

Disability Etiquette and Awareness



People with disabilities have abilities.
They participate in activities of daily
living such as:

- Family
- School
- Sports
- Community Events
- Employment



Important Terms To Know:

- **Disability** – A condition that effects one or more functions of your daily life.
- **Functional Limitation** – A limitation in function which results from the disability.
- **Handicap** – The ultimate effects of a disability on a person’s ability to perform work or other functions. The word “Handicap” is also used to describe areas of access such as: parking, seating and exits.
- **ADA** – Americans with Disabilities Act



American Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (P.L. 101-336) is the most comprehensive civil rights legislation adopted to prohibit discrimination against people with disabilities. Public and private businesses, state and local government agencies, private entities offering public accommodations and services, transportation and utilities are required to comply with the law. The ADA was signed into law by President George Bush on July 26, 1990, extending civil rights protections to individuals with physical or mental disabilities in the following areas:

- ❑ Employment
- ❑ State and Local Government Activities
- ❑ Public Accommodations
- ❑ Telecommunications



Person First Language

- Instead of “the disabled, handicapped, crippled” say “person with a disability.”
- If a person relies on a wheelchair don’t say “confined, or wheelchair bound” say “person who uses a wheelchair. Instead of “electric chair” say “power chair”
- Instead of “suffers, or is a victim of, affected or stricken with” say “a person with”
- Instead of “normal person” say “able bodied or non disabled”
- Instead of “crazy, or nuts” say “person with a mental illness.”



Disability Etiquette

- Treat people with disabilities just like everyone else.
- Ask before you help. If someone with a disability needs help often times they will ask for the help. They are independent people.
- Ask “Do you need assistance?” (Only ask if they appear to need assistance not just because they use a wheelchair or cane.)



Disability Etiquette Before You Speak:

- Speak **DIRECTLY** to the person with a disability, NOT to their caregiver, sign language interpreter or whoever they are with.
- Talk to someone with a disability just as you would an able bodied person.
- People with disabilities are HUMANS not just A DISABILITY.
- Be respectful of the questions you ask people with disabilities.
- Be mindful that some people may have a hidden disability, therefore a handicapped parking sticker could be justified.



Disability Etiquette, Be Respectful of Physical Contact

- Grabbing someone to assist them can affect their balance if they need to use their limbs to move.
- Avoid tapping people on the head or shoulder. All people should be treated with respect.
- Do not touch one's wheelchair, scooter, or cane unless asked to.



The Importance of Disability Awareness & Etiquette

- To clear up any assumptions or misconceptions that society has regarding people with disabilities.
- To educate society on the appropriate ways to conduct themselves towards people with disabilities.
- To have the knowledge of “person first language” and terms.
- To assure society that people with disabilities are just like people without disabilities and that everyone should be treated equally and with respect.



People Who Use Wheelchairs Or Have Mobility Impairments. DON'Ts:

- Don't lean over them to shake another person's hand.
- Don't rest your drink on their chair.
- Don't rely on them to hold items for you just because they are sitting down and can have it on their lap.
- Don't touch or push a wheelchair unless the person asks you to and gives specific instructions. (You could dump someone out of their chair or break it.)
- Don't bend down or lean over them
- Don't make them strain their neck to look up at you.



People Who Use Wheelchairs Or Have Mobility Impairments. DO's :

- Keep all accessible doors with ramps or electric doors unlocked and unblocked.
- Keep paths cleared so that wheelchairs can navigate safely.
- Keep items that they may need within their reach.
- Sit in a chair near them to talk to them.
- Step out in front of a service counter if it is too high for person in a wheelchair to see over it. Face to face conversations are always best.



People Who Use Wheelchairs Or Have Mobility Impairments. DO's Continued:

- Make directions clear to accessible routes through buildings such as elevators, ramps, or automatic doors.
- Allow a person with a mobility impairment to use a private or employee restroom, if it is accessible and if it is the closest accessible restroom.
- If a guest or visitor bathroom is not accessible or is far away. Make sure there is ample seating for people with respiratory problems. They may only be able to walk short distances.



Courtesy Rules of Blindness

- They are ordinary people, just blind. You don't need to raise your voice or address them as if they were a child.
- They may use a long white cane or a guide dog to walk independently; or they may ask to take your arm. Let them decide if they want to take your arm. They will keep a half-step behind to anticipate curbs and steps.
- They want to know who's in the room with them. Speak when you enter. Introduce them to the others including children, and tell them if there are any pets.
- Know doors and cabinets that are left partially open can be a hazard to them.
- Don't avoid words like “nice to see you.” They use them too. They are always glad to see you.



