

# **Americans with Disabilities Act and Suggestions for Inclusion of People with Disabilities In Adult Continuing Education**

## **ETIQUETTE**

Here are some general considerations for disability etiquette... When talking to someone with a disability, speak directly to that person.

People with disabilities are entitled to the same courtesies that you extend to anyone. This includes their personal privacy.

If you don't lean or hang on to people in general, then don't lean or hang on to someone's wheelchair. Wheelchairs are extensions of personal space for people who use them.

Treat adults as adults. Call a person by his first name only when you are doing so with everyone else present.

Relax and don't be embarrassed if you happen to use an accepted, common expression such as, "See you later," or "I've got to be running along," that seems to relate to the person's disability.

When talking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, place your self at the wheelchair user's eye level to spare both of you a stiff neck.

When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who are with you. When giving directions, be as specific as possible, such as "walk fifty feet and turn left."

Offer assistance to a person with a disability if you want to, but wait until your offer is accepted before you help and listen to any instructions the person may want to give.

Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to get things done or said. Let the person set the pace in walking and talking.

When planning events involving people with disabilities, consider their needs ahead of time.

Don't use terms and phrases that imply how a person feels about his or her disability. Don't define someone by his or her disability. Use terms that are up-to-date and non-derogatory.

Commit yourself to communicating effectively, courteously, and appropriately.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INCLUDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN YOUR AGENCY**

Focus on the abilities of a person with a disability, not the disability.

Treat all persons with disabilities with dignity and respect.

Be supportive and friendly. Be yourself, and share genuine laughter and interest in him or her.

Use positive language and avoid negative statements, "put-downs" or an exasperated tone of voice/expression.

Focus on enhancing self-esteem by creating opportunities for success.

Ask the person if they would like assistance and how you can best assist them.

Use correct language when speaking to a person about their disability. Avoid derogatory or patronizing terms.

Speak directly to the person with a disability; not a third party.

Respect the individual's right to privacy and confidentiality. Ask his/her permission to share information if you think it will be useful to others.

Be aware of and avoid potential barriers to participation in an activity. (EX: physical barriers for wheelchairs, videos without closed or open captions for hearing impaired.)

Offer age-appropriate activities to the participant. (EX: Don't engage a teen who is mentally impaired in a game of "Duck-Duck-Goose" or drawing with crayons.)

Take initiative to interact and know a person with a disability (look beyond the disability).

Choose activities that promote cooperation between individuals to achieve common goals.

Choose activities which involve the five senses (smell, taste, touch, hearing, and vision).

Don't deny a person with a disability the opportunity to participate in their choice of an activity based on your own assumptions of their capabilities.

Be aware of limitations specific to a disability, but don't be overprotective. There is a degree of dignity in being able to take risks.

People with disabilities are no different than people without disabilities. They have the same interests, needs, desires, and expectations with regard to adult continuing education activities.

## **TIPS ON ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS (INCLUDES WHEELCHAIRS, CRUTCHES, CANES, BRACES AND WALKERS)**

Prior to assisting a person with mobility impairment, ask if he/she would like assistance and how you can help.

Speak directly to the person who uses a wheelchair, not a third party.

If conversation lasts more than a few minutes, in order to establish and maintain eye contact, it is acceptable to sit or kneel to get yourself on the same level as the wheelchair user.

Open communication helps overcome fearful or misleading attitudes. Encourage questions about mobility aids.

It is OK to use expressions like "running along" when speaking to a person who uses a wheelchair. It is likely that he/she uses similar expression.

Be aware of a wheelchair user's capabilities. Some users can walk with aid and use wheelchairs to conserve energy and move about quickly.

Remember that mobility aids are a means of freedom that enable the user to move about independently.

When not in use, mobility aids (i.e., canes, crutches, walkers, wheelchairs) should be kept nearby the user. Obtain consent of the user, if necessary, to move these items.

