



*Easy Read Edition*

# **Inclusive Meetings: The Autistic Self Advocacy Network's Community Living Summit**

## **Part 1: Introduction**

# 1. Introduction

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## What is this toolkit?



This toolkit can help you make meetings better for autistic people.



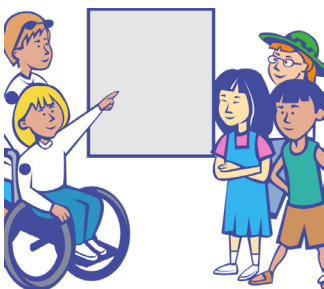
Meetings are a great tool for getting people together.



You can share ideas at meetings.



You can talk about important things.



You can work on a project.



You can make plans for action at meetings.



Sometimes, meetings can be hard for autistic people.



People might run meetings in ways that don't work for us.



We will talk about some problems autistic people have in meetings.



Then, we will talk about how you can solve these problems in your own meetings.

There are 3 parts to this toolkit.



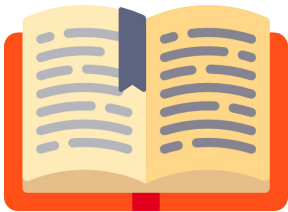
The first part is about what to do before the meeting.



The second part is about what to do during the meeting.



The third part is about what to do after the meeting.



You can start by reading the whole toolkit.



Then, you can look back at each part while you plan your meeting.

*The contents of this report were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90RT5026). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this report do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, or HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.*



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# **Inclusive Meetings:** **The Autistic Self Advocacy** **Network's Community Living** **Summit**

## **Part 2: Before the Meeting**

## 2. Before the meeting

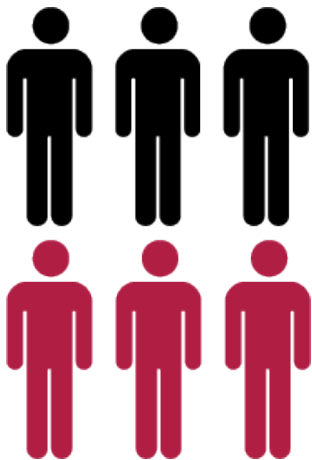
### Invite autistic people



Invite autistic people to your meeting!



You *need* to invite us if your meeting is about autism.



At least half the people at your meeting should be autistic.



Invite all kinds of autistic people.

Invite autistic people with all different:



- races.



- genders.



- amounts of money.





Invite autistic people who need different kinds of help.



This makes sure all kinds of autistic people can share our ideas.

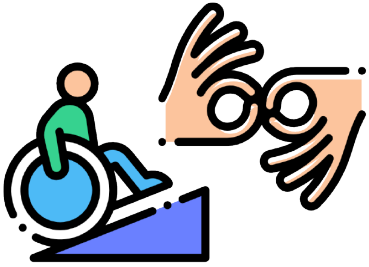


This makes the meeting better.



Nothing about us, without us!

## Set up accommodations



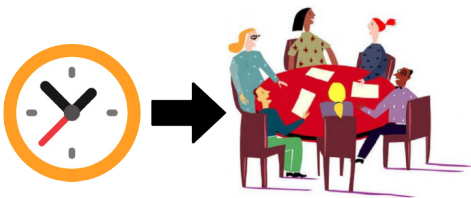
The next step is setting up **accommodations** for people at the meeting.



Accommodations are help people might need for their disability.



Accommodations let everyone take part in ways that work for them.



You set up accommodations before the meeting so people can come.



Autistic people may need many different kinds of accommodations.

Some kinds of accommodations are:



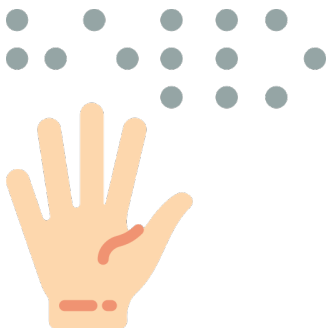
- ASL interpreters (people who talk in American Sign Language)



- CART (speech-to-text while people in the meeting talk)



- Having a note-taker



- Braille or large print for writing

These are just some examples. There are lots of kinds of accommodations!



