



## **Accessibility Guide for Conference Speakers**

### **Section 1 – Accessible Presentations for the Deaf Community: Presenting a Session with the Help of American Sign Language Interpreters**

First off, let's start with the fact that it's hard only if we make it hard. Just breathe. Be thoughtful and remember we are all humans in this together.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list yet it should provide some foundation for awareness about presenting to the Deaf community.

#### **Presenting a Session When You Have a Deaf Guest in Your Audience**

- There are over 1,000,000 hearing impaired and Deaf individuals in the United States.
- American Sign Language (ASL) is a language! The ASL interpreter is there to help translate your spoken word into a visual language that a Deaf person can use to “listen.”
- The DeafBlind community uses a form of ASL called Tactile ASL and Pro-Tactile. The DeafBlind person will communicate using a tactile form of ASL in the hand or on the shoulder, while Pro-Tactile allows for the communication of emotions, atmosphere and other social exchanges.
- If possible, make your presentation materials available in advance, by taking advantage of the offer to upload your presentation to the conference website ahead of time. Doing so will enable Deaf and DeafBlind attendees and their interpreters to prepare in advance.
- Your Deaf guests will typically sit in the first row for clear sight lines to the interpreter.
  - Some Deaf guests may sit elsewhere to have the interpreter closer or better situated for the room being used.
- Often the interpreter will share the stage with you as the speaker. This is because the Deaf guest would like to periodically get a glimpse of your essence as a speaker. Your body language. Your expression. The use of your hands. This can only be done when the interpreter is in close proximity to you.
  - Many times the interpreter will arrive a little early to introduce themselves and orient themselves to where you are presenting and get a feel for your speaking style.

- Speak at your normal pace. There is no need to look over at the interpreter to see if they are still interpreting. They will do their job of keeping up with you. If the interpreter missed your point or needs clarification on something, they will ask you to clarify.
  - In some cases there may be multiple interpreters, and the interpreter may indicate to you “interpreter change” so you know there will be a very brief pause (a few seconds at most) and a switch of interpreters. This should not interrupt your flow and the interpreters will be sure to prompt you.
- When putting up a PowerPoint slide for viewing, pause for just a moment. This allows for the individual to look at the slide and take the cartoon/graph/information in visually. If you talk while putting up the slide, the Deaf guest's eyes are on the interpreter because you are talking. They can't read your slide and watch the interpreter (listen) at the same time.
- If you have DeafBlind guests in the room while using PowerPoint you can verbally describe what's being projected onto the screen. This information is conveyed to them via their interpreter.
  - For the benefit of DeafBlind attendees, be sure to read Section 2 of this document, “Accessible Presentations for the Blind Community: PowerPoint and Presentation Preparedness.” Follow these techniques, and you will create a heightened exchange of information for the blind and DeafBlind attendee.

### **Some Facts about ASL Interpreters**

- Usually ASL interpreters work as a team of two if the job is over an hour. It also depends on the job. Even if it's an hour it will depend on the complexity of the topic being covered and how many folks might be in one meeting.
- Most interpreters work in 20-minute increments. Don't be startled when they switch (hey... where's that interpreter going?) Most will verbally indicate “interpreter change,” so just keep moving forward with your presentation.
- Most interpreters will arrive a little early to orient themselves to the room, layout, and where the person they are interpreting for will be sitting.
- Don't engage in conversation with the interpreters even when they are off. Yes, they are interesting people but they are there to do a job.

### **Using an Interpreter**

- If you have more than one Deaf or DeafBlind attendee at your session, you may have more than one interpreter present to ensure that communication is clear, fluid, and efficient.
- When using an interpreter, remember YOU AREN'T talking to the interpreter. You are having a conversation with the Deaf individual.

- Avoid statements that begin with “tell him/her”.
- Make eye contact with the Deaf attendee; they are part of your audience, not the interpreter.
- No need to tell the interpreter they are doing an amazing job.
- If you attend a session or workshop presented by a Deaf or DeafBlind speaker/presenter and thought the information was fantastic, don’t tell the interpreter that they were fantastic, tell the Deaf or DeafBlind presenter. Think about it. The interpreter didn’t make the presentation; they were the conduit through which you received the information from the Deaf/DeafBlind workshop/session leader.

