

ACCESSIBILITY TIPS FOR HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Communication Tips

- Use a normal volume and tone when speaking to persons with disabilities.
- Avoid inappropriate descriptors: “handicapped,” “retarded,” “crippled,” “special,” or “wheelchair bound”
- Always offer help but wait for acceptance.
- Don’t pet or distract a service dog.

Physical disabilities

- Get on eye level with a person using a wheelchair.

Visual disabilities

- Introduce yourself when approaching.
- Announce when you leave the room.

Hearing disabilities

- Speak directly to the person and do not cover your mouth.
- Tap the person’s shoulder or wave your hand to get their attention.
- Hire certified American Sign Language interpreters and do not rely on family members as interpreters.

Cognitive or Intellectual disabilities

- Provide information in plain language

1/5 of Americans have a disability

“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 health care can be physical/architectural, communicative, attitudinal, and social/economical.
 - Increased accessibility decreases healthcare costs, increase client bases, 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 Americans with Disabilities Act.



Compliance with Disability Law

Doors

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

Try this: Can you open the door with your pinky? If not, have the door adjusted to open more easily.

Entrance

Should be at least 32 inches wide.

Try this: Can you walk in with your hands on your hips and elbows out without making contact with the doorway? If not, widen the doorway.

Hallways

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

Try this: Can you walk through your hallways with your hands on your hips and elbows out and still have space between your elbows and the walls? If not, widen the doorways or find an alternate path through the building.

Disclaimer: These tips do not ensure complete accessibility. Please visit www.ada.gov or call the ADA 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.

Staff Training

Comprehensive guides and courses on disability issues are available online at <http://www.ada.gov/publication.htm>

Sources: U.S. Dept. of Justice and U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services: Access to Medical Care for Individuals with Mobility Disabilities <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/civilrights/understanding/disability/adamobilityimpairmentsguidance.pdf>; World Institute on Disability: Access to Medical Care training curriculum <http://wid.org/publications/downloads/Access%20to%20Medical%20Care%20Curriculum%20%28PDF%20format%29.pdf/view> ; Office of Disability Employment Policy: Communicating With and About People with Disabilities <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/comucate.htm>; Catherine L. Graham, MEBME. USC/School of Medicine; United Spinal Association: Disability Etiquette Guide <http://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>; Federal Communications Commission (FCC): 504 Disability Handbook, Disability Etiquette: http://transition.fcc.gov/cgb/dro/504/disability_primer_4.html