

# PREA and Access Considerations for People who are Blind or Low Vision

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*IMPACT/JUSTICE*

NATIONAL  
**PREA**  
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CENTER



# Lisa Capers

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# Mission

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The mission of the PRC is to assist adult prisons and jails, juvenile facilities, lockups, community confinement, and tribal facilities in their efforts to eliminate sexual abuse by increasing their capacity for prevention, detection, monitoring, responses to incidents, and services to victims and their families.

The PRC is funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

# Logistics

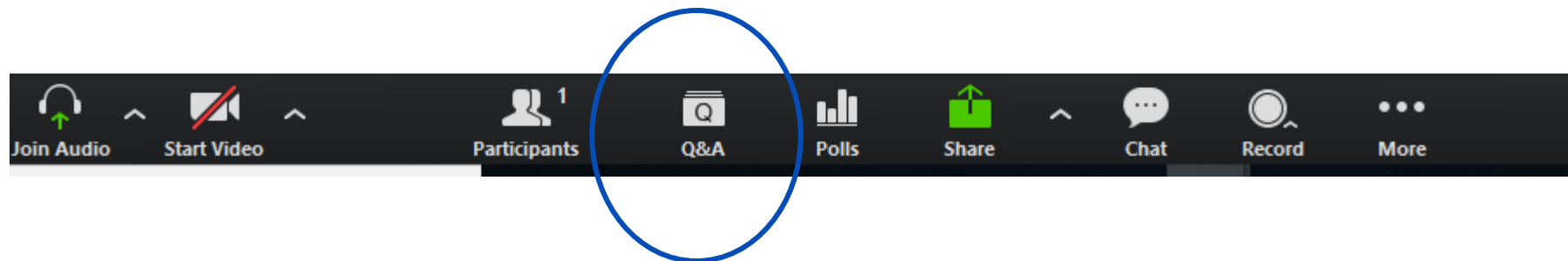
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# Logistics

## Submitting Questions

- To submit a question during the webinar, use the **Q&A feature** on your webinar toolbar, as seen below.
- Presenters will address the questions at the end of the presentation.





**Allison Hastings**

Project Director

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# Agenda

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- **Overview of Disability, Incarceration, and PREA.**
- **Understanding Blindness and Low Vision.**
- **Risks and Barriers that People Who Are Blind or Low Vision Face.**
- **Achieving Equal Access to PREA Educational Information.**
- **Achieving Equal Access to Reporting and Victim Services.**
- **Resources.**
- **Q&A.**

