



Disability Awareness

We believe in a more
inclusive workforce.

Disability



This brochure answers questions you may have about people with disabilities.

Disabilities are part of being human.

People with disabilities should always be treated like anyone else: as a person, not a disability. The disability community is the world's most inclusive minority community. People of every color, gender, religion, ethnicity, and age are, or may become, a member of the disability community.

Disability awareness starts with understanding.

Each individual functions differently with their disability. Some disabilities are hidden, such as autism, intellectual and developmental, respiratory, epileptic, heart, orthopedic, and sensory conditions. Some disabilities are clearly visible, like when a person uses a wheelchair. The one thing that is the same: nearly all people with a disability can work and should have the opportunity to hold a job.

Nearly 70 percent of working-age people with disabilities are unemployed. Whether negative perceptions are born from ignorance, fear, or misunderstanding, they keep some employers from appreciating the full potential of a person with a disability. Awareness and education are the first steps in providing people with disabilities greater access to social and economic independence.

Communication

How to interact with people with disabilities:

- 1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person.** Don't speak through their companion or sign language interpreter.
- 2. When introduced to a person with a disability, offer to shake hands.** People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb will let you know if they prefer a different way.
- 3. When meeting a person who is blind or partially sighted, verbally identify yourself and whoever is with you.** When conversing in a group, identify the person who is speaking.
- 4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted, then listen or ask for instructions.** It is very important not to assume what an individual can or cannot do without assistance.
- 5. Treat adults as adults.** You should address a person with a disability by their first name only when extending the same familiarity to all others. Also, never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the shoulder or head.
- 6. Leaning on a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on a person.** You should view a wheelchair as part of the personal space of the person using it. As a general rule, ask yourself if you have a close enough relationship to invade that individual's space regardless of whether he or she uses a wheelchair.
- 7. Listen attentively to a person who has difficulty speaking.** Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or jumping in to complete their thought. If necessary, ask questions that require short answers, a nod, or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and wait for a response. If you are still unable to understand what the person is saying, ask if there is someone who can interpret for you or consider using alternative means of communication.
- 8. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or crutches, place yourself at eye level.** This will help facilitate the conversation.
- 9. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap their shoulder or wave your hand in their field of vision.** Look directly at the person and speak clearly in a normal, non-exaggerated way. Some people may read lips. However, lip reading is only 30 to 50 percent effective. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself near a light source and by keeping your hands away from your mouth when speaking. In some cases, an interpreter may be present or you may need to consider alternative forms of communication, such as demonstrative or written.
- 10. Relax.** Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted common expressions that seem to relate to a person's disability, such as "See you later" or "Did you hear about that?"

The etiquette was adapted from many sources, including the United Cerebral Palsy's version of The Ten Commandments, which was updated by Irene M. Ward & Associates (Columbus, Ohio) to provide the most current language for its video, The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities.



**Don't be
afraid
to ask
questions!**

Communication

Always use People First Language.

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put them first. Group designations such as “the deaf” or “the disabled” are inappropriate because they do not reflect the individuality, equality, or dignity of people with disabilities. The following are examples of negative and positive phrases. Note that the positive phrases put the person first. Use this list as general guidance, but individual preference will vary.

If in doubt, ask individuals what terminology they prefer.

Negative Phrases

Positive Phrases

Retarded, mentally defective	-	+	Person with intellectual/developmental disabilities
The blind	-	+	Person who is blind, person who is partially sighted
The disabled, handicapped	-	+	Person with a disability
A hearing loss, the deaf	-	+	Person who is deaf, person who is hard of hearing
Afflicted by multiple sclerosis	-	+	Person who has multiple sclerosis
Cerebral palsy victim	-	+	Person with cerebral palsy
Epileptic	-	+	Person with epilepsy
Confined or restricted to a wheelchair	-	+	Person who uses a wheelchair
Stricken by muscular dystrophy	-	+	Person who has muscular dystrophy



Negative Phrases

Positive Phrases

Crippled, lame, deformed	-	+	Person with a physical disability
Autistic	-	+	Person with autism
Dumb, mute	-	+	Unable to speak, uses synthetic speech
Fit	-	+	Seizure
Crazy, nuts	-	+	Person with a psychiatric disability/mental illness
The deinstitutionalized	-	+	Person who no longer lives in an institution
Has overcome his/her disability; courageous (when it implies the person has courage because of having a disability)	-	+	Successful, productive
Normal person	-	+	Person without a disability
Suffers from a disability, victim	-	+	Person who has a disability

Disabilities: Myths and Facts

Myth:

People with disabilities cannot be productive in the workplace.

