

ACCESSIBILITY TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Physical Disabilities

- A wheelchair = a person's personal space – ask before pushing or touching it
- Get on eye level with a person in a wheelchair to talk
- Keep walk ways and hall ways free of clutter and barriers

Visual Disabilities

- Introduce yourself by name & role when approaching
- Ask if assistance is needed—offer your arm rather than taking theirs
- Don't touch a guide dog without the owner's permission
- Have large print format if needed
- Use Braille signage to the right of doorways
- Announce when you leave the room

Hearing Disabilities

- Face and speak directly to the person & make sure you have their attention
- Rephrase rather than repeat sentences a person doesn't understand
- Tap on the shoulder or wave your hand to get their attention
- Hire certified American Sign Language interpreters if required—do not rely on family members as interpreters

Cognitive or Intellectual Disabilities

- Provide information in plain language
- Ask the individual to repeat the information they've received to be sure it was understood
- Never pretend to understand what a person says—ask them to repeat it slowly

General Communication Tips

- Use person first language – “the person with a disability” rather than “the disabled person”
- Use a normal volume and tone when speaking to persons with disabilities
- Avoid inappropriate descriptors like “handicapped”, “retarded”, “crippled”, or “special”
- Always offer help but wait for acceptance

One in five Americans has a disability

According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), “disability” means, with respect to an individual:

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- A record of such an impairment
- Or being regarded as having such an impairment
- Disabilities include physical, sensory, cognitive, or mental impairments
- Barriers to healthcare can be physical or architectural, communicative, attitudinal, and social/economical
- Increased accessibility decreases healthcare costs and improves the health of individuals with disabilities
- Federal tax credits and deductions are available to private businesses to offset the expenses required to comply with the ADA



COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

Doors

Non-automatic, internal doors should require no more than five pounds of force to open and should have lever, instead of pull, handles.

Try this: Can you open the door with one hand, held in a closed fist? If not, replace the handle on the door with a lever or loop handle or retrofit with an add-on lever extension. Is the door still too heavy to pull open (requires more than 5 pounds pressure to pull open)? Have the hinges on the door adjusted so it opens more easily.

Entrance

Should be at least 32 inches wide.

Try this: If you can walk through the doorway with your hands on your hips and elbows out, then it should be wide enough.

Hallways

Should be at least 36 inches wide and free of obstacles for a person to pass through using a wheelchair or other assistive device.

Try this: If you can walk through your hallways with your hands on your hips and elbows out without making contact with the walls, then it should be wide enough.

Disclaimer: These tips do not ensure complete accessibility. Please visit www.ada.gov or call the ADA Toll-free Information Line at 800-514-0301(voice) or 800-514-0383 (TTY) for more information and materials about accessibility requirements.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

- The ADA is a federal law that prohibits discrimination against, or segregation of, people with disabilities in all activities, programs, or services.
- The regulations set forth by the ADA are mandatory and individuals can file complaints for non-compliance with owners, managers, and the U.S. Department of Justice.
- Technical assistance materials on the ADA and current regulations are available online at <http://www.ada.gov/ta-pubs-pg2.htm>
- To obtain a free, comprehensive guide to find out if your office/building is accessible, go to http://www.ada.gov/medcare_mobility_ta/medcare_ta.htm for "Access To Medical Care For Individuals With Mobility Disabilities".

Sources: U.S. Dept. of Justice and U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services: Access to Medical Care for Individuals with Mobility Disabilities; World Institute on Disability: Access to Medical Care training curriculum; Office of Disability Employment Policy: Communicating With and About People with Disabilities; Catherine L. Graham, MEBME. USC/School of Medicine; United Spinal Association: Disability Etiquette Guide