Courtesy Rules of Blindness Cont...

- Their sense of smell, taste, touch or hearing did not improve when they became blind, They rely on them more and, therefore, may get more information through those senses than sighted people do.
- If they are your houseguest, show them the bathroom, closet, dresser, window--the light switch too. Let them know whether the lights are on or off.
- Don't think of them as just a blind person. They are just a person who happens to be blind.
- You don't need to remember "politically correct" terms, such as; "visually impaired", "sight challenged" etc. Keep it simple and honest, just say blind.



People of Short Stature or Little People

- The terms “midgets” or “dwarfs” are not politically correct.
- People of short stature are adults so treat them age appropriately.
- Make sure that items are at the appropriate height so that they can reach them.
- If there are counters or tables that are too high, make accommodations by going in front of the counter or table to speak to them.
- Treat them with respect, don't pet or kiss them on the head or face.
- Make eye contact and be at their level when speaking to them.



Epilepsy (Seizure disorder)

- People with Epilepsy have seizures not epileptic fits.
- You can not do anything to stop a seizure.
- If the person falls make sure their head is turned on to the side and protected then wait for the seizure to end.
- Ensure privacy and respect when the seizure is over. The person may be disoriented and embarrassed.
- In some instances beepers and strobe lights can trigger a seizure.
- People with Cerebral Palsy can also have seizures. Don't assume someone with a seizure only has epilepsy.
- Avoid strong fumes from cleaning products, perfumes etc.



People With Developmental Disabilities

- Learn slowly.
- Have difficulty applying what they learned to real situations.
- Speak to the person in simple terms so they can understand.
- Don't use baby talk but don't use complex words either.
- They can make their own decisions, but give them time.
- They are eager to please; may only respond with that the other person wants to hear instead of how they really feel.
- Make instructions and signs available in pictures and single words or short phrases.
- Most feel confident in a routine or repetitive environment.



Disability Awareness & Hidden Disabilities



Hidden Disabilities

- Not all disabilities are visible.
- Don't assume someone does not have a disability just because you don't see one.
- Examples of hidden disabilities include, but are not limited to:
 - Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
 - Learning disabilities
 - Respiratory disorders
 - Heart problems
 - Internal disorders
 - Speech disorders
 - Psychiatric Disabilities or Mental Illness



Learning Disabilities

Learning disability is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning challenges. The skills most often affected are: *reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, retention and math.* **TIPS:**

- Break tasks into smaller steps, and give directions verbally and in writing.
- Have the person repeat the steps or physically show you the steps they understood.
- Listen carefully to what the person says to confirm they understood the directions correctly.
- Use pictures or manually teach them the steps.



People with Speech Disabilities

- Give the person your full attention
- Don't finish their sentences or thoughts. Don't interrupt them.
- If you don't understand, ask them to repeat or clarify.
- If you are not sure as to whether you understood, you can repeat back what he/she said to confirm you understood.
- If you still don't understand, ask him/her to write it down or ask for other ways to communicate with him/her.



People with Psychiatric Disabilities or Mental Illness

- Most people are not violent.
- It may affect their ability to think or feel.
- Keep pressure to situations at a minimum.
- People have varying personalities and cope differently.
- Some may have trouble picking up social cues.
- Others are supersensitive.
- Ask what makes them most comfortable and respect their needs.
- In a crisis, stay calm, take deep breaths, be supportive and ask what you can do to help them.



Remember

- People with disabilities know what they can and can't do. Don't assume or expect them not to be able to help themselves.
- Allow people with disabilities to make their own decisions as to what they can and can't participate in. (The contrary could be considered discrimination and a violation of the ADA.)
- Just because you might not be able to see someone's disability, does not mean that they don't have one. They MAY have a HIDDEN disability.

The best way to know what type of assistance an individual needs is to ask.



Useful websites

- <http://www.fndfl.org> Family Network on Disabilities of Florida
- <http://www.adata.org> Americans with Disabilities Act Technical Assistance
- <http://www.add.org> The National Attention Deficit Disorder Association
- <http://www.autism-society.org> The Autism Society of America
- <http://www.cdc.gov> Centers for Disease Control
- <http://www.nami.org> The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill
- <http://www.ncil.org> The National Council on Independent Living
- <http://www.spinalcord.org> The National Spinal Cord Injury Association
- <http://www.rarediseases.org> The National Organization for Rare Disorders
- www.ccdhh.org - Community Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Manatee and Sarasota County
- <http://www.faasb.com> Florida Association of Agencies Serving the Blind
- www.disability.gov National Resources

Thank You!!!

For more information or to have this presentation brought to your organization contact:

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