

Disability Language and Etiquette

Respectful Language

At this time, people-first language is recommended for use by anyone who doesn't have a disability and for professionals who are writing or speaking about people with disabilities. Ultimately, people with disabilities decide how their disability should be stated - some may choose people-first language, while others use identity-first language.

- **People-first language** is based on the idea that the person is not identified by their disability.
 - "People who are blind" instead of "Blind people"
- **Identity-first language** means that the person feels that the disability is a strong part of who they are and they are proud of their disability.
 - "Disabled person" versus "person who has a disability"

Quick Tips for Assisting People with Disabilities

- Know the location of accessible parking spaces, ramps, rest rooms, drinking fountains, telephones and communication aids that you have on hand in your office or building.
- Be patient and give your full attention - some individuals may have difficulty communicating and may need more time to express themselves.
- If you don't understand someone, don't pretend you do - ask questions to help you understand.
- Know the location of possible service dog relief areas.

General Etiquette

Treat people with disabilities the same way you would treat anyone else, while making reasonable accommodations. Speak directly to the individual, not their companion, interpreter, personal care associate, etc.

Hearing Disability

For many people, the words "deaf" and "hard of hearing" are not negative. Instead, the term "hearing-impaired" is considered negative as it implies that something is not as it should be and ought to be fixed if possible. How people "label" or identify themselves is

personal and may reflect identification with the deaf and hard of hearing community, the degree to which they can hear, or the relative age of onset. Over the years the most commonly accepted terms have come to be "deaf," "Deaf," and "hard of hearing."

Audism is a term used to describe discrimination or prejudice against individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing people.

- Look directly at the person and speak clearly and slowly in normal tones.
- If a person uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
- Pause to make sure you are understood.

Physical Disability

A mobility device is a part of the individual's person space. Do not lean on the device or use it as a hanger. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair, stand back, kneel, or sit down to help alleviate their neck strain.

Visual Disability

- Ask if they need assistance or want guidance.
- Never touch the person or their cane without asking!
- Do not touch or talk to a service dog without permission.
- Identify yourself as you enter or a leave a small work area.
- Use descriptive language when giving directions, such as "90 degrees to your right" rather than "over there."
- Let the individual know if you are holding out a pen to them, or something similar.
- Put a business card or sticky note at signature lines so the individual can feel where to sign when needed.
- Identify paper money when handing it to a customer with a visual disability.
- Offer to read printed materials aloud.

Speech Disability

- Do not guess what they are saying. Repeat it back to confirm that you understood.
- Do not speak for the person or finish their sentences.

- Do not raise your voice. People with speech disabilities do not necessarily have hearing disabilities.
- Ask about communication devices and tools that the person may be comfortable using.

Cognitive Disability

- Use clear, concise and simple language
- Give them time to respond in their own way
- Ask the person what helps them understand and how they communicate
- Do not assume all people read
- Consider breaks and timing
- Be clear about what you are asking and don't assume they are picking up on social cues.

Terms Generally Preferred

- People with disabilities (PWD) / An individual with a disability
- Has a disability
- Typical
- Intellectual disability
- Person who uses a wheelchair / person with a mobility disability
- People who are deaf or heard of hearing / people with a hearing disability
- Psychiatric disability
- Person who has epilepsy
- Seizures
- People with brain injuries
- Person with a learning disability
- People who have diabetes

Terms Generally Discouraged

- The disabled / A disabled person
- Suffers from / afflicted by / victim of
- Normal
- Mental retardation
- Wheelchair bound
- Hearing impaired
- Mental illness, mental disorder, crazy, insane
- Epileptic

- Fits / spells / attacks
- Brain damaged
- Slow learner
- Diabetics