



## State of Wisconsin

Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities

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### Issue: Public Health Orders and Information in Accessible Formats

During this pandemic, individuals with disabilities have been subject to misinformation about preventative measures to take, the spread of the disease, and public health orders as this information has not been in accessible formats. This has been especially true for Deaf individuals who use American Sign Language (ASL). Many of the verbs and nouns used in English don't translate to ASL. In addition, public health information that has been shared via social media or on state websites has not been fully accessible for people who are blind or visually impaired who use screen readers or other assistive technology to navigate websites or read documents.

Furthermore, much of the public health information that has been disseminated has included high-level medical terminology which is not understandable for individuals for which English is a second language, people who have cognitive disabilities, or who have little or no health literacy.

Some general recommendations to ensure public health information is accessible include:

- Captioning and sign language for all live and recorded events and communications including state addresses, press briefings, and live social media.
- Converting materials into "Easy Read" or plain language formats so that they are accessible for people with intellectual disability or cognitive impairment.
- Developing accessible written information products by using appropriate document formats, (such as "Word"), with structured headings, large print, braille versions, and formats for people who are deafblind.
- Working with disability organizations, including advocacy bodies and disability service providers to disseminate public health information.

There are some great resources on making public health information accessible including:

- World Health Organization, "[Disability Considerations during the COVID-19 Outbreak](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/disability/eng-covid-19-disability-briefing-who.pdf?sfvrsn=963e22fe_1)." Available at: [https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/disability/eng-covid-19-disability-briefing-who.pdf?sfvrsn=963e22fe\\_1](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/disability/eng-covid-19-disability-briefing-who.pdf?sfvrsn=963e22fe_1).
- FEMA, "[COVID-19 Best Practice Information: Considerations for People with Disabilities](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_covid_bp_disability_considerations.pdf)." Available at: [https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema\\_covid\\_bp\\_disability\\_considerations.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_covid_bp_disability_considerations.pdf).
- ITU, "[Guidelines On how to ensure that digital information, services and products are accessible by all people, including Persons with Disabilities during COVID-19](https://www.itu.int/en/SiteAssets/COVID-19/ITU-Guidelines-on-digital-accessibility.pdf)." Available at: <https://www.itu.int/en/SiteAssets/COVID-19/ITU-Guidelines-on-digital-accessibility.pdf>.



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### Issue: Public Health Orders and Information in Accessible Formats (continued)

- AT3, "[Information and Communication Technology Accessibility Resources for Documents, Social Media, Computer, and Mobile Device Access](https://www.at3center.net/repository/ICTCoPResources)." Available at: <https://www.at3center.net/repository/ICTCoPResources>.

#### Recommendations:

- GCPD recommends that the DHS adopt "plain language" protocol for all public health information and the Governor's office adopt this protocol for all public health related executive orders.
- In addition, GCPD recommends all documents be made accessible for deafblind, blind, and visually impaired individuals.
- State agency websites where information is posted should be fully accessible to people with disabilities who utilize assistive technology and screen readers to navigate websites. There should also be a way for people with disabilities to request documents in an accessible format, if the materials on the website are not accessible.
- Public health information and executive orders should be readily available in Spanish and other languages so people can understand the preventive measures they should be taking to protecting themselves and reduce the spread of COVID-19.