



# Welcome to Our Graduation: Checklist for Creating Accessible Graduation Ceremonies

This Checklist is designed to assist with planning graduation ceremonies that are accessible and inviting for all attendees under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.



The Protection and Advocacy Agency for the State of Illinois  
(800) 537-2632 (Voice); (800) 610-2779 (TTY)  
[www.equipforequality.org](http://www.equipforequality.org)



The Illinois ADA Project provides ADA information and training to a wide audience, including schools, businesses, public/private entities, and people with disabilities.

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(877) ADA-3601 (V); (800) 610-2779 (TTY); [www.ADA-IL.org](http://www.ADA-IL.org)



The Illinois Attorney General's Disability Rights Bureau enforces state and federal laws protecting the rights of people with disabilities. The Bureau also provides technical assistance and referrals to individuals with disabilities and public or private entities seeking to comply with disability rights laws.

Chicago Disability Rights Bureau (312) 814-5684 (V); (800) 964-3013 (TTY)  
Springfield Disability Rights Bureau (217) 524-2660 (V); (877) 844-5461 (TTY)  
[www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov)

# Creating Accessible Graduation Ceremonies

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), public and private school systems must ensure that their programs, services, and activities are accessible to, and usable by, students and family members with disabilities. This legal requirement includes ensuring an equal opportunity to participate in graduation programs. The requirements under the ADA and Section 504 include providing both physical access and appropriate auxiliary aids and services (e.g., sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices and systems, large print materials), unless the provision of these accommodations would cause an undue burden, often defined as “significant difficulty or expense” or would fundamentally alter the program, service, or activity. Each school should do its best to provide individuals with disabilities the most integrated seating arrangements possible, allowing them the benefit of sitting with their families and avoiding undue restrictions on seating for companions.

Because high school and other graduations are such a significant and memorable event for graduates and their families, providing an accessible program is an important step towards creating an inclusive community in the school. Individuals with disabilities can face many barriers that may hinder or prevent equal participation or cause them to feel devalued and excluded. For example, although it is not unlawful to use the word “handicapped,” it is an offensive word to many people with disabilities and should be avoided. Additionally, without proper planning, students or guests with disabilities may have trouble: sitting with their families, reading small print on an invitation, using their assistive technology with the school website, contacting the school for more information, parking at or climbing steps to the venue, understanding signage, finding a space for their wheelchairs, using a restroom in the building, hearing what is said, or ascending the stairs during the ceremony. Without a doubt, graduation programs that fully comply with these vital accessibility requirements ensure a more hospitable and inviting environment for all attendees—and comply with the law!

The following Checklist reviews the requirements for providing access in existing facilities and presents a few examples of the many methods of compliance that may be acceptable under the regulations. It is divided into seven sections:

- 1) Staff Coordination, Training, and Reasonable Accommodations
- 2) Invitations, Promotional Materials, and Programs
- 3) Site Selection and Accessibility
- 4) Auxiliary Aids and Services
- 5) Service Animals
- 6) Auditorium/Assembly Areas
- 7) Stage Access

The Checklist is intended to be a quick overview of the accessibility requirements for graduation ceremonies. While it may not include every aspect of access in detail, it provides a tool for self-evaluation in determining whether individuals with disabilities and their families can equally and comfortably participate in the event. It is

recommended that schools incorporate accessibility at the very beginning of graduation planning to avoid last minute problems. Public school districts should have an ADA or Section 504 Coordinator to assist with accessibility considerations as well as have a Transition Plan in place for addressing accessibility.

For additional resources, a resource list (Appendix A) and appropriate terminology fact sheet (Appendix B) are attached at the end of this Checklist. For detailed accessibility requirements, please refer to the ADA Standards. A link is provided in Appendix A. It should be noted that the term “accessibility” is a legal term with complex requirements depending on various factors including the age of the building, whether there have been renovations, and the resources of the organization. For purposes of this Checklist, the term “accessibility” will be used a little more loosely to convey ways of providing access to individuals with disabilities, while generally following the ADA requirements.

