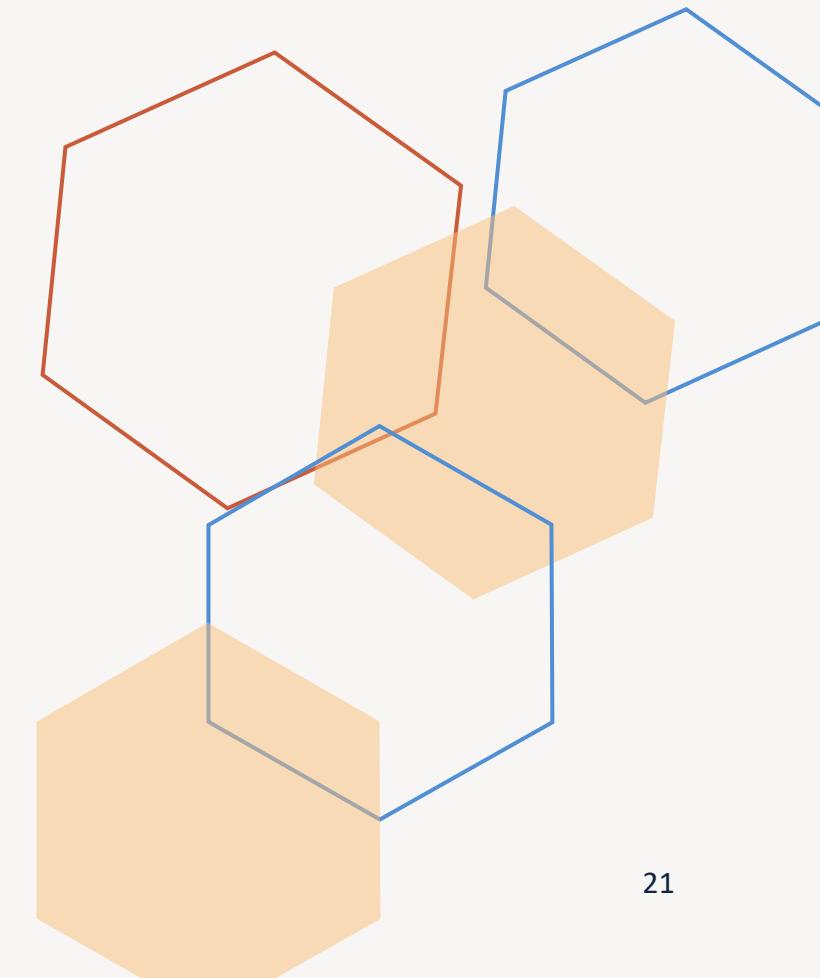
Headings

- Give structure
- Improve comprehension
- Screen readers use headings to navigate



Other Written Content Tips

- Font size at least 11 or 12 pt
- Avoid script fonts and italics
- Avoid scanned documents



Uploading Content

- Use accessible file formats – PDF, Word, HTML
- Have a descriptive file naming convention
 - “2025_Town_Budget_Summary.pdf” instead of “document1.pdf”

Wet Signature / Stamp Workarounds

- Does the online version actually need a signature?
- Provide accessible version alongside scanned one
 - Clearly label this version as “Accessible Version (No Signature)” or similar
- Keep stamped version in person
 - Note on website that signed version is available in Town Hall
- Add scanned page to the end of an accessible document

Example – Two Versions

- Department of Public Health

Learn more and share a one-pager on DPH and what we do: [DPH at a Glance PDF](#) | [Doc](#)

- Proposition 2 ½ Training and Resources

Color Contrast:

making sure that the text and background colors are different enough from each other so that the words are easy to see and read

- Color contrast impacts the readability of content, both on the web and in print

Color Contrast

Good color contrast means that everyone can see content no matter:

- Device
- Vision status
- Lighting
- Black and white printing
- WCAG standard ratio is at least 4.5:1
- [WebAIM Contrast Checker](#)