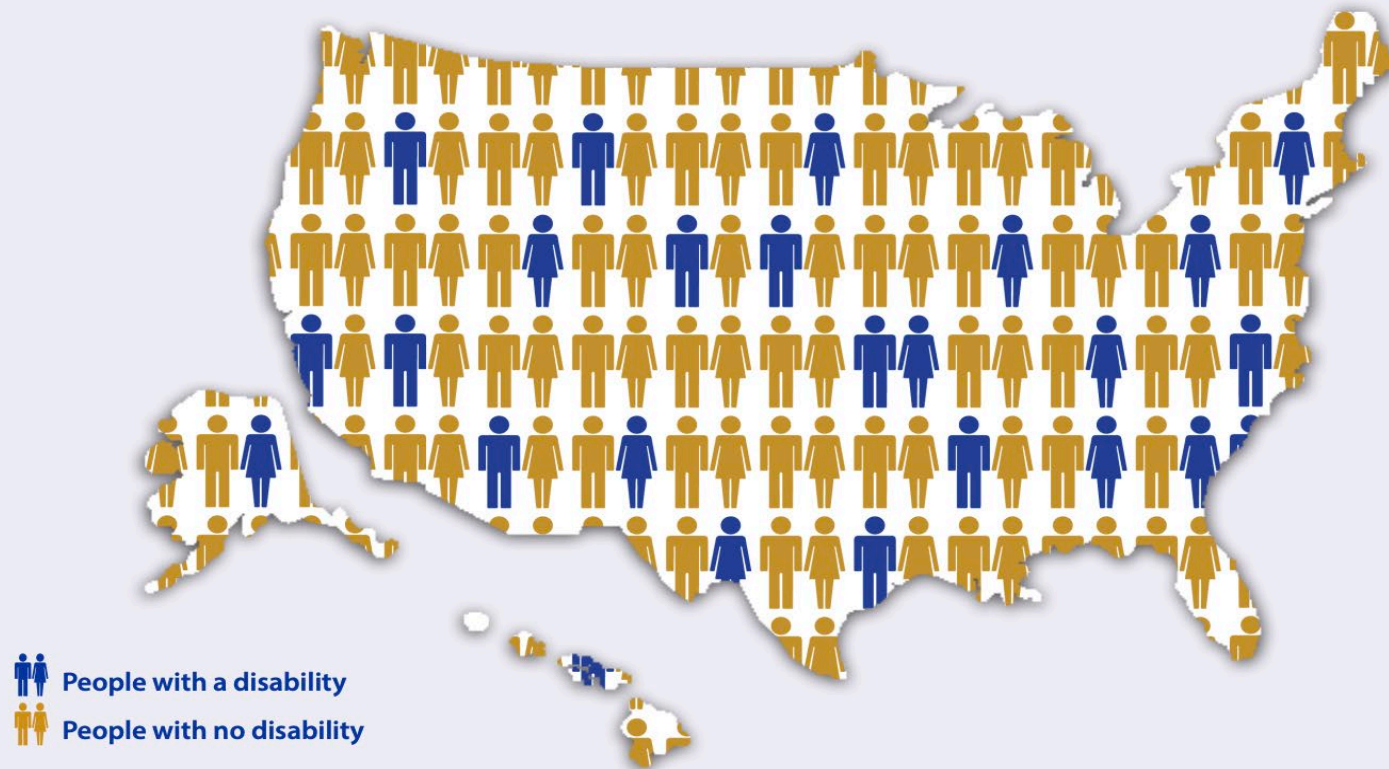
# Overview of Disability, Incarceration, and PREA

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# People with Disabilities in the United States

More than **1 in 4** adults in the United States have some type of disability  
(28.7%)



# Victimization Disparities for People with Disabilities

- People with disabilities are **more than twice as likely** to experience sexual violence as people without disabilities.
- Nearly **half** of people with developmental disabilities are assaulted 10 or more times.
- **20%** of Deaf adults have experienced physical abuse by an intimate partner. **15%** have experienced forced sex in an intimate partner relationship.

# Disability Disparities in Jails

## Non-psychiatric disabilities

**40%** of people in jail have a non-psychiatric disability;

**4x more likely** than the general population.

- Cognitive: **7x** more likely
- **Vision: 4x more likely**
- Hearing: **3x** likely

## Psychiatric disabilities

**64%** of people in jails report indicators of psychiatric disabilities.

# Disability in State and Federal Prisons

**40%** of people in state and federal prisons have psychiatric disabilities.

**56%** of people in state and federal prisons have non-psychiatric disabilities.

→ Taken together, **80% of women** and **65% of men** in prison have at least one disability.

# Most Common Disabilities in State and Federal Prisons

## Most commonly reported disability types:

- Psychiatric: 40%
- Cognitive: 23%
- Ambulatory: 12%
- **Vision: 11%**

# Misunderstanding of Common Disability-Related Behaviors Can Contribute to Arrest and Incarceration Disparities

## Common manifestations of disability that can lead to arrest and incarceration include:

- ‘Atypical’ reactions to social cues and commands.
- Slurred speech.
- Difficulty walking or atypical gait.
- Slow processing of questions or commands.
- Insufficient or complete lack of means for effective communication escalate interactions.

# What Happens Inside?

Incarcerated people with disabilities are **3x** more likely to be sexually abused than their counterparts without disabilities.



