

To: SSSP Board of Directors  
From: Val Leiter, Chair, Accessibility Committee  
Re: Annual report  
Date: July 14, 2019

The Board of Directors charged the Accessibility Committee with developing a proposal to address members' call for assistance with caregiving needs that are associated with attendance at the annual meeting, and with addressing the accessibility of SSSP divisions' newsletters.

The Accessibility Committee scheduled conference call on June 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss these two requests. Laura Mauldin (Chair-Elect of the Committee) and I attended the meeting, and this memo documents our responses to those requests, incorporating other Committee members' feedback subsequent to the conference call. The Committee voted in favor of forwarding these responses for your consideration (6 out of 7 members voted yes, and one member did not vote because they could not be contacted via email at all).

### **Newsletter Accessibility**

The Board "tasked the Accessibility Committee to evaluate the membership need in having division newsletters distributed in both PDF and TXT formats for accessibility, and to look into the best options and formats for newsletter accessibility." Currently, division newsletter editors are required to distribute all newsletters in PDF and TXT formats. Electronic readers (software that helps people with visual impairments) can use files in PDF or TXT formats. In November, the Teaching Social Problems Division sent out a message regarding their newsletter that included the statement that, "It has been brought to our attention that some members would like to receive a plain text version (no graphics or formatting) of division newsletters. This option will make the newsletter more accessible for those people with visual differences or who do not have high speed internet due to downloading time, and it will make printing less expensive."

Laura and I discussed this approach of providing newsletters in PDF format and in a plain TXT format with no graphics or formatting and found this approach to be adequate to meet members' needs, should they have visual impairments now or develop them as they age. This method provides the material in a way that universally meets all members needs, now and into the future (as we all continue to age), and we recommend to the Board that the following language be provided to all divisions to inform their newsletter distribution procedures:

All division newsletters must be distributed electronically, to save time, money, and natural resources, and to make them accessible to all of the Society's members. Newsletters will be distributed electronically in two formats: in PDF form, and in TXT form with all graphics and formatting removed. This approach makes the newsletters accessible to all members, resulting in equity amongst our membership in terms of access to information.

## **Subsidizing Caregiving During the Annual Meeting**

At the August 9, 2018 Board of Directors meeting in Philadelphia, the Board charged the Accessibility Committee with creating a model and procedure to provide a subsidy for members with caregiving responsibilities so that they can attend SSSP sessions.

Laura and I developed two proposals for pilot approaches to addressing members' caregiving needs for the Board's consideration, based on the information that Michele Koontz provided to us, which was included in the original email calling our Accessibility Committee conference call.

### **Pilot Approach A:**

The Society will hire a professional childcare provider and provide care at the meeting space. The Society would ensure that the provider is insured and that their insurance would cover the Society as well. Parents or legal guardians would sign a form freeing the Society from all and any liability. Parents would be asked to estimate the number of hours that they would need care, and would be required to pay a 50% deposit, based on the number of estimated hours needed x \$10 per hour per child).<sup>1</sup> The deadline for signing up for this care would be established by the Administrative Officer, dependent on when the childcare provider would need to know how many children would be served for a specified number of hours.

### **Pilot Approach B:**

The Society will continue its current policy of providing members with information in the final conference program about how to access childcare on their own at the conference location. Additionally, the Society will subsidize the caregiving that members require to purchase to attend the meetings, including childcare, spousal care, and elder care, addressing concerns that many members experience caregiving constraints that go beyond childcare. The Board would develop a budget for this expense, the Administrative Officer would set deadlines for requests for funding and for reimbursement, and the Accessibility Committee would review the applications and make decisions about distributing the available funds. All applicants would make an initial request with an estimate of the cost of care by the first deadline set by the Administrative Office, and after the meeting provide written documentation of the actual financial costs of the care provided by the second deadline set by the Administrative Office.

We submit these two approaches for your consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> The deposit is set at 50% of anticipated costs because the Southern Sociological Society (SSS) found that 16 children were signed up in a recent year, but only 2 came. There was a \$40 nonrefundable deposit, and SSS ended up subsidizing the cost for the other 14 children. We would like to limit the Society's financial liability, and have a policy that provides a stronger economic incentive for parents and legal guardians to use the care that they have requested.