

# National Disability Institute's LEAD Center



## LEAD CENTER

*Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement  
of People with Disabilities*

&

# JAN

Job Accommodation Network

## Effective Communication: Disability Awareness & Etiquette Guide

### Guide for Centers for Independent Living and American Job Centers

The National Center on Leadership for the Employment and Economic Advancement of People with Disabilities (LEAD) is a collaborative of disability, workforce and economic empowerment organizations led by National Disability Institute with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, Grant No. #OD-23863-12-75-4-11. This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



# **DISABILITY AWARENESS & ETIQUETTE GUIDE**

## Guide for Centers for Independent Living and American Job Centers

Prepared by the LEAD Center, in Partnership with the  
Job Accommodation Network and National Council on Independent Living  
March 2016

Preparation of this Guide was funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy, Grant No. OD-23863-12-75-4-11,CFDA # 17.720. This document does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, nor does the mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.



# DISABILITY AWARENESS & ETIQUETTE GUIDE

Guide for Centers for Independent Living and American Job Centers

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>DISABILITY AWARENESS &amp; ETIQUETTE GUIDE .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FACTS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AMERICAN JOB CENTER REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DISABILITY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>WHAT IS A DISABILITY?.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>CUSTOMERS AND COLLEAGUES: GENERAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>DEAFNESS/HEARING LOSS/HARD OF HEARING .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>LOW VISION OR BLIND.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HIDDEN, INVISIBLE OR NON-APPARENT DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>SPEECH IMPAIRMENT .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>COSMETIC DISFIGUREMENT.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>PEOPLE OF SHORT STATURE .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>EXTEND AJC COMMUNICATION TO CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>CUSTOMERS AND COLLEAGUES – AT WORK IN GENERAL.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>HELPFUL TIPS.....</b>	<b>21</b>



## INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is essential when interacting with people with disabilities who are customers or colleagues. The provision of quality services and the development of collaborative relationships with job seekers who utilize American Job Center (AJC) services are dependent upon AJC staff feeling confident about knowing what to do and say when communicating with job seekers with disabilities. Enhancing the ability of AJC staff to engage in relaxed, spontaneous conversation with customers or colleagues with disabilities can increase everyone's comfort level, ensure positive interactions, and demonstrate mutual respect.

## DISABILITY AWARENESS & ETIQUETTE GUIDE

This guide has been developed to address effective communication directed to both customers and AJC colleagues who have disabilities, in order to assist Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in their collaboration with AJCs. The guide utilizes a common sense approach to providing information about disability and communication in a format that is easy to read and understand. This guide may be used for other purposes when there is a need to create awareness through education that will enhance communication effectiveness with people with disabilities.

## FACTS

- People with disabilities are part of the diversified human capital of talent in the United States.
- More people with disabilities are working side by side with people without disabilities in integrated community workplace settings than ever before.
- One in five people (20 percent of the U.S. population) is a person with a disability.
- Every 10 minutes, 498 Americans become persons with disabilities.
- Twenty million families in the United States have at least one member with a disability.
- 51 percent of taxpayers with disabilities earn less than \$21,000 a year.
- People with disabilities want to work in jobs of their choice that can support their self-sufficiency and economic independence.
- The employment of people with disabilities is vital to the well-being of our entire nation.



## AMERICAN JOB CENTER REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DISABILITY

The workforce system and AJC staff protocol is to ask each job seeker whether he or she has a disability, regardless of whether he or she appears to have a disability. However, not all AJCs ask this question about disability. AJCs that do request disability information must inform the job seeker that:

- Providing the information is voluntary.
- The information will be kept confidential, as provided by law.
- Refusal to provide the information will not subject the job seeker to adverse treatment.
- The information will only be used in accordance with the law.

## WHAT IS A DISABILITY?

### The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Definition of Disability

#### An Individual with a Disability Is a Person Who:

- Has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- Has a record of such an impairment; or
- Is regarded as having such an impairment.

#### Disabilities May Be Associated With:

- Hearing
- Mobility
- Cognition
- Vision
- Speech/Communication
- Learning
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Mental Health/Emotional Conditions
- Chronic Health Conditions



## CUSTOMERS AND COLLEAGUES: GENERAL COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

### Ask the Person with a Disability First:

- If you are in doubt about what you should do as you communicate with a customer or colleague, ask the individual what his or her preference is for the best way to communicate with or provide assistance to him or her.

