



Information for Fellows with Disabilities

Individuals with disabilities are leaders across the globe. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is committed to ensuring that Africa's young leaders with disabilities are able to fully participate in the Fellowship through reasonable accommodation and support. The Fellowship's disability support complies with the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), one of the United States' most comprehensive pieces of civil rights legislation that prohibits discrimination and guarantees that people with disabilities to fully participate in U.S. life. While the Fellowship provides appropriate resources to ensure Fellows are able to participate in the program, the support services or accommodations may not be the same as what you are used to at home. When necessary, and if resources are available, additional support will be provided to Fellows using assistive technologies or accommodative services.

General

Q: While I am in the United States, will I have access to all disability services?

A: You will be provided with reasonable accommodations that allow you to access and participate in all required activities of the Fellowship.

Q: How will my Institute know my individual needs?

A: Prior to arrival to the United States, all Fellows who self-identify as having a disability in their Fellowship application will receive a survey from IREX requesting detailed information about their disability-related needs and health conditions. The information that you provide in this survey is confidential and will only be shared with your Institute so that they can best prepare to accommodate your needs. When necessary, IREX will arrange a phone call, Skype session or email with you to confirm your accommodations needs.

Q: Will my responses to the disability survey limit my ability to participate in the Fellowship?

A: No, the Fellowship is a fully-inclusive program and the information that you provide in the disability survey will only increase your Institute's ability to accommodate your individual needs. It is vital that your disability survey responses be as detailed and accurate as possible so that IREX and your Institute can prepare for your full participation in the Fellowship.

Q: What access to medical care will I have? Can I get medication if I need it?

A: All Fellows will have access to health benefits during their stay in the United States through the U.S. Department of State's [Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges \(ASPE\)](#). Please note that ASPE only covers medical emergencies and does not cover medications for pre-existing conditions. You should plan to bring all your necessary medication for your entire stay in the U.S., as prescription drugs for pre-existing medical conditions will be your responsibility and may be very expensive. Fellows are responsible for all medical costs including required doctor visit copays and any prescribed medications.



Q: I will need to purchase medical supplies during my stay in the United States. Will this be covered by IREX or my Institute?

A: We encourage you to bring enough medical supplies to last you the entirety of your stay in the United States. If you are unable to bring enough supplies, you can make purchases at local medical supply stores. All supply costs are the responsibility of the Fellow. Please be aware that available medical supplies may differ from those available in your home country and that prices may vary from what you are accustomed to in your home country. You can check online vendors or communicate with your Institute if you will need to obtain a specific supply during your stay.

Mobility

Q: I have trouble walking for long distances. Will I be provided with assistance?

A: Yes, if necessary, a wheelchair or scooter can be provided for you to use during the Institute.

Q: I currently use a wheelchair but will be unable to bring it with me to the United States. Will a wheelchair be provided for me?

A: Yes, a wheelchair can be provided for you to use during the Institute.

Q: Will classrooms and housing be accessible to me?

A: Yes, your Institute will make accommodations to ensure the classroom and residence hall environments fit your needs. Each Institute will have unique accommodations depending on the college or university where you are placed.

Q: What will the bathroom be like? Is it in the room or down the hall? Is there a tub or a roll-in-shower?

A: If necessary, your Institute will provide you with an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible room which should meet the reasonable standards for your needs. This may include a bathtub or use of a shower chair either in your room or down the hall depending on the housing set up on campus. Not all Institute housing is able to provide both options, and you may need to learn new methods for accommodations that are not exactly as you are used to in your home.

Q: I will require assistance to help with housework, such as laundry and cleaning. Will this be provided?

A: Yes, some assistance can be provided. Fellows are generally expected to take care of their own personal needs such as light housework, laundry, and sometimes cooking. Maid service is not typically provided during the program; however, if you have a disability that creates challenges in handling these tasks, assistance will be provided to enable you to do these things as independently as possible. Your Institute will provide information on laundry machines to wash and dry clothing and the availability of cleaning supplies.

Q: How much walking will I have to do?

A: During your time at your Institute, there will be a lot of walking around campus (getting to class, dining hall, etc.). While you may have transportation to many of your site visits, community service, etc., there will still be a lot of walking. If you feel uncomfortable standing or walking for long periods of time, and typically use a wheelchair or electric scooter at home, we suggest you bring your device with you. If you are unable to bring one from home, a wheelchair or electric scooter can be provided for you to use during your Institute.