## **TIPS FOR GUIDING INDIVIDUALS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

The guiding of an individual who is visually impaired is a personal service which sighted people may be asked to render. Some find a degree of awkwardness in assuming the role of a guide. This may arise from a lack of knowledge and exposure to persons who are blind. The following guidelines are designed to assist in relieving uncertainties:

Always ask the blind individual if he/she would like assistance. If he/she would, make contact so he/she can grip your arm just above the elbow. Holding your arm, he/she will follow slightly behind you.

Give verbal information when you are about to approach a new terrain or area.

If you come to an area that is too narrow for both of you to pass through, place your arm behind your back so he/she will know to step behind you.

Always pause before a step up or down.

When using stairs, step down or up, pause again until the individual you are guiding can ascend or descend with you. Move at a normal pace that is comfortable for both of you.

When approaching doors, put your arm in the position for narrow spaces and tell the person whether the doors opens toward or away from you, and whether it opens to the left or right.

When the person you are guiding wishes to be seated, take him/her to a chair and allow him/her to make contact and seat the individual.

Give the individual a description of the area you are walking through (i.e., "you are approaching a curb or step").

When walking with someone you are not familiar with, verbal explanations may be necessary in all the above situations.

If you are assisting a person who uses a Seeing Eye dog, remember that the dog is responsible for the safety of the person, You should not pet, feed or distract him from doing his job.

When assisting someone with a guide dog, offer him/her your left arm. If a person with a visual impairment uses a cane, offer assistance on the free hand side.

## **TIPS FOR INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

Ensure adequate staff supervision is available so participation in all activities occurs.

Throughout activities, designate a staff to provide verbal instructions and a description of what is occurring in the environment.

Individuals -with low vision can benefit from using contrasting colors in activities.

Plan activities which require use of the senses (hearing, smelling, tasting, touching).

Guide participants through a new activity by allowing them to feel your movements (i.e., hand over hand).

Explain clearly and in concrete terms what you are doing as you perform an activity.

If you distribute printed materials, describe what is on the materials for those who are unable to read it at the time you distribute it.

Don't be afraid to use words like "see" or "look" or "blind". Such words are a part of our everyday vocabulary and people who are blind use them too.

Do not make assumptions about what visually impaired participants would like or are capable of doing. Many people who are blind are denied opportunities for experiences such as scenic views merely because someone assumed "they wouldn't get much from the experience." With appropriate description, a blind person could enjoy a scenic view just as much as a sighted person.

## TIPS FOR INCLUDING DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING PERSONS

To facilitate speech reading:

Be sure you have the listener's attention. (Use a light touch, wave or other visual sign if needed to attract his/her attention.)

Turn toward the light and face the listener.

Speak clearly and not too quickly.

Use normal tone of voice. Avoid shouting and exaggerated expressions.

Use facial expressions, hand gestures and body movements to aid communications ... Persons who are deaf may not hear subtle changes in your voice.

Avoid chewing or smoking while you talk. Be aware the mustaches or beards can be a barrier to lip-reading.

Many deaf people do not read lips. In most cases, one cannot rely solely on that as a means of communication with a deaf person.

Avoid background noise, if possible,

Use simple sentences and directions to get over a stumbling block , try rephrasing or using different words.

Look for signs of bewilderment or "bluffing." The person may be embarrassed or concerned about "being a nuisance" and pretend to hear what was said. Above all, be patient and understanding.

In addition to speech reading, you should be aware of the following communication aids:

Although not every deaf person knows sign language, those who do use "sign" as their main communication mode will be most comfortable when another signer is present to interpret. Sign language interpreters are available for all structured activities when requested in advance.

When addressing someone who is accompanied by an interpreter, you should face toward and speak directly to the person with the hearing impairment.

Try finger spelling (hand/finger movements which correlate to letters of the alphabet) if you are not proficient in sign language. This type of communication is easy to learn but will make for slow communication.

Use visual aids such as diagrams or pictures or a written message. If a person does not speech read or use sign language, writing may be his/her only means of communication.

Make use of available visual and listening aids: Use videotapes that are closed or open-captioned Take advantage of assistive listening devices which are designated for people

with some hearing ability and are available upon request at an increasing number of public facilities (i.e., theaters, museums, etc.).

