



# Providing Services to Applicants with Hearing, Vision, and Mobility Disabilities

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Resources and Tips for Marketing Agents



**Housing Preservation  
& Development**

**Mayor's Office for People  
with Disabilities**

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## Quick Resource Guide

This Guide lists some of the most common accommodation requests that you may get, and provides you with the contact information for the organization(s) that can provide the service for a fee. Fees vary by provider and are usually charged as an hourly rate.

### For American Sign Language (ASL)

- LC Interpreting Services: M-F: 917-210-5804  
[info@lcinterpretingservices.com](mailto:info@lcinterpretingservices.com) After hours: 347-842-0188
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing Interpreting Services Inc.: 212-647-1092  
[info@dhisnyc.com](mailto:info@dhisnyc.com)

### For Video Remote Interpreting

- Purple Communications: 800-618-2418 | [VRI@purple.us](mailto:VRI@purple.us)
- Sorenson VRS: 800-659-4783 | [sorensonvrs.com](http://sorensonvrs.com)
- ZVRS: 888-888-1116 | [zvrs.com](http://zvrs.com)

### For CART

- Center for Hearing and Communication: 917-305-7700
- Total Caption: 201-301-2435

### For Assistive Listening Systems

- Hearing Loss Association: 212-769-4327 | [info@hearinglossnyc.org](mailto:info@hearinglossnyc.org)

### For Braille Documents

- CUNY Baruch College: 646-312-1420 | [judith.gerber@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:judith.gerber@baruch.cuny.edu)
- Van Guard: 212-736-0070 ext. 133

### For Signature Cards/Guides

- Independent Living Aids: 716-332-2970
- Amazon.com

## Reasonable Accommodations

A “reasonable accommodation” is a change, exception, or adjustment to a rule, policy, practice, or service that may be necessary for a person with a disability to have an equal opportunity to use and enjoy a dwelling, including public and common use spaces. If an applicant with a disability requests an accommodation for their eligibility appointment, it is mandatory by law, as well as HPD/HDC’s marketing policies, to provide that accommodation.

A housing provider can deny a request for a reasonable accommodation if the request was not made by or on behalf of a person with a disability or if there is no disability-related need for the accommodation. In addition, a request for a reasonable accommodation may be denied if providing the accommodation would impose an undue financial and administrative burden on the housing provider or it would fundamentally alter the nature of the provider's operations. The determination of undue financial and administrative burden must be made on a case-by-case basis involving various factors, such as the cost of the requested accommodation, the financial resources of the provider, the benefits that the accommodation would provide to the requester, and the availability of alternative accommodations that would effectively meet the requester's disability-related needs.

When a housing provider refuses a requested accommodation because it is not reasonable, the provider needs to discuss with the requester whether there is an alternative accommodation that would effectively address the requester's disability-related needs without a fundamental alteration to the provider's operations and without imposing an undue financial and administrative burden. If an alternative accommodation would effectively meet the requester's disability-related needs and is reasonable, the provider must grant it.

## Using Appropriate Language

People with disabilities are a cross-section of society; like any other group. Their needs and desires are varied and individual. So, the first basic is never make assumptions. The best thing to do is ask the person if they need assistance and how you can help. Also remember, just because you offer assistance, doesn't mean they will accept it. There is no need to be offended if an applicant declines your assistance.

Language is important. The words you use carry weight and power, both positive and negative. The following is a list of words that should not be used—even if the applicant uses them—and their alternatives.

<u>Avoid</u>	<u>Use Instead</u>
Handicapped	Disabled or Accessible (as in accessible bathroom)
Crippled	Disabled or Person with a Mobility Disability
Wheelchair-Bound	Wheelchair User or Person who uses a Wheelchair
Impaired	Person who is Disabled
Visually Impaired	Person who is Blind or Low Vision
Hearing Impaired	Person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Retarded, Slow	Person with an Intellectual or Developmental Disability
Midget	Little Person

It is considered rude to ask applicants questions about their disability, unless it pertains to providing them with accommodations.

## **Accommodations for Applicants Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

Per Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2% of affordable housing units are set aside for people with hearing and vision disabilities.

There are services that provide interpreters for deaf and hard of hearing individuals that can come to the meeting, and there are also video relay services so that an interpreter can join remotely. Below are some options. Applicants who have hearing loss and are not deaf might request an assisted listening device.

### **For Deaf Applicants**

#### **American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreting Services**

A sign language interpreter assists deaf or hard of hearing individuals understand what is being said by converting the spoken word/meaning into sign language. Interpreters generally attend meetings in person.

##### LC Interpreting Services

Phone: 917-210-5804

Web request: [info@lcinterpretingservices.com](mailto:info@lcinterpretingservices.com)

##### Deaf & Hard of Hearing Interpreting Services Inc.

Phone: 212-647-1092

Web request: [info@dhisnyc.com](mailto:info@dhisnyc.com)

##### All Hands in Motion

Phone: 718-997-0472

Web: [www.allhandsinmotion.com](http://www.allhandsinmotion.com)

#### **Video Remote Interpreting**

A video-telecommunication service that uses devices such as web cameras or videophones to provide sign language or spoken language interpreting services.

