

Staff Training



Specialized Support and Disability Services
University Student Services

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General suggestions and guidelines for interacting with people with disabilities

1. Treat people who have disabilities with the same dignity and respect you would give people without disabilities.
2. Offer help but wait until it is accepted before giving it. Offering assistance to someone is only polite behaviour. Giving help before it is accepted is rude. It can sometimes be unsafe, as when you grab the arm of someone using a crutch and the person loses his/her balance.
3. Offer to shake hands when introduced to people with limited hand use, an artificial limb, etc., for they can usually shake hands and offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.
4. Don't lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair. It is an extension of his/her personal space. Never patronize someone in a wheelchair by patting him/her on the head or shoulder.
5. Listen attentively when talking with someone who has difficulty speaking and wait for him/her to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod, or shake of the head.
6. Talk directly to the person with the disability, not to someone accompanying him or her. To ignore a person's existence in a group is very insensitive and it is always rude for two people to discuss a third person who is also present. For example, if a deaf person is with an interpreter, speak directly to the deaf person, the interpreter will interpret what you are saying to him/her.
7. Treat a disabled person as a healthy person. Because an individual has a functional limitation does not mean that the individual is sick. Many disabilities have no accompanying health problems.
8. Most people with disabilities will ask for assistance if they need it. They will often try to do as much as they can on their own and assistance is not always required. Offer assistance if you wish but do not insist on helping.

9. When talking to a person in a wheelchair, if conversation continues for more than a few minutes, pull up a chair. Communication may be enhanced and neck strain alleviated.
10. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "see you later" or "did you hear about that?" that may relate to a person's disability.
11. When giving directions to a person in a wheelchair, be sure to review the route the person will travel in the context of elevators, ground level access, etc.
12. When a person transfers out of a wheelchair to a chair, car, etc., do not move the wheelchair out of reaching distance. Be aware of the wheelchair users capabilities. Some can walk with the aid of walkers or crutches and use wheelchairs only some of the time in order to conserve energy and move about more quickly.
13. If you have difficulty understanding someone, don't pretend that you understand. Repeat as much as you understand and the person's reactions will give you clues.

These are excerpts from the following two sources: "Ten Commandments for Communicating with People with Disabilities", The New York Times, June 7, 1993, and a pamphlet from the *Regional Rehabilitation Research Institute on Attitudinal, Legal and Leisure Barriers*, Washington, D.C. Additional observations have been added.

Interacting with people who are deaf or hard of hearing

1. Be sure to have the person's attention before beginning to speak; this may mean making eye contact or a gentle tap on the shoulder.
2. Be sure there is a direct line of vision. This conveys a direct line of communication even though an interpreter may be present.
3. Ask the person what is their preferred mode of communication. Don't assume they are a lip/speech reader or a signer.
4. Don't shout.
5. Speak slowly (but not *too* slowly) and clearly. Speak clearly and be direct. Don't exaggerate lip movements which makes lip/speech reading impossible. Avoid using idioms or colloquial expressions such as "What's up." Short sentences are easy to understand.
6. If you are not being understood, rephrase your sentence rather than repeat it. Some lip movements, and therefore some words, are harder to lip/speech read than others.
7. Don't be embarrassed about communicating with paper and pencil. It is okay to write notes, but keep them simple and direct.
8. If you are having trouble understanding the deaf or hard of hearing person's speech, ask him/her to repeat it. Remember, communication is the goal. Be patient.
9. Take advantage of communicating with deaf and hard of hearing people using a Teletype device (TTY) or calling them through a Message Relay Center so they can use their TTY. Also use the opportunity to communicate through the Internet with those who have access.
10. Be courteous to the deaf or hard of hearing individual. If the telephone rings or someone knocks on the door tell the person that you are answering the phone or door.
11. If you are using an interpreter speak directly to the deaf person, not to the interpreter. Don't say, "Ask him..., tell her..."

12. When making presentations to audiences with deaf or hard of hearing participants.

- Provide copies of handouts, overheads before the presentation to both the interpreters and the deaf person.
- Seat interpreters at front of room with client directly across from them.
- Don't speak too quickly
- Don't keep talking at the same time as you are requiring audience members to attend to something visually.
- Allow additional wait time for questions before moving on.

