

DISABILITY ETIQUETTE

Disability Etiquette is about respecting everyone as an individual. Here are a few tips:

In conversation...

- Always speak to the person with a disability rather than through a companion who may be present.
- Treat adults as adults and don't use a baby-voice as you would with small children; refrain from using words like sweetie, sweetheart, or honey.
- Tap a person who has a hearing disability on the shoulder to get their attention. Look directly at the person, speaking clearly and slowly. Shouting won't help but written notes will!
- When talking with a person who uses a wheelchair place yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level to spare you both from stiff necks!
- When greeting a person with vision loss always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When talking in a group use the name of the person to whom you are speaking to give vocal cue. Use a normal tone of voice and let it be known when the conversation is at the end.
- Provide your whole attention when talking to a person who has difficulty speaking. Stay encouraging rather than correcting, stay patient, and do not speak for the person. When able ask questions that promote short answers or nods and shakes of the head. Never pretend to understand but rather repeat what you do understand; the person's reaction will guide you to understanding.

Common Courtesies...

- When wanting to help a person with a disability, ask **FIRST** before you act and listen to any instructions the person may want to give you.
- When giving directions to a person using a wheelchair consider physical obstacles such as stairs, curbs, and steep hills. It's helpful to think about distance and weather conditions as well.
- Don't lean or hang on a person's wheelchair. Wheelchairs are an extension of personal space.
- When giving directions to a person with a visual impairment use words like "left a hundred feet" or "right two yards."
- When offering to help a person with a visual impairment, allow the person to take your arm; that helps to guide, rather than to propel or lead the person.
- Be mindful of the extra time it may take a person with a disability to get things done or said. Let the person with a disability set the pace in walking and talking.

Helpful Facts ...

- It's okay to ask people about their disabilities and it's okay for them to choose to not talk about it!
- Remember, just because a person uses a wheelchair doesn't mean that person is sick. Lots of people who use wheelchairs are healthy and strong.
- It's okay to ask people who have speech problems to repeat themselves.
- If an interpreter is helping you to speak with a person who is deaf or hearing impaired, make sure you talk to the person, not the interpreter.
- When talking to a person who is blind don't speak loudly; they hear as well as you do!
- **NEVER** pet or try to play with Service Animals/Guide Dogs. They cannot be distracted from their job!
- Don't **EVER** park in places reserved for people with disabilities unless you have the appropriate tag.
- Invite friends with disabilities to come to your home, to go out to eat, to go to a concert. Think of ways to make sure that they can be included in the things you like to do. Always make sure when going out that the person with the disability can have their needs accommodated. If not, ask the manager or owner to do things like putting in a ramp or making sure there are braille menus available.
- Treat a person with a disability the way you like to be treated!