Q: How will I get to places off campus?

A: Accessible transportation will be provided for required program activities and events. During your free time, you are responsible for getting around on your own but you should find that most public transportation in the United States is accessible. Please discuss with your Institute what type of transportation is available on campus and in the local community.

Vision

Q: I am visually impaired. Will I have someone to assist me during my time in the United States?

A: Yes, if necessary, an Orientation & Mobility specialist will be available during the first few days of your Institute. They will get you acquainted with your new surroundings and help you learn how to navigate safely and independently. Human guides may be provided for certain required sessions or activities but will not be provided for the entire Institute and will not be available during your free time.

Q: I use braille to read documents. Will materials be provided to me in braille?

A: Most materials will be provided for you electronically and limited program materials may also be available in braille. With advanced notice, and when possible, your Institute may be able to provide you some materials in braille. Please be aware that a shortened form of braille is commonly used in the United States.

Q: I use JAWS software on my computer to read documents but will be unable to bring my computer. Will the software be provided for me?

A: Yes, if you need to use JAWS during the Institute and you cannot bring your personal computer, you will be provided with a computer that has the appropriate software for you to use during your stay. It may be different from what you use at home, so training can be provided.

Q: I use a voice/braille recorder to take notes during class. Will a recorder be provided for me?

A: If you require the use of a recorder, please bring the recorder you typically use. If you are not able to bring one with you, one can be provided for you to use during your stay. It may be different from what you use at home, so training can be provided.

Q: I have low vision, and it is difficult to read documents in small print. Can materials be printed for me using large font?

A: Yes, materials can be provided to you in a larger print if needed. Please let your Institute know of this request as soon as possible, prior to your arrival on campus, so they can make the necessary arrangements. When large print is not possible, materials will be provided for you electronically.

Q: How will I get to places off campus?

A: Accessible transportation will be provided for required program activities and events. During your free time, you are responsible for getting around on your own, but you should find that most public transportation in the United States is accessible. Please discuss with your Institute what type of transportation is available on campus and in the local community.

Q: What type of telephone will be provided for me?

A: All Fellows will be provided with basic smartphones. It may be different from what you use at home, so training can be provided. Fellows may choose to transfer the SIM cards provided by IREX into their own phone if they are compatible with the U.S. cellular service provider's network.

Q: I have never traveled on an international flight before. Will someone be there to assist me?

A: When feasible, IREX encourages Fellows to directly contact their airline carrier(s) to discuss their individual travel support needs. Prior to your arrival to the United States, IREX will also contact your airline to arrange travel assistance based on your individual needs. The level of travel assistance will vary by airline and a personal escort is not guaranteed.

Hearing & Communication

Q: Will I be provided with a sign language interpreter? Will they be available 24 hours a day?

A: Interpreters will be provided for required program activities, but will not be provided full time. Interpreters will not be available after session hours or during free time. A tablet or other technology can be loaned to you to use during your Fellowship to help you communicate with non-signing peers during your free time. It may be different from what you use at home, so training can be provided.

Q: Will my interpreter learn my language, or do I need to learn American Sign Language (ASL)?

A: We will do our best to locate an interpreter that best fits your needs. However, as noted in the Fellowship application, interpretation may only be available in ASL, and Fellows should be proficient in or learn to use ASL prior to their arrival in the United States. Prior to your Fellowship, please notify IREX as soon as possible if you would like us to help you identify support in your home country to become more familiar with ASL, and speak with the U.S. Embassy about ASL training prior to your arrival.

Q: I use a tablet to communicate with my peers. Will a tablet be provided for me?

A: If you typically use a personal tablet, please bring it with you. If you are not able to do so, a tablet can be provided on loan to use during your Institute. It may be different from what you use at home, so training can be provided.

Q: What type of telephone will be provided for me?

A: All Fellows will be provided with basic smartphones. It may be different from what you use at home, so training can be provided. Fellows may choose to transfer the SIM cards provided by IREX into their own phone if they are compatible with the U.S. cellular service provider's network.

Additional Resources

- [Video interview with Mandela Washington Fellow Hilda Muluh Bih](#) (captions available)
- [Getting What You Need in the United States](#)
- [Disability Organizations in the United States](#)
- [Top 10 Disability Resources On-Campus](#)
- [Your Rights and Responsibilities](#)