**Remember:** Creating an accessible event is not limited to ADA compliance and does not relieve the entity from providing greater access for a particular individual or from complying with the provisions of a state or local access code or other accessibility regulation. Where state and local codes or standards contain more stringent requirements, they must be incorporated. Conversely, adoption of ADA Standards or certification of the equivalency of a state/local code will not relieve covered entities of their responsibilities to meet the accessibility standards of the ADA (or other accessibility requirements), including the requirement to provide reasonable accommodations and modifications.

## **1. Staff Coordination, Training, and Reasonable Accommodations**

Providing an accessible and inviting environment begins with a properly trained and educated staff. Most, if not all, accessibility problems and lawsuits stem from inadequate staff coordination and training. Staff members must be fully informed and properly prepared to provide disability-friendly assistance prior to, during, and after the graduation program. Even if a facility is fully accessible, inadequate staff training may result in an ADA violation due to a staff member’s lack of knowledge about accessible features or how to properly interact with people with disabilities, including using appropriate terminology. On the other hand, ADA staff training and proper planning may help prevent problems where the venue is not fully accessible.

Staff training should include ADA requirements as well as providing information and resources regarding reasonable accommodations. Some reasonable accommodation requests that people with disabilities may make include: accessible parking permits; accessible seating; sighted guides; access for service animals or personal assistants; wheelchair and companion seating (which may involve seating with more than three companions); materials in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or electronically on a CD-ROM; assistive listening systems (ALS); assistive listening devices (ALD); American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters; and CART (Computer Assisted Realtime Translation – open captioning).

Best Practices for Staff Coordination and Training	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you identified one or two staff members to oversee accessibility issues, perhaps led by the ADA / Section 504 Coordinator?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the designated staff members been given the responsibility of implementing policies and procedures to ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, the graduation program?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are staff members prepared for guests with disabilities who did not provide advance notice of their needs?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do staff members know the standards for physical and programmatic access, including requirements for the graduation stage, auditorium seating/assembly areas, and communication accessibility?</li> </ul> <p><b>Note:</b> This information is provided in the following checklists.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are staff members aware of available resources regarding reasonable accommodations?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you plan to do a dry run with persons with disabilities prior to the event to spot any potential barriers or issues that need to be addressed before the event takes place?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Note:**
- Appendix A has a resource list for improving accessibility.
  - Appendix B provides guidance for using disability appropriate language.

## 2. Invitations, Promotional Materials, and Programs

Many people in our community have disabilities impacting their ability to hear, see, and communicate. It is important to create invitations, promotional materials, and programs that are usable by people with disabilities. There are many simple ways to do this.

Text of Invitations, Promotional Materials, and Programs	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you used a plain font (such as Univers, Helvetica, Tahoma or Arial) in your materials?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is all text at least a minimum of 12-point type size for regular print?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the invitations and promotional materials been printed on matte paper and in contrasting color (light on dark or dark on light), without background graphics and/or patterns?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you provide the invitations and promotional materials in alternative formats, such as large print (at least 24-point type size), Braille, and electronically?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Note:** Be sure that the invitations and promotional materials provide all of the necessary information about the graduation, including accessibility information. It is also a good idea to include a request form allowing people with disabilities to request accommodations for the event.

<b>Content of Invitations, Promotional Materials, and Programs</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you included a confidential <u>request form</u> or some indication for participants/attendees to request accommodations?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is this form basic and easy to complete?</li> <li>❖ Is this form available in accessible formats (e.g., electronically on the website or CD-ROM, large print, and Braille)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>   <input type="checkbox"/>  <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the promotional materials include contact information for obtaining accessibility information or utilizing accessible features?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you included information regarding alternative and accessible ways of communicating attendance and accommodation needs? (For example, voice and TTY telephone numbers, Relay services, e-mail, text message, website, regular mail, etc.)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the promotional materials include information about any inaccessible features and how these are being addressed?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the invitation include information about the accessible facilities at the venue, such as the location of parking or the nearest restroom?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the invitation include information about the nearest public transportation, including the closest bus stop and train station?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Accessibility of Promotional Website</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your website compatible with screen-reading software?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do all graphical elements of your website, like images, have alternative textual descriptions so that a screen reader can “read” the image?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all PDF documents contained on the website created so that they are accessible to a screen reader?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your website designed so that it is still usable if the font size becomes larger?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a high color contrast between the website’s background and text?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