You need to ask people about their accommodations before the meeting.



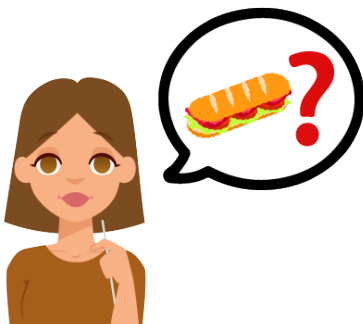
This is because it can take time to set up accommodations.



Asking people a week or two before is a good idea.



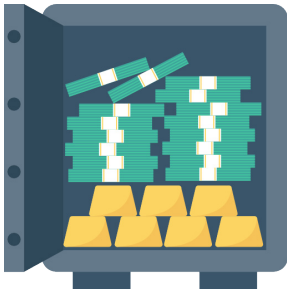
For bigger meetings, asking a month or two before is better.



Ask people about what foods they eat if you will have food at the meeting.



Some accommodations cost money.



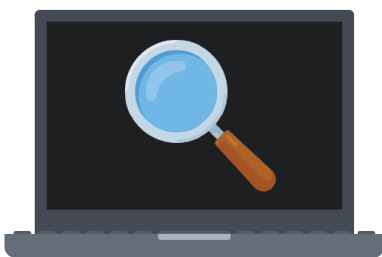
You should set aside money for accommodations when you plan your meeting.



Some disability groups or colleges can help with accommodations.

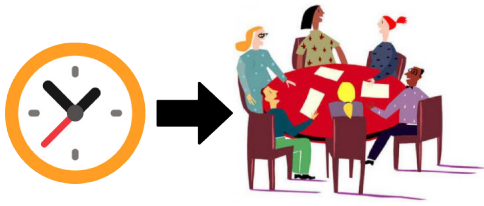


These groups can give you things like CART or ASL for free.



Try looking up groups near you that could help.

## The basics



There are some basic things you should do before your meeting.



Do these things even if no one asks for them.



If you do these things, more people can come to your meeting.



Make sure wheelchair users can get to your meeting.



Check your meeting building and room.



Make sure that anyone using a wheelchair can get in.



Make sure the meeting room is in a quiet place.



Make sure the meeting room lights are not too bright.



This helps autistic people who are hurt by loud noise or bright light.





Do not have flashing lights at your meeting.



Flashing lights can really hurt people who have seizures.



If people might take pictures, tell them not to use flash.



Also tell them to ask before they take pictures of people.



Ask people not to use anything with a strong smell.



Things like cologne or perfume can make a whole room smell.



Autistic people can be hurt by strong smells.



Make a name tag for each person at the meeting.



This helps autistic people who can't remember faces or names.



You can also make [color communication badges](#).



These help people choose how much they want to talk to others.



Send people a schedule.



List what you will talk about at the meeting.



Say how long you plan to talk about each thing.



This lets people plan ahead for the meeting.



A schedule also helps during the meeting.



It helps people know what is going on.



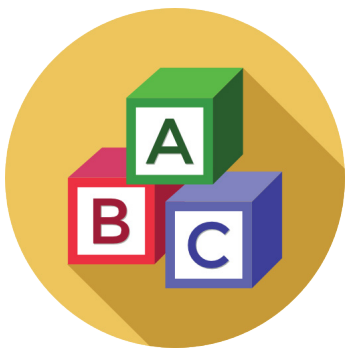
Send a list of questions you might ask in the meeting.



It can be hard for autistic people to answer questions on the spot.



Give us time to think of our answers before the meeting.



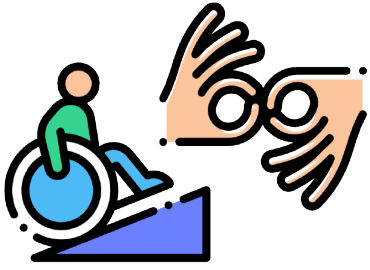
Things you write for your meeting should be in plain language.



This makes sure everyone can understand what is going on.

