

Etiquette for Interacting with People with Disabilities



This guide offers ways to practice respect and promote disability equity.

Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak directly to the person with a disability rather than through a companion, staff, or interpreter. • Use the same vocal tone and level as your typical speaking voice. • Let a person with difficulty speaking finish. If you don't understand, repeat what you've understood, ask if that is correct, and allow them to respond. If they are using a communication device, wait for them to finish without interrupting or finishing their sentences.
Offering Assistance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always ask if assistance is needed. Listen to or ask for instructions if accepted. • Do not assume they can't. Instead, assume they can until they tell you otherwise.
Decision Making & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include people in the decision-making process by giving them information and options. • Always inform people of what you are doing, ask for their consent, and ensure they are comfortable.
Personal Space & Mobility Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to make eye contact. • Do not lean on or hang on a person's wheelchair; it is part of their personal space. • Never move a wheelchair without informing the person and asking for permission.
Respect & Patience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain patient with someone. Wait until you are sure you understand what they are saying, rather than assuming you know. • Use multiple-choice questions with a "yes" or "no" response, including the option of all or none of the above. • Relax and be yourself.