• Can you access the entire page without using the mouse? For instance, can you navigate through the links and form using only the tab key?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• If you have videos, are they captioned for people who are deaf or hard of hearing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Do the links on your website have appropriate labels to enable a screen reader to know where that link is taking them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Have you performed a preliminary review of your website to determine its accessibility? Additional information can be found at: <a href="http://www.w3.org/WAI/eval/preliminary.html">www.w3.org/WAI/eval/preliminary.html</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3. Site Selection and Accessibility

Selecting an appropriate site for the graduation is vital for ensuring that a graduation is accessible for all participants and attendees. Staff member(s) should visit the venue considered for the graduation ceremony to assess accessibility and/or needed modifications. This should be done whether the graduation takes place at the school or off-site. Schools can be held liable (along with the lessor) under the ADA even if they rent or lease space for the graduation ceremony.

The following list can help staff survey the potential venue to assess its accessibility and/or identify potential barriers. It is important to think broadly with regard to barrier removal, as there may be more than one solution available. For example, if an exterior door requires an excessive amount of force to open, the school can: (1) adjust the door closers and oil the hinges; (2) install power-assisted or automatic door openers; (3) prop the door open; (4) station two or more people to make sure there is always at least one person there to open the door; or (5) install lighter doors. Because cost is often a factor, the school may need to prioritize items to be addressed. The school may also consider a long-term plan or timetable for bringing the entire facility into compliance.

Generally, older facilities are less likely to be fully accessible than newer facilities. Field houses and similar venues also often have accessibility problems in addition to the uncomfortable seating many such venues contain. It should be noted that public school districts should have a Transition Plan for improving accessibility and an ADA Coordinator. These can be a valuable resource in planning graduation events.

<b>Steps to Ensure Site Accessibility</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
• Did the staff visit the potential venue to assess accessibility and/or needed modifications (even if this is the school)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Did the staff identify all potential barriers and think of ways to remove each barrier (by using this or another checklist)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Has the responsible staff member(s) ensured that the facilities and equipment required to be readily accessible are in operable working condition and usable by persons with disabilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

People with disabilities require a continuous, smooth, accessible path of travel throughout the entire facility, including the parking area and path from parking to the seating area, restrooms, and concessions. An accessible path of travel means there are no obstacles such as revolving doors, curbs, steep ramps, or steps. Ramps or lifts may be necessary for stage access. Use this checklist to ensure accessibility.

<b>Site Accessibility: Parking</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the venue have accessible parking in sufficient numbers for the total number of spaces available? The ADA Standards requirements for the required number of accessible parking spaces are outlined below.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the accessible parking identified by proper signage?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are the accessible parking spaces at least 16 feet wide, including either an 8 foot or 5 foot wide diagonally striped access aisle which can be used to maneuver wheelchairs immediately next to the accessible parking space?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a curb cut close to the accessible parking and accessible entrance so that individuals who use wheelchairs can travel on a safe path off the parking lot and on a level sidewalk?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the absence of sufficient accessible parking, has the school considered accessible parking permits (or valet services) for accessible parking for the event?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a continuous accessible path of travel from the parking to the facility including curb cuts, ramps, and signage?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Table 208.2 Parking Spaces**

<b>Total Number of Parking Spaces Provided in Parking Facility</b>	<b>Minimum Number of Required Accessible Parking Spaces</b>
1 to 25	1
26 to 50	2
51 to 75	3
76 to 100	4
101 to 150	5
151 to 200	6
201 to 300	7
301 to 400	8
401 to 500	9
501 to 1000	2 percent of total
1001 and over	20 plus 1 for each 100, or fraction thereof, over 1000

