

Selecting Your Program Venue

One of the most critical decisions your chapter will make at the very beginning, and one that will affect the future of your chapter, is where to hold your programs. The venue will either facilitate attendance or hamper it, depending on the location and community image of the facility.

ACAP programs are designed to provide information, resources, support and community for adult-child caregivers and others. The venue must be conducive to the mission. In other words, as your Leadership Team decides on the venue for your ACAP programs, there is much to consider.

1. ACAP chapter venues need to be “neutral” and welcoming of all.
 - Venues that portray or have the reputation of being exclusive or excessively expensive will be off-putting to some caregivers, sponsors and promoters and will brand your chapter negatively.
 - Avoid selecting a venue that may be perceived as non-welcoming to any group or population.
 - Avoid venues that may be perceived as offering the organization unfair marketing/visibility advantage (CCRC’s, specific businesses, etc.)
 - Other chapters have found the following to be effective venues: library, senior center / senior-services office, Area Agency on Aging meeting room, faith community fellowship halls
 - Note: Faith community facilities can be tricky. If you consider a faith community facility, be sure that it is well recognized in your area as open and welcoming of all persons, regardless of race or ethnicity, LTBTQ+ status, educational or socio-economic level, or nationality. Having a venue that is seen as exclusive, unwelcoming of certain populations, etc. will be counterproductive to your mission.
2. As you make decisions about your venue, consider attendees who may have physical or mobility limitations. Venues need to be completely barrier-free, including exterior entrance, foyer, meeting areas, restrooms, etc. Take into consideration the distance people will have to walk to get to the meeting room and the doors they will need to go through. Those with mobility issues will have difficulty with long distances, and many may have difficulty opening doors, particularly heavy ones. Be sure that restrooms are in a high-traffic area to ensure a feeling of safety.
3. Look at several options for your venue. Using the information contained in the next several pages, be thorough in your evaluation of each possible site. If possible, have several people look at each venue option, and use the grid so comparisons may be objective.
4. Be sure the venue is in a main traffic area in your community and that it is convenient and easy to find. Even if a participant is not familiar with the exact location or area of

the program, the facility and room where your programs will be held should be easy to find and easy for someone to give directions.

5. Be sure you will be allowed to place outdoor signage, directing people to the exact door to enter for your programs, and that there are grassy areas where outdoor signs may be placed.
6. You will want the venue to be in a safe area and perceived as safe.
7. You will want your venue to be centrally located within your chapter's footprint.
8. Be sure the venue offers adequate parking, even for when your attendance grows. And, be sure the parking area is well-lighted. The majority of ACAP participants probably will be women. It is important that participants feel safe when arriving and leaving the program, particularly in the winter when it probably will be dark as attendees are leaving the program. Be certain that adequate accessible (handicapped) parking is available.
9. Be sure that the outside (parking areas, doorway, etc.) is well maintained, even with winter weather.
10. You may want to consider a venue that is on a public transit route so families and professional caregivers without cars may be able to attend, also.
11. A facility that has a portico over the entry is ideal for attendees, speakers and sponsors, particularly on rainy or snowy days.
12. Optimally, there will be a lobby area large enough for a 6'-8' table for welcoming and registering attendees, separate from the presentation area. This will minimize noise, congestion and confusion as the program begins, allowing the presentation area to be specifically for the program's information and resources (sponsors).
13. The presentation space should be large enough to accommodate 50-70, yet comfortable (not cavernous) for groups of 10 or fewer. Your presentation area also should have room for one refreshment and 3 sponsor display tables to facilitate interaction with sponsors, important resources for attendees.
14. Attendees should be seated at tables during the presentation. If possible, select a venue that offers round tables that seat 6-8 each. Round tables prompt conversation / community-building, an important component of ACAP. In addition to tables and chairs for attendees, several 6' or 8' rectangular tables will be needed for refreshments, sponsor displays and registration. Be sure you know who will be responsible for setting up the room — whether the facility staff will set up the room, or if the Leadership Team will be doing this. If the staff will be arranging the room for you, be sure you know if there is an extra charge for the service.
15. And, for those times when additional tables and chairs may be needed, last-minute, make sure they are available and easy to access.
16. Looking for a presentation area that offers a large clock on a wall, easily visible for the program facilitator and speaker, is a good consideration. This helps the program stay on time and helps maintain adherence to the program format.

17. You'll want to be sure you know where light switches are, and, if possible, you'll want to have access to controlling the temperature in the presentation area as well as the foyer.
18. Be sure that there are strong wi-fi and audio-visual capabilities that will allow all to see and hear electronic presentations, regardless of where they sit in the room.
19. Make sure the room is situated so the ACAP presentation will not be competing with another presentation, class or group next door.
20. Be sure there are microphones for presenters and adequate acoustics / sound dampening so presentations may be easily heard. If possible, use lapel microphones and/or arrange for more than one microphone for times when you have more than one speaker and/or audience questions.
21. Find out whether the venue staff will set up the AV components before you arrive, or if you need to do that. If the staff sets up the AV, make sure you know if there is an additional fee.
22. You will also need to be sure that the laptop to be used for broadcasting in-person programs is supported and that you can get passwords, etc. You'll also need to be aware if any cables may be needed
23. Be sure that where the presenter will be standing is close enough to an outlet that a laptop may be plugged in. You'll also need to make sure that a podium and/or table may be set for a laptop so the speaker may be seen and heard as the program is broadcast to a virtual audience.
24. It is extremely helpful to have a kitchen, ice machine and coffeemaker close by and that the chapter may use them. Make sure you know what you may use from the kitchen. From time to time, you may need to use platters, bowls and serving utensils and/or to dispose of liquid (coffee, melted ice, etc.) at the end of the program. Make sure you know if they have coffee, cups, stirrers, and condiments available for your use and, if so, the charge for you to use them.
25. You'll also need adequate trash cans and recycling bins. Please encourage recycling. Be sure to find out whether you will be responsible for emptying trash after your program and, if so, where and any details about disposing waste.
26. You'll want to work out with the facility's staff how to gain access to the facility and how to lock up, if that's needed. If you will need to unlock and lock the building, if possible, have two or more people with keys, ensuring that there won't be any problem getting into the venue on time for programs. You'll also want to know what happens if a key becomes lost.
27. It's also extremely helpful to have the name and cell number for someone connected with the venue who can help, if needed. There have been times that the heat or air conditioning was not working properly, the microphone, speaker or technology was not working properly, or some other mishap occurred, necessitating a staff person's assistance. And there is the ever-present issue of technology, wi-fi, passwords, etc. not working just as you are getting ready to begin an ACAP program.

28. Make sure you know the venue's rental rate and expectations of payment, whether there is a contract / lease, when payment needs to be made, payment process, etc. And, remember to make sure to ask about any additional costs for set up, using their technology, additional tables and chairs, serving pieces, coffee, etc.
29. It also is extremely helpful to have a storage area at the venue so you may keep ACAP materials there between programs rather than having to bring the items each time.
30. Also, be sure to find out about whether outside groups are covered by the venue's liability insurance, or whether you will need to purchase coverage for the chapter. (If you need to purchase coverage, ACAPcommunity can provide guidance on the company that has provided coverage for other chapters.)