

## The Basics

### ASK BEFORE YOU HELP

Just because someone has a disability, do not assume they need help.

If the setting is accessible, people with disabilities can usually get around fine.

Adults with disabilities want to be treated as independent people.

Offer assistance only if the person appears to need it. And if they do want help, ask how before you act.

### BE SENSITIVE ABOUT PHYSICAL CONTACT.

Some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance. Grabbing them- even if your intention is to assist could knock them off balance.

Avoid patting a person on the head or touching his wheelchair, scooter or cane.

People with disabilities consider their equipment part of their personal space.

Patting an adult on the head is a pejorative act that can be demeaning.

It can be taken as treating the adult like a child because they have a disability.

### THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK.

Always speak directly to the person with a disability, not to their companion, aide or sign- language interpreter.

Making small talk with a person who has a disability is great; just talk to him as you would with anyone else. Respect their privacy.

If you ask about their disability, they may feel like you are treating them as a disability, not as a human being.

However, many people with disabilities are comfortable with children's natural curiosity and do not mind if a child asks them questions.

## RESPOND GRACIOUSLY TO REQUESTS.

When people who have a disability ask for an accommodation at your business, it is not a complaint. It shows they feel comfortable enough in your establishment to ask for what they need. And if they get a positive response, they will probably come back again and tell their friends about the good service they received.

## DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS.

People with disabilities are the best judge of what they can or cannot do.

Do not make decisions for them about participating in any activity.

Depending on the situation, it could be a violation of the ADA to exclude people because of a presumption about their limitations.

(Language)

PUT THE PERSON FIRST. Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person."

Say "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled."

For specific disabilities, saying "person with Tourette Syndrome" or "person who has cerebral palsy" is usually a safe bet. Still, individuals do have their own preferences. If you are not sure what words to use, ask.

Avoid outdated terms like "handicapped" or "crippled."

Be aware that many people with disabilities dislike jargony, euphemistic terms like "physically challenged" and "differently abled."

Say "wheelchair user," rather than "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair bound."

The wheelchair is what enables the person to get around and participate in society, it is liberating, not confining.

It is okay to use idiomatic expressions when talking to people with disabilities. For example, saying, "It was good to see you," and "See you later," to a person who is blind is completely acceptable, they use these expressions themselves all the time!

People with disabilities are allowed to use all the words in their language of choice.

Many people who are Deaf communicate with sign language and consider themselves to be members of a cultural and linguistic minority. They refer to themselves as Deaf with a capital "D," and may be offended by the term "hearing

impaired" to refer to people who have hearing loss but communicate in spoken language.

With any disability, avoid negative, disempowering words like "victim" or "sufferer."

Say "person with AIDS," instead of "AIDS victim" or "one who suffers from

AIDS." Note: We want you to think of people who have a disability as individuals your friends, your co-workers, your neighbors.