Purple Communications

Phone: 800-618-2418

Web: [signlanguage.com/vri/](http://signlanguage.com/vri/)

E-mail: VRI@purple.us

## **CART**

For applicants that prefer captions, consider exploring **Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART)** – “an instant translation of the spoken word into English text using a stenotype machine, notebook computer or real-time software” (National Association of the Deaf).

The following New York-based organizations could be helpful when considering abovementioned devices:

Center for Hearing and Communication

Phone: 917-305-7700

Web: [www.allhandsinmotion.com](http://www.allhandsinmotion.com)

Total Caption

Phone: 201-301-2435

Web: [www.totalcaption.com](http://www.totalcaption.com)

## **For Hard of Hearing Applicants**

For applicants who are hard of hearing, you can use the same accommodation service as above (CART, ASL, video remote interpreting). Additionally, people who are not deaf but have hearing loss are able to use assistive listening systems. These systems offer noise reduction and/or sound clarity and amplification. They require installation by a qualified vendor. The most widely used assistive listening system is called Induction Loop System. If you are interested in looping your space, please reach out to the NYC chapter of the Hearing Loss Association for information about vendors: 212-769-4327.

The Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities (MOPD) keeps a current list of these facilities that have an Induction Loop System installed:

[www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/laws\\_locallaw51\\_list.pdf](http://www1.nyc.gov/assets/mopd/downloads/pdf/laws_locallaw51_list.pdf)

## **Accommodations for People with Vision Disabilities**

Per HUD, 2% of the affordable housing units are set aside for people with vision and hearing disabilities. There are varying degrees of vision disabilities which means applicants will have different preferences for accommodations.

Generally, accommodations include providing documents or forms in alternate formats, providing assistance with signing documents, and wayfinding. It is considered best practices to ask the applicant ahead of time what accommodations they need. Please do not make any assumptions.

### **Accessible Documents**

#### **Large Print**

For applicants with low vision, they might request the documents/forms in large print. The standard is as follows:

Font size: 18+; font type: Verdana, Arial, or Helvetica; line spacing: 1.25.

#### **Braille**

Some applicants might request to read the forms in braille. Generally it takes time to create braille documents. A possible solution is to have a few braille copies made ahead of time so that if an applicant requests them, they are available. The applicants would refer to the braille for reference. They would still be signing the print forms.

Braille can take 4 weeks to print and you should request in advance whenever possible. You can request braille through Baruch College at 646-312-1420 or emailing Judy Gerber at [judith.gerber@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:judith.gerber@baruch.cuny.edu). Another resource is Van Guard, and the request can be made to Dave Salomon at 212-736-0070 ext. 133

## **Electronic Formats**

Some applicants prefer to read the documentation on their computers, tablets, or mobile devices. The preferred format is Microsoft Word documents. It can be emailed to the applicant or provided on a USB thumb drive.

## **Signatures**

There are some helpful tips and tools for assisting applicants with vision disabilities sign documents. A practical solution is to place a card or ID underneath the signature line so that the applicant can feel where to sign.

Signature guides: You may consider purchasing a small card specifically designed with a space cut out for a signature. They are relatively inexpensive and very helpful. You can find them on Amazon or below:

Independent Living Aids – Signature Guides

<https://www.independentliving.com/product/Aluminum-Signature-Guide/writing-guides-money-management>

## **Wayfinding**

During eligibility appointments, applicants with vision disabilities might need some assistance finding their way. You should be prepared to do the following tasks (once again, each individual has different preferences. Please do not make any assumptions):

- Meet applicant outside the building.
- Escort them to lobby and other areas such as office or bathroom
  - Some individuals prefer to hold your elbow while others strictly prefer to receive spoken directions such as “left, right, straight, stop, etc. Always give them a choice. Feel free to ask “How may I best assist you?”
  - Etiquette: It is considered rude to ask applicants questions about their disability unless it pertains to filling out forms and providing them with accommodations. Asking personal questions regarding their disability might be tempting but is not appropriate.

## **Considerations for Applicants with Mobility Disabilities**

Per HUD, 5% of affordable housing units are set aside for people with mobility disabilities. People with mobility disabilities (including people who use wheelchairs) have different disabilities and varying levels of ability. The best way to prepare for a meeting with a person with a mobility disability is to ask what, if any, accommodations they will need for the meeting.

### **Meeting Location Accessibility**

All business meetings with applicants who require reasonable accommodation should be held in an accessible location. You may contact HPD for information on how to make your business accessible to people with mobility, or other disabilities. In the event that you are not able to meet the accommodation request, meeting an applicant with a disability at their home is an acceptable alternative. Conducting eligibility appointments and other housing related business in coffee shops, restaurants, or on the street is not acceptable.

### **Some Tips to Keep in Mind**

- Don't push or touch a person's wheelchair before asking for permission and waiting for instructions; it's part of their personal space.
- People who use canes or crutches need their arms to balance themselves, so never grab them. Offer your arm instead, and ask before offering help
- Keep the ramps and wheelchair-accessible doors to your building unblocked and unlocked.
- If your building has different routes through it, post signs directing wheelchair users to the most accessible ways around the facility.
- If the applicant notifies you that they use a wheelchair, pick a room that is wheelchair accessible or provide an alternate location that is on the ground floor, accessed by elevator and has no steps leading to it.
- Find out where your accessible bathroom(s) are so that you can direct applicants if needed.