Test block

Accessible Images

Images are a powerful communication tool

- Explain complex processes
- Highlight events
- Make information more engaging

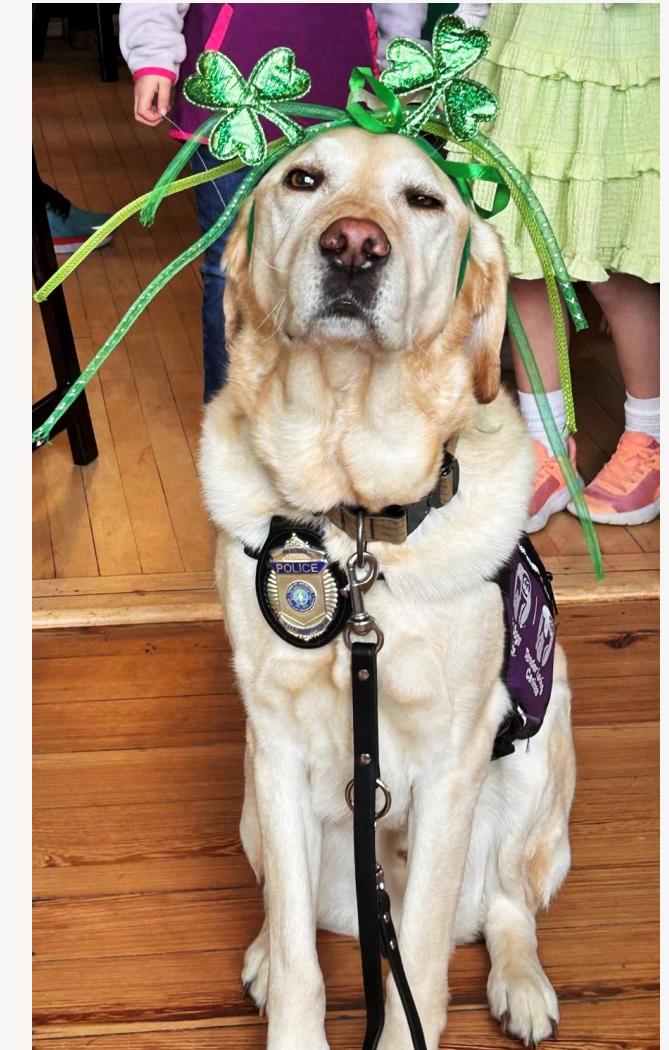
Alternative Text:

also known as alt text, is descriptive text that conveys the meaning of an image in digital content.

- the primary purpose of alt text is to make images accessible to individuals who are visually impaired or using screen readers.
- all non-text content needs to have alternative text that provides the same information found in the content

