

What to Say

Do use respectful terms like:

- Person with a disability
- Person using a wheelchair/walker
- Disabled person
- Little person
- Person with mental health disability
- Deaf/hard of hearing
- Blind/low vision
- Neurodivergent

Don't use hurtful terms like:

- Wheelchair-bound
- Handicapped/handicapable
- Invalid/crippled/slow
- Special needs/differently abled
- Victim/sufferer
- Midget
- Insane/crazy
- Deaf and dumb/deaf and mute
- Retarded/spaz/challenged

What to Keep in Mind

- ▶ Treat adults as adults and independent people, not as children, just like you would treat anyone without a disability.
- ▶ Ask about a person's disability only if it's relevant, if the person offers the information, or if you know the person well.
- ▶ Offer to help only if the person is visibly struggling. If the person asks for help or accepts your offer, follow their instructions.
- ▶ Speak directly to the person, not the interpreter, aide, or companion.
- ▶ Don't pet or distract a service animal.
- ▶ Remember that people with disabilities know themselves just like you do: their likes, dislikes, abilities, limitations, etc.
- ▶ Know that many disabilities are not visible.
- ▶ If you make a mistake, apologize, correct it, learn from it, and move on.



Office of the Chief
Disability Officer

PHYSICAL AND SENSORY

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Accessibility Considerations

When hosting an event, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the event being held in an accessible location, including bathrooms?
- If the event is virtual, is it being held on an accessible platform?
- Are you including access language in event promotions?
- Are you prepared to hire accessibility professionals (ASL interpreters, captioners, audio describers)?

Learn More

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When you're interacting with someone...



...who is deaf or hard of hearing

- ▶ Get their attention by stepping into their line of vision, waving your hand, or tapping them on the shoulder.
- ▶ **If the person uses a sign language interpreter**, speak to and look at the person instead of the interpreter.
- ▶ **If a person reads lips**, converse in a well-lit, quiet area, and speak clearly at a normal volume with your mouth visible. There's no need to yell or exaggerate your speech.
- ▶ Consider moving to a quieter area if it's too noisy to communicate.
- ▶ If the person doesn't understand you, offer to repeat, rephrase, or write it.
- ▶ If you don't understand something they said, ask them to repeat or write it.
- ▶ If you know any sign language, try using it.

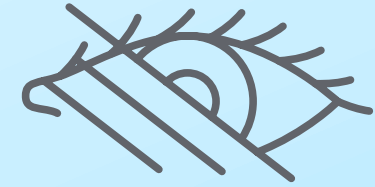


...who has physical / mobility disabilities

- ▶ Offer to shake hands or bump fists when meeting.
- ▶ Be mindful of personal space but consider moving closer if you're in a loud environment.
- ▶ Stand or place yourself at eye level if speaking for more than a few minutes.

DON'T:

- ▶ Pat the person on the head.
- ▶ Grab or touch them without asking first.
- ▶ Lean on, touch, or move a person's wheelchair, cane, crutches, walker, or other mobility device.



...who is blind or has low vision

SPEAKING:

- ▶ Enter the conversation by saying your name and tell them when you're leaving.
- ▶ In a group, identify yourself and to whom you're speaking each time you talk.
- ▶ Face the person and speak at a normal volume.

WALKING:

- ▶ Stay on the opposite side of a guide dog or cane.
- ▶ Be specific when describing the environment, street signs, or obstacles.
- ▶ **If asked to be a human guide**, offer your elbow, wait until they take it, and walk steadily at their pace.
- ▶ **If giving directions**, be as specific as possible and use numbers on a clock as part of the description (e.g., "The door is at 4 o'clock").

About Service Animals

A service animal is trained to help a person with a disability. Service animals are allowed to go with the person, even where animals are not normally allowed. Don't touch, distract, or speak to the service animal. Interact with the person, not the service animal.