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# Words to Know



## accommodations

Help people might need for their disability.



## color communication badges

Something people can wear to choose how much they want to talk to others.



## plain language

Writing that is easy for people with disabilities to understand.





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# **Inclusive Meetings:** **The Autistic Self Advocacy** **Network's Community Living** **Summit**

## **Part 3: During the Meeting**

## 3. During the meeting

### Icebreakers



A lot of meetings start with **icebreakers**.



This is so people can get to know each other.



A lot of icebreakers are hard for autistic people to join in.



For example, “tell your life story to the person next to you.”



These icebreakers make people think of what to say on the spot.



Some autistic people can't think of what to say that fast.



There are better ways to do icebreakers.



You can give people a list of questions before the meeting.

These questions can be ones like:



- What is your name?



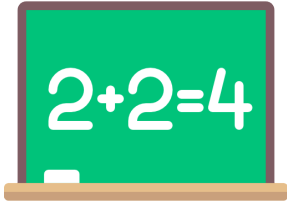
- Where are you from?



- What do you hope to get out of this meeting?



- What is your favorite food?



These questions help people learn about each other.



They make sure that people who need to think about their answer can still join in.

## Relationship-building games



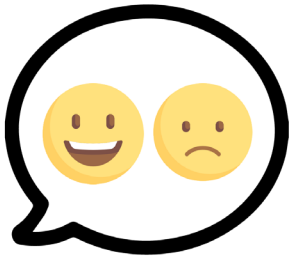
Some meetings have “mindfulness” or “relationship-building” games.



These are games to get people to feel closer to each other.



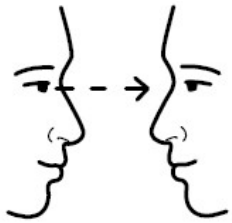
They usually happen at the start or end of a meeting.



Many of these games make people say how they are feeling.



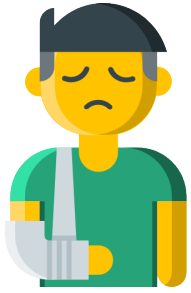
They make people touch each other.



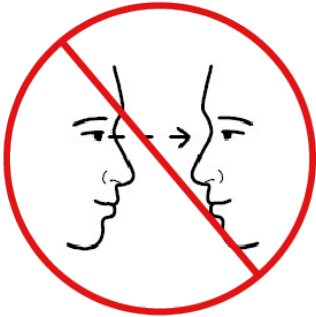
They make people look each other in the eye.



They make people move their bodies around.



These games can hurt autistic people.



It can hurt us to make eye contact or be touched.



We might not have the words to talk about our feelings.



You shouldn't do these games as part of your meeting.



## Sharing ideas



You should share ideas in many ways at your meeting.



Don't just talk out loud about your ideas. Share them in other ways too.

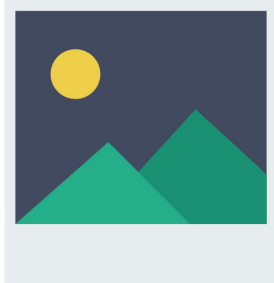
Let's say you want to share an idea. You could use:



- A PowerPoint



- Notes on a whiteboard

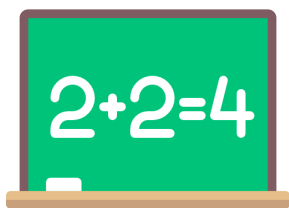


- Pictures (in your Powerpoint or drawn on the whiteboard)



- CART

You can use these things at the same time as you talk about your idea.



This lets every person learn in the way that works for them.



It shows that everyone is welcome at your meeting.



If people feel welcome, they will want to share more.



This makes the meeting better!

# Stimming



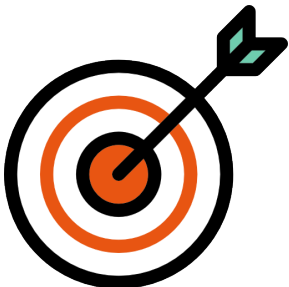
Many autistic people **stim**.



We might rock, flap, or play with a toy.