Photo credit: Podtoppen.se

## 115.16

# Inmates with disabilities and inmates who are limited English proficient

- 115.16 (a): The agency shall take appropriate steps to ensure that inmates with disabilities (including, for example, inmates who are deaf or hard of hearing, those who are blind or have low vision, or those who have intellectual, psychiatric, or speech disabilities), have an equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from all aspects of the agency's efforts to prevent, detect, and respond to sexual abuse and sexual harassment.
- 115.16 (c) The agency shall not rely on inmate/resident/detainee interpreters, readers, or other types of assistants except in limited circumstances where an extended delay could compromise the inmate's safety, the performance of first-response duties under § 115.64, or the investigation of the inmate's allegations.

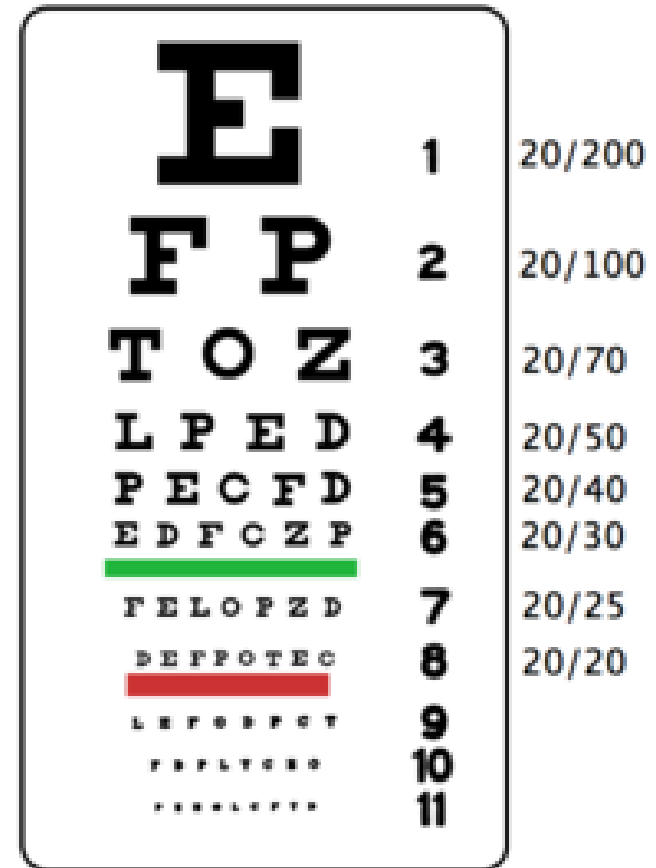


# Understanding Blindness and Low Vision

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# Definition of Terms

- **Low vision:** Vision loss that can't be fully corrected and interferes with daily activities.
- **Legally blind:** Clarity of vision (“visual acuity”) is 20/200 or less in the better eye or the field of vision is limited to 20 degrees or less.
- **DeafBlind:** Any degree of hearing loss and vision loss together.



# Blindness is a Spectrum

“**Blind**” and “**low vision**” are terms for the range of people whose vision or lack of vision impacts their daily lives and requires the use of assistive technology and/or adaptive strategies for sight-based activities.

- White canes.
- Navigating rooms by touch.
- Screen readers.



# People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision in the U.S.

Approximately **50 million** American adults or **18%** of the population experience some degree of vision loss.

- About 4 million have trouble seeing, even with glasses.
- 340,000 cannot see at all.
- Slightly over 45 million still have trouble seeing, even with glasses.
- Black and indigenous people have the highest rates of blindness and low vision.
- Most people who are blind or have low vision are older.

# Potential Effects of Vision Loss

- Higher risks of falls.
- Trouble navigating.
- Difficulty with everyday activities.
- Reduced social interaction.
- Reduced access to information.
- Embarrassment.
- Anxiety.
- Difficulty reading.
- Less autonomy due to inaccessible environments.



# Barriers to Information

- Small fonts.
- Poor contrast of text to background.
- Lack of audio options.
- Lack of Braille options.
- Digital formats that aren't designed for screen readers.