Site Accessibility: Entrances	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the accessible entrance close to accessible parking and an accessible path of travel?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the main entrance is not accessible, are there ways to make the main entrance accessible for the event (e.g., using a temporary ramp for a small elevation)?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Note that the ADA requires access in “the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the individual.” Separate entrances for people with disabilities are not desirable.</li> <li>❖ If there is a lack of accessibility, has it been communicated to people who provided information indicating that they have a disability?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there must be an alternative accessible entrance:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is there appropriate signage indicating the route/location of the accessible entrance?</li> <li>❖ Is the accessible entrance close to the main entrance?</li> <li>❖ Is the accessible entrance close to the accessible parking?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are ramps:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Is each ramp no steeper than 1:12 (twelve inches of length for every one inch of rise?)</li> <li>❖ Does each ramp have handrails on both sides that are between 34 and 38 inches above the ramp’s surface?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are steps at the front entrance:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Do the steps have handrails?</li> <li>❖ Is there a permanent ramp? (If not, a temporary ramp can be purchased and should be made available.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the threshold of the entrance no greater than ½ inch?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the entrance door easy to open?</li> <li>• Did you check your state and local accessibility codes to see if they have requirements for entrance door weight?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the front entrance doorway at least 32 inches wide with the door open 90 degrees, measured between the face of the door and the opposite stop?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the door hardware require grasping, pinching, or twisting?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ If so, can you eliminate the need to open the door by keeping it open during the graduation?</li> <li>❖ <b>Note:</b> Lever door hardware or push button door openers are recommended.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the main entrance accessible under the standards listed above?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Site Accessibility: The Building</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Accessible Path of Travel:</b> Under the standards listed below, does the venue have an accessible path of travel from the front entrance to all areas guests will use?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the clear door width for all internal door entrances, including restroom entrances and stalls, at least 32 inches wide?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all aisles and pathways from the accessible entrance to all public spaces in the facility at least 36 inches wide?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are internal steps, do all the steps have handrails?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are ramps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Are they no steeper than 1:12?</li> <li>❖ Do they have handrails on both sides that are between 34 inches and 38 inches above the ramp's surface?</li> <li>❖ Do they provide edge protection to prevent someone from slipping off the ramp?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the venue have a stable, non-slip floor surface and/or carpets with a firm low pile of a ½ inch or less along accessible routes and in accessible rooms?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the reception counter low enough for a wheelchair user (between 28 and 34 inches high)?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all obstacles cane-detectable? (Do protruding objects located between 27 inches and 80 inches above the floor, protrude no more than 4 inches into walks, halls, aisles (all circulation paths) etc.?)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Emergency Preparedness:</b> Are there visual and audible alarms built into the facility's alarm system?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you included people with disabilities in emergency plans?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Lighting:</b> Is the venue well lit?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any areas of high reflection or glare that could affect visibility or cause discomfort for individuals with visual impairments?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Restrooms:</b> Does the venue have accessible restrooms for each gender?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the accessible restroom(s) on the same floor as the function? If not, is there directional signage indicating the route and location of the accessible toilet rooms?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

