

Disability Awareness & Etiquette Tips

All Disabilities

- When referring to someone with a disability, use “person-first language,” such as “person with a disability”, or use the persons’ name. Never use the word “handicap.” or any other words that have derogatory meanings. “Handicapped” is outdated and unacceptable terminology.
- It’s acceptable to use common expressions with individuals that seem like it may relate to their disability, such as, “see what I mean” (to someone who is blind).
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted, then listen and follow the person’s instructions carefully.
- Communicate directly with the person with a disability, not with their family, friends or companions, unless they direct you to do so.
- Be familiar with all the accessibility features and services of the event, such as providing materials in alternate formats, location of animal relief area and securing sign language interpreters.

Individuals with Visual Impairments

- Always identify yourself when interacting with someone who has a visual impairment. Alert the individual when you are speaking directly to them if more than the two of you are present.
- Ask the individual how much detailed information they would like you to provide for them.
- Even though you are assisting the person, still describe actions you are taking with them.
- The generally accepted way to assist a person with a visual impairment is to stand beside them and offer your arm (L-shaped) closest to them, and alert them to grab it. Then, walk slightly ahead of the person using their chosen pace.
- It’s acceptable to give “clock cues” when giving directions, such as “the chair is at 12 o’clock (straight ahead).
- Don’t take any actions that might distract a service animal from performing its duties, such as petting or feeding, without first getting permission from the owner. A service animal is not considered a pet.

When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions

- (1) Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?
- (2) What work or task has the dog been trained to perform? Staff are not allowed to request any documentation for the dog, require that the dog demonstrate its task, or inquire about the nature of the person's disability.

Individuals with Mobility Impairments

- Do not touch or push someone's wheelchair or grab their mobility device without their permission, since it's considered part of their personal space.
- Be willing to "deliver the service" to the individual using a mobility device if barriers exist. Otherwise, serve the individual from the accessible counter.
- Be aware of obstacles that may exist that impede a clear path of travel.

Individuals with Speech Impairments

- Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish. You may need to ask them questions that require a "yes or no" response to make sure you understood correctly.
- Writing notes or pointing to objects or printed materials may be an effective way to communicate with individuals who are speech impaired.

Individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Using gestures and basic signs may be a way to enhance your communication. Writing simple notes or pointing to objects or printed material can also be effective.
- Speak directly to the person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.

Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities

- Provide information to the individual in a short, concise manner. The language used should be basic and easy to understand.
- Using visual images of information can allow for effective communication.
- When giving instructions, you may need to break down tasks into basic, easy to follow steps.

***For more information on disability awareness, please contact:
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