



Important Information to Consider

Conference Centers all have policies and some have a statement of faith they will ask you to agree with. It is in your favor to ask for these at the outset of discussions with the venue if they do not give it to you immediately. Look for the following information:

1. Exclusive use of facility – Will your group be the only one in the conference center? If it is important to you that this be so find out if there is a minimum contract rate you will be held to in order to have this right. Also be sure to write the contract a minimum of one year in advance so it is easier to book your choice of dates.

2. Individual room assignments - Assignment of individual rooms is often the responsibility of the group coordinator and frequently the conference center will require a copy of this (perhaps in their own format) prior to the event. Some centers even charge a fee for lists not returned by the due date. It is required both in case of an emergency and so that they may be prepared for your guests when they arrive for check-in.

3. Meeting rooms – Determine prior to signing a contract for a location whether or not they are able to accommodate all of your meeting space needs; don't forget about break-out spaces. This includes the number of rooms available to you (how many are provided at no charge and what, if any, is the per room charge for each additional space), will the furniture you require be available and will they prepare the space for you according to your specifications. Also request a detailed list of the audio and visual equipment that come standard in the room and the rental rates of any additional equipment you may need.

4. Personal food and beverages – Many conference centers do not permit groups to bring their own snacks or beverages to serve to their guests during their stay; this includes guests bringing their own. This is due to health code regulations and some safety and maintenance issues. Because of the legal ramifications some centers will fine for any outside food on campus. On the other hand, if you have reserved the right to prepare your own meals or snacks be sure to walk through the kitchen prior to arrival so you will be ready with any food preparation items that are not provided as well as to be familiar with the space.

5. Meal service – Be sure to request standard meal times in advance so that you have the ability to change arrival times or ask for a flexible schedule if needed. Also, request a standard meal menu or the menu for you retreat if it's available (this should not be ready until a few days prior to the event). Notify your customer service contact with any special dietary needs as soon as possible; chefs are happy to accommodate diabetic, vegetarian and other food allergies

when they are given ample time to prepare. Determine whether or not your group will be sharing the dining room with other groups, whether or not you are permitted to decorate tables and/or have access to a microphone for announcements during meals if needed and how the meals will be served and cleaned up. Additional charges can apply to specialty food or services.

6. Vehicle parking - Parking is frequently an issue. Determining in advance where the best place for your group to park and letting them know can reduce check-in frustration immensely – as well as keep a meeting from being interrupted because someone parked in a restricted area. Don't forget your Day Guests! Sometimes they need to park in a different lot.

9. Final payment - Groups are usually expected to make financial settlement upon arrival. When signing a contract know the minimum amount you will be responsible for (frequently there is a charge for x number of people even if that many do not attend because the center held rooms for you) and be prepared to pay it. It helps to call the day before arrival, or even the morning of, and calculate a final bill with your conference center coordinator based on final numbers. Determine whether or not a credit card authorization form will be required prior to check in to guarantee payment for additional services requested that are not included in the original contract arrangements.

10. Standards of conduct – Many Christian conference centers have policies that go beyond the standard no firearms, etc policies most centers have. You may be required to sign and return it with your contract. Make sure you read it so you are not surprised by any room assignment ratios for youth/children or additional fees that will be incurred if a policy is broken. It is also a good idea to pass this policy on to your guests so they will know ahead of time what to prepare for.

11. Day Guest Fees – Conference Centers often have a small per person charge for day guests, as well as rate for each meal they are with you. These are any guests who come for part or all of a day during your retreat but do not spend the night. Be sure to notify your services coordinator of the number of Day Guests and meals you expect them to be present for so that the chef can prepare as well.