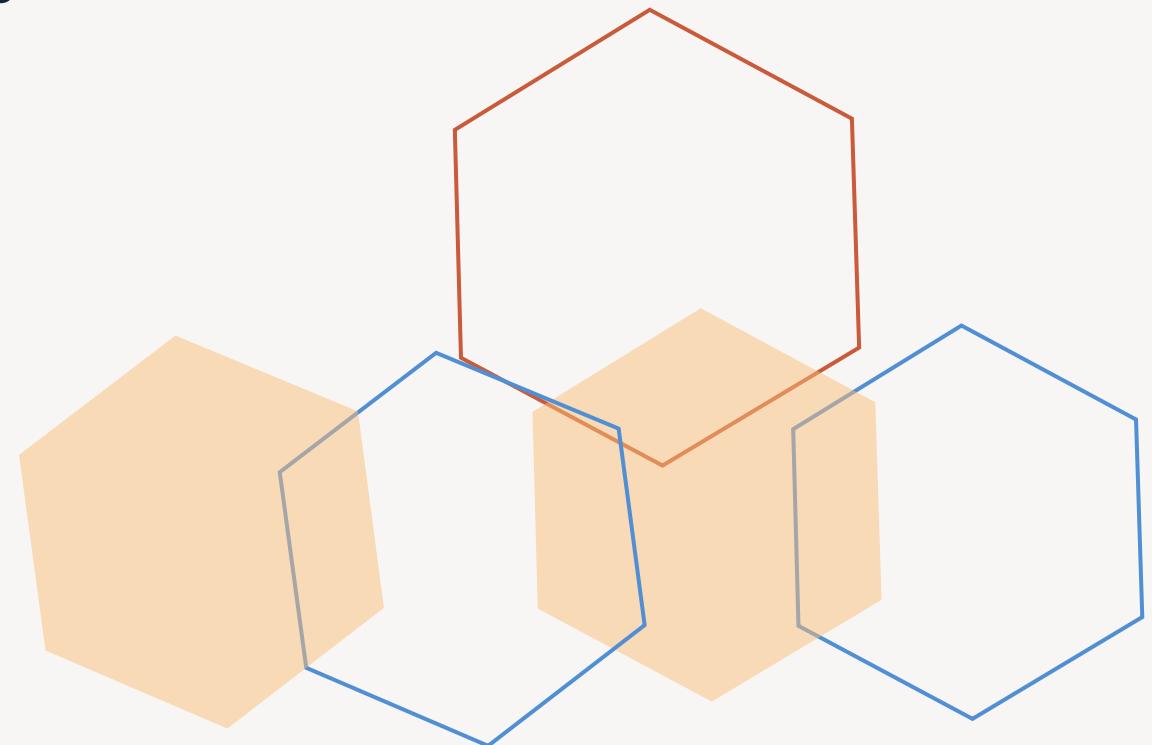
Drafting Alternative Text

- Be accurate, objective, and succinct
- Avoid redundant phrasing
- Purely decorative content



Video Accessibility

- Captioning videos ensure individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can access audio content and videos



Profile

Meetings

Events & Sessions

Personal Contacts

Personal Devices

Whiteboards

Notes

Surveys

Recordings & Transcripts

Clips

Scheduler

Settings

Reports

Account Profile

Zoom Learning Center

Video Tutorials

Knowledge Base

General

Security

Schedule Meeting

In Meeting (Basic)

In Meeting (Advanced)

Email Notification

Other

Remote support

Allow meeting host to provide 1:1 remote support to another participant

**Manual captions**

Allow host to type closed captions or assign a participant/3rd-party service to add closed captions

 Allow host to type or assign a participant to type Allow use of caption API Token to integrate with 3rd-party Closed Captioning services**Automated captions**

Allow users to enable automated captions in these languages in meetings and webinars.

Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French (Canada), French (France), German, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Malay, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Tagalog, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

 Allow only the following users to enable captions for the meeting or webinar **Full transcript**

Allow viewing of full transcript in the in-meeting side panel

**Save Captions**

Allow participants to save fully closed captions or transcripts

 Allow only the following users to save captions from the meeting

Video Accessibility Tips

- Remind participants not to speak over one another
- In-person participants use microphone
- Say aloud anything addressed in comments
- Captions should not obstruct relevant information
- Have camera on for lip-readers
- Use a non-distracting or blurred background

Putting it into Practice

- Written Content – Write, Display, and Upload
- Color Contrast
- Accessible Images – Draft and Add Alternative Text
- Video Accessibility

