

How to Find Conferences for OMOD Speakers



Step 1: Find out what your speaker(s) are interested in. What are they expert(s) about? Pay attention to the themes and/or topics that arise in your first six-week class. Then, make a list of these themes/topics. This will be helpful when you search for conferences. Below are some common OMOD themes, but new topics will merge with each new class. *(Note: don't worry if one of the topics that emerged in the first six-week class seems too obscure for a conference presentation; you would be surprised at how many different conferences there actually are.)*

- Disability issues or experiences
- Advocacy
- Accommodations in college or work
- Transportation
- Travel
- Family, friends, and/or dating
- Independence

Step 2: Search online for state conferences that relate to the themes you identified in Step 1. A few key word searches you may try include:

- Texas advocacy conferences
- Texas disability conferences
- Texas employment conferences
- Texas education conferences
- Texas conferences (sometimes, a simple search for conferences in your state may be useful for giving you an overview of all possible conferences where your speakers may present)

Step 3: Create a list of the conference names, dates, locations, proposal submission deadlines, contact information, and accompanying websites. Once you have a list of conferences and/or other events that look like good fits for your speaker(s), compile all of the information in a spreadsheet that you can easily update.

- If you find an annual conference that does not immediately apply to any of the themes/topics you identified, make a note of it anyway. Most annual conferences have new themes every year, and one of the future themes may suit your speaker(s) better. Similarly, your own list of themes/topics may expand with additional six-week classes, and future speaker(s) may write stories that are better suited to these conferences.

- You may also want to record any registration fees or speaker expenses covered at this time. If you have a limited budget for conference presentations, you may need to limit yourself to conferences in your area that do not require overnight stays, or ones that offer free registration for speakers, reimbursement for mileage, and/or complimentary lodging or meals.

Step 4: Ask your friends, family members, coworkers, or partner organizations if they know of any conferences that may be suitable to your speaker(s). If you have budget limitations or don't feel your speakers are ready for a big conference yet, you may also consider smaller venues like Toastmaster's, speakers bureaus, meetings, luncheons, etc. Your local contacts may have good suggestions for these smaller speaking opportunities. Note the same information as you did in Step 3.

Step 5: If you are missing any important information, such as the next conference date or the proposal submission deadline, email the conference coordinator and ask to be added to their email list for conference updates and future calls for speakers.