Fact:

People with disabilities have a variety of skill sets and abilities and can make meaningful contributions in the workplace.

Myth:

People with disabilities hinder business.

Fact:

Diverse teams produce better solutions, so there's a clear performance advantage to bringing together people with all kinds of differences. Research has also found organizations employing people with disabilities have higher morale and employee engagement, which we know drives profitability.*

Myth:

People with disabilities always need help.

Fact:

Many people with disabilities are very independent and prefer to be responsible for themselves. However, they often welcome help when needed. If you offer assistance, wait until your offer has been accepted, then listen or ask for instructions.

* Lori B. Golden (as quoted in "Why Hire Disabled Workers?" by Sarah Blahovec, The Huffington Post, February 24, 2016)

Be inclusive.

- **Do not assume a person cannot perform a certain task.** A person with a disability knows best what they need, if anything, in terms of accommodations. With the right support, a person with a disability can be very productive.
- **Keep hallways and office spaces clear from excess clutter.** This can make it difficult for people to maneuver around or reach equipment, such as copiers and printers.
- **Provide accessible restrooms, drinking fountains, and telephones.** If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives, such as a private or employee restroom, a glass of water, or a desk phone.
- **When planning a meeting or other event, try to anticipate specific accommodations that a person with a disability might need.** If this cannot happen, let the person know ahead of time.
- **Ensure company information, announcements, and events are made accessible through various methods of communication.**
- **Accommodate transportation needs.** Transportation is often a major issue for those who have to depend on others for assistance getting to and from work. One way to accommodate transportation needs is to offer flexible work schedules or telework options.
- **Be prepared.** Encourage fellow employees to learn how to assist individuals with disabilities in cases of emergency, including proper procedures for building evacuations and medical emergencies.
- **Encourage interaction between people with disabilities and their co-workers.** Include people with disabilities in group activities, meetings, and social gatherings. Forming work groups or teams with interdependent tasks is an excellent way to enhance employee relations.

Always remember:

- **Educate yourself and others.**
- **Hire qualified people with disabilities.**
- **Speak out** when you hear others talk negatively about people with disabilities.
- **Encourage participation of people with disabilities** in social, community, and workplace events by making sure that the meeting or event sites are accessible.



