



# Breast Cancer Awareness for Women with Disabilities: Quick Guide To Interacting with People With Disabilities

## All Types of Disabilities

- Introduce yourself and offer a handshake. The person will tell you if they are not able to shake hands for some reason.
- Always ask before providing assistance – wait until offer is accepted.
- Speak directly to the person and not their attendant, interpreter, family member, etc.
- Do not pet service animals without checking with the owner first.
- It is acceptable to ask questions if you are unsure how to proceed or what to do next.

## People with Mobility Disabilities

- Do not push or touch a person's wheelchair or scooter without their permission – these are both part of personal body space.
- Try to ensure that there is space in your waiting rooms for someone in a wheelchair or scooter to comfortably wait in their chair.

## People with Cognitive, Developmental, or Intellectual Disabilities

- Keep communication simple, using short sentences and completing one topic before moving to the topic. Ask for confirmation that the person understood what you were saying.
- If possible, use pictures or other visibility aids.
- Ask if the person has any questions or if there is anything they would like for you to clarify.

Funding provided to the American Association on Health and Disability from the Susan G. Komen Foundation (2016)



American Association on Health and Disability

[www.aahd.us](http://www.aahd.us)

301-545-6140



1-877 GO KOMEN

(1-877-465-6636)

[ww5.komen.org](http://ww5.komen.org)

## People with Mental Health or Behavioral Health Disabilities

- If someone appears agitated or even seems angry when they are just confused; speak calmly and patiently and offer to repeat information.
- If someone becomes anxious, ask how you may assist them in getting their needs met – speak in a calm tone of voice.
- If a person brings a friend or relative to the appointment, speak directly to the person, not the friend or relative.

## People who are Blind or Have Low Visibility

- Introduce yourself and anyone else who is present for the conversation.
- Offer to read information to a person when appropriate. Speak directly to a person, not through a companion.
- If you are asked to guide someone, offer your arm, and then walk slightly ahead of them after they take your arm. Describe barriers in the way, such as steps, and announce which direction you will be turning. Never push or pull someone or leave someone standing alone in the middle of a room.
- Do not pet or distract their Guide Dog. A Guide Dog walks on the left so you should walk on the right.

## People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or Have a Hearing Loss

- Let the person establish their preferred method of communication for your conversation, such as lip reading, sign language or writing notes. Refer to the intake questions for further guidance on how to know in advance what the patient will require.
- Always speak directly to the person and not their interpreter.
- Do not raise your voice unless they request that you do so.

## People with Speech and Language Disorders

- People with speech and language challenges may take longer to communicate with you – be patient and respectful. Ask the person to repeat themselves if you do not understand them. Do not interrupt or finish the person's sentence.
- Ask one question at a time, giving them time to respond before moving on.
- If the person uses any assistive technology devices, make sure they are always within the person's reach.