

# DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

# COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- ✘ Person first language
- ✘ A person is not a condition.
- ✘ Disability is not illness.
- ✘ Disability is a normal part of life, not tragedy.
- ✘ Relax and use everyday language.
- ✘ Ask rather than assuming.

# COMMUNICATING BASICS

- ✘ Use the term “disability”
  - + “Handicap” refers to something in the environment & is considered offensive when referring to a person.
- ✘ “Invalid” “retarded” & “crippled” are some examples of what not to say.
- ✘ Reference person first, then disability.  
ex. Person with epilepsy, not “epileptic”

# COMMUNICATING BASICS

- ✘ Avoid defeatist terms when referring to impairments.
  - ex. Don't say "confined to a wheelchair" or "victim of Aids"
- ✘ Avoid portraying a person with a disability as heroic
  - + Portray the person in real life terms...parent, athlete, business owner.

# COMMUNICATING BASICS

- ✘ Ask before providing assistance & don't be offended if the person refuses your assistance.
- ✘ Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to his or her caregiver, interpreter, or companion.
- ✘ Neither focus nor attempt to ignore a disability.
  - + i.e. Don't mention the disability unless it is relevant to the conversation.

# COMMUNICATING: SPEECH RELATED

- ✘ Speech Impairments can be caused by stroke, MS, ALS, or other diseases.
- ✘ Augmentative Communication (aug com).
- ✘ Tips:
  - + Provide time for person to complete sentence.
  - + Treat person as fully competent.
  - + Give extra time if client using aug com.

# COMMUNICATING: MOVEMENT RELATED

- ✘ Extend social courtesies as usual (if someone is unable to shake your hand, he or she will tell you).
- ✘ Don't lean on someone's wheelchair...it is considered part of one's body space.
- ✘ When talking to someone using a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, place yourself at eye level.
- ✘ Relax, it's okay to say "Don't Run Off"

# COMMUNICATING: VISION RELATED

- ✘ Upon greeting, identify yourself and others who are involved in the conversation.
- ✘ When offering guiding assistance, offer an arm & give verbal cues. “Guide” don’t “lead”
- ✘ Give cues if you move locations
- ✘ Don’t pet Guide Dogs (applies to all service dogs)
- ✘ Relax, it’s okay to say “see you later”

# COMMUNICATING: HEARING RELATED

- ✘ Get the person's attention before speaking. Look directly at them while speaking.
- ✘ Speak clearly, slowly and expressively to establish whether he or she reads lips.
- ✘ Stay in a well-lit area. Keep hands, food away from your mouth.
- ✘ Don't shout.
- ✘ Relax, it's okay to say "I hear ya"

# COMMUNICATING: HIDDEN DISABILITIES

- ✘ Not all disabilities are ‘obvious’
- ✘ Learning-related disabilities are common and often not diagnosed
  - + Be clear, concise, and patient
  - + Rephrase your question/comment if that helps
- ✘ Other hidden disabilities include low-vision & psychiatric conditions
  - + Stick to the ‘basic guidelines’ and you will be fine.

**THANK YOU**