

Interacting With People Who are Visually Impaired

- Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone with a vision impairment. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person that you are speaking to. When dining with a friend with a vision impairment, ask if you can describe what is on their plate.
- Never touch someone with vision impairment unless they know you are there.
- Offer your arm. Don't propel or lead a person with a vision impairment.
- When accompanying a person with a vision impairment, offer to read signs, menus, etc., and on the street warn of any unusual hazards.
- Don't stop helping abruptly. Let the person with a vision impairment know before you leave.
- If you meet someone with a guide dog never distract, pet, or feed the dog. Remember to keep other pets away. If a service animal is distracted, it may inhibit the service animal from doing its job.

Interacting With People With Physical Disabilities

- Do not lean or hang on someone's wheelchair. Bear in mind that people with physical disabilities treat their wheelchairs as extensions of their bodies.
- Never patronize people who use wheelchair by patting them on the head.
- Never move adaptive equipment outside the person's reach.
- Be careful when assisting someone who uses adaptive equipment. Ask how the equipment works if you are unfamiliar with it.
- Place yourself at eye level when speaking to someone who uses a wheelchair, scooter, crutches, etc.
- Prevent a strained neck by standing a few feet away when talking to an individual in a wheelchair.
- For long talks, it's best to find a place to sit down.

Interacting With Persons Who Have A Speech Impairment

- Listen attentively to people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish. If necessary, ask short question that require short answers or a nod of the head. Never pretend to understand; instead, repeat what you understood and allow the person to respond.
- Stay calm. The person with a speech impairment has been in this situation before.
- Don't shout. People with speech impairments often have perfect hearing.
- Be patient and give your full attention. People with speech impairments want to be understood as badly as you want to understand them.
- Don't interrupt. Don't finish sentences or supply words. This can be frustrating.

Interacting With Persons Who Are Hearing Impaired

- Tap a person with a hearing impairment on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to establish if the person can read lips. If so, try to face the light source and keep hands, food and other objects away from your mouth when speaking. If a person is wearing a hearing aid, don't assume they have the ability to discriminate your speaking voice. Never shout to a person with a hearing impairment, just just simply speak in a normal tone.
- Find the best way to communicate (sign, lip read, write notes, etc.)
- Rephrase rather than repeat. If the person didn't understand you, then try using different words to express your ideas.
- Use body language. It offers clues to what you are saying.

Interacting With People Who Have Mental Impairments

- People with mental impairment learn slowly and have a harder time using their knowledge.
- Be clear and concise - don't use complex sentences or difficult words.
- Don't talk down to the individual - in other words don't baby talk. This won't make it easier to understand.
- Don't take advantage of the individual. Never ask a person with a mental impairment to do anything that you wouldn't ask a friend to do.
- Be understanding and patient. People with mental impairments are often aware of their limitations, but they have the same needs and desires as everyone else.
- People with mental impairments have an impairment of the mind that can make daily life more difficult. If someone is obviously upset, stay calm. Getting upset yourself won't help matters. Offer to help by contacting a family member, counselor, or friend.

Guide Dogs: Fact, Fantasy, and Etiquette

- Services animals are not required to be certified. The person with a disability simply needs to have a note from their doctor or counselor stating that the service animal is for the emotional, mental, or physical well being of the person with a disability. This note should be on letterhead stationery with the doctor's or counselor's name, phone number, and address.
- A service animal must have its attention on several things.
- The owner and dog are a team.
- Don't distract a working dog and NEVER when they are crossing the street.
- Keep your dog under control when approaching a working dog.
- Don't feed or throw toys to a working dog.
- And last, keep in mind, most service animal owners are proud of them. They like to talk about them. If you're not sure, just ask. It's okay to be curious, but be respectful.

Categories of Service Animals

- ❖ **Dog Guide or Seeing Eye Dog:** is a carefully trained dog that serves as a travel tool for persons with severe visual impairments.
- ❖ **Hearing or Signal Dog:** is trained to alert a person with significant hearing loss or who is deaf when a sound occurs.
- ❖ **Service Dog/Animal:** is a dog or other animal trained to assist a person who has a mobility or health impairment.
- ❖ **Autism Assistance Dog:** are trained to act much like any other service animal, but they address the specific needs of a person with autism, especially children with autism.
- ❖ **Seizure Response Dog:** is trained to assist a person with a seizure disorders.
- ❖ **Therapy Animals:** these animals provide people with therapeutic contact, but are not limited to working with people who have disabilities.
- ❖ **Companion/Emotional Support Animal:** assist people with mental or emotional disabilities to function independently.

Learning More About People With Disabilities

- Listen to a disabled person – one in your neighborhood, your church, or around your place of employment and ask them about their life – not about the medical aspects of the disability. When we compare what we found out, we’ ll have not heard from a couple of experts, but from enough people to realize that there are differences and similarities.
- Read a book or watch a video about a person with a disability. John Hockenberry’ s, “Moving Violations” is a good book: “When Billy Broke His Head” and “Kiss My Wheels” are good videos. Consider whether the experiences are typical or atypical and why.
- Some people with disabilities insist that there are many positive aspects to the experiences of being disabled. Discuss why they say this.
- Survey your neighborhood: cars parked over sidewalks, unleashed dogs, curb cuts, and branches that can hit a blind person.
- Find a curb cut. Is the “cut” flush with the street at the bottom, or is there still a lip? Is the curb cut broken? Would it be easy to use in a wheelchair? Are cars parked in front of it, making it unuseable?