

Disability Sensitivity and Working With Individuals With Disabilities

General Tips	People With Vision Impairments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not refer to a person’s disability unless it is relevant. • Don’t assume a person with a disability needs assistance as soon as they walk in the room. They will either tell you ahead of time or ask for your help when needed. • Work with people with disabilities to discover what needs to be done in your facility and create effective advocacy tools for accessibility. • Avoid asking personal questions about someone's disability. Let them mention their disability first. If you must ask, be sensitive and show respect. Avoid negative or sensational descriptions of a person's disability with anyone. • Use “people first” language when addressing a person with a disability. I.e., it is better to say "person with a disability" rather than "a disabled person." • Avoid the word handicapped. A handicap is what a person with a disability cannot do, keep the focus on ability and what they can do. • Make sure everything that is needed for work related task can be found and accessed easily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always make your presence known. Greet the person who may not know you are there. • Don't pet guide dogs or other service animals while they are working. Ask before interacting with the dog. • Talk directly to a person who is blind, not through their companion. • Use the person’s name to whom you are speaking so they are aware you are speaking to them. • Pulling or steering a person is awkward and confusing. Most commonly an individual who is blind will request for you to guide them if needed. • If you are a sighted guide for a person with a visual impairment, allow the person to take your arm at or above the elbow so that you guide rather than propel. • Avoid grabbing their arm or their dog's harness unless asked for assistance. • Keep all walkways clear of debris/obstacles.
People Who Use Aids To Move	Persons Who Are Hearing Impaired
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always ask the person who uses a wheelchair if he or she would like assistance before you jump in to help. Your help may not be needed or wanted. • Don't hang things from or lean on a person's wheelchair. • Take steps to insure that all materials that may be needed are within the reach of someone that utilizes a wheelchair. • If your conversation lasts more than a few minutes, consider sitting down, to get yourself on the same eyelevel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always make eye contact with the person you are speaking to. • A gentle tap on the shoulder will help you announce your presence. • Face the person you are speaking to and speak slowly and clearly, do not raise your voice. • If there is a breakdown in communication put pencil to paper and write down what you are attempting to convey. • Speak to the person not their interpreter if there is one present.
People with Learning Disabilities	People With Cognitive Disabilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Put instructions and important information in writing if the person has auditory and/or short term memory difficulties • Use hands on training and provide tactile examples. • Break down complicated tasks into line items with check boxes • Supply notebooks, file cabinet and other organizing and note taking aids • Provide options for quiet work environment if necessary. • Utilize text to speech software if needed • Remember that this person has normal or above normal intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the person who you are working with is having trouble understanding you, repeat yourself, using different words, without getting frustrated. • Patience is a virtue! • Break up your ideas into small manageable bits that can be easily remembered. “Keep it simple.” • Be considerate without be patronizing. Keep all conversations at an adult to adult level.