# Risks Created By Barriers to Information

- May have to rely on other people for information, leaving them vulnerable to power imbalances and abuse.
- May not understand their rights, how to report, or get help.
- May not be able to access the rules, making compliance difficult.

# Barriers to Physical Spaces

- Hard-to-navigate spaces (e.g., spaces with small signs).
- Crowded spaces that take a long time to exit safely.
- Unfamiliar spaces without clear verbal descriptions or tactile maps of physical layouts.
- Inadequate access to assistive supports.

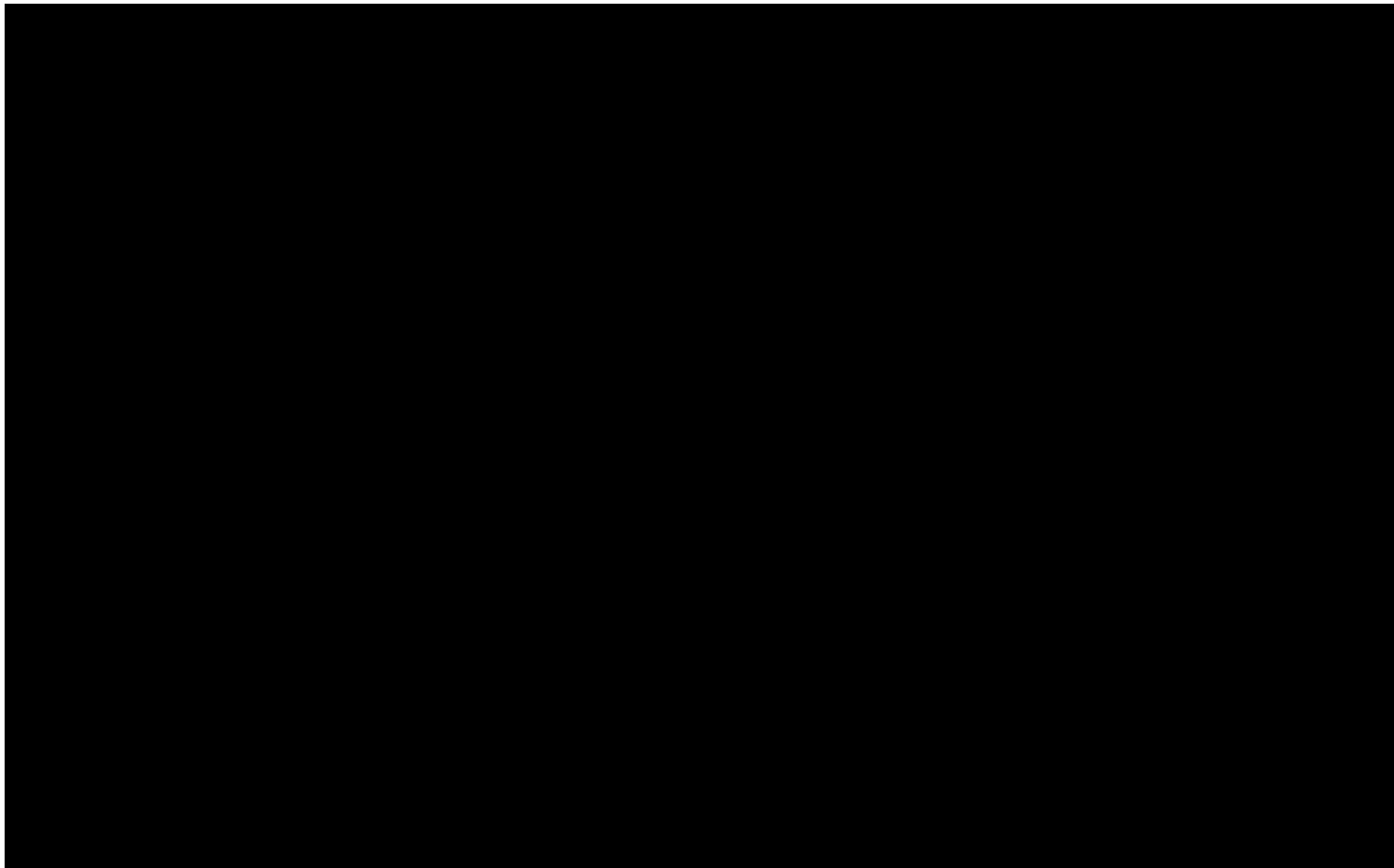


# Risks Created by Barriers to Physical Spaces

- May have to rely on other people for navigation, leaving them vulnerable to power imbalances and abuse.
- May not be able to exit dangerous situations quickly or easily.
- May not be able to find help quickly or easily.

# In Their Own Words: Carolyn Richardson

## [Testimony from a 2022 U.S. Senate Hearing](#)



# Achieving Equal Access to PREA Educational Information for People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

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115.33

# General Etiquette for Achieving Equal Access

## Increasing Safety Throughout the Facility

- Introduce yourself and others in the room.
- Speak directly to the person with vision loss.
- Describe layout of room.
- Identify entry/exits and which way doors open.
- Describe the actions you're taking, especially if you're going to touch them.
