

Draft Guidance for Committee Chairs
How to Host an Accessible Remote Meeting
For Legislators

This document is created to support Washington State Legislators who are Committee Chairs in conducting accessible hearings, work sessions, and remote testimony. This guidance was drafted by Disability Rights Washington and based on a Rooted in Rights Blog post called "[How to Make Your Virtual Meetings and Events Accessible to the Disability Community](#)" by Alaina Leary. For more resources and tips watch "[Make Your Video Calls Accessible](#)" by Rooted in Rights or contact [Darya Farivar](#) at Disability Rights Washington.

During Remote Meetings and Hearings

- **Allow time for technical difficulties-** We are all navigating this new technology together and know that things will not be perfect. Some people have more barriers than others and may need additional time to take themselves on or off mute or camera.
- **Mute participants when they are not speaking-** Reducing background noise helps those with sensory disabilities and varying hearing stay focused on the meeting. Additionally, this can be helpful for individuals who experience PTSD or an anxiety disorder in the case of an accidental loud noise.
- **Announce the speaker-** It can be difficult to track the progress of a remote meeting regardless of your access needs. A simple solution that helps people track who is speaking is to say your name before speaking or say the name of the legislator wishing to provide the comment or question. In many committees, this is already done.
- **Use headphones that have a mic-** Headphones are another great way to reduce background noise and the microphone can enhance the quality of your audio for other participants.
- **Use plain language-** Be mindful of jargon, slang, acronyms, and assumed knowledge to be inclusive of all attendees. The more [plain language](#) you use the more accessible your questions and comments are.
- **Speak at a reasonable pace-** By not speaking quickly we make it easier for accurate captioning, sign or spoken language interpreters, and folks with processing difficulties to participate.
- **Describe images, screen share, and use alternative text -** When using images, graphs, or charts are shown the presenter should describe them to the audience. This is helpful for individuals with varying vision, learning disabilities, and who use an interpreter. When sharing documents use simple uncluttered formats, when sharing images use [alternative text](#) for those using screen readers. If you're sharing a pre-recorded video, be sure to describe what's happening in the video and [add captions](#).
- **Allow additional time for interpretation-** Whether an individual is using simultaneous or consecutive interpretation it's important to speak slowly and give adequate time for interpretation to be done. Consider that those who use interpreters to provide testimony will need double the time to say the same amount. If you are planning to use interpretation services, book them at least a week in advance and send presentation information to the providers in advance as well.
- **Prioritize people with direct lived experience-** For every issue people with direct lived experience must have the opportunity to share their thoughts. In the disability community, the phrase "nothing about us without us" is frequently used to describe this. Arranging for accommodations and interpretation takes time, energy, and resources. Because of this, it can be disappointing when all of that work is done and the individual is not called upon to provide testimony.