

Accessibility Considerations for Gatherings

The upcoming regional conferences and inter-institutional meetings provide opportunities to make a profound statement about the Bahá'í community's eagerness to begin the Nine Year Plan conscious of the need for accessible meetings, facilities, and communities so that everyone—including those who are Deaf, blind, hard of hearing, and mobility challenged—will be welcomed and fully able to participate in the gatherings. Please consider implementing the following suggestions, which could greatly facilitate participation.

- Registration forms that include
 - Requests for accommodations, such as
 - Captions
 - American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters
 - Preferential seating
 - At the front and center for visually and hearing-impaired persons
 - Near the entrance for those with fatigue issues
 - At the aisles and front for those who use a wheelchair
 - Assistance with mobility for navigationally challenged, such as the blind
 - A deadline for the above requests (including wording such as, “While we will attempt to accommodate all accessibility requests, it would be helpful if requests are received by [date]”)
 - Name and contact number of a designated point person who can
 - Triage requests to knowledgeable individuals and agencies who can assist in fulfilling them
 - Be easily identified and located during the event to answer questions, eliminate confusion, and resolve difficulties
 - Give a clear response in advance as to whether or not each person can be accommodated in time for them to make an informed decision about attending

- Venues that
 - Are wheelchair accessible throughout, including in parking, entry, meeting and breakout rooms, restrooms, hallways, doorways, passageways, aisles, and eating and recreation areas
 - Are acoustically adequate for multiple conversations if more than one group is in the same space
 - Have the best technology possible, so that, for example, a sizable monitor(s) can simulcast captioning within the sight lines of all presenters, which will allow the Deaf and hard of hearing to see the presentation and the captions at the same time
 - Include breakout rooms with video monitors where captions are needed

- Have adequate lighting on faces of presenters to assist those lipreading from the monitor as a supplement to the captions or ASL interpreting
- Organizers who
 - Make sure every speaker uses a microphone, whether or not they feel they need it
 - Have a plan for preferential seating (as mentioned above)
 - Make sure captions and printed material are in font sizes large enough for those with vision limitations to read easily
 - Identify in advance and ensure facilities for fast typists and transcriptionists to assist with captioning if that request is made
 - Make sure topics and discussion can be printed on chart paper, a chalkboard, or a whiteboard in breakout rooms if there is no monitor
 - Encourage the friends to lovingly communicate and socialize with those who are differently abled