



Disability
Access
Services

Room 244
Corbett Center

Monday-Friday
8:00 am-
5:00 pm

Disability Awareness

What do you do if.....

➤...you see a person with a disability and you wonder if they need help?

Just because someone has a disability, *don't assume s/he needs help*. Ask only if s/he appears to need help. A person with a disability will oftentimes communicate when s/he needs help. *Ask how*, before you act. People with disabilities are the best judge of what they can or cannot do.

➤...you have a person with a disability in your class or you see someone in Corbett and you want to talk to them?

Always *speak directly to the person with a disability*, not to a companion, aide or sign language interpreter. Making small talk with a person who has a disability is great; just interact as you would with anyone else.

➤...you suspect someone has a disability but you are not sure?

Respect his/her privacy. If you ask about his/her disability, s/he may feel like you are treating him/her as a disability, not as a human being. However, many people with disabilities are comfortable with questions about their disability *after getting to know someone*.

➤...you have someone blind in your class, small group, study group, on a field trip with you, or in your dorm?

- Identify yourself before you make **physical** contact with a person who is blind.
 - Tell him/her your name and your role if it's appropriate, such as resident advisor, graduate assistant, professor, receptionist or fellow student. Be sure to introduce the student to others who are in the group, so that s/he's not excluded.
- People who are blind may need their arms for balance, so offer your arm—don't take his—if s/he needs to be guided. (It is however appropriate to guide a blind person's hand to a banister or the back of a chair to help direct him/her to a stairway or a seat.)
 - If the person has a guide dog, walk on the side opposite the dog. As you are walking, describe the setting, noting any obstacles, such as stairs ('up' or 'down') or a big crack in the sidewalk. Other hazards include: revolving doors, half-opened filing cabinets or doors, and objects protruding from the wall at head level such as hanging plants or lamps.
- Give as much visual description as possible related to the task at hand: describe graphs, photos, information on the board, overheads, other handouts given to the group; describe the landscape, environment on field trips; describe the layout of a new space, etc.
 - If you need to leave a person who is blind, inform her/him you are leaving, don't just walk away.

➤...you have someone Deaf with an interpreter in your class, small group, study group, on a field trip with you?

When using a sign language interpreter, look directly at the person who is deaf, and maintain eye contact to be polite. Talk directly to the person ("what would you like?"), rather than to the interpreter, ("Ask her/him what s/he'd like.") Sit in a circle so the person can see everyone, and take turns talking. Make sure s/he gets a chance to chime in, remember there is a time-lag with an interpreter. (The following information also applies...)

➤...you have someone Deaf or Hard of Hearing (without an interpreter) in your class, small group, study group, on a field trip with you, or in your dorm?

- Since most people who have a hearing loss watch people's lips as they speak: Sit in a circle so the person can see everyone, and establish a means for everyone to take turns talking, being sure to address the person with hearing loss directly to keep them included in the discussion.

- When talking, face the person. A quiet, well-lit room is most conducive to effective communication. If you are in front of the light source (e.g., a window) with your back to it, the glare may obscure your face and make it difficult for the person who is hard of hearing to speech read.

- If the person is using lip-reading, rephrase using a different way of saying the same thing, rather than repeat, sentences that the person does not understand.

- Speak clearly, but don't over emphasize your words.

- Avoid chewing gum, smoking or obscuring your mouth with your hand while speaking.

AND REMEMBER:

Be sensitive about physical contact

Some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance. Grabbing them, even if your intention is to assist, could knock them off balance.

Avoid patting a person on the head or touching his wheelchair, scooter or cane, or petting a working dog. People with disabilities consider their equipment/animals part of their personal space.

When speaking about or with a person who has a disability, *keep the person first.*

Say "person with a disability" rather than "disabled person."

Say "people with disabilities" rather than "the disabled." Ex.: For specific disabilities, saying "person with Tourette syndrome" or "person who has cerebral palsy" is usually a safe bet.

Say "person who uses a wheelchair" rather than "confined to a wheelchair" or "wheelchair bound." The wheelchair is what enables the person to get around and participate in society; it's liberating, not confining.

Its best to ask individuals about their own preferences: *If you are not sure what words to use, ask.*

Always avoid outdated terms like "handicapped", "crippled", or "retarded."

Be aware that many people with disabilities dislike jargony, euphemistic terms like "physically challenged" and "differently-abled."

For more info see: <http://www.unitedspinal.org/pdf/DisabilityEtiquette.pdf>

Are you, or do you know, a student with a disability?

Contact Student Accessibility Services for information on access services!



Check out our website at das.nmsu.edu



Give us a call at 575-646-6840



Send us an email at das@nmsu.edu

