

# 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](http://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/medicare\\_mobility\\_ta/medicare\\_ta.htm](http://www.ada.gov/medicare_mobility_ta/medicare_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