- Treat them as independent and capable.

# Achieving Equal Access to PREA Written Materials: Large Font

- Choose a sans serif font.
- Use a font size of **18pt** or larger.
  - Some people with low vision may need even larger fonts
- Choose a font color that has a high contrast to the paper color.
- Use uppercase and lowercase letters.
- Avoid italics.

Sans

Serif

Arial

Helvetica

Verdana

# Achieving Equal Access to PREA Written Materials: Braille

- **Braille** is a tactile writing system that represents letters, numbers, and symbols with combinations of raised dots.
- Not everyone who is blind or has low vision can read Braille. It's often unaffordable to learn and use.
- Many DeafBlind people use Braille.



# Achieving Equal Access: Audio Materials

- Since not everyone can read Braille or print of any size, **audio materials** are another important option to have available.
- Recordings should be easy to start, even if someone can't see the buttons or screen.
- If you provide videos with PREA information, you should also have an option with **audio description**.
  - Audio description describes the relevant visual information on the screen.
  - For example, “a woman in prison walks down a hallway and puts a piece of paper in a slit in a locked box.”

# Achieving Equal Access for DeafBlind People

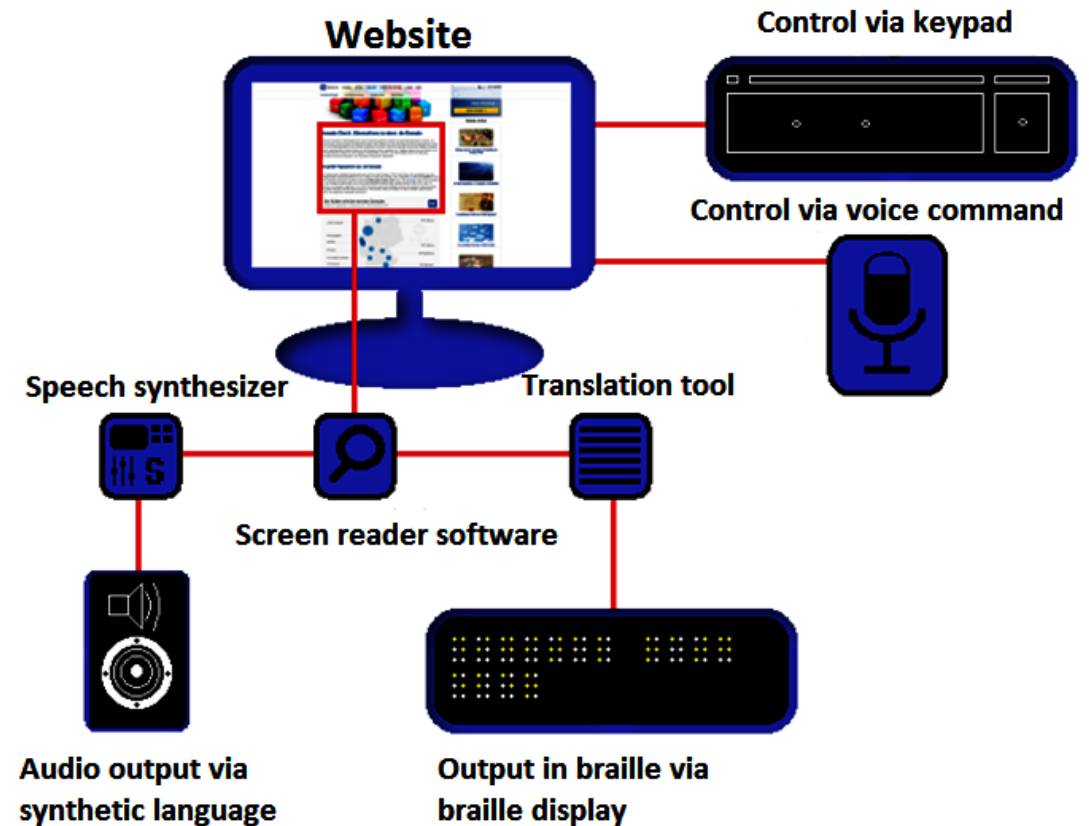
DeafBlind people may need a range of accommodations to access PREA information depending on how much they use their sight or hearing.