### People First Language:

- Use People First Language (i.e., person with a disability, person who uses a wheelchair, person who experiences hearing loss, etc.) rather than using “disabled person,” “wheelchair-bound person,” or “hearing-impaired person.” “People First Language is not political correctness, instead, it demonstrates good manners, respect, the Golden Rule, and more—it can change the way we see a person, and it can change the way a person sees himself or herself.” (Source: <http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/explore/people-first-language>)
- Some disability organizations, such as the National Organization of the Deaf, the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, and the National Federation of the Blind prefer not to use People First Language. You may hear customers and colleagues refer to themselves or others without using People First Language. The authors of this guide promote the use of People First Language whenever possible.
- People who use wheelchairs do not live in their wheelchairs; they use wheelchairs to provide mobility to have the freedom to move about their environment.
- Avoid using “special needs” in reference to children, youth, and adults with disabilities.
- When talking about assistance needed by individuals with disabilities, speak in terms of adjustments, assistance, accommodations, and assistive technology.

### “Handicapped”:

- Customers or colleagues may refer to parking spaces colloquially as “handicapped parking spaces,” but using the term “accessible parking spaces” is preferred.
- Avoid using “handicapped” in any context.



## Functional Access:

- When a person with a disability needs access to your facility, workplace, or website, consider how to provide access that allows the individual to function independently and productively.
- Work towards removing barriers to functional access. This barrier removal would include physical, communication, and programmatic access.

## Sit Down and Relax:

- For longer conversations with a person who uses a wheelchair, or with someone who does not stand for long periods of time, pull up a chair and sit down to have a conversation or conduct an interview at eye-contact level.

## One Size Does Not Fit All:

- Do not assume that the communication preference for one person with a specific disability will be the same preference for another person with a similar disability.
- For example, people who experience hearing loss and low vision have various levels of hearing and sight, so what might work for one person may not work for another.
- Ask the person with a disability the best way to communicate with him or her.
- Customize communication to meet the individual needs of the person with a disability according to the individual's expressed preferences.

**Be Prepared with Accessible Printed Materials Ahead of Time:** (Also see more information under Specific Print Requests and Access to PowerPoint Presentations in this guide)

- Even if you have no advance accommodation requests, particularly for meetings open to the public, demonstrate inclusiveness by preparing handouts in various formats, such as large print, on CDs, or recordings explaining the materials.
- Send information out electronically ahead of time and provide information via a download on your website in Word or Plain Text format to provide accessibility options.
- You may download information on a thumb drive or CD-ROM to provide access.

- Do not assume that the same point-size font for printed materials will work for all people who have low vision.
- Be prepared to provide information in Braille.

## Service Animals:

- Service animals assist individuals with disabilities to accomplish a variety of important tasks.
- Only dogs qualify as service animals. (Source: ADA Requirements on Service Animals [http://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm))
- However, “in addition to the provisions about service dogs, the U.S. Department of Justice’s revised ADA regulations have a new, separate provision about trained miniature horses that do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. (Miniature horses generally range in height from 24 inches to 34 inches measured to the shoulders and generally weigh between 70 and 100 pounds.)” (See [http://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm) )
  - Entities covered by the ADA must modify their policies to permit miniature horses where reasonable. The ADA regulations provide four assessment factors to assist entities in determining whether miniature horses can be accommodated in their facility. The assessment factors are:
    - Whether the miniature horse is housebroken.
    - Whether the miniature horse is under the owner’s control.
    - Whether the facility can accommodate the miniature horse’s type, size, and weight.
    - Whether the miniature horse’s presence will not compromise legitimate safety requirements necessary for safe operation of the facility.
- Examples of ways service animals support individuals with disabilities include:
  - **Hearing** sounds for persons with significant hearing loss.
  - **Guiding** individuals with vision loss.
  - **Supporting** people who may use wheelchairs or have other disabilities in accomplishing numerous tasks, such as retrieving items for the individual.
  - **Assisting** in reducing an individual’s anxiety.
  - **Alerting** an individual that a seizure is about to occur (seizure aware).





