



PREPARING TO PROVIDE ACCOMMODATIONS: Recommendations for Law Enforcement Agencies

People with disabilities and Deaf people are victims of violent crime at three times the rate of people without disabilities.¹ They also experience some of the greatest barriers to staying safe. Too often, it is difficult for victims with disabilities to report a crime and participate in an investigation. Federal law requires government agencies, including law enforcement, to ensure their responses and services are accessible to victims with disabilities so they can participate in the criminal justice system.² An important way to increase access to safety is by providing victims with accommodations.

What is an accommodation?

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires government agencies to make all services available to people with disabilities. This includes providing and paying for auxiliary aids and services, such as sign language interpreters and Braille materials, to ensure equal access. It also includes making reasonable modifications to policies, procedures, and practices. Together, we refer to these as accommodations.

This document is part of a toolkit that includes a how-to guide for asking about and providing accommodations. Before agency personnel begin implementing those recommendations, it is essential that your agency has the resources and supports in place to help personnel seamlessly provide accommodations. Being unable to meet a victim's accommodation request can create a barrier for them to get the help they need. Additionally, it can damage your agency's relationship with that victim and others in the disability and Deaf communities. This document outlines several actions your agency can take to make sure personnel are prepared to provide accommodations to survivors in a timely manner.



To learn more about providing accommodations, visit reachingvictims.org/resource/just-ask.

How to prepare your agency to provide accommodations



Review and update your agency's accommodations policy

Because it is often not possible to tell if someone has a disability just by looking at them, an effective accommodations policy should direct agency personnel to ask all victims if they need accommodations. Your agency's policy should also describe when and how to ask victims if they need accommodations; outline the steps to take when a request is made, including how to meet requests in a timely manner; and explain how to confirm if the provided accommodations are effective. If your agency has an accommodations policy in place, review and, if necessary, revise it to ensure it meets recommended practices. If your agency does not have an accommodations policy, create one as soon as possible. Disability and Deaf service organizations can support you in creating policies that meet the needs of victims with disabilities and Deaf victims.



FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: If a person who uses a mobility device, such as a motorized wheelchair, needs a courtesy ride, does your policy direct agency personnel how to arrange accessible transportation? Avoid using ambulances if possible.

How to prepare your agency to provide accommodations (continued)



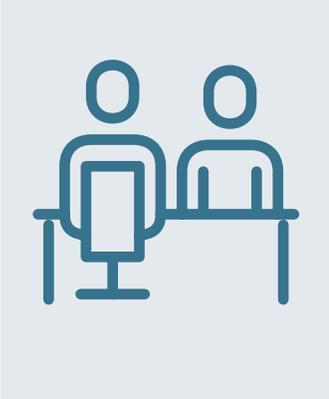
Budget for accommodations

Your agency will likely receive more accommodation requests once agency personnel start asking every victim about the need for accommodations. Some of these requests may not have any costs associated with them, such as talking slower or reading information out loud when working with a victim whose ability to process information is impacted by their disability. However, other accommodation requests will have costs that may not currently be included in your budget. Have a dedicated line item for accommodations in your budget to ensure you have money available to meet the needs of victims with disabilities and Deaf victims. Some law enforcement agencies receive funding to provide accommodations through other agencies within their unit of government. Others apply for funding in partnership with non-governmental organizations.



Develop partnerships

Disability and Deaf service organizations can provide a wealth of information, including how to increase a person's access to safety, and identify community resources from which your agency can rent or buy equipment to support communication or mobility, such as a medical supply company and/or a company that provides accessible transportation. They can also help you review and strengthen your accommodations policy and help your agency build relationships with the disability and Deaf communities. Establishing a connection with sign language interpreting agencies or individual interpreters will help agency personnel more quickly fill interpreter requests.



Train agency personnel

Once you have created or enhanced your policy, train agency personnel on how it has changed, why, and how to implement it. It can also be helpful to include basic information about how to work with victims with disabilities and Deaf people, such as common barriers to safety and justice, types of disabilities, disability terminology, best practices for interviewing crime victims with disabilities, and understanding Deaf culture. Disability or Deaf service organizations may be able to provide this training for your agency or support the development of training for officers and other agency personnel.



Monitor and re-assess

After you have implemented your accommodations policy, create a plan to regularly monitor its effectiveness. Develop a strategy that allows your agency to check in with victims who have received accommodations and personnel who have provided them about what does and does not work. Track how many and what type of accommodation requests your agency receives. This information will help your agency strengthen its policy and protocols and more accurately budget for accommodations in the future.

1 Erika Harrell, Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009–2014 - Statistical Tables (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

2 Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990).

The National
RESOURCE CENTER
for REACHING VICTIMS
Helping those who help others

Vera INSTITUTE
OF JUSTICE

To learn more about providing accommodations,
visit reachingvictims.org/resource/just-ask.

This document was produced by the Vera Institute of Justice Center on Victimization and Safety under Award # 2016-XV-GX-K015, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this document are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