## **TIPS FOR INCLUDING PERSONS WHO ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED (INCLUDES PERSONS WHO ARE MENTALLY AND/OR LEARNING DISABLED)**

Treat adults with developmental disabilities as adults, not children. Don't "talk down" to the individual.

Keep concepts clear and concise. Use concrete examples.

Use simple language for captions on written materials and signs.

When teaching an activity, simplify your instruction by breaking the task into several easy steps. Keep directions simple and use demonstration.

Eliminate as many distractions as possible in order to aid concentration.

Consider shortening the length of an activity for persons with limited attention spans, or plan an alternate activity for individuals who may lose interest ahead of other group members (i.e., provide a magna-doodle set, paper and markers for drawing, a Walkman cassette player, etc.).

Allow extra time for moving from one place to another. Some individuals may have mobility, balance or stamina problems, causing them to move more slowly than the rest of the group.

Performing fine motor tasks may be difficult.

Include ample opportunities for restroom and water breaks. Reminders may be necessary.

Be aware of medications which may make the user sensitive to sun exposure.

Be aware of associated health problems (i.e., enlarged heart, allergies, seizures).

Persons with Down syndrome may have increased susceptibility to neck and spine injuries. Be aware of this and avoid undue stress such as tumbling, gymnastics, etc.

## **TIPS FOR PLANNING TRIPS TO INCLUDE FULL PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Inquire about the need for accessible transportation.

If necessary, acquire transportation, which is accessible for persons in wheelchairs.

A sign language interpreter may be necessary for hearing impaired persons. Ask about availability of assistive listening devices if you will be in an "audience situation" (i.e., theater, puppet show, lecture, etc.).

Plan trips which involve all the senses for persons with sensory impairment (i.e., hearing, vision). Example: a musical concert may not be the best choice if your group includes one or more participants who are deaf, unless it is going to be interpreted.

"Hands-on" experiences are likely to be more successful.

When planning a trip to a swimming pool, inquire about an accessible dressing area. Plan to use life jackets for seizure-prone individuals. (A child's parent or an adult with a disability may waive this requirement in writing.)

Distribute I.D. cards with phone numbers to anyone who may not be able to communicate emergency information if separated from the group.

Be sure to bring emergency phone numbers a medication information on trips.

## **WHEN YOU FIRST MEET A PERSON WHO HAS A DISABILITY**

First of all, remember the person with a disability is a person. He is like anyone else, except for the special limitations of his disability.

A disability need not be ignored or denied between friends. But, until your relationship is that, show friendly interest in him as a person.

Be yourself when you meet him.

Talk about the same things that you would with anyone else,

Help him only when it is requested. When a person with a disability falls, he may wish to get up by himself, just as many people who are visually impaired or blind prefer to get along without assistance. So, offer help but wait for a request before giving it.

Be patient. Let the individual set his own pace in walking or talking.

Don't be afraid to laugh with him.

Don't stop and stare when you see a person with a disability whom you do not know. He deserves the same courtesy any person should receive.

Don't be overprotective or oversolicitous. Don't shower the individual with kindness.

Don't ask embarrassing questions. If he wants to tell you about his disability, he will bring up the subject himself.

Don't offer pity or charity. The person with a disability wants to be treated as an equal. He wants to prove himself.

Don't separate a person with a disability from his wheelchair or crutches unless he asks.

When dining with a person with a disability, don't offer to cut his food unless he asks.

Don't make up your mind ahead of time about a person with a disability. You may be surprised how wrong you are in judging his interests and abilities.

Talk to a person with a disability in a mature voice. He may look extremely little or young, but intellectually may be functioning at a very high level.

Enjoy your friendship with the individual with a disability. Many times he will be an inspiration to you.

## IT'S THE PERSON FIRST

People with disabilities, like other minority groups, are actively seeking full civil rights. They want to be accepted by their communities as equal members who actively participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life.