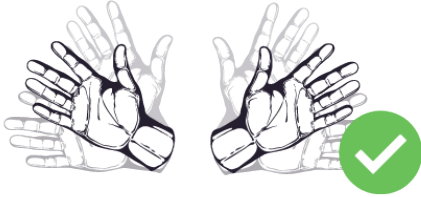
We might move around the room.



This helps us focus.



Don't try to get us to stop stimming.



You should let everyone at the meeting know that stimming is okay.



You should say it is okay to move around.



You can say so at the start of the meeting.



This helps autistic people feel welcome at the meeting.

# Talking during the meeting



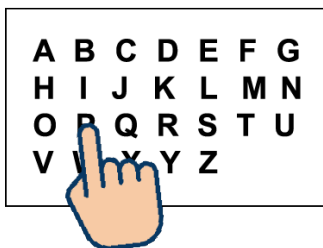
Autistic people may use AAC to talk.



AAC stands for **Augmentative and Alternative Communication**.



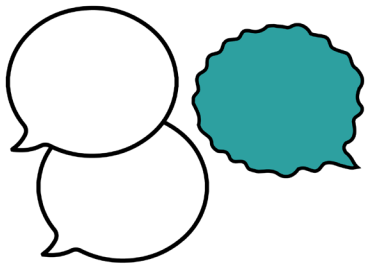
That means using something other than speaking to share ideas.



Some people who use AAC have a letter board.



Others type on a computer or an iPad.



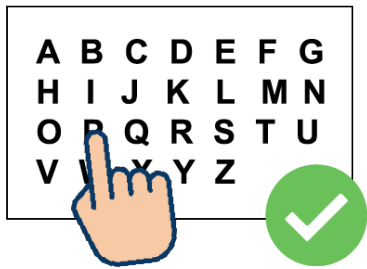
Some autistic people who can speak, speak in a different way.



We may not use complete sentences.



It may take us a long time to finish a thought.



Let people know that how they communicate is okay.



Make sure that people who use AAC get time to talk.



Make sure autistic people have enough time to say what they want.



Don't move on to someone else even if it takes a long time.





Don't call on anyone at the meeting who doesn't want to talk.



Autistic people need time to think about a question before answering.



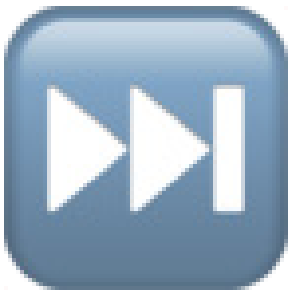
We may not be able to answer if you call on us on the spot.



Instead of calling on people, you could do a “round robin”.



This is when you go around the room and everyone gets a turn to share.



Anyone who doesn't want to share can “pass” their turn.



This can help when talking in a big group.

## Working in groups



Sometimes a big group in a meeting can be too big.



It may help to split up into small groups.



Each group can talk on their own.



Then the groups can come back and share what they talked about.



Autistic people can have a hard time with lots of noise.



When lots of people talk at once, we can't tell what is going on.



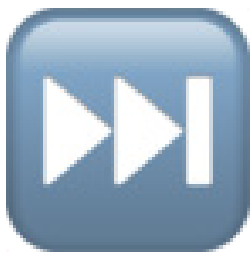
Make sure each small group has their own quiet space.



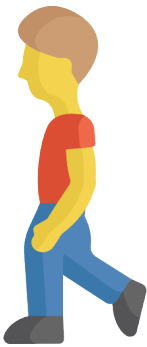
This way, everyone knows what is going on.



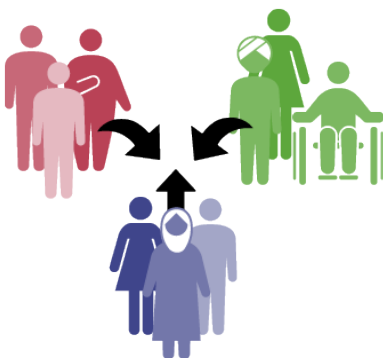
Autistic people need time to work through change.



It can take us more time to move from one thing to the next.



If you split into small groups, leave a few minutes for everyone to move.