- **Interpretation**: many, but not all, styles of interpretation for DeafBlind people are based on touch.
- **Descriptive transcripts**: include both the visual and audio information in a video as text. Typically presented as Braille or large font.
- **Braille**: allows DeafBlind people who can't read large font to read written information.



# Making Digital Materials More Accessible: Screen Reading Technology

**Screen reading software** parses information on a screen and reads it out loud or sends it to a Braille display.



# More about Screen Reading

## Screen Reader Demonstration



# Designing for Screen Readers

- ❑ Make sure content uses **meaningful tags**, such as headings.
- ❑ For files, set a logical reading order.
- ❑ Include **alt text** for all figures or images.
- ❑ Use descriptive link text.
- ❑ For more guidance, consult the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Web Content Access Guidelines.



# Making Digital Materials More Accessible: Screen Magnifiers

**Screen magnifiers** magnify content on a screen many times. Users can set the level of magnification. They often include high-contrast settings or distinctive cursor options as well.



# Achieving Equal Access to PREA Reporting and Victim Services for People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

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115.51 and 115.53

# Achieving Equal Access: Written Reporting

- Depending on how much someone can see, writing in large print can be an option.
- If someone can read and write Braille, a Braillewriter can give them access to written reporting.
- If computers and printers are accessible, someone may be able to type and print a letter using a screen magnifier or screen reader.
- Offer tours or tactile maps to ensure people know where to take written reports.

**For some, written reporting may not be an option at all.**

# Achieving Equal Access: Verbal and Phone Reporting

- Ensure that staff are easy to locate, such as by having them announce their presence.
- Offer phones with large-print buttons and buttons with Braille so people can dial independently.
- DeafBlind people may require interpreters or another accommodation to be able to report verbally or by phone.



# Resources

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## Making PREA and victim services accessible for incarcerated people with disabilities:

An implementation guide for practitioners on the adult and juvenile standards

Sandra Harrell, Allison Hastings, and Margaret diZerega  
October 2015



**VERA**  
INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

## Making Written Materials Accessible



- We use written materials to convey important information about our agencies and the resources and services available to the people we serve. It's essential that organizations that work with and serve people with disabilities – including all criminal legal agencies and programs – infuse accessibility in their materials. This includes any materials related to community engagement and reform initiatives.



Ensuring the accessibility of the materials for the broadest audience, whether print or electronic, depends on choices made throughout the development of the materials. It requires being intentional both about content (i.e., word choice and sentence structure) as well as formatting and appearance (i.e., font size and color choice).



