Overview:

Beginning in spring 2020, the number of libraries offering live meetings and programs through online virtual platforms has increased tremendously. It is essential to ensure that library events are welcoming and accessible for everyone who is interested in participating or learning with others in their communities. When online programs and classes are planned with accessibility in mind, it is possible for many people who have previously found barriers to enjoy and benefit from the opportunities their libraries provide.

General Tips:

- Announcements and registration for programs must explicitly invite people with disabilities to participate. For example, "The _____________ Library welcomes people of all abilities to programs. If ASL interpreter services, captioning or audio description are needed, contact email -or- phone number to request those services when you register. Please register as soon as you know you will be attending. Requesting accommodations as early as possible is critical. Requests made at least _____ days in advance will help to ensure availability."
- Online registration forms should include a line where people can include their requests for accommodations along with whatever contact information is requested.
- Provide agendas, schedules or program outlines in advance and stick to them.
- Display with the agenda, preferably with pictures or icons, at the beginning of the program.
- Keep trauma informed practices in mind and alert your audience to difficult content.
- Use Universal Design for Learning principles by presenting your material in a variety of ways.
- Consider both chronological and developmental age when creating content.
- If you are using interactive features, let people know before you start, for example "We are going to have a poll later on. We will ask you what your opinion is."
- Make sure participants can see your face and avoid back lighting.
- Use serif free fonts such as Arial, Calibri or Veranda.
- Encourage viewers to use headphone and full screen mode. This helps minimize distractions and allow the audience to focus.
- Feature accessibility options and ways for participants to request support.

Tips for Video Meetings and Presentations:

- Minimize or eliminate background distractions such as noise, music, and visual clutter. Hang a curtain or bedsheet behind you to make a clean background.
- Avoid busy virtual backgrounds.
- Use non-florescent lighting.
- Avoid overhead lights.
- Keep your face clearly visible as you speak.
• If you are using interactive features, let people know before you start, for example "We are going to have a poll later on. We will ask you what your opinion is."
• Use captions for videos and voiceovers and edit automatically generated ones. This makes them more accessible to people who are deaf, people with auditory processing issue, and English Language Learners.
• Sync the captions and the voice.
• Try to keep only one thing going on at a time in the frame. Too many bells and whistles can be distracting.
• Make it active! Plan for a variety of activities and include movement, music, and crafts where relevant.
• Make it interactive!
  o When live, give your audience the option of responses such as comments, pictures, thumbs up etc...
  o Include some back and forth with the audience like Elmo and Mr. Rogers do. Ask them to respond to a prompt by reflecting or making a face or movement etc...
• Allow for some pauses, both for the presenter and the audience to re-center.
• If you have an on-line book club, make sure the book is available in a variety of formats such as braille, large-print and audio.
• Give information in more than one way. Include picture, movement, demonstration and written information.

**Tips for Webinars:**

• Use clean backgrounds that do not become a distraction.
• Avoid all caps.
• Use a 24-point font or greater.
• Make sure there is high contrast between print and the background.
• Keep animations simple and describe them.
• Describe any pictures, charts or graphics before you read the slide.
• Use the alt tags to describe the pictures. This makes them accessible to people who use screen readers and supports people who struggle with social cues or have visual processing issues.
• Use only videos that are captioned.
• Make sure you voice all of the information on the slide, do not rely on people being able to see, read, or process the print information.
• Include a variety of communication styles in your presentation such as visual supports, ASL and captioning.
• Leave the bottom 1/3 of the slide blank to allow for captions.

**Tips for Group Discussions:**

• Always identify yourself before you speak and ask others in the discussion to do the same.
• Edit your display name to make sure it is correct.
• Ask people who are not speaking to mute themselves or use the host functions and mute them.
• Monitor chat and integrate those comments into the discussion.
• Arrange for captioning.
• Post transcripts, which can be developed from the captioning, afterwards.
• Allow for privacy, offer to block names and phone numbers.
Tips for Accessible Documents:

- Write in plain English to make it easier for people with reading disabilities, new adult readers and English language learners to understand. Try aiming for fifth grade level.
- Use a 14 pt font or larger.
- Keep underlining and italics to a minimum as they sometimes confuse screen readers.
- Make sure there is high contrast between print and the background.
- Use plain backgrounds.
- Use alt tags to describe the pictures.
- Paste urls separately, rather than imbedding them so people using screen readers can follow.

Resources:

- New York City’s Mayor’s Office for People with Disabilities Digital Accessibility Resources: [https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mopd/resources/digital-accessibility-guides.page](https://www1.nyc.gov/site/mopd/resources/digital-accessibility-guides.page)
- Project ENABLE, out of Syracuse University: [https://projectenable.syr.edu/](https://projectenable.syr.edu/)
- Here are some tips on accessible digital produces of a variety of types: [https://www.section508.gov/create](https://www.section508.gov/create)
- Readability Formulas, a free resource for checking reading levels: [https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php](https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php)

YouTube automatically generates captions for uploaded videos that you can edit for accuracy. Captioning is not universally available for live video but can be added once stored. Click [here](https://readabilityformulas.com/free-readability-formula-tests.php) for more information.

Facebook will also generate captions for uploaded videos and you will also need to edit them. [This video](https://www.section508.gov/create) has easy to follow instructions, even though it is geared to the real estate industry!

The [National Deaf Center](https://www.section508.gov/create) has a great resource for live-captioning.

New toolkit updated by the ASGCLA Accessibility Assembly, June 2020