

SourceAmerica®

An AbilityOne® authorized enterprise



DISABILITY
AWARENESS



DISABILITIES ARE A NATURAL PART OF THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

People with disabilities should always be treated as one would treat any person; they are people, they are not the disability. The disability community is the world's most inclusive minority community. People of every color, gender, religion, ethnicity or age are or may become a member of the disability community.

DISABILITIES AWARENESS INCLUDES UNDERSTANDING

Each person functions differently with his/her disability. Some disabilities, such as respiratory, epileptic, heart, orthopedic and sensory conditions are "hidden," whereas the disability is clearly visible when a person uses a wheelchair. The one thing that is the same among nearly all persons with a disability is that they can work and should have the opportunity to hold a job.

Nearly 80% of people with significant disabilities do not have jobs. Whether born from ignorance, fear or misunderstanding, negative perceptions keep some employers from appreciating and experiencing the full potential of a person with a disability.

This brochure will provide you with the facts and answers to some questions you may have regarding people with disabilities. Awareness and education are the first steps in providing people with disabilities greater access to social and economic independence.



ETIQUETTE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- 1. When talking with a person with a disability, speak directly to that person** rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
- 2. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands.** People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands.
- 3. When meeting a person who is visually impaired, verbally identify yourself** and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
- 4. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted, then listen or ask for instructions.** It is very important not to make assumptions about what an individual can or cannot do without assistance.
- 5. Treat adults as adults.** Address people who have disabilities by their first names 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 or hanging on a person's wheelchair is similar to hanging on a person;** one should view a wheelchair as part of the personal body space of the person who is using it. Therefore, as a general rule, ask yourself if you have a close enough relationship with a particular person such that you would reach out and touch that individual regardless if he or she uses a wheelchair. If the answer is yes, then it might be more appropriate to lean or hang on the person's wheelchair.



- 7. Listen attentively when you are talking with a person who has difficulty speaking.** Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. Never try to finish a person's sentence just because they are talking slowly or more labored than you. If necessary, ask short 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 allow the person to respond. 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** in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
- 9. When trying to get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the individual on the shoulder or wave your hand.** Look directly at the person and speak clearly in a normal, non-exaggerated way. Some people may read lips, however lip-reading is only 30-50 percent effective. For those who do lip-read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and by keeping your hands away from your mouth when speaking. Not all people who are deaf or hard of hearing are able to lip-read, in which case 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?"

Above all, do not be afraid to ask questions when you are unsure of what to do!

The etiquette was adapted from many sources, including the United Cerebral Palsy Association'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.

POSITIVE IMAGE EMPOWERS: ALWAYS USE PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

When writing or speaking about people with disabilities, it is important to put the person 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 people what terminology they prefer.

NEGATIVE PHRASES

POSITIVE PHRASES

Retarded, mentally defective	—	+	Person with intellectual/ cognitive disabilities
The blind	—	+	Person who is blind, person who is visually impaired
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
Crippled, lame, deformed	—	+	Person with a physical disability

NEGATIVE PHRASES

POSITIVE PHRASES

Dumb, mute



Unable to speak,
uses synthetic speech

Fit



Seizure

Crazy, nuts



Person with a psychiatric
disability/mental illness

The de-institutionalized



Person who no longer lives in an institution

Admits he/she has a disability



Says he/she has a disability

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 has a disability

DISABILITIES: MYTHS & FACTS

MYTH: People with disabilities cannot be productive in the workplace.

FACT: People with disabilities have a variety of skill sets and abilities that make them very productive in the workplace. Ability, not disability, counts.

MYTH: People with disabilities don't want to work.

FACT: Most people with disabilities want to work. In fact, two out of three people with disabilities who were unemployed (67%) said they would prefer to be working.*

MYTH: People with disabilities always need help.

FACT: Many people with disabilities are very independent and prefer to be responsible for themselves. If you offer assistance, wait until your offer has been accepted, then listen or ask for instructions.

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- Educate yourself and others.
- Speak out when you hear others talk negatively about people with disabilities.
- Hire qualified 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.



* N.O.D., Harris, 2004

- Do not assume a person cannot perform a certain task. With the right accommodations and support, a person with a disability can be very productive. Also, a person with a disability knows best what he or she needs in terms of accommodations.
- Keep hallways and office spaces clear from excess clutter that may make it difficult for people to maneuver around or reach equipment such as fax machines, copiers and printers.
- Disseminate company information, announcements or events through various methods of communication such as email, voice-mail, and flyers.
- 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 a barrier cannot be avoided let the person know ahead of time.
- Transportation is often a major issue for those who have to depend on others for assistance in getting to and from work. Offering flexible work schedules or a telework option are ways to accommodate transportation needs.
- Be prepared. Encourage fellow employees to learn how to assist persons with disabilities in cases of emergency, including proper evacuation procedures and medical emergencies.
- Help encourage interaction between employees with disabilities and their co-workers. Include employees 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.

COMMON COURTESIES

- Remember that people with disabilities have abilities.
- Ask people with disabilities what terminology they prefer; not all people with disabilities use the same words to describe themselves and their disabilities.
- Familiarize yourself with appropriate ways of communicating with people with disabilities.
- 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 someone with a disability in the same manner you would apologize if you offend someone without a disability.
- Identify yourself verbally to a person who is blind or visually impaired, i.e. "Hi, Mary, this is John Doe."
- Extend your hand to shake if that is what you normally do. A person who cannot shake hands will let you know.
- A person should not be defined by their condition. Do not refer to individuals by their disability.
- 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, implying that someone with a disability is not normal. Say that the person is "non-disabled."
- Do not interact with a service dog while it is working.
- 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.

RESOURCES

DISABILITY INFORMATION

www.disability.gov

This user-friendly website contains links to information of interest to people with disabilities, their families, employers, service providers and other community members.

JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK

www.askjan.org

A free consulting service designed to increase the employability of people with disabilities by:

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

THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT POLICY

www.dol.gov/odep

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





Established in 1974, SourceAmerica® creates job opportunities for a skilled and dedicated workforce: people with significant disabilities. We are the vital link between this exceptional workforce, a network of more than 1,000 community-based nonprofits, and the Federal Government and commercial companies that need the products and services this workforce provides. Headquartered in Vienna, VA, SourceAmerica provides the agency network with business development, contract management, legislative and regulatory assistance, communications and public relations materials, information technology support, engineering and technical assistance, and extensive professional training needed for successful nonprofit management. SourceAmerica is an AbilityOne® authorized enterprise. For more information go to www.sourceamerica.org or call 1-888-411-8424.

SourceAmerica®

An AbilityOne® authorized enterprise

This brochure was produced as a public service by SourceAmerica.