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June 2024

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# Additional Resources

- [National Federation of the Blind](#)
- [World Wide Web Consortium's Web Content Access Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.1](#)
- [American Printing House's Guidelines for the Development of Documents in Large Print](#)
- [American Foundation for the Blind](#)
- [Society for the Blind](#)

# Citations

## Slide 9

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Disability and Health Data System (July 2024), Available from: <http://dhds.cdc.gov>.

## Slide 10

Amylee Mailhot Amborski, Eve-Line Bussière, Marie-Pier Vaillancourt-Morel, and Christian C. Joyal, “Sexual Violence Against Persons With Disabilities: A Meta-Analysis.” *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 23, no. 4 (2022), 1330-1343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838021995975>.

Leigh Ann Davis, “People with Intellectual Disabilities and Sexual Violence,” *The Arc*, March, 2011, <https://www.thearc.org/wp-content/uploads/forchapters/Sexual%20Violence.pdf>.

Robert Q. Pollard, Jr, Erika Sutter, and Catherine Cerulli, “Intimate partner violence reported by two samples of deaf adults via a computerized American sign language survey,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 29, no. 5 (2014): 948-965, doi:10.1177/0886260513505703.

# Citations (2)

## Slide 11

Jennifer Bronson, Laura M. Maruschak, and Marcus Berzofsky, “Disabilities Among Prison and Jail Inmates, 2011-12,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 14, 2015, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/dpji1112.pdf>.

Jennifer Bronson and Marcus Berzofsky, “Indicators of Mental Health Problems Reported by Prisoners and Jail Inmates, 2011-12,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, June 22, 2017, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/imhprpji1112.pdf>.

## Slides 12-13

Laurin Bixby, Stacey Bevan, and Courtney Boen, “The Links Between Disability, Incarceration, And Social Exclusion,” *Health Affairs* 41, no. 10 (2022): 1460-1469, <https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2022.00495>.

# Citations (3)

## Slide 14

Allen J. Beck et. al., “Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails reported by Inmates, 2011-2012,” Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2013, <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/svpjri1112.pdf>.

## Slide 19

“Facts and Figures on Adults with Vision Loss from the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)”, American Foundation for the Blind, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://www.afb.org/research-and-initiatives/statistics/adults-vision-loss-nhis>.

2022 American Community Survey, “Disability Prevalence dataset,” K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, accessed August 15, 2024, <https://disabilitystatistics.org/acs/1>.

# Citations (4)

## Slide 25

Shari Roeseler and Brandie Kubel, “Assisting Survivors of Interpersonal Violence and Sexual Assault Who are Blind or Have Low Vision” (presentation, Center on Victimization and Safety, June 18, 2019.)

## Slide 30

Photo Credit: IONOS Digital Guide, <https://www.ionos.com/digitalguide/websites/web-development/screenreader/> (accessed September 6, 2024).

## Slide 32

Photo Credit: Fable, <https://makeitfable.com/glossary-term/screen-reader/> (accessed September 6, 2024).

## Slide 33

Photo Credit: VisionAid Technologies, <https://www.visionaid.co.uk/supernova-magnifier> (accessed September 9, 2024).