- **Alerting** others that a seizure is occurring.
- Service animals hold allegiance to their masters and as such are working animals:
  - Resist the temptation to pet a service animal unless you ask its handler first.
  - Some people with disabilities, who use dogs as service animals, have no problem with other people petting their animals; other people with disabilities do. It is always best to ask the person with the disability for permission if you want to pet his or her dog.
  - When service animals are in your presence, assume the service animal is working.
- Dogs that are newly working with their handlers may become confused if people other than their masters want to pet or feed the dog treats.
- Keep your conversation directed to the person.
- The person using the service animal may introduce the animal to you, as this provides an opening for conversation.
- Businesses are not permitted to ask for verification that a dog is a service animal. (Source: ADA Requirements on Service Animals [http://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm))
- It may not be obvious what services the service animal provides. If not obvious, it is appropriate to ask if the dog is a service animal. If it is relevant, it is also appropriate to ask what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. No other inquiry is allowed.
- **You cannot:**
  - Ask about the person's disability.
  - Require medical documentation.
  - Require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog.
  - Ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task. (Source: ADA Requirements on Service Animals [http://www.ada.gov/service\\_animals\\_2010.htm](http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm))

## Utilize Different Communication Techniques:

- When conducting training, identify participants' communication needs to ensure individuals with disabilities have access to the information provided.
- A few examples of customizing communication techniques include:



- Speaking louder or standing closer to a customer who is having difficulty hearing, but only if requested by the person with a disability.
- Describing the layout of a room, as requested by someone who is blind, may assist the person's ability to navigate the room independently.
- Facing the audience directly so that a person may lip-read. Only about 30 percent of people who are deaf or who have hearing impairments can lip-read.
- Ensuring that American Sign Language interpreters are available, if requested.

### **Specific Print Requests:**

- Customize information provided in print for individual access.
- Ask persons in what point size and font they would like text provided.
- Prepare information in Word or Plain Text so that documents may be adjusted to various print sizes.
- Some PDF documents are not easily changed into alternate, accessible formats.
- Ask persons who have low vision or are blind if they require Braille copies.
- Prepare information in highly contrasted colors for people with a learning disability such as dyslexia or low vision.

### **Unable to Understand:**

- People with disabilities want you to hear, understand, and respond to them when they request assistance or when they are in a conversation with you.
- To understand a request for assistance and hear what a person is saying during a conversation, feel comfortable to state, "I was not able to understand what you said, could you repeat what you have just said?" or "Let us move to another room where it is quieter."
- Ask persons what they need so you can provide the necessary assistance.
- Being honest makes you an effective communicator.



## DEAFNESS/HEARING LOSS/HARD OF HEARING

A wide range of hearing losses exist, from mild hearing loss to deafness. When communicating with people who experience hearing loss:

- Ask a person how best to communicate with him or her if you are facing challenges in communication.
- Communicating with people with hearing loss may require you to speak a little louder, but only if requested.
- Directly face the person so your voice carries well, and so people who lip-read can see your lips.
- Utilize a sign language interpreter if requested.
- Write comments on paper if requested.
- Communicate through text messages if this works best.
- A person's ability to hear may or may not impact his or her ability to speak. Do not make assumptions.

### Placement of a Sign Language Interpreter:

- A person who uses a sign language interpreter should be the one to decide where the interpreter sits or stands.
- When introduced to someone who uses a sign language interpreter, look at and speak directly to the person with hearing loss. Do not direct your conversation to the interpreter.
- Your typical facial expressions, gestures, expressions, animation, and the intensity of your speech are important when communicating to the person with whom you are speaking.
- Remember that a mustache can be a barrier to someone who is a lip reader if it hangs over your upper lip.
- Make sure you do not put your fingers or hands in front of your face if an interpreter is used or if a person is reading your lips.



## Write Down What You Want to Say:

- If someone experiences hearing loss, do not assume this individual can read lips.
- Offer your business card to share your name, position, organization, and contact information so the person has accurate information.
- Find paper and pen, and write down what you would like to say.
- Reinforce what you say by directly facing the person in case he or she can lip read.

## Accents:

- If you have an accent, it may be difficult for people who experience hearing loss to understand what you are saying.
- Be prepared to repeat what you say and, if requested, spell a specific word not understood or rephrase it.

## Cochlear Implant:

- If someone who is deaf or has a profound hearing impairment has a cochlear implant to improve his or her ability to hear, most individuals will be able to hear sounds and learn to interpret speech over time.
- Individuals with cochlear implants have varying levels of speech and sound recognition depending upon the success of and the time elapsed since their implant occurred.
- Many people who have a cochlear implant enter into a speech-and-sound rehabilitation program that assists them in learning how to interpret the sounds they hear.
- Individuals that have had a cochlear implant may still need to lip read or use a sign language interpreter.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice while directly facing the person and enunciate the words you speak as you would with anyone else.
- Do not increase the volume of your voice, exaggerate lip movements, or slow down your speech (unless requested).



## Gaining Attention Of A Customer Or Colleague Who Is Deaf:

- When you need to gain the attention of customers or colleagues who are deaf, you may need to be sure that you are standing in their line of vision. Tap them on the shoulder, flash the light off and on in the room, or wave your hand where they can see it.
- Ensure that you face the individual directly when you speak.

## TTY:

- TTY machines used to communicate with people with significant hearing loss are almost obsolete. Instead, individuals tend to utilize adapted hearing-assistance telephones, Internet relay services, CAP-Tel phones, video relay services, and smartphones.

## LOW VISION OR BLIND

Blindness is the only disability that has a statutory definition. The identification of “legal blindness” defines an individual’s eligibility for Social Security benefits. Social Security considers individuals to be legally blind if their vision cannot be corrected to better than 20/200 in their better eye, or if their visual field is 20 degrees or less in their better eye. (Source: <http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10052.pdf>)

- A person who has low vision and is legally blind may have some functional limited vision.
- When a person states that he or she is blind, but has low vision, the customer service representative, peer, or employer may be confused, particularly if the person does not use a cane or service dog to assist him or her with mobility.
- Some people who have low vision will carry a cane, but only use it in certain situations, such as crossing a street or waiting for a bus.
- A person who has low vision may also use a service dog.
- Individuals with limited peripheral vision may be able to read a 12-point font. They may have only a few degrees of central vision (tunnel vision) and have no peripheral vision on the sides of either eye, or on the top or lower visual fields.
- People who have low vision or are blind may wear glasses. Glasses may enhance the vision of some people with low vision. Glasses are also used to protect the eyes from harm such as from a low-hanging tree branch.



## Meeting A Person Who Is Blind or With Low Vision:

- Identify yourself by name and introduce other individuals that may have accompanied you when meeting and greeting a person who is blind.
- Inform a person who is blind if you must end the conversation and leave him or her.
- If you want to offer assistance, ask first if the individual would like assistance and wait for a response. If the offer of assistance is accepted, ask what type of assistance would be helpful or if the individual would like to take your arm. Do not immediately grab the person's arm or hand to guide them. Also, warn the individual about approaching steps, curbs, and other upcoming obstacles.
- If offering to assist someone in finding a seat, you may speak the person's name and gently tap on the table to provide an auditory cue. This cue lets the individual know where a seat is located.
- Do not touch the person without asking permission first.
- Do not grab the person's cane to direct him or her on where to go; offer verbal instructions or offer your assistance to act as a sighted guide.
- If offering to help someone as he or she sits down, let the person know beforehand as you guide the person's hand (with permission) towards the back of the chair.

## Navigating the AJC Facility:

- For a new customer or colleague who is blind or has low vision, provide sufficient time for the customer or colleague to learn how to navigate around the facility.
- Initiate an orientation tour of the facility with a customer or colleague who is blind and describe the environment while moving from room to room.
- Contact a local organization that serves people who are blind to request an Orientation and Mobility specialist. You may also contact the state vocational rehabilitation representative regarding orientation mobility or other support that may be helpful to the individual (e.g., transportation).

## DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

- Developmental Disability (DD) is defined in Federal law, in part, to establish eligibility for services and benefits from state or Federal agencies.
- The current definition, under the Developmental