

Conflicting Access Needs



What is an access need?

An access need is something a person needs to communicate, learn, and take part in an activity. Many people have access needs.

Examples of access needs

- Soft or dim lighting. Some people are sensitive to bright lights.
- Bright lighting. Bright lighting helps those with low vision see and read.
- Plain language (writing that is easy to read). Plain language helps people who have a hard time reading.
- Ramps and elevators. People who use wheelchairs or other mobility devices need ramps and elevators.
- A sign language interpreter. Many people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing use interpreters. This helps them communicate with people who do not know sign language.



What does it mean for access needs to conflict?

Sometimes, the access needs of more than one person don't work together. These are **conflicting access needs**.

For example:

- How can a person who needs bright light work with someone who needs dim lighting?
- What if someone needs precise, formal language and other people need plain language?

These access needs conflict with each other.



Addressing conflicting access needs



Scenario one:

There is a group for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Several of the members are autistic.

Some of the autistic members need language that is formal and complicated. This helps them to get the most out of materials and being in the group.

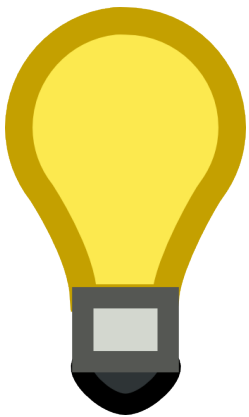
But many of the members need easy-to-read materials.

The group wants to hold a meeting. They want to talk about an important topic in I/DD policy. There will be handouts on the policy issue.

One solution is to have two versions of the handouts:

- one handout for the people who need complicated language, and
- one handout for the people who need easier-to-read handouts.

Scenario two:



Janie and Jackson are at an advocacy meeting. Janie wants the lights bright. Jackson wants the lights dimmed.

Janie has low vision. This makes it hard to read or see when the lighting is dim. Jackson has discomfort at bright lights. But Janie needs the lights to read and see.

One solution would be to compare how big each need is.

If the lights are too low and Janie can't see, she can't read and take part. If the lights are bright, Jackson might not like it, but he could still take part.

The group could reach a compromise. They could decide to use bright lights so that Janie can see and read. But they could also suggest ways to make Jackson more comfortable. For example, maybe Jackson could wear sunglasses.

Scenario three:

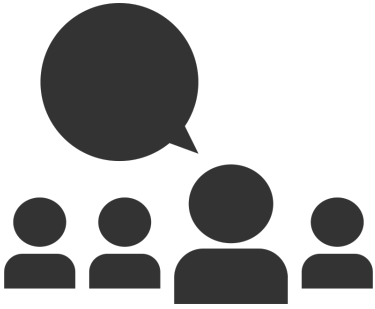
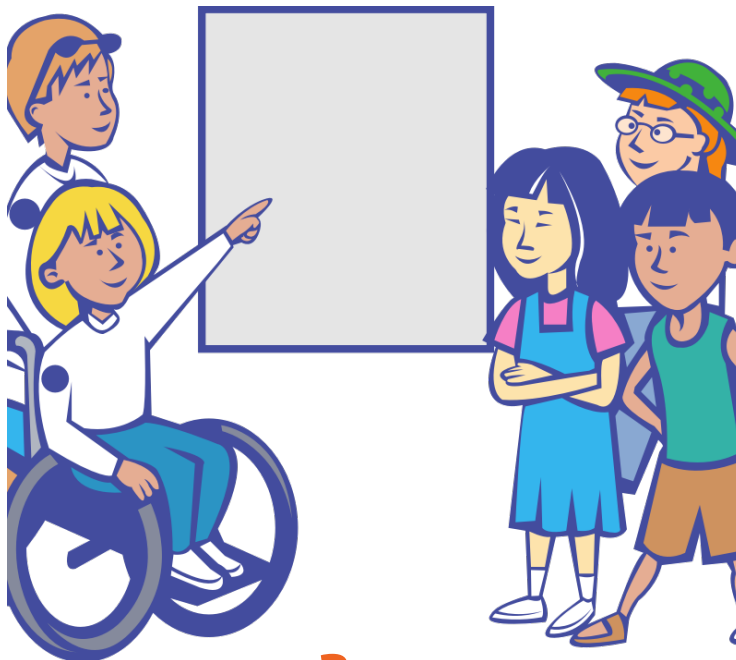
Janine and Natasha are both part of an advocacy group. Janine cannot process speech well. She needs clear, distinct speech. Sometimes, she needs people to repeat themselves.

Natasha has a physical disability that can make it hard to understand her speech.

Janine has a hard time understanding Natasha. But, she doesn't want to be rude by asking Natasha to repeat herself many times. Even if Natasha doesn't mind repeating herself a lot, it would slow down meetings.

Some solutions would be:

- Have someone else repeat what Natasha said to Janine.
- Have Natasha use a device that will put out speech when she types on it.
- If Janine can read, someone can write what Natasha says on a whiteboard or poster paper. Then Janine can read it.



More resources

- **Conflicting Access Needs:**
<http://realsocialskills.org/post/110641669716/conflicting-access-needs>
- **Accessible Event Planning (section on conflicting access needs):**
<https://autisticadvocacy.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Accessible-Event-Planning.pdf>
- **On Creating Accessible and Inclusive Meetings or Events:**
<https://campus-climate.umn.edu/sites/campusclimate.umn.edu/files/accessmtgsfinal.pdfv>