Common Courtesies

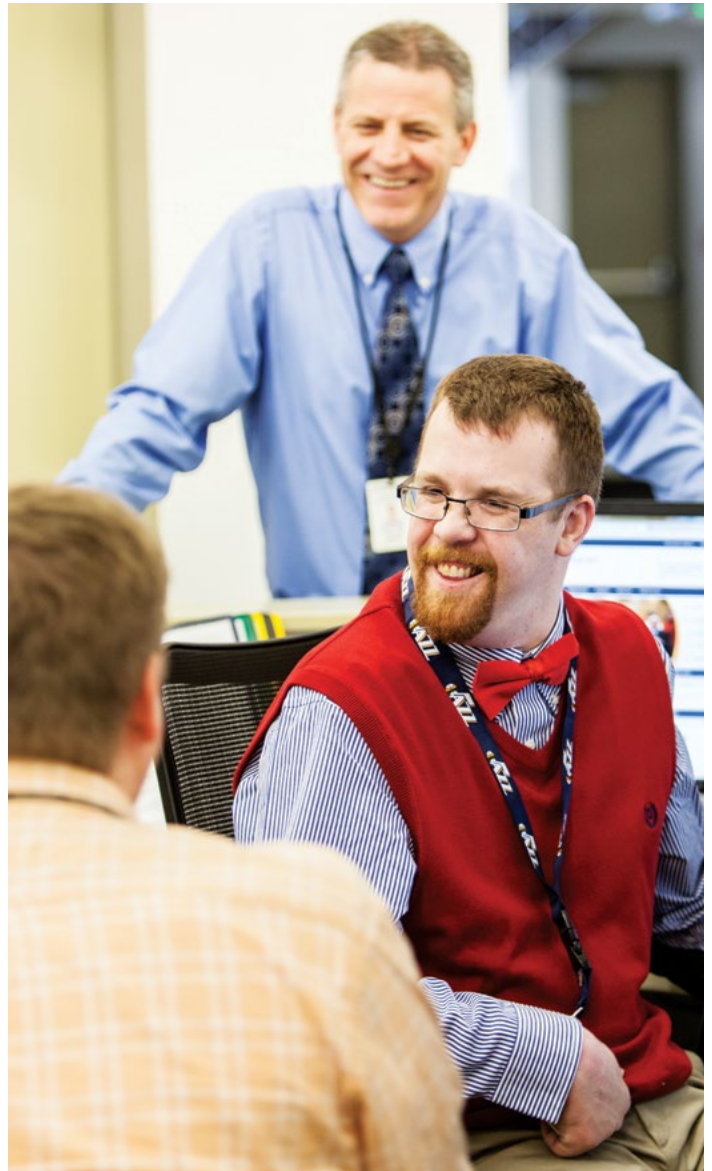


**Remember
that people
with
disabilities
have abilities.**

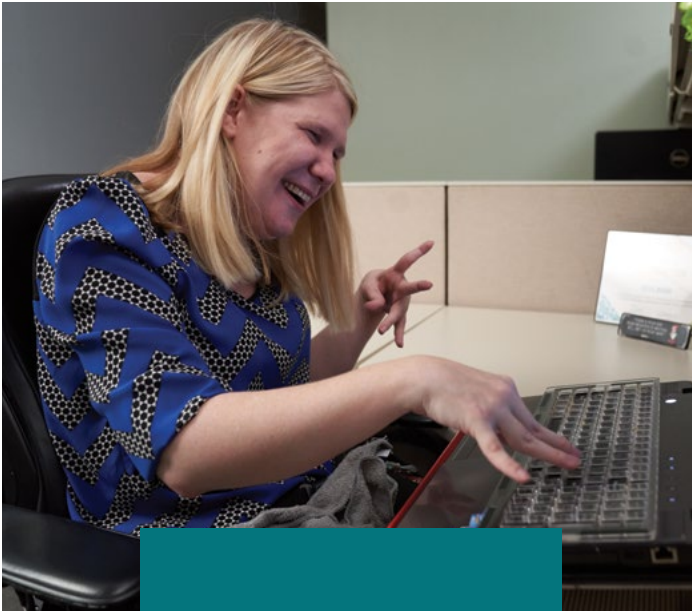
- Ask people with disabilities what terminology they prefer; not everyone uses the same words to describe themselves and their disabilities.
- Familiarize yourself with appropriate ways of communicating.
- Ask first before assisting a person with a disability. Wait for acceptance and instructions before you help.
- Be considerate of the extra time it may take a person with a disability to walk, talk, write, or perform a task.
- Use common sense and apologize if you offend a person with a disability in the same manner you would apologize if you offend a person without a disability.
- Identify yourself verbally to a person who is blind or partially sighted, e.g., "Hi, Mary, this is John Doe." Also, alert them verbally when you enter or leave the room.
- Do not interact with a service dog while it is working.
- Extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know.
- Do not block ramps or park in disability-designated parking spaces.

- When describing a person with a disability, do not emphasize the disability over other characteristics.
- Do not use “normal” to describe someone who does not have a disability, thus implying that someone with a disability is not normal. Say that the person is “nondisabled.”
- If you encounter a person having a seizure, do not try to put anything in his/her mouth. Do not give him/her something to drink, and do not attempt to restrain his/her movements.
- When speaking to a person with a disability, be friendly but not overly friendly, paternalistic, or condescending. Do not assume you need to speak loudly.

A person should not be defined by their disability. Do not refer to individuals by their disability.



Resources



Disability Information

www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/topics

This user-friendly website links people with disabilities, their families, employers, service providers, and other community members to relevant information such as benefits, employment, and health.

Job Accommodation Network

www.askjan.org

This is a free consulting service designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities by:

- Providing individualized worksite accommodation solutions
- Providing technical assistance regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability-related legislation
- Educating callers about self-employment options.

The Office of Disability Employment Policy

www.dol.gov/agencies/odep

This site provides information regarding disability-related policies and practices affecting the employment of people with disabilities.

SourceAmerica® connects government customers and other organizations to a national network of AbilityOne® authorized providers that hire a talented segment of the workforce — people with disabilities. Established in 1974, SourceAmerica is committed to increasing economic and social inclusion and advocating for a more accessible future of work for people with disabilities. SourceAmerica, an AbilityOne® authorized enterprise, harnesses the momentum and boosts the capability of its network and customers as a leading job connector for the disability community.





**To learn more
about disability
awareness and the
talents of people
with disabilities, visit
SourceAmerica.org or
call 1-888-411-8424.**

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