• Does the restroom door have a minimum clear opening of 32 inches with the door open 90 degrees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the force required to open the restroom door 5 pounds or less?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are accessible stalls at least 56 inches x 60 inches (wall mounted toilet) or 59 inches x 60 inches (floor mounted toilet)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the height of the toilet at least 17 inches, measured from the floor to the top of the toilet seat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the grab bar next to the toilet between 33 and 36 inches high and 42 inches in length?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the grab bar behind the toilet between 33 and 36 inches high and 36 inches in length?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are soap, paper towel dispensers, and hand dryers accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is the height to the top of the sink no greater than 34 inches?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are the faucets operable without tight grasping or twisting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Are the pipes under the sink insulated or otherwise configured to protect against contact?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Permanent Signage for Rooms and Spaces:</b> Signs designating Restrooms, Exits and Rooms with Numbers are required to have Braille and raised/tactile characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Are the tactile characters on signs located at least 48 inches from the floor to the baseline of the lowest tactile character and 60 inches maximum above the floor to the baseline of the highest tactile character?</li> <li>❖ Are signs mounted on a wall adjacent to the latch side of the door, or as close to the latch side as possible?</li> <li>❖ Is Braille text of the same signage information present? Is this true even if a picture is used to illustrate information?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Directional and Temporary Signage:</b> Although the requirements for Braille and raised characters do not apply, does the venue have the required directional signage to the following elements? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ To the accessible entrance?</li> <li>❖ To the accessible restroom?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Is there signage leading to the graduation, reception area, coatrooms, restrooms, and other facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#### 4. Auxiliary Aids and Services

Everyone wants to be able to see the stage, hear the speeches, and understand the trainings or messages being delivered. The Title II regulations specifically address the obligation of a school board to remove communication barriers for individuals with disabilities. To fulfil this obligation, schools must provide effective communication for people with disabilities using auxiliary aids and services. Auxiliary aids and services are defined as aids and services that are designed to provide effective communication, *i.e.*, making aurally and visually delivered information available to persons who are deaf or hard of hearing or have speech and/or vision impairments. Schools may pick any effective form of communication but should give primary consideration to an individual's preference.

**In General:** Auxiliary Aids and Services may include the acquisition or modification of equipment or devices and other similar services and actions.

**Examples of Auxiliary Aids and Services:**

**For people who are deaf or hard of hearing:** Qualified interpreters, note takers, transcription services, CART (Computer Assisted Realtime Translation – a form of open captioning), assistive listening devices and systems, open and closed captioning, videotext displays, or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

**For people with vision impairments:** Qualified readers, taped texts, audio recordings, materials are electronic or on CD-ROM, Braille materials, large print materials, or other effective methods of making visually delivered materials available to individuals with visual impairments

The appropriate auxiliary aid depends on the context of the communication and the needs of the individual with disabilities. A school should honor the choice of appropriate auxiliary aid or service of the individual with a disability, unless it can demonstrate that another effective means of communication exists or that use of the means chosen would not be required by law.

**Note:** It is recommended that people be asked to submit reasonable accommodation requests at least two weeks in advance of the event to allow time to obtain accommodations such as an ASL interpreter, CART, or alternative formats.

Communication Access: Auxiliary Aids and Services	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that the school may <u>not</u> assess an additional charge for providing a required auxiliary aid or service under the ADA?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do all promotional materials include information about how to request an auxiliary aid or service and applicable deadlines?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If a sign language interpreter is requested, is there a position where the interpreter can stand so people who are deaf or hard of hearing can see both the person speaking and the interpreter's face and hand movements?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If lighting will be dimmed for any part of the event, can the audio-visual technician position a spotlight for the interpreter that distributes light clearly and evenly to the face and upper body?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If computer-assisted transcript (also called CART) is requested, is there a position where the CART reporters can connect their equipment and project it onto a large screen or television monitor?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you have an assistive listening system (e.g., a loop system or an FM or infrared amplification system) installed? If there is an audio loop, has it been placed towards the front of the room with clear sight lines to the stage and the speaker(s)?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are all videos or film used as part of the event captioned to give access to deaf and hard of hearing viewers?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 5. Service Animals

Under the ADA and Section 504, schools must allow people with disabilities to bring their service animals into all areas where students and guests are allowed access.