Also leave a few minutes for everyone to come back to the large group.

## Plan breaks



Taking breaks is an important part of meetings.



Breaks let people rest and get ready to do more stuff.



Without breaks, we would not get as much done.



Any long meeting should have a break.



You should have a 10-minute break for every hour of a meeting.



Eating lunch while meeting doesn't count as a "break".



Being part of a meeting is work, even if there is food.



Make sure that people have enough breaks.

## Breaks on our own



Sometimes, autistic people get overwhelmed.



We might need to take a break during the meeting.



We might a quiet place to take a break.





You should have a break room set aside for the meeting.



Let people know where the break room is when the meeting starts.



Let people know it is okay to take breaks whenever they need.



Also let people know that the break room is a quiet place.



People shouldn't use the break room to make phone calls or listen to music.

# Talking about hard things



Hard things sometimes come up in meetings.



Many autistic people have gone through bad things in life.



We may be hurt or “**triggered**” when talking about something.



Being triggered makes us remember when something bad happened.



It can make us feel like the bad thing is still going on.



Make sure people have a way to tell you if they get triggered in the meeting.



Don't ignore someone who gets triggered in your meeting.



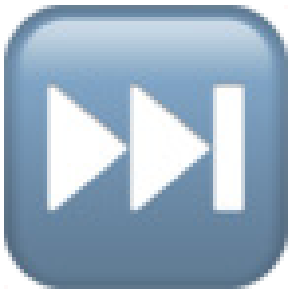
Don't make them feel like their feelings aren't a big deal.



Quietly ask them what they need.



You can give them space to talk it out if they need to.



You can move on to the next meeting topic.



You can let the person know that they can leave the room if they need to.



After, you should check in with the person again.



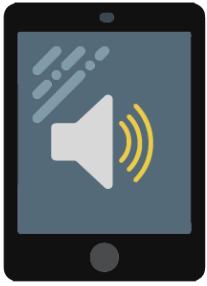
Say you're sorry that they felt hurt in the meeting.



Ask how you can help them feel safe for the next meeting.

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# Words to Know



## Augmentative and Alternative Communication

Using something other than speaking to share ideas. Some kinds of AAC are typing, sign language, or a letter board.



## icebreakers

Games or talks people have to get to know each other at the start of a meeting.



## stimming

When someone moves their body to help them focus. They may rock, flap, or play with a toy.



## trigger

When something makes us remember a bad thing that happened in our life. It can make us feel like the bad thing is still happening.





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# **Inclusive Meetings:** **The Autistic Self Advocacy** **Network's Community Living** **Summit**

## **Part 4: After the Meeting**

## 4. After the meeting

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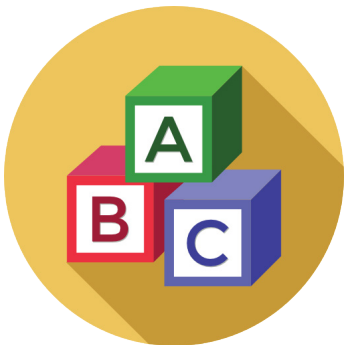
It is good to have someone take notes during the meeting.



Then, email the notes to everyone who came to the meeting.



This helps people remember what happened.



Make sure the notes are in **plain language**.



Ask people how the meeting went.



You can make a list of questions.



You can give it to people before the meeting.



Then, people have time to come up with answers.

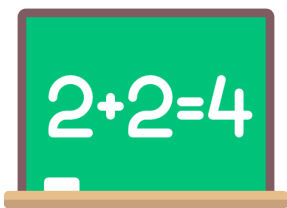
Some good questions may be:



- What was your favorite part of the meeting?



- What could have been better about the meeting?



- What is one thing you learned in this meeting?



- What are you going to do next because of this meeting?



Autistic people may take more time to think about how the meeting went.



It may be easier for us to write about it instead of talk.



Give people your email address. Then they can send their thoughts later.



They can follow up if they have questions or ideas.

