# Accessibility Audit for Health Care Settings

## PUTTING INCLUSIVE DESIGN INTO PRACTICE

People with disabilities continue to be underserved by the health care system, and barriers to equitable care exist at every step of an appointment, from arrival to aftercare instructions. Even after clinics comply with regulations for mobility-related accessibility, they frequently fall short for patients with cognitive, sensory, and developmental disabilities. **True inclusivity requires expansive, creative, community-informed problem solving and a dedication to making services work for all patients.** This tool provides an initial list of questions to prompt a reevaluation of your clinic's compliance and facilitate an ongoing effort to expand accessibility.

## ACCESSIBILITY WITHIN AND AROUND THE CLINIC

### Inclusive infrastructure

- Has your clinic recently assessed its compliance with ADA accessibility guidelines?

- Does your clinic have adequate van accessible parking and an accessible route into the clinic?

- Does your clinic provide information about the most accessible path from the nearest bus stop?

- Has your clinic reviewed and implemented ADA standards for accessible restrooms? Consider sensory friendly options such as unscented hand soap.

- Does your clinic have a mechanism for patients to report accessibility issues?

### Equitable practices

- Are staff at your clinic offered training in disability health equity? Awareness of existing disparities can prompt clinicians to be more intentional about offering equitable care.

- Are staff at your clinic offered training in disability etiquette? Explicit instruction in respectful interactions can improve patient experiences and build physician confidence.

- Are persons with a spectrum of disabilities represented on decision making boards or advising committees?

### Resources

- National Council on Disabilities Health Equity Framework (https://www.ncd.gov/report/framework-to-end-health-disparities-of-people-with-disabilities/)

- ADA Design Standards (www.ada.gov/law-and-regs/design-standards/2010-stds)

- NWADA Center Accessibility Checklist 2020 (https://nwadacenter.org/sites/adanw/files/files/NWADA%20Center%20Accessibility%20Checklist%202020.pdf)

- U.S. Access Board Restroom Standards (www.access-board.gov/ada/guides/chapter-6-toilet-rooms)

- CDC Disability and Health Inclusion Strategies (www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability-strategies.html#UniversalDesign)

- CDC Health Equity for People with Disabilities (www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/humandevelopment/health-equity.html)

- New York Department of Health Disability Etiquette Primer (https://health.ny.gov/publications/0951.pdf)

# ACCESSIBLE SCHEDULING AND CHECK-IN

## Inclusive infrastructure

- Has your clinic considered improving the sensory accessibility of the waiting room by lowering the volume on any background music or, offering softer lighting, or maintaining a quieter corner of seating?

- Is your clinic prepared to provide ASL interpreting services?

- Does your clinic have a space for patients in wheelchairs to use the front desk with accessible counter height? Is technology such as touch screens or card readers adjustable by height for wheelchair users and people of various heights?

- Does your clinic provide alternative options for those who cannot see a touch screen or have limited dexterity?

- Has your clinic considered providing vibrating pagers or cell phone texts to signal to patients who are deaf or hard of hearing that the physician is ready for them?

- Has your clinic explored online scheduling and telehealth options? Has your clinic assessed the accessibility of existing telehealth services?

## Equitable practices

- Has your clinic considered offering longer appointments to patients who may need more time for information and sensory processing?

- Does your clinic allow flexibility when a person who relies on transportation companies outside their control and arrives late for an appointment?

- Does your clinic ask patients or referring physicians if they will need accommodations? Consider connecting patients with resources or surveys that can improve the specificity and relevance of their accommodations.

- Does your clinic alert physicians and staff of accommodations upon registration so they can prepare to meet a patient's needs in advance?

- Has your clinic considered connecting patients with social stories and detailed information about what to expect and prepare for during a visit?

- Has your clinic considered offering additional appointment reminders for patients who have difficulty with memory or executive function?

## Resources

- National Association of the Deaf Position Statement on Health Care Access (www.nad.org/about-us/position-statements/position-statement-on-health-care-access-for-deaf-patients)

- ADA Effective Communication Requirements (www.ada.gov/resources/effective-communication)

- Barriers to Healthcare When Sensory Sensitivity Is a Problem - Sensory Friendly Solutions (www.sensoryfriendly.net/barriers-to-healthcare-when-sensory-is-a-problem)

- HHS Guidance on Nondiscrimination in Telehealth (www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/disability/guidance-on-nondiscrimination-in-telehealth)

- AUCD Building an Autism Friendly Hospital (www.aucd.org/template/news.cfm?news_id=14472)

- AASPIRE Healthcare Toolkit for Autistic Adults (www.autismandhealth.org/?p=ahat&theme=ltlc&size=small)

# ACCESSIBLE AND RESPECTFUL APPOINTMENTS

## Inclusive infrastructure

- Is your clinic equipped with a wheelchair accessible scale?

- Has your clinic considered the accessibility of other diagnostic equipment?

- Are the doors to exam rooms sufficiently wide and unobstructed?

- Has your clinic considered designating a sensory friendly exam room with dimmable or non-florescent lighting?

- Is your clinic equipped with accessible exam tables — height adjustable with adequate space around table to accommodate equipment and supporting staff?

- Does your clinic have a lift to safely transfer patients to the exam table, and are staff trained in using this equipment safely?

- Has your clinic considered developing a protocol for meeting accommodations needs that were not planned for in advance?

## Equitable practices

- Are staff at your clinic trained to promote patient consent and bodily autonomy when working with patients with disabilities?

- Are staff at your clinic aware that they should address patients with disabilities directly, rather than speaking primarily to the caregiver or interpreter?

- Are staff at your clinic aware that persons with disabilities deserve equitable access to sexual health care?

- Have staff at your clinic considered practices that make procedures more sensory friendly, including giving explicit descriptions of what to anticipate and respecting patient's requests to slow down or pause?

- Have staff at your clinic considered ways to make aftercare instructions more accessible for people with various disabilities, for example using plain language and offering versions in large print or Braille?

## *Resources*

- [Accessible Medical Diagnostic Equipment (adata.org/factsheet/accessible-medical-diagnostic-equipment)](adata.org/factsheet/accessible-medical-diagnostic-equipment)

- [ADA Access to Medical Care for Individuals with Mobility Related Disabilities (www.ada.gov/resources/medical-care-mobility)](www.ada.gov/resources/medical-care-mobility)

- [UNFPA Advocacy Brief on Disability and the Right to Bodily Autonomy (www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/2021_Bodily%20Autonomy%20Advocacy%20Brief-EN.pdf)](www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/2021_Bodily%20Autonomy%20Advocacy%20Brief-EN.pdf)

- [Comprehensive Approach to Medical Care for Adults with Developmental Disabilities (www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2018/0515/p649.html)](www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2018/0515/p649.html)

- [Our Sexuality, Our Health: A Disabled Advocate's Guide to Relationships, Romance, Sexuality and Sexual Health (odpc.ucsf.edu/advocacy/sexuality-sexual-health/our-sexuality-our-health-a-disabled-advocates-guide-to#tips)](odpc.ucsf.edu/advocacy/sexuality-sexual-health/our-sexuality-our-health-a-disabled-advocates-guide-to#tips)

- [Everybody Communicates: Toolkit for Accessing Communication Assessments, Funding, and Accommodations (odpc.ucsf.edu/communications-paper)](odpc.ucsf.edu/communications-paper)

**For more information**
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