



## GUIDE TO PROVIDING ACCOMMODATIONS:

# Law Enforcement Agency Staff

People with disabilities and Deaf people are victims of violent crime at three times the rate of people without disabilities.<sup>1</sup> They also experience some of the greatest barriers to staying safe. Too often, it is difficult for victims with disabilities to report a crime and participate in an investigation. Federal law requires government agencies, including law enforcement, to ensure their responses and services are accessible to victims with disabilities so they can participate in the criminal justice system.<sup>2</sup> An important way to increase access to safety is by providing victims with accommodations.

## Ask Everyone and Ask Often

### Why ask everyone?

One in 4 Americans has a disability. For many, their disability may not be visible. For this reason, it may not be possible to tell if someone needs accommodations just by looking at them. Best practice is to ask every victim you work with if they need any accommodations.

### When?

Ask during your first interaction with a victim and ask at every new step in the process or new activity.

### Why ask often?

A victim may have a better sense of what they need as they learn more about the investigative process. They may also feel more comfortable talking about their needs as they build trust with agency personnel. Additionally, their needs may change over time.



To learn more about providing accommodations, visit [reachingvictims.org/resource/just-ask](https://reachingvictims.org/resource/just-ask).



## Set the stage.

### Explain why you are asking about accommodations.

For example: “We want to make sure every victim gets the help they need and feels safe, including people with disabilities and Deaf people. We know some disabilities may not be visible and some people may not feel comfortable asking for accommodations on their own, so we ask everyone if they need any accommodations.”

### Describe the process.

Provide a brief overview of what the victim will need to do, whether they are making a report or participating in an investigation. This will help them determine if they need any accommodations.

## What is an accommodation?

**Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** requires government agencies to make all services available to people with disabilities. This includes providing and paying for auxiliary aids and services, such as sign language interpreters or Braille materials, to ensure equal access. It also includes making reasonable modifications to policies, procedures, and practices. Together, we refer to these as accommodations.

When explaining what an accommodation is to a victim, use plain language. For example:

“Some victims with disabilities and Deaf people need law enforcement to make changes to the way we do our work so that the person with a disability can report a crime and participate in an investigation. These changes can include providing the person with equipment, such as a portable ramp; getting a sign language interpreter; or doing something to support the person, like reading forms out loud. We call these changes accommodations.”



# Ask and listen.

## Ask.

- 1. Start by asking if the person needs any accommodations. Here are some examples of how to ask:**
  - Is there anything I can do to make it easier for you to make this report or talk to me about what happened?
  - Is there anything I can do to make it easier for you to meet with me and talk about what happened to you?
  - Do you need any accommodations to make this report or be interviewed?
- 2. If the person needs more context to understand what you are asking, ask more specific questions, such as:**
  - Do you need help communicating?
  - Can we contact a support person for you?

## 3. Give examples: Here are some things you can say to help victims identify accommodations they may need:

- I can write down what we talked about if you're having trouble remembering or focusing on what I'm saying.
- We can meet in a quiet space to reduce distractions if it's hard to concentrate.
- I can read written information out loud.
- I can get a sign language interpreter to help us communicate.
- We can take breaks during the interview if you start to feel overwhelmed or tired.

## Listen.

People with disabilities and Deaf people know best what they need and how to meet those needs. People with the same disability may have different needs, so do not make assumptions about what will work for a person.

## Did you know?

Many of these accommodations are free and easy to provide and can make a significant impact on a victim's ability to participate in the legal system. For more examples of accommodations, refer to our **Accommodations Tip Sheet**.

## STEP 3



# Provide accommodations.

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Provide the requested accommodations as soon as possible, keeping in mind that some survivors may not be able to get the help they need without them. Cover any costs associated with providing accommodations.

If a victim needs an accommodation, indicate that in your report so the next officer or investigator will know to provide accommodations as needed.

## STEP 4

# Check in and make changes.

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Finding the right accommodation can take time. After providing an accommodation, check with the victim to see how it is going. Are they fully able to file a police report and/or participate in the investigation? If not, what would work better?

1 Erika Harrell, Crime Against Persons with Disabilities, 2009–2014 - Statistical Tables (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2016).

2 Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990).

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