



Project Accessibility Quick Guide To Interacting With People With Disabilities

People With 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 giving assistance.
- ◆ Speak directly to the person and not their attendant, interpreter, etc.
- ◆ Do not pet service animals without checking with the owner first.
- ◆ Use the Project Accessibility recommended intake questions to learn how to best serve your patient with a disability.

People With Mobility Disabilities

- ◆ Do not push or touch a person's wheelchair without their permission.
- ◆ Try to ensure that there is space in your waiting rooms for someone in a wheelchair to comfortably wait in their chair.

People With Cognitive Or Intellectual Disabilities

- ◆ Keep communication simple, using short sentences and completing one topic before moving to the topic.
- ◆ 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.



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People With Psychiatric Disabilities

- ◆ Many people with psychiatric disabilities may become agitated or even seem angry when they are actually just confused; don't assume the person is violent or dangerous.
- ◆ Do not assume that they have a cognitive disability (e.g., mental retardation) as well. Speak to them as you would any other person.
- ◆ If someone with a psychiatric disability becomes upset or angry, calmly ask how you may assist them in getting their needs met.

People With Visual Disabilities

- ◆ Introduce yourself and anyone else who is present for the conversation.
- ◆ Offer to read information to a person when appropriate.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Do not pet or distract their guide dog.

People With Hearing Disabilities

- ◆ 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 Disabilities

- ◆ Be prepared for patients with speech disabilities to take longer to communicate with you.
- ◆ Do not interrupt or finish their sentences for them. Give them time!
- ◆ Ask one question at a time, giving them time to respond before moving on.
- ◆ Ask the patient to repeat themselves if you do not understand them.
- ◆ If the person uses any assistive technology devices, make sure they are always within the person's reach.