Service Animals	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that an exception to a “no pets” policy must be made for service animals?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that staff may only inquire as to whether an animal is a service animal or ask what tasks the animal has been trained to perform?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that staff may not ask about the person's disability?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that staff cannot require certification, ID cards, or insist that service animals wear a special harness or cape?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that separate fees cannot be charged for admitting a service animal?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that the school is not required to provide care or food for a service animal or provide a special location for it to relieve itself?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that allergies and fear of animals are generally not valid reasons for denying access?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did you know that violators of the ADA may be required to pay money damages and penalties?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Note:** You can learn more about service animals through the ADA National Network document at <http://adata.org/service-animals> or the U.S. Department of Justice document at [www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)

## 6. Auditorium/Assembly Areas

There are certain requirements for accessible seating in auditoriums. It is important to try to integrate wheelchair seating throughout the auditorium so that people with

disabilities can participate in the most integrated setting possible. For an event like graduation, it is also critical to ensure that families are able to sit together.

Auditorium/Assembly Areas	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there a plan for the flow of people throughout the event that provides sufficient space for mobility?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have you offered front row seating to accommodate students or guests who are deaf or hard of hearing?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If your graduation ceremony is in an assembly area with fixed seating, do you have the required number of seats for people who use wheelchairs (as described in the following table)?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there designated wheelchair seating? Is it higher than other rows of seats in front of it to provide an unobstructed, comparable line of sight to the program?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the wheelchair seating integrated into the seating arrangement so that people have a range of options for viewing the ceremony?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the surface around the wheelchair seating smooth, even, and on an accessible route of travel?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there sufficient numbers of companion seats provided so that families do not have to be separated? (Many facilities only provide three companion seats. However, it is preferred that families not be separated at graduation ceremonies. Therefore, facilities should provide seating for people who use wheelchairs and their companions to the maximum extent feasible absent undue burden, often defined as "significant difficulty or expense.")</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For events where bleacher seating is used, have accessible seating positions been incorporated to allow for integrated seating and a clear line of sight?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In auditoriums and assembly areas, is at least 5 percent of the total number of aisle seats provided an aisle seat in which a person can easily transfer to or from a wheelchair? Does the aisle seat have no armrests on the aisle side, or removable or folding armrests on the aisle side?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Table 221.2.1.1 Number of Wheelchair Spaces in Assembly Areas

Number of Seats	Minimum Number of Required Wheelchair Spaces
4 to 25	1
26 to 50	2
51 to 150	4
151 to 300	5
301 to 500	6
501 to 5000	6, plus 1 for each 150, or fraction thereof, between 501 through 5000
5001 and over	36, plus 1 for each 200, or fraction thereof, over 5000

## 7. Stage Access

There should be equal stage access for individuals with disabilities who are receiving diplomas or who are on stage for the ceremony. Having students with disabilities receive diplomas in a manner different from their classmates without disabilities is discouraged.

Stage Access	Yes	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the responsible staff member(s) aware that ramps are preferable to lifts when it comes to stage access?                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The amount of time it takes to operate a lift could disrupt a ceremony and unfairly focus the audience's attention on the person with a disability rather than the ceremony.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have ramps been installed for stage access for people with disabilities, including teachers, administrators, graduates, or other invited guests/speakers?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the maximum slope of a ramp 1:12 (one foot long for every one inch of rise)? <i>See Section 405 of the 2010 ADA Standards for more information.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ <b>Note:</b> Ramp ratios of 1:16 or 1:20 provide greater access.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are handrails provided to assist graduates with disabilities or staff members in ascending or descending the stairs to the stage?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the responsible staff member(s) discussed stage access options with the graduate to ascertain his/her preferences?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are the lectern, podium, and microphones accessible?</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Appendix A – Resource List for Improving Accessibility

### Resource List for Improving Accessibility

#### General Resources

- Centers for Independent Living (CILs) – Find the CIL in your area
  - ❖ [www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html](http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html)
- Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Standards
  - ❖ [www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards\\_index.htm](http://www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards_index.htm)
- U.S. Access Board – Technical assistance on accessibility requirements
  - ❖ (800) 872-2253 (voice); (800) 993-2822 (TTY); [ta@access-board.gov](mailto:ta@access-board.gov)
  - ❖ [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov)
- Department of Justice's Guide on Accessible Meetings
  - ❖ [www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm](http://www.ada.gov/business/accessiblemtg.htm)
- New England ADA Center ADA Checklist for Readily Achievable Barrier Removal
  - ❖ [www.adachecklist.org](http://www.adachecklist.org)
- ADA National Network: Accessible Parking
  - ❖ <http://adata.org/parking>
- National Center on Accessibility
  - ❖ [www.ncaonline.org](http://www.ncaonline.org)

