



Accessible Event and Meeting Guidelines

Under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), York Region District School Board (YRDSB or the Board) is required to ensure programs, services and facilities are provided with respect for the dignity and independence of people with disabilities. These requirements are also reflected in the Board's [Accessibility Policy #407](#).

All Board educators and employees who are planning in-person school board events or meetings must ensure the environment is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. School board events and meetings include:

- field trips,
- graduations,
- family-teacher interviews,
- fundraisers,
- information sessions,
- school councils,
- sports/teams/clubs, and
- other events that include YRDSB students and/or staff.

Consider the following guidelines so that people with and without disabilities can access school board events and meetings in a meaningful way:

1. [Proactively seek out accommodation needs](#)
2. [Follow the principles of universal design](#)
3. [Choose an accessible location](#)
4. [Make presentations accessible](#)
5. [Request feedback from participants](#)

A quick reference version of these guidelines are available on page 6 as an [Accessible Event and Meeting Checklist](#).

1. Proactively seek accommodation needs

Seek out accommodation needs without assumptions

Always ask participants to communicate any accommodation needs before the event or meeting. Identifying accommodation needs ahead of time should be a regular practice f

Never assume participants will not have any accommodations needs, even if you believe you know all the participants. Disabilities can be acquired, temporary or situational. It is important to remember that disabilities and the type of accommodations required for equitable participation can change over time.

Include an accommodation statement

Proactively identify accommodation needs by including an accommodation statement in any invitations, registration forms, and/or emails communications leading up to the event or meeting. The following accommodation statement may be used as a template:

“Please inform us if you have any accommodation needs regarding the [event or meeting name]. We are committed to providing appropriate accommodation based on the Human Rights Code and consistent with the principles of dignity, individualization and inclusion.”

Consult directly with the accommodation seeker

If someone makes an accommodation request, consult directly with them. Accommodation should be a collaborative process between the student, parents/guardians, or staff (as the accommodation seeker) and the Board (as the accommodation provider).

Keep in mind that a preferred accommodation may not be the most appropriate accommodation. But every effort should be made to meet accommodation requests in a way that:

- respects a person’s dignity,
- responds to their individualized needs, and
- allows for full participation and inclusion.

Proactively meeting the duty to accommodate can be supported by understanding and applying the [7 principles of universal design](#).

2. Follow the principles of universal design

Universal design means creating an environment that can be accessed, understood and used by everyone, including people with disabilities and/or diverse needs and abilities. There are 7 principles of universal design:

Principle 1: Equitable Use

The design is useful, inclusive and appealing to all users.

Principle 2: Flexibility in Use

The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences, abilities and disabilities.

Principle 3: Simple and Easy Use

Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language or skills.

Principle 4: Perceptible Information

The design communicates essential information in a meaningful way to all users.

Principle 5: Tolerance for Error

The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

Principle 6: Low Physical Effort

The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

Principle 7: Space for Approach and Use

Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach and use, regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Additional guidelines for each principle of universal design can be found on the [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design website](#).

3. Choose an accessible location

Confirm accessible features

The location or venue of the event or meeting must be accessible to people with and without disabilities. Accessibility is a shared responsibility. The location or venue owner is responsible for making their venue accessible. But the event or meeting organizer(s) are also responsible for asking about and checking for different accessible features.

It is recommended to visit the location or venue before booking or confirming it. Ask and confirm if the chosen location or venue has accessible features, such as:

- accessible public washrooms,
- accessible seating in auditoriums,
- automatic doors,
- barrier-free paths of travel into and through buildings,
- ramps, lifts or elevators whenever there are stairs, and
- wide doorways at entrances to buildings and common areas.

Consider accessibility supports

Accessibility supports include real-time captioning services, sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices and/or support persons. It is a best practice to retain professional captioning services as well as sign language interpreters for events and meetings. Also consider training event organizers or volunteers to act as support persons to help any participants navigate the event or meeting spaces, as needed.

Providing accessibility supports at the event or meeting is another way to proactively meet accommodation needs and the duty to accommodate.

4. Make presentations accessible

Consider the accessible slide deck guidelines

Any PowerPoint or Google Slide presentations (called slide decks) in the event or meeting need to be accessible. There are 5 key areas for creating accessible slide deck presentations:

1. Simple slide layouts
2. Large and sans-serif fonts
3. Strong contrast and colour choice
4. Images, tables and charts
5. Audio and video alternative formats

Review the [Accessible Slide Deck Guidelines](#) for more information on how to create accessible slide decks.

Display information purposefully and meaningfully

When presenting visual information, not every participant may be able to view the screen. This can be due to seating distance, poor sight lines or vision loss.

Visual information should have a clear purpose and should be accessible to all participants in a meaningful way. Describe any graphics or visual information as a regular practice.

5. Request feedback from participants

After the event or meeting, provide the opportunity for participants to share feedback. Accessibility is a learning process, and asking for feedback is a way to evaluate how you met accommodation needs and identify ways to improve next time.

Thank you for your commitment to making in-person events and meetings more accessible!

Questions related the Accessible Event and Meeting Guidelines or alternative format requests can be directed to the Board's [Accessibility Officer](#). These guidelines are also available directly as web content on the YRDSB [Accessibility Resource Hub](#).

References

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (2016). [Ontario Regulation 191/11: Integrated Accessibility Standards](#).

K-12 Education Standards Development Committee (2022). Development of proposed Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) education standards - [2022 final recommendations report](#).

National Disability Authority (2020). [Centre for Excellence in Universal Design: What is Universal Design?](#)

Ontario Human Rights Commission (2018). Policy on accessible education for students with disabilities: [Duty to accommodate](#).

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (2013). [Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings](#).

Rick Hansen Foundation (2017). [Universal Design 101](#).

AODA.ca (2019). [Accessible School Field Trips](#).



Accessible Event and Meeting Checklist

1. Proactively seek accommodate needs

- Ask all participants to communicate any accommodation needs ahead of time.
- Include an accommodation statement in any invites, registration forms or emails.
- Consult directly with any participant who makes an accommodation request.
- Provide the most appropriate accommodation with respect for dignity and inclusion.

2. Follow the principles of universal design

- Review, understand and apply the [7 principles of universal design](#) to the event.

3. Choose an accessible location

- Visit the event or meeting location before booking or confirming it.
- Ask about and check for different accessible features at the location or venue, including accessible washrooms, seating and paths of travel.
- Consider how best to provide accessibility supports, such as captioning services, sign language interpreters and support persons.

4. Make presentations accessible

- Review the [Accessible Slide Deck Guidelines](#) for how to make presentations accessible.
- Have a clear purpose for displaying visual information and describe all graphics.

5. Request feedback from participants

- Provide the opportunity for event or meeting participants to share feedback.
- Remember that accessibility is a process and feedback fosters improvement.

Refer to the full Accessible Event and Meeting Guidelines for more information. Questions or alternative format requests can be directed to the Board's [Accessibility Officer](#).