Consider how you might introduce a friend to another friend who is visiting from out of town. You would give your visitor's name and where she lives. You might mention her occupation, her hobbies, or things she may have in common with your friend.

Each of us has many characteristics, physical, mental, and personal, that make us who we are. Most of us want to be known as a whole person and not just by one or two facts. We would hope to be considered as who we are before the fact that we might have a limp from an accident, have slower speech due to a stroke, or wear glasses. It is important to speak and write about children and adults with disabilities in a way that conveys that they are just like everyone else. Let your words emphasize the person's worth and abilities, not the disabling condition. Refer to the person first, rather than the disability. Use the phrase "a person with disabilities" instead of a disabled person." This simple etiquette puts the emphasis on the individual first.

Here are a few suggestions for talking about people with disabilities:

### **Affirmative Phrases**

Person who is blind or visually impaired.  
Person who is deaf or hard of hearing.  
Person who has multiple sclerosis.  
Person affected by cerebral palsy; person with cerebral palsy.  
Person who has muscular dystrophy.  
Person with Down syndrome.  
Person with mental retardation.  
Person with epilepsy or seizure disorder.  
Person with mental illness.  
Person who uses a wheelchair.  
Person with a physical disability.  
Person without speech, nonverbal.  
Seizure.  
Successful, productive.  
  
Person without disabilities.  
  
No alternative to these...

### **Negative Phrases**

The blind.  
Suffers a hearing loss.  
Afflicted by MS.  
CP victim; palsied.  
  
Stricken with MD.  
Mongoloid.  
Retarded; mentally defective.  
Epileptic.  
Crazy; insane.  
Confined or restricted to a wheelchair.  
Crippled; lame; deformed; invalid.  
Dumb; mute.  
Fit.  
Courageous (implies the person is a hero or martyr).  
Normal (implies person with a disability isn't normal).  
Drain; burden; poor; unfortunate

## FACTS AND MYTHS

Here are some myths and facts about people with disabilities:

Myth 1: People with disabilities are brave and courageous.

Fact: Adjusting to a disability actually requires adapting to a lifestyle, not bravery or courage.

Myth 2: All persons who use wheelchairs are chronically ill or sickly.

Fact: The association between wheelchair use and illness has probably evolved through hospitals using wheelchairs to transport sick people. A person may use a wheelchair for a variety of reasons, none of which may have anything to do with lingering illness.

Myth 3: Wheelchair use is confining: users of wheelchairs are "wheelchair-bound."

Fact: A wheelchair, like a bicycle or an automobile, is a personal assistive device that enables someone to get around.

Myth 4: All persons with a hearing loss can read lips.

Fact: Lip-reading skill varies greatly among people who use it and is never wholly reliable.

Myth 5: People who are blind acquire a sixth sense.

Fact: Although most people who are blind develop their remaining senses more fully, they do not have a sixth sense.

Myth 6: People with disabilities are more comfortable "with their own kind."

Fact: Years of grouping people with disabilities in separate schools and institutions has reinforced this misconception. Today, more and more people are taking advantage of new opportunities to join the mainstream of our society.

Myth 7: Nondisabled people are obligated to "take care of" their fellow citizens with disabilities.

Fact: People may offer assistance to whomever they choose, but most people with disabilities prefer to be responsible for themselves.

Myth 8: Curious children should never be allowed to ask people about their disabilities.

Fact: Many children have a natural, uninhibited curiosity and ask questions that some adults might find embarrassing. But scolding children for asking questions may make them think there is something "bad" about having a disability. Most people with disabilities won't mind answering a child's question.

Myth 9: The lives of people with disabilities are totally different than those of nondisabled people.

Fact: People with disabilities go to school, get married, work, have families, do laundry, grocery shop, laugh, cry, pay taxes, get angry, have prejudices, vote, plan, and dream like everyone else.

Myth 10: It's all right for nondisabled people to park in accessible parking spaces for a short time.

Fact: Because accessible parking spaces are designed and situated to meet the needs of persons who have disabilities, these spaces should only be used by people who need them.

