

BRSS TACS

Bringing Recovery Supports to Scale

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER STRATEGY

Tips and Suggestions to Increase Accessibility

This table includes a summary of recommendations and best practices from a variety of nationally recognized leaders in the field, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Organizations may use this table to help assess readiness and increase overall accessibility. One change can often impact people with various types of disabilities. Additionally, this content is part of a set of informational sheets about improving access to recovery supports. Related topics include an mobility limitations; disabilities affecting reasoning, memory or learning; deafness or hearing loss; and blindness or vision loss.

Action to Take	Increase access for people with physical disabilities	Increase access for people with disabilities affecting reasoning, memory, or learning	Increase access for people with visual disabilities	Increase access for people who are deaf or have hearing loss
Contact your local Center for Independent Living about available technical assistance	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruit advisory board and board of director members who have disabilities or are knowledgeable about disability accommodations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use person-first language ¹	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ask if an individual has specific needs that require program accommodation or facility adaptation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use “Approach, Ask, Assist” technique ²	✓	✓	✓	✓
Direct conversations and eye contact towards the person with the disability	✓	✓	✓	✓
Facility modifications (specific examples are highlighted on the corresponding tip sheets)	✓	X	X	✓
Modify program times to accommodate accessible, mass transit transportation schedules	✓		✓	

Action to Take	Increase access for people with physical disabilities	Increase access for people with disabilities affecting reasoning, memory, or learning	Increase access for people with visual disabilities	Increase access for people who are deaf or have hearing loss
Update staff training and handbooks with information on how to interact with people with disabilities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simplify language (e.g., shorter words with fewer syllables, remove unnecessary words, write like you speak)				✓
Offer additional explanations and/or review materials ahead of time	X	✓	X	✓
Read written text out loud		✓	✓	
Provide agendas for group meetings ahead of time	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use picture cards to facilitate understanding of abstract concepts		✓		
Limit acronyms, abbreviations, slang, multiple speakers, background noise, and crosstalk	✓	✓	✓	✓
Consider using a talking stick ³		✓		✓
Use descriptive language when guiding someone with a visual impairment	X	X	✓	X
Ask if person requires large print or braille ⁴			✓	
Have everyone state their name before speaking in a group setting	X	X	✓	X
Provide magnification devices or adjust routine computer settings ⁵			✓	
Describe photos or images accompanying materials ⁶	X	X	✓	X
Speak clearly and articulately	✓	✓	✓	✓
Provide telephone handset amplifiers, telephones that are compatible with hearing aids, closed caption decoders, and open and closed captioning devices	X	X	X	✓

Action to Take	Increase access for people with physical disabilities	Increase access for people with disabilities affecting reasoning, memory, or learning	Increase access for people with visual disabilities	Increase access for people who are deaf or have hearing loss
Contact local deaf service agencies to locate interpretation services				
Look at and speak directly to the person who has a disability. If an interpreter is present, face the person, not the interpreter. ⁷	✓	✓	✓	✓
If using written notes, give one copy to person who is deaf and one copy to interpreter ⁸				✓
Give copy of presentation, written materials, acronyms, etc. to interpreter ahead of time ⁹	X	X	X	✓

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Please share your thoughts, feedback, and questions about this publication by emailing BRSSSTACS@c4innovates.com. Your feedback will help SAMHSA develop future products.

Notes

1. "Portrayal of People with Disabilities," Association of University Centers on Disabilities, 2011, <https://www.aucd.org/template/page.cfm?id=605>.
2. "Tips for Assisting People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision," Vision Australia, n.d., <https://www.visionaustralia.org/information/family-friends-carers/tips-assisting>.
3. Lewis Mehl-Madrona, "Introducing Healing Circles and Talking Circles Into Primary Care," *The Permanente Journal* 18, no. 2, (2014): 4-9, <http://dx.doi.org/10.7812/TPP/13-104>.
4. "Types of Accommodations for Employees with Vision Loss," AFB, n.d., <http://www.afb.org/info/for-employers/accommodations-for-workers-with-vision-loss/types-of-accommodations/345>.
5. American Foundation for the Blind, "Types of Accommodations."
6. American Foundation for the Blind, "Types of Accommodations."
7. Kimberly Kirkpatrick, "10 Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter," *Communities* (blog), NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, February 16, 2016, <https://www.edi.nih.gov/blog/communities/10-tips-using-sign-language-interpreter>.
8. Kirkpatrick, "10 Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter."
9. Kirkpatrick, "10 Tips for Using a Sign Language Interpreter."