



**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT
COMMISSION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES
COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING ACCESSIBILITY POLICY
REVISED – SEPTEMBER, 2023**

To Request a Reasonable Accommodation:

The Commission will make all good faith efforts to provide requested reasonable accommodations, aides, services, or barrier removal to enable all members and meeting participants' full inclusion. Accommodations are provided upon request with advance notice. Persons requesting accommodations such as sign language interpreters, Computer Assistive Real Time (CART), accessible format materials (Braille, large print, electronic files, and audio format), or other reasonable accommodations are asked to:

- Provide a detailed description of the accommodation needed and contact information.
- Make the request as early as possible, and request it be preferably five (5) business days in advance of the meeting.
- Last minute requests will be received, and we will take all steps to accommodate, but may be impossible to fulfill. In all situations, a good faith effort (up until the time of the event) will be made to provide requested accommodations,
- Accommodations of persons that conflict with each other such as one person requiring the use of a service animal and another person being allergic to animals will be resolved through negotiation between the affected persons facilitated by staff.

To make requests or for any questions, please contact Betsy Tolbert Luecking, Community Outreach Manager, at 240-777-1256 (Voice) or via MD Relay at 711, or Carly Clem, Program Specialist II, at 240-777-1252 (Voice) or via MD Relay at 711. Or you may send a request by email to Betsy.Luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov or Carly.Clem@montgomerycountymd.gov.

Taking the steps outlined above will provide the Commission staff with adequate time to best meet the needs of the attendees at its public meeting.

Note: At this time, Commission meetings are held virtually via Zoom.

BCCs can choose to meet in person, virtually, or in a hybrid format combining both. Many BCCs are continuing to meet virtually. BCC members are not required to get the COVID vaccine. Face masks are not required. BCC's do not use virtual chat as it makes it the meeting inaccessible for some people.

I. Physical Access for People who use Wheelchairs or other Assistive Mobility Devices

- a. The Commission will conduct meetings in facilities that are accessible to people who use wheelchairs or any other assistive mobility devices. The facility should have an accessible path to the building, parking and access to public areas, including restrooms. If the meeting location is not on the ground floor, a ramp or elevator must be available.
- b. Any "official" off site Commission meetings must also be held in an accessible location and this includes public meetings, parties, and/or meetings in private homes.

II. Communication Access for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- b. Meetings should be conducted in rooms where audio loop systems, FM or portable infrared system or other assistive technology are available whenever possible.
- c. All meeting participants must speak into the microphone so that the assistive listening devices can conduct the sound.
- d. Voting on motions should be done verbally and by a show of hands, so that persons with hearing loss should be able to see how people voted. Also, all comments should be made verbally to enable sign language interpreters to communicate responses.
- e. All videos shown should have visible captioning.

III. Access for Persons who are Blind or who have Low Vision

- a. Meetings may begin with introductions. All members and guests should be introduced or introduce themselves when they speak so that persons who are blind or have low vision will know who is in attendance.
- b. Alternative formats should be provided, upon request, such as large print, Braille, electronic formats, audiocassettes, or computer disk. Documents that were not provided prior to the meeting should be read aloud or summarized for the group.
- c. All participants are asked to identify oneself when sharing in discussions. Also, all comments should be made verbally (avoid nodding and shaking of the head when responding to questions).
- d. The Commission should request meeting presenters to provide documents by the use of email to the Commission staff as soon as possible preferably at least five (5) business days prior to their presentation. Staff should then forward electronic formats to Commissioners for prior review. Other accommodations should be made upon request.
- e. In addition to all videos being shown with visible captioning, staff should also attempt to obtain copies of videos that have audio-description, whenever available. Presenters should read or describe slides.
- f. Members who share photos and/or charts at meetings are asked to describe the material being shared.
- g. Whenever a presenter distributes printed documents at a meeting, without prior electronic transmittal to the Commission staff, a full and complete set of documents should be provided to staff in electronic format or the requested format, if available. All Alternative formats of these and other meeting documents should be made available upon request and provided generally within five (5) working days subsequent to the close of the meeting.

IV. Miscellaneous Meeting Provisions if an Accommodation Is Not Made:

- a. **In advance of the meeting**, there may be certain unforeseen technical and/or scheduling conflicts that may preclude the timely provision of such as, but not limited to, sign language and cued interpreters, audio loops, alternative formats or barrier removal. The Commission staff or Chair should make all good faith efforts to notify participants making requests for an accommodation if it cannot be provided, prior to initiation of the meeting.
- b. At the time of the meeting, the ADA does not mandate that the meeting be terminated if an unexpected event such as failure of the audio loop or failure of an interpreter to show occurs. Reasonable accommodation must be attempted but does not anticipate 100% success on every

occasion. To remediate the occasional failure, staff should work with each member in determining a back-up plan and should provide summaries/minutes or Braille copies of handouts after the fact in the requested format. During a meeting if there are any immediate needs for accommodation, participants should address the issue with the staff.

- c. **The County is committed to full and equal participation**, and when there is a failure to provide an accommodation, the Commission shall make every reasonable effort, as possible, to hold off making motions or voting on issues until all members have equal access to review materials.
- d. In recognition that all attendees and presenters at Commission meetings are present on a voluntary basis at sacrifice of personal time and convenience, and that certain attendees must arrange for third party transportation, such as, but not limited to Metro Access and taxi cabs, and in the interest of the majority of attendees, all meetings should continue through the course of the full agenda, except for weather or safety concerns. Our meetings are subject to the *Open Meetings Act*, and we also have a responsibility to carry out meetings for those that attend from the general public. The public can only speak if recognized by the Chair.
- e. Those persons wishing to leave, because of the absence or failure of a requested accommodation, may do so at any time. In the event this absence of accommodation occurs at a regular monthly Commission meeting, and affects a Commissioner, that person may be excused from the meeting without penalty to attendance, so long as that person has made all good faith efforts to appear prior to the start of the meeting.