## The Big Idea



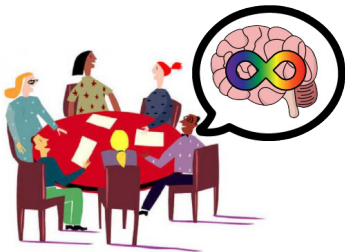
Meetings help us make new ideas.



They let people work together to make changes.



Autistic people need to be part of meetings.



We *really* need to be part of meetings about autism.



Getting to come to the meeting isn't enough.



We need meetings that work for autistic people.



We need meetings that welcome us.



Making meetings better for autistic people takes work.



Every person has different needs.

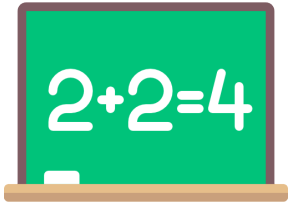


You will run into new problems at every meeting.



That is okay! It means you can help more people be part of your meetings.

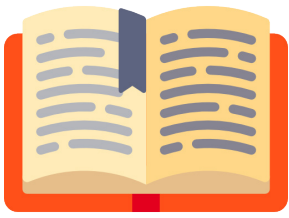




You will learn from each meeting you have.



Then, use what you learned to plan better meetings.



Using this toolkit is a good place to start.



Take what you learned from this toolkit and use it in your meetings.



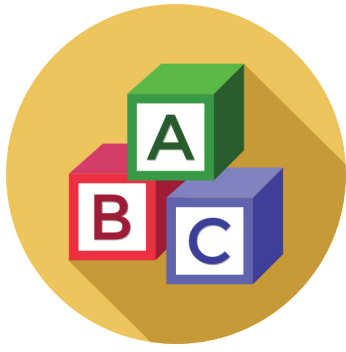
That shows autistic people that you care about our voices.



That is the best way to help us make the changes we want!

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# Words to Know



## plain language

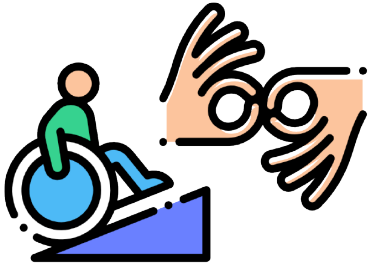
Writing that is easy for people with disabilities to understand.



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# **Inclusive Meetings: The Autistic Self Advocacy Network's Community Living Summit**

**Part 5: Words to Know**



## accommodations

Help people might need for their disability.



## Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)

Using something other than speaking to share ideas. Some kinds of AAC are typing, sign language, or a letter board.



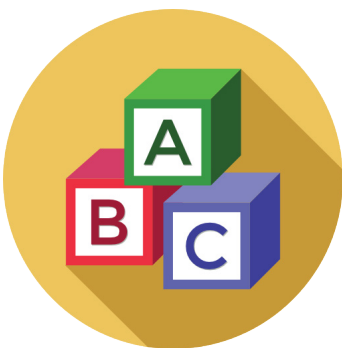
## color communication badges

Something people can wear to choose how much they want to talk to others.



## icebreakers

Games or talks people have to get to know each other at the start of a meeting.



## plain language

Writing that is easy for people with disabilities to understand.





## stimming

When someone moves their body to help them focus. They may rock, flap, or play with a toy.

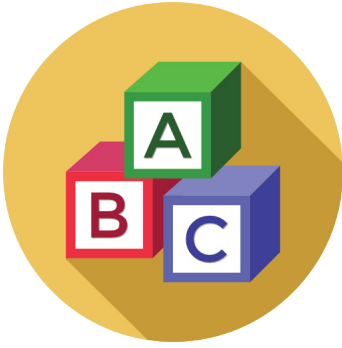


## trigger

When something makes us remember a bad thing that happened in our life. It can make us feel like the bad thing is still happening.

## To Learn More

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For more about writing in plain language, visit <http://www.sabeusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/GuideToCreatingAccessibleLanguage.pdf>



For more about color communication badges, visit <https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ColorCommunicationBadges.pdf>



For more papers about making events better for disabled people, go to <http://pacific-alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Accessible-Event-Planning.pdf> and <https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/White-Paper-Planning-Accessible-and-Inclusive-Organizing-Trainings.pdf>

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