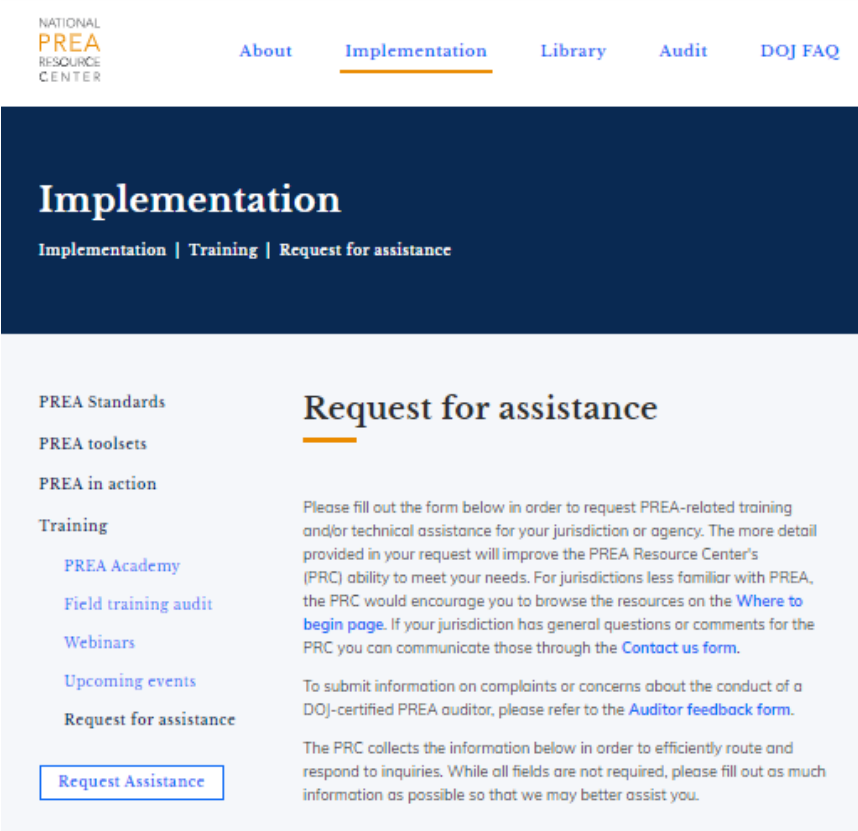
# Questions?



# Request Assistance

## PRC Website

Jurisdictions can request assistance by completing a web form on the PRC website under the “Implementation” tab and clicking “Request for assistance” under “Training.”



The screenshot shows the National PRC Resource Center website. The navigation menu includes 'About', 'Implementation' (which is underlined), 'Library', 'Audit', and 'DOJ FAQ'. The main content area is titled 'Implementation' and has sub-links for 'Implementation', 'Training', and 'Request for assistance'. A sidebar on the left lists various resources: 'PREA Standards', 'PREA toolsets', 'PREA in action', 'Training' (with sub-links for 'PREA Academy', 'Field training audit', 'Webinars', 'Upcoming events', and 'Request for assistance'), and a 'Request Assistance' button. The main content area is titled 'Request for assistance' and contains text explaining the purpose of the form and providing instructions on how to use it.

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About Implementation Library Audit DOJ FAQ

## Implementation

Implementation | Training | Request for assistance

PREA Standards  
PREA toolsets  
PREA in action  
Training  
PREA Academy  
Field training audit  
Webinars  
Upcoming events  
Request for assistance

### Request for assistance

Please fill out the form below in order to request PREA-related training and/or technical assistance for your jurisdiction or agency. The more detail provided in your request will improve the PREA Resource Center's (PRC) ability to meet your needs. For jurisdictions less familiar with PREA, the PRC would encourage you to browse the resources on the [Where to begin page](#). If your jurisdiction has general questions or comments for the PRC you can communicate those through the [Contact us form](#).

To submit information on complaints or concerns about the conduct of a DOJ-certified PREA auditor, please refer to the [Auditor feedback form](#).

The PRC collects the information below in order to efficiently route and respond to inquiries. While all fields are not required, please fill out as much information as possible so that we may better assist you.

Request Assistance

## Mailing List Signup

First name \*

Last name \*

Phone

Email \*

Confirm email \*

Do you wish to name your employer? \*

Submit

## Sign Up for our PRC Newsletter

Jurisdictions can sign up for the PRC newsletter by completing a web form on the PRC website under the “How to use this site” tab and going to “Frequently asked questions” and clicking “Subscribe to our newsletter.”



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For more information about the National PREA Resource Center, visit [www.prearesourcecenter.org](http://www.prearesourcecenter.org).

To ask a question, please visit our [Contact Us](#) page.

# Thank You!

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