



Notes from the Navigator

A Monthly Newsletter about Serving Customers with Disabilities in the One-Stop System



Basic Etiquette: People with Disabilities

The Disability Program Navigator Initiative is a collaborative effort of HempsteadWorks, VESID & Abilities, Inc.

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1. Always Use "Person First Language"

Examples:

"person with a disability " not" the disabled"

"person who is blind" not "a blind person"

For more examples, consult the piece entitled ["Watch Your Language"](#)

2. "Disability" is the most generally accepted term -- not "handicap"

3. Offering Assistance

It is okay to offer assistance.

Ask before providing assistance.

Once the offer for assistance has been accepted, ask for instructions and clarify what kind of assistance the person wants.

4. Respect all assistive devices (i.e., canes, wheelchairs, crutches, communication boards, service dogs, etc.) as personal property. Unless given specific and explicit permission, do not move, play with, or use them.

5. Always direct your communication to the individual with a disability.

If a person is accompanied, do not direct your comments to the companion.

6. Remember that people with disabilities are interested in the same topics of conversations as people who do not have disabilities.

7. Use a normal speaking tone and style. If someone needs you to speak in a louder voice, they will ask you to do so.

8. Remember that people with disabilities, like all people, are experts on themselves.

They know what they like, what they do not like and what they can and cannot do.

9. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands.

People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.)

10. Treat adults as adults.

Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. Adapted in part from material developed by Access AmeriCorps, a collaborative project of the Corporation for National Service, and United Cerebral Palsy Associations, Inc. Used with permission.

(Excerpt from www.onestops.info)