

Inclusion Etiquette and Communication

- 1** Person-first: Focus on the person as an individual first. People with disabilities have different personalities, preferences, talents, etc just like people without disabilities.
- 2** “Hidden” Disabilities-Remember, not all disabilities will be obvious at first.
- 3** Service Animals/Guide Dogs-Animals use a guide or companion animals for individuals with disabilities are working. Do not pet, talk to, or distract a working animal.
- 4** Offering Assistance-Always ask if someone needs help and ask them to tell you the best way for you to help. Never assume that someone with a disability needs help, but if you see a need, feel free to ask.

Be Patient-Certain tasks may take a person with a disability longer than you are used to. If someone is speaking more slowly, give them time to speak and do not rush in to try to finish their sentence. Be careful not to act rushed, and be understand if someone with a hidden disability appears overwhelmed or frustrated.
- 5** Language-Be sure to use person-first language and avoid words that have become outdated (wheelchair-bound, crippled, etc are not acceptable terms).
- 6** Communication-Speak directly to the person, regardless of their abilities. If an interpreter is involved, they will relay your message. You should be speaking to the individual and not to the interpreter. (Saying “Would you like more milk? Instead of “Ask her if she would like more milk.”)
- 7** Wheelchairs-Do not lean on a person’s wheelchair and do not move or push their wheelchair without first getting permission. If speaking to someone in a wheelchair for an extended period of time, sit down next to them so as to be at eye level.
- 8** Visual Impairments-When you greet a person with a visual impairment, say hello and tell them your name and where you are. (“Hi Mary, it’s Angela to your left.”). If offering assistance with walking, let them take your arm and remember to let them know when steps, inclines or turns are approaching.
- 9** Hearing Impairments-Do not shout at individuals with hearing impairments. It is better to speak slowly and clearly, look directly at them so they can see your face/mouth, and use facial expressions, gestures and visual aides to help share your message.
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