Myth 11: Most people with disabilities are unable to have sexual relationships.

Fact: Any person can have a sexual relationship by adapting the sexual activity. People with disabilities can have children naturally as well as adopt them. People with disabilities, like other people, are sexual beings.

Myth 12: People with disabilities always need help.

Fact: Many people with disabilities are quite independent and capable of giving help. But if you want to help someone with a disability, ask first if they need it.

## **AT WHAT POINT CAN SOMEONE BE DENIED SERVICE?**

It is important for everyone to know if and when it is legally appropriate to say "no" to an integrated placement. Three reasons can be supported for denying access to a person with a disability. They are:

- safety;
- the participant's inability to abide by reasonable codes of conduct for the program and setting (even with assistance); and
- it places an undue burden on the agency. The burden may be financial or the burden may be that the program is significantly altered or the nature of the situation is changed.

Before denying an individual with a disability a service, it is recommended that legal consultation be sought.

Denying access to a person for reasons of perceived safety endangerment must go far beyond what has traditionally been regarded as an "unsafe situation for a person with a disability." People with disabilities or limitations are able to safely do more than the general public ever thought possible. Each situation must be evaluated on an individual basis.

Denying access due to financial burden or significantly altering the program or service must be documented. An entity should be prepared to prove, in court, the impact or potential impact; inclusion of the individual would have on the agency and its ability to continue its operations. Each situation must be evaluated on an individual basis.

Codes of conduct must apply to all people universally, not just to individuals with disabilities or limitations. An entity should be prepared to prove, in court, the impact, or potential impact, inclusion of the individual would have on the agency and its ability to continue its operations. Each situation must be evaluated on an individual basis.

## **RECOMMENDED BROCHURE ADDENDA**

### **Code of Conduct**

Your agency should list your required Code of Conduct in your brochure/publication. If you do not want to list the entire code in the brochure/publication, you should at least state that your agency adheres to a Code of Conduct and post it at the administrative office.

### **Registration Form**

Include the following question on your registration form: "Does the registrant have any special needs? If so, please describe any accommodation needed for the enjoyment of this program." This will possibly prevent a person with a disability or limitation from registering for a program without your prior knowledge of his/her special needs.

A similar statement should also appear on your agendas to allow a person the opportunity to request an assistive listening device or an interpreter in order to communicate with your governing board, i.e., "If you will be attending tonight's program and are in need of any special accommodations to aid you in communicating with our board, please contact our office at TDD 4 123 -4 5 67 or use the relay system. We will be happy to meet your needs. Please allow us 48 hours' notice to secure proper accommodations."

## **SUPPORT STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

It would be helpful if an entity, when hiring part-time staff, would seek applicants who meet the requirements of the job and who also have healthy attitudes and/or experience working with people who have disabilities.

The following are suggested questions you might include when interviewing:

What experience or exposure have you had with persons with a disability?

In your opinion, what are some of the differences between people who have a disability and those who do not?

How would you attempt to meet the needs of disabled individuals, if they were in your program?

Do you have any objections to working with people with disabilities?

The answers to these questions will give you an indication of how an applicant might do when working with an individual with a disability.

## **DISABILITY POINTERS**

Before beginning an activity, review with the consumer the safety rules and considerations that apply.

When presenting instructions, use multi-modal communication. Use concrete, direct and short sentences. Provide one part of the instruction at a time, rather than a 10-minute speech soon to be forgotten.

Demonstration is very useful, as well as "DO AS I DO" learning.

Break the activity down into small sequential steps. Teach each step progressively, noting and adjusting to the speed of the learner.

Allow plenty of time for learning and relearning.

Attention spans may be limited, so allow for breaks in a long task or alternative activities.

Noncompetitive activities allow for inclusion.

Emphasize choice, age appropriateness and independence. Avoid doing for or making choices for the person.

Communication styles may be different.

Appropriate reinforcement assists in building confidence and skills. Do not provide unwarranted praise.

Expectations play a major role in our leadership style. THINK POSITIVE!

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