Online Resources: Deaf or hard of hearing

- Deaf Culture and Sign Language of the Global Village
<http://library.thinkquest.org/11942/>
- Guidelines for Using Sign Language Interpreters
<http://www.lsadc.org/web2/signinterp.html>

Interacting with people who are partially sighted or blind

1. When you first meet a blind or partially sighted person, introduce yourself to the person; identify yourself to let the person know you are talking to them. Likewise, inform the person when you are leaving or walking away.
2. If the person seems to need assistance, identify yourself and offer assistance.
3. Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone who is blind or partially sighted. Remember to make “voice contact” where you would ordinarily make “eye contact”.
4. If you are walking with a blind person, let him or her take your arm (usually your right) just above your elbow and walk in a relaxed manner. The person can usually follow the motion of your body.
5. If the person is using a guide dog, s/he will usually keep the dog to the left and hold your left arm. Warn the person when you are approaching a step or other obstacle.
6. Orient the person to a room by explaining where furniture, etc., is located and offer to guide the person. Inform the individual if there has been a change in furniture arrangement. Keep hallways and reception areas clear of obstacles.
7. Keep doors fully open or closed.
8. Guide dogs are working animals. It can be hazardous for the blind person if the dog is distracted. Check with the owner before petting the dog.
9. When giving directions use descriptive words such as “straight ahead” or “forward.” Be specific when giving directions and avoid vague terms such as “over there”.
10. If you are helping a blind person fill out forms, be sure to explain what you are doing. Don’t complete the forms without consulting with the blind person. Always read verbatim information to the person if their signature is required.

11. Although it may seem unusual, do not hesitate to use words like “see” or “look”.
12. Many people may not use white canes or guide dogs but are nevertheless legally blind and may require assistance or accommodations which include alternate format materials such as large print, Braille texts, or texts on disk.
13. When making presentations to audiences with blind participants:
 - Provide prior access to handouts, charts, information on overheads in alternative format.
 - Give a brief orientation to room and audience.
 - Have participants introduce themselves.
 - Ensure that there is only one person speaking at a time; no side conversations
 - Don't use non-verbal communication signals to convey meaning.
 - If using visual aids verbally describe content.

Online resources: blind or partially Sighted

- When you meet a blind person.
http://www.cnib.ca/eng/publications/pamphlets/when_you_meet.htm
- Tips for successful meetings when some participants are visually impaired.
http://www.cnib.ca/eng/publications/pamphlets/meeting_tips.htm

Interacting with people with mobility disabilities

Definition:

- Mobility disabilities are those disabilities which restrict a person's ability to move around, to perform manual tasks, or to participate in certain activities. The nature and degree of mobility disabilities are as varied as their causes, some of which are: Multiple sclerosis; spinal cord injuries; cerebral palsy; muscular dystrophy; spina bifida; polio and arthritis.
1. Ask first if you can be of assistance and listen attentively to the person's reply. Do not reach for walkers, wheelchairs or any other assistive devices, as they are part of an individual's personal space. Do not assume that the person using a wheelchair needs assistance.
 2. Do not come up to someone who is using a wheelchair and start pushing them without asking.
 3. When communicating, do not stand too close to the person in the wheelchair. Remember to give the person a comfortable viewing angle of yourself. If having more than a brief conversation, sit down and face the person.
 4. Don't be afraid to shake hands with a person with a disability. People with limited hand use or with a prosthesis can usually shake hands. Shaking hands with the left hand is also acceptable. For those who cannot shake hands, you might wish to touch the person on the shoulder or arm to greet them.
 5. If you are asked to fold, carry or store a wheelchair, treat it with the same kind of care that you would if you were holding someone's eyeglasses. They are similar in many ways. They can break, they are difficult to have repaired, and it is extremely disruptive to the users when they are out of commission, as this is their means of mobility.
 6. It is a very common experience for persons who use wheelchairs to be told that some places are accessible, when they are not. Listen carefully when anyone who uses a wheelchair tells you that a specific area you thought was accessible is not.
 7. Don't lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair. It is an extension of his/her personal space. Never patronize someone in a wheelchair by patting him/her on the head.
 8. Listen attentively when talking with someone who has difficulty speaking and wait for him/her to finish. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod, or shake of the head.

9. Tips for making presentations to audiences when some of the participants have mobility disabilities or fine motor difficulties.

- Provide copies of handouts, charts, maps, information on overheads prior to the presentation.
- Provide wheelchair accessible tables or other appropriate writing surfaces as needed.
- Ensure that there is space for inclusive wheelchair seating.

Accommodations:

- In seeking solutions, start by asking the person with the disability what changes, if any, would be necessary to accommodate them in an environment.
- A desk or table might have to be raised, a filing cabinet lowered, or an aisle widened to accommodate an individual who uses a wheelchair.

**Stress ability rather than disability.
A person has the disability.
It's not the other way around.
If a disability isn't relevant, don't mention it.**

Online Resources: Mobility Disabilities

American Red Cross: Earthquake tips for people with mobility disabilities.
<http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/mobility.html>

Travel for people with mobility disabilities
<http://www.msnbc.com/news/793784.asp>

Canadian Paralegic Association
<http://www.canparalegic.org/national/>

Job Accommodation Network
<http://www.jan.wvu.edu/links/> (profiles various disabilities/conditions and suggests reasonable accommodations)

With thanks to the Canadian Paralegic Association and Employment Series for Persons with Disabilities (Human Resources Dev. Canada, AB Human Resources & Empl.)