#### ADA Technical Assistance and Training

- ADA National Network
  - ❖ (800) 949-4232 (V/TTY); <http://adata.org/>
- U.S. Department of Justice ADA Hotline
  - ❖ 800 - 514 - 0301 (voice); 800 - 514 - 0383 (TTY)
  - ❖ [www.ada.gov/infoline.htm](http://www.ada.gov/infoline.htm)

#### Service Animals

- ADA National Network: Service Animals
  - ❖ <http://adata.org/service-animals>
- Department of Justice: Service Animals
  - ❖ [www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm)

#### American Sign Language Interpreters

- Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf
  - ❖ [www.rid.org/](http://www.rid.org/)
- Contact your State's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Agency

#### ADA Related Equipment

- Job Accommodation Network (provides equipment resources)
  - ❖ (800) 526-7234 (V); (877) 781-9403 (TTY)
  - ❖ <http://askjan.org>

## Appendix B – People First Language

# People First Language

### People First Language

#### Handicaps Only Apply to Golf, Bowling, and Horse Racing

Mainstream disability groups endorse person-centered language, emphasizing the individual over their medical condition. The terminology we use is more important than just being “politically correct.” Using appropriate language demonstrates respect for your guest as a person and shows your understanding of disability-related issues. Examples of acceptable and unacceptable language include:

<u>Current</u>	<u>Outdated</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a disability</li> <li>• Person who is disabled</li> <li>• Person who has _____ (fill in disability)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person suffering from (stricken with) _____</li> <li>• Mentally Retarded</li> <li>• Handicapped, person with special needs, mentally/physically challenged, crippled, lame, gimp, deformed, victim, afflicted, epileptic, diabetic, paraplegic, palsied, differently-abled, handicapable, ...</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person without a disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal / healthy, (temporarily) able-bodied</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair user</li> <li>• Person who uses a wheelchair</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wheelchair-bound</li> <li>• Confined to a wheelchair</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who is blind, has low vision, or is visually impaired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The blind</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who is deaf</li> <li>• Person who is hard-of-hearing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deaf</li> <li>• “Hearing impaired” is disfavored by many.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with an intellectual disability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retarded, mentally defective, moron, ...</li> <li>• Person who functions as a 6 year-old, (this negates the person’s life experiences).</li> <li>• The phrase “person with mental retardation” should be avoided.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person with a psychiatric disability</li> <li>• Person with mental illness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crazy, nuts, psycho</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person (living) with HIV or AIDS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Person who suffers from HIV or AIDS</li> <li>• AIDS victim.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seizure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fit</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to speak</li> <li>• Uses synthetic speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dumb</li> <li>• Mute</li> </ul>

• Person of short stature	• Dwarf or midget
• Person with a learning disability	• The learning disabled, slow
• Person who has Down Syndrome	• Mongoloid
• Congenital disability • A disability existing from birth	• Birth defect
• Says she has a disability	• Admits she has a disability
• Person no longer living in an institution	• The deinstitutionalized
• Successful or productive	• Overcame his/her disability

**Note:** Terminology is continually evolving. While these guidelines are intended for people who are speaking about others with disabilities, a person with a disability may use any term they desire to describe themselves or others with a disability.

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**For questions, please contact the Illinois ADA Project  
or Equip for Equality at:**



Telephone: (877) ADA - 3601 (Voice)

TTY: (800) 610 - 2779

E-Mail: [Contactus@ADA-IL.org](mailto:Contactus@ADA-IL.org)

Website: [www.ADA-IL.org](http://www.ADA-IL.org)

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**Equip for Equality** is the Protection and Advocacy Agency for people with disabilities in Illinois.