

Suggestions for Assembly Accessibility Chairs

Thank you for volunteering as an Accessibility Chair for a CNCA Assembly! Your role is crucial in ensuring that all attendees, regardless of their physical abilities or other barriers, have an equitable and positive experience at the Assembly.

Please Note: This document collects the shared experience of past Accessibility Chairs. It is a supplement to, not a replacement of, the CNCA Assembly Guidelines.

Responsibilities of the Accessibility Chair:

- **Accommodation Requests:** Coordinate with the Area Assembly Coordinator on how to fulfill advance seating accommodation requests.
- **On-Site Setup and Signage:** Oversee setup and placement of accessibility signs, including priority seating signs on chairs.
- **Accessible Parking Oversight:** Coordinate with the Assembly Parking Chair to reserve additional parking near entrances for those with limited mobility.
- **Traffic Flow:** Ensure easy and safe movement in the Assembly Hall, keeping an eye out for obstructions that might affect members using mobility devices.
- **Announcements and Support:** Facilitate accessibility-related announcements and provide on-site support.
- **American Sign Language (ASL) Interpretation Support:** Assist Area officials as needed when ASL interpretation is requested and approved by the Area.
- **Advocate for inclusion** in Assembly planning by fostering collaboration and teamwork.

1. ACCOMMODATION REQUESTS

Work with the Area Assembly Coordinator to address seating accommodation requests before the Assembly. Key tasks include:

- Collecting requests from Districts and Committees for members who need special accommodations, such as wheelchair-accessible seating, spots near microphones, or seats closer to speakers for those who are hard of hearing.
- Making sure attendees with specific needs can sit with their districts, so they feel included and not isolated.
- Collaborating with the Assembly Coordinator to adjust the floor plan to meet these requests, while keeping accessible routes to restrooms, coffee stations, and meal areas in mind.
- Confirming these arrangements a week before the Assembly to allow for any last-minute adjustments.

2. SIGNAGE

The pass-it-on supplies will include various signs used for accessibility purposes. Ensure accessibility signs are set up properly and help create a space that's easy to navigate. Responsibilities include:

- Place priority seating signs on aisle seats at each table, especially near wider aisles, to make these seats available for members with mobility issues or other needs. While anyone can use these seats, they should be given up when needed.
- Mark spaces at District tables wheelchairs (and their companion seat) as requested, ensuring they are close to microphones for sharing. Make sure these areas are easy to access.
- Reserve table with District Signs for only those Districts that requested accommodations in advance, either the night before or early in the morning before attendees arrive.

- Bring materials like tape, markers, and blank signs to handle last-minute needs.

3. ACCESSIBLE PARKING

Work with the Parking Chair to make sure parking is accessible for attendees with limited mobility. Tasks include:

- Reserving additional parking spaces close to the venue entrance for members with mobility challenges, in addition to state-designated disability parking spots.
- Placing clear signs to guide attendees to accessible parking and the closest entrances.
- Stationing parking volunteers to assist attendees in finding their way from the lot to the venue safely.
- Using cones, yard signs, or tape to clearly mark reserved parking spaces.

4. CLEAR AND ACCESSIBLE PATHWAYS

Work with the Facilities Chair and Assembly Coordinator to make sure the Assembly Hall is set up so attendees can move around safely and easily, especially those using mobility devices. Assist with key tasks as needed, such as:

- Checking that main aisles are at least six feet wide and secondary aisles between tables are four feet wide to allow safe movement.
- Ensure all routes to microphones, restrooms, coffee stations, and meal areas are free of obstructions, which can include requesting attendees who moved their chairs to not sit so as to block an aisle. Ask the Area Assembly Coordinator if you are unsure whether you can clear an obstruction in an aisle

- Monitor busy areas, like meal or coffee lines, to ensure there's enough space for everyone.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SUPPORT

Provide announcements and on-site assistance to ensure attendees know about available accommodations and feel supported. Key tasks include:

- During meal instructions, inform attendees about accommodations such as front-of-line access for those with mobility challenges and if necessary escort them to the front of a food line.
- Be available during the event to address last-minute needs, such as helping attendees find accessible seating or guiding them to restrooms or parking.
- Work with volunteers to ensure they know how to assist attendees with accessibility needs and stay alert to any issues during the event. (See Appendix)

6. AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE (ASL) INTERPRETATION SUPPORT

ASL interpretation is available upon advance request at the Post-Conference Assembly. As the Accessibility Chair, you are not required to be an expert in ASL interpretation but should be willing to learn the basics of how it works at events. Your role is to provide support to ensure interpreters can perform their duties effectively. Work with the Area Chair, Assembly Coordinator, and the Interpretation & Translation (I&T) and Technology Committees to meet the needs of both the interpreters and the attendees who rely on their services. Possible tasks include:

- Assist with setting up a designated area for ASL interpreters, including a black backdrop and appropriate lighting to ensure visibility for Deaf attendees.
- Prepare a follow-along script or other documents the interpreters may need in advance to perform their duties effectively.

- Work with the Assembly Coordinator to reserve seating accommodations for Districts with Deaf members near the interpreters, ensuring unobstructed views and easy communication.
- Be available during the Assembly to address any last-minute needs for interpreters, such as adjusting their setup or providing additional materials.

7. ABOUT CHILDCARE

CNCA does not currently provide childcare at Area events due to insurance restrictions and liability concerns. Unlike most A.A. groups, CNCA is a legal entity and therefore could be held responsible for any injuries to a child under the care of its volunteers. While some host committees have shared information about local professional babysitters, any care must take place off-site. Decisions about on-site childcare would not only require significant changes to our insurance policy, but they would also set a precedent that should only be made with the informed group conscience of the Area. Parents are encouraged to arrange peer support among themselves, and individual members acting of their own accord can help connect parents or caregivers so long as they do not make recommendations.

8. FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY

As Accessibility Chair, you serve as a vital advocate, ensuring every attendee feels welcome and valued at the Assembly. Your dedication to creating a supportive environment and fostering teamwork within your committee reflects the spirit of love and service that defines our fellowship.

APPENDIX A.

ETIQUETTE FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Blind or Visually-Impaired Attendees

- **Introduce Yourself:** When approaching, state your name and role to help the person identify you. For example, “Hi, I’m [Name], the Accessibility Chair.”
- **Ask Before Assisting:** Always ask, “Would you like any help?” before offering assistance. Don’t assume they need help or act without their consent. If they accept your help, offer your arm (not grabbing theirs) so they can follow your lead. Walk slightly ahead and at a natural pace.
- **Provide Clear Directions:** Use specific and descriptive language when giving directions. For example, say, “The restroom is 10 feet ahead, on your left,” rather than, “It’s over there.”
- **Describe the Environment:** Let them know about obstacles, such as steps, narrow spaces, or changes in floor texture.
- **Avoid Distracting Guide Dogs:** If they have a guide dog, remember it is working. Do not pet, talk to, or distract the dog without permission.
- **Respect Personal Space:** Avoid moving or touching their personal belongings, such as canes or bags, without asking.
- **Identify Yourself When Speaking:** If in a group, state your name before speaking so they know who is addressing them.
- **Alert Them When Leaving:** Let them know when you’re walking away from a conversation to avoid confusion.
- **Use Everyday Language:** Phrases like “See you later” or “Look at this” are perfectly acceptable; there’s no need to avoid them.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Attendees

- **Face them directly** when speaking in a well-lit area.
- **Make eye contact** with the Deaf person when an interpreter is speaking for them, but don't expect that they will be able to make eye contact back to you
- **Direct your questions and comments to the Deaf person** and not the interpreter, even for interpretation related questions.

- **Get their attention** before speaking through a gentle wave or a light tap on the shoulder.
- **Be patient**, especially if they read lips or speak with a speech impediment, and be prepared to repeat or rephrase sentences if misunderstood.
- **Use written notes or text messages** if communication proves difficult. Having notepads available is a good idea if you know a Deaf member who communicates in ASL will be in attendance.

Mobility-Impaired Attendees

- **Ask before assisting**, as they know their abilities and needs best.
- **Ask before touching someone's wheelchair or scooter**, even if they are not in it.
- **Be mindful of the pace** and terrain when accompanying someone.
- **Offer your elbow** instead of pushing a wheelchair, unless requested.