Interacting with people who have learning disabilities

Definition:

Learning disabilities affect the way individuals with average to superior intelligence receive, store, organize, retrieve and use information. Learning disabilities appear in one or any combination of five distinct areas: visual and auditory learning, language processing, motor skills, and organizational and conceptual abilities.

1. Be aware that many people with learning disabilities may have been misunderstood and “mislabeled” for years. They may hesitate to identify themselves until it becomes necessary. As a result, some people may appear anxious and uncomfortable in certain situations.
2. Those who have a written language disability may require assistance with spelling or writing.
3. Many people have difficulty with spatial orientation and sequencing. Be specific when giving directions.
4. Poor verbal or written expression should not be construed as a measure of understanding or intelligence.
5. A person with a reading disability may hesitate or refuse to participate in oral reading. Respect, without question, a person’s right “to pass” or silently read material.
6. Information presented exclusively in a visual manner (maps and diagrams) or in an oral manner (directions or lectures) may be confusing.
7. Tips for making presentations to audiences when some of the participants have learning disabilities.
 - Provide copies of handouts, charts, maps, information on overheads prior to the presentation in either hardcopy or electronic form.

Online Resources: Learning Disabilities

- Adults with Learning Disabilities and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.
<http://www.ldonline.org/adults/>
- Non Verbal Learning Disorders
<http://www.nldline.com/>

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STAFF RESOURCES

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[Rutgers University Libraries Staff Resources: Administration:](#)

Advisory Committee on Services for Persons With Disabilities: Useful Links

Kurzweil 3000 Training Videos

(all Apple Quicktime (.mov) files)

- [Listen and Read](#)
- [Scan and Read](#)
- [Scan and Read in Foreign Languages](#)
- [Changing Voices](#)
- [Reading on the Web](#)
- [Kurzweil User Interface](#)

RUL Links

- [Services for Persons With Disabilities](#)
- [PC Working Group: Best Practices](#)

RU Links

- [Office of Disability Services at Rutgers](#)
- [Office of Disability Services for Students Coordinators](#)
- [Office of Compliance, Student Policy and Judicial Affairs : ADA Compliance](#)
- [Computing for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Contact information for Camden campus students with disabilities:](#)
 - [Web site with additional information](#)
 - [Students with Disabilities \(all schools excluding law\)](#)
Associate Dean Thomas DiValerio
(856) 225-2663
tdivaler@camden.rutgers.edu
Campus Center, Room # 326 (stairs by the third street entrance, elevator located behind the corner convenience store and down the hall from the main campus lounge and multipurpose room)
 - [Students with Disabilities \(law school only\)](#)
Associate Dean Angela Baker
(856) 225-6411
angbaker@camden.rutgers.edu
211 North Fifth Street

Government Links

- [ADA HOME PAGE](#)
- [Disabilityinfo.gov](#)
- [United States Access Board](#)

JAWS

- [JAWS 7.0 Documentation](#)
- [Getting Started with JAWS MP3's](#)
- [JAWS Audio tutorials](#)

Last updated December 7, 2005, May 4, 2010, May 19, 2010, July 21, 2010

URL: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/staff/groups/disabilities/useful_links.shtml

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AODA Customer Service Standard

Accessibility for Ontarians Act (AODA) Customer Service Standard

Enhanced training

- [Enhanced Training](#) [full PowerPoint - 100 slides]
- [Enhanced Training](#) [in sections]:
 - [Introduction](#)
 - [Library Impacts](#)
 - [Current Environment](#)
 - [Development Guidelines](#)
 - [Sustainability](#)
- [Principles of Universal Design](#) [Word]



For staff

- [Staff Session](#) [PowerPoint]
- [AODA - Tips](#) [PDF]

The overall goal of the training is to help us provide a high level of support to those people we encounter with visible or invisible disabilities. As such, this training is mandatory. The modules are available from the [Office for Person with Disabilities](#) homepage.

AccessON.ca

Everyone—individuals, communities, businesses and organizations—has a role to play in making Ontario accessible for people of all abilities.

On AccessON.ca, you will find information, videos, and real-life stories to help you better:

- understand disabilities

- recognize and prevent barriers to accessibility
- welcome people with disabilities
- understand Ontario's accessibility laws and what they mean for you.

Visit www.AccessON.ca.

Accessible Library Services

The Ontario Public Library Association has developed a [video project](#) to support staff training on serving persons with disabilities. The videos, which are captioned, are:

- [Assistive Technology in the Library](#)
- [Understanding the Diversity of Library Customer Needs](#)
- [Accessible Library Service for a Person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)
- Providing a Barrier Free Library Experience (coming soon)

Ontario Human Rights Code

The AODA uses the definition of 'disability' found in the Ontario Human Rights Code. The Code has provided equal rights and opportunities and freedom from discrimination for persons with disabilities since 1962.

Resources from the Ontario Human Rights Commission include:

- [Disability and the Duty to Accommodate: your rights and responsibilities](#)
- [Human Rights eLearning series](#)

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