



# EVERYONE IS INVITED

INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

THE WHYS AND WHEREFORES OF

## MY SECRET TRAINING SYSTEM

### WHY is Access Program Training Important?

It is deeply disheartening when patrons say "I drove around the site for hours searching for the accessible parking area but no one knew where it was," or "I walked all around the venue asking staff where the Access Center was and each person sent me in a different direction." If you want to have a successful Access Program that truly serves your patrons, you must train your staff!

I addressed the top producers of an event that had recently hired me. "When the Department of Justice, the governmental agency that enforces the Americans with Disabilities Act, does an access assessment of an event, one of the things they do is approach random staff members and ask questions about accessibility. They might ask a security guard, 'Are there sign language interpreters at this event?' To the person collecting the trash, 'Where is the reserved viewing for patrons with disabilities?' The person staffing the gate might be asked, 'Where do I check out an assistive listening device?'" If the staff can't answer these and other questions, the DOJ will likely require that training for festival staff be included in any settlement agreement that results from their visit.

Making sure that festival staff are adequately trained turns out to be a tough job. Here are a few reasons why.

1. Since these are temporary events we are working with temporary staff and there may be a lot of turnover with fresh faces every year. This is true for both management and the staff on the ground, the ones who have the most interaction with patrons.
2. Depending on the size of the event there can be hundreds or thousands of people to train in numerous departments, all on different schedules and working with different companies.
3. You will likely be given very little time to do the training and some people are hired at the last minute.
4. Training budgets are tight.

### WHO Do You Train?

In an ideal world, every single staff member, volunteer, contractor, or vendor that interacts with the public would learn at least the basics of the Access Program and those in particular positions would learn more detailed information as needed. Will you be able to reach everyone? Will they all read or listen carefully and then retain the information? Not necessarily. Your realistic goal may be that patrons would not have to ask more than a couple of people to get the answers they need. When patrons get a helpful answer quickly they do not become overly frustrated, their festival experience is better, and this helps to avoid situations that invite litigation.

"I drove around the site for hours searching for the accessible parking area but no one knew where it was."

### HOW Can You Accomplish the Task of Training So Many People?

Here is the system I use.

1. **Producer/Management Training:** Present this training at the annual pre-production meeting for the event. I provide basic information and updates about the program, some access awareness training including messages from patrons with disabilities, and I go into one topic in greater depth. Over the years, the management team develops more understanding, appreciation, and personal investment in the program. Thus, management is more likely to support and follow up on training for their teams.
2. **All Staff Training:** I prepare a one-sheet with the fundamental information about the program that each person needs to know. Using various distribution methods I try to get this one-sheet to every person working the event: in the staff guide, credentials packet, via online training, in an email, laminated and put on the tables in catering, etc. (See side bar for form you can use to create your own All Staff Training document).
3. **Department-Wide Training:** Certain teams need in-depth information that is particular to their team's work. Examples are the Access Team, the Vendors, Security and Parking. There are more teams that need specialized training and producers will need to think about how this applies to their individual festivals. When possible, present the training in person.
4. **Job-Specific Training:** Within a department, certain individuals or small teams will need specialized training. For example, within the Security Team the Gate Staff, Service Animal Screeners and Platform Security will each need different training particular to their post. Again, each festival needs to review their systems and determine who needs this level of individualized training. Prepare a training document and present the training in person.

### WHAT Training Methods Work in the Festival Setting?

In all cases, keep it as brief as possible but still include the essential information. You may have an hour or more

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during an online pre-production presentation or only five minutes with a team that is about to be deployed.

1. Prepare written documentation tailored to each particular team; something they can carry in their pocket for reference.
2. Provide in-person training whenever possible. It leaves a stronger impression.
3. On line training can be offered in advance. Common options include live or recorded video or audio, or an on-line slide presentation.
4. Quizzes, contests, prizes, and more.

#### WHEN Should You Deliver the Training?

You are likely to need to present your training sessions in a variety of ways at various times depending on team availability.

1. In advance when possible.
2. During the few days before the event opens.
3. The morning of the event.
4. During the event as new staff or volunteers arrive for their shift.

Your Access Program training plan may take a few years to grow to its potential. Get started by enlisting the backing of the lead producers. With their support you can develop a successful training program for your festival!

**Laura Grunfeld** writes a regular column helping producers make their events accessible to people with disabilities. Suggest topics to her by writing to [Laura@EveryonesInvited.com](mailto:Laura@EveryonesInvited.com). She has worked many festivals across the nation and readers can learn more about her event accessibility consulting, training, and production company at [www.EveryonesInvited.com](http://www.EveryonesInvited.com), [www.linkedin.com/in/lauragrunfeld](http://www.linkedin.com/in/lauragrunfeld), [www.youtube.com/lauragrunfeld](http://www.youtube.com/lauragrunfeld), [www.facebook.com/everyones.festival](http://www.facebook.com/everyones.festival), [www.instagram.com/everyonesfestival](http://www.instagram.com/everyonesfestival).

## “ALL STAFF” ONE-SHEET

Fill In and Make Your Own:

**Accessible Parking:** Location, policies.

**Access Entrances to Site and Venue:** Locations, policies.

**Access Center:** Location, hours, and services provided.

**Mobility Device Policy:** Which mobility devices are allowed at this event and which are not.

**Entering and Exiting Systems:** Location of accessible entrances and exits, number of companions allowed, what is or is not allowed through these entrances.

**Accessible Viewing Platforms:** Locations and policies. Who is allowed on the viewing platforms, is a particular wristband required, chairs provided, etc.

**Accessible Portable Toilets:** Location, who is allowed, how to get the code if they are locked.

**Service Animals:** Service Animal, Emotional Support Animal, Service Animal In-Training, and Pet policies. What to do if an animal is acting up.

**Medication:** Festival polies and procedures regarding medications.

**Interacting with Persons with Disabilities:** Common considerations.

**Seizures:** What to do if someone has a seizure.

**In Case of Emergency:** Emergency procedures.

**How to Reach the Access Team:** Names, cell numbers, radio channel.

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