### **Other Items to Ponder**

*Braille & Deafness* – Deaf people don’t necessarily read braille. Some might read it because they are blind as well as Deaf. And just because someone is blind, it doesn’t mean they read braille. Lots of folks have enough vision to be able to read large print, or they have equipment that will enlarge regular print or read the document aloud. For more on this, read Section 2 of this document, “Accessible Presentations for the Blind Community: PowerPoint and Presentation Preparedness.”

*The “D” in Deaf* – You may be asking yourself, “Why does he/she capitalize the D in Deaf?” Most Deaf people are part of a vibrant, thriving, yet marginalized community within the hearing dominant culture. People are proud to be Deaf and/or they come from a long line of Deaf families. Therefore, the D is capitalized. It is also referred to as “big D”, Deaf, or culturally Deaf people (those who identify as Deaf.)

Like hearing people, every Deaf person is different. If you don't know, ask. Let's finish as we started, be thoughtful and remember we are all humans in this together.

## **Section 2 – Accessible Presentations for the Blind Community: PowerPoint and Presentation Preparedness**

Today there are over 3.4 million blind Americans and the number is growing every year. With that in mind it is important to remember that blindness is a spectrum. It ranges from those who are legally blind (20/200 corrected or worse) to those that are blind and see no light or figures at all.

The blind community is becoming more and more accepting of referring to all those who fall into this spectrum simply as “blind.” What is important for you to know as a speaker/presenter of any subject matter is that there are likely to be blind members of your audience. These attendees should be given equal access to materials ensuring equal access to knowledge.

It is important to keep in mind there is one key commonality with blind audience members: a vast majority will not be able to see anything at a distance or at all. In most presentation set-ups, even the first row is too far from the speaker or screen for most people who are legally blind.

The following guidelines lean heavily towards the use of PowerPoint presentations, but have application across many teaching techniques and styles.

Presentations today are often PowerPoint-centric, but imagine not being able to see the slides at a presentation! Even more frustrating, imagine slides being shown, but not described or read so you can follow along. Think of the last time you attended a presentation, sat in the back of the room, and with fairly good vision still couldn't see the slides. A little frustrating, wasn't it? But imagine that being your world every day. We can do better!



We ask all our speakers who use PowerPoint to raise their awareness and share what each slide displays. All too often speakers use PowerPoint slides and fail to describe what is being displayed; this disengages audience members who have visual impairments. And of course even those in the back of the room with 20/20 vision can benefit using this technique.

### **We Recommend the Following**

- *Text / Copy* – If your slide contains written words, please take the time to read them and present the points in order. Please try to avoid summarizing what the slide says, read it exactly as it is written.
- *Graphic Images / Charts* – If your slide displays images and graphics that are relevant to the topic, please read them and try to describe them. For example, a pie chart, “The slide shows a pie chart illustrating the percentage of donors for each segment, the largest being the yellow pie slice equaling 25%.”
- *Photographs* – Again, please describe them if they are relevant to the topic. If there only to graphically enhance the slide, you can pass.

- Cartoons and Illustrations – For someone who is visually impaired this is one of the great frustrations because most speakers reference the illustration, but rarely read or describe it. To include your audience, take a brief moment to describe the image and read the caption, so everyone can benefit. Visual imagery is important to everyone, even those who are blind.

### **Advance Planning**

- This may take some practice and advance planning, but it will greatly enhance everyone's experience at our educational programs.
- Keep in mind any additional props or visual aids that you may bring to your presentation. Describing them and / or advising the audience what you are holding will help everyone's engagement.
- When preparing your talking points, or if you write out your full presentation, insert symbols or notations where you need to describe a slide or visual aid. This can help prompt you to describe what is being shown to your audience. Some sample symbols include:   ★

Accessibility for the blind community is a very large conversation, and for starters we wanted to focus on conference presentations. There are many more considerations when it comes to printed materials and collateral, but we will cover those issues later as AFP continues to grow its efforts to create accessible learning opportunities.

We want everyone who attends the AFP International Fundraising Conference to have a rich learning experience, and appreciate your help in providing that experience for all attendees. Following these guidelines benefits not only those who may be blind or Deaf, but also those attendees in the back of the room or with less desirable sight lines. Collectively we can make an effort to be inclusive of everyone within our professional community and create new professional development opportunities for those who are blind or Deaf. Thank you for taking the time to incorporate these considerations into your presentation, and we look forward to your participation at the conference.

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