

Etiquette for people of all abilities at work and at play

Reception Etiquette

Know where accessible restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones are located. If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives, such as the private or employee restroom, a glass of water or your desk phone.

Use a normal tone of voice when extending a verbal welcome. Do not raise your voice unless requested.

When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands.

People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands.

- Shaking hands with the left hand is acceptable.
- For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.

Treat adults in a manner befitting adults:

- Call a person by his or her first name only when extending that familiarity to all others present.
- Never patronize people using wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.

When addressing a person who uses a wheelchair, never lean on the person's wheelchair. The chair is part of the space that belongs to the person who uses it.

When talking with a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person rather than through a companion who may be along.

If an interpreter is present, speak to the person who has scheduled the appointment, not to the interpreter. Always maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter.

Offer assistance in a dignified manner with sensitivity and respect. Be prepared to have the offer declined. Do not proceed to assist if your offer to assist is declined. If the offer is accepted, listen to or accept instructions.

- Allow a person with a visual impairment to take your arm (at or about the elbow.) This will enable you to guide rather than propel or lead the person.
- Offer to hold or carry packages in a welcoming manner.
Example: *May I help you with your packages?*
- When offering to hand a coat or umbrella, do not offer to hand a cane or crutches unless the individual requests otherwise.

Conversation Etiquette

When talking to a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person, rather than through a companion who may be along.

Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted common expressions such as "See you later." Or "Got to be running along." that seem to relate to the person's disability.

To get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, naturally and slowly to establish if the person can read lips. Not all persons with hearing impairments can lip-read. Those who can will rely on facial expression and other body language to help in understanding. Show consideration by placing yourself facing the light source and keeping your hands and food away from your mouth when speaking. Shouting won't help. Written notes may.

When talking with a person in a wheel chair for more than a few minutes, use a chair, whenever possible, in order to place yourself at the person's eye level to facilitate conversation.

When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. EXAMPLE: *On my right is Penelope Potts.*

When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking. Speak in a normal tone of voice, indicate in advance when you will be moving from one place to another and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.

Listen attentively when you're talking to a person who has a speech impairment. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Exercise patience rather than attempting to speak for a person with speech difficulty. When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod or a shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Repeat what you understand, or incorporate the interviewee's statements into each of the following questions. The person's reactions will clue you in and guide you to understanding.

If you have difficulty communicating, be willing to repeat or rephrase a question.

Do not shout at a hearing impaired person. Shouting distorts sounds accepted through hearing aids and inhibits lip reading.

Do not shout at a person who is blind or visually impaired -- he or she can hear you!

To facilitate conversation, be prepared to offer a visual cue to a hearing impaired person or an audible cue to a vision impaired person, especially when more than one person is speaking.