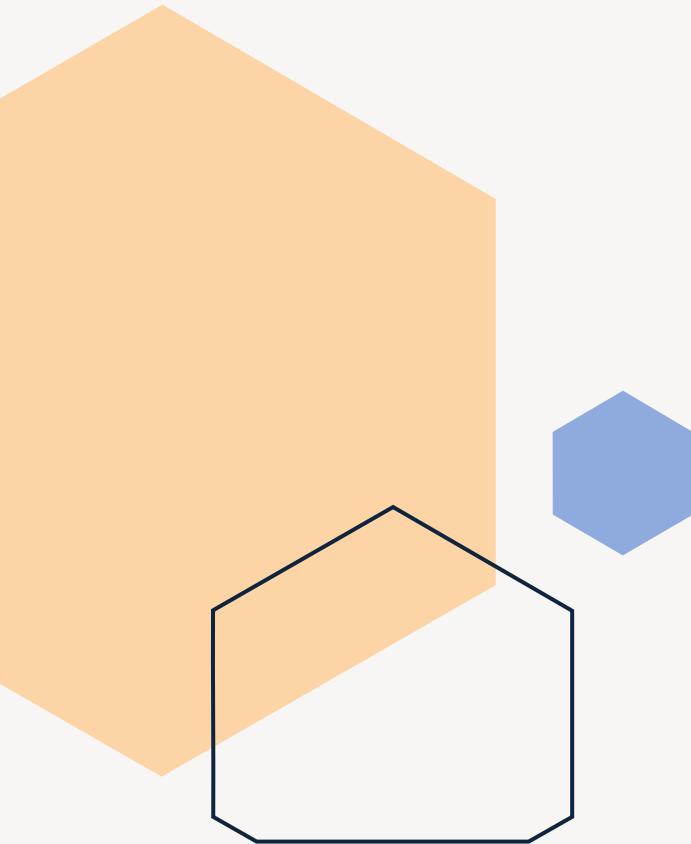
- Built-in accessibility checker

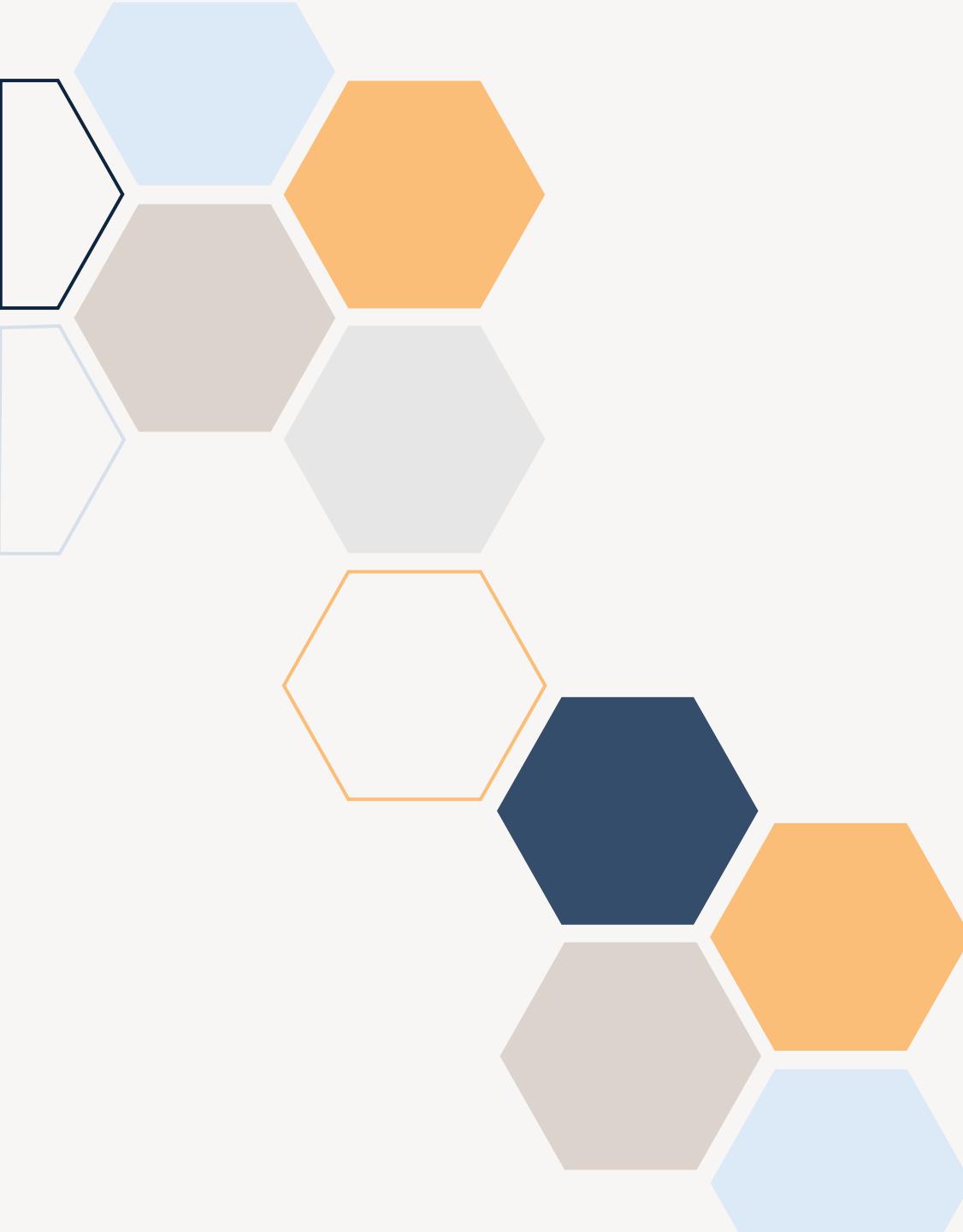
Exceptions for Archived Content

- Older web content doesn't have to retroactively be made accessible *unless* someone asks for it
- Archive documents by creating a folder on your website clearly labeled archived documents

Accessibility is a Continuous Process

- Governments must make their websites and apps meet the WCAG 2.2 Level AA standard
- Sherborn's compliance deadline is April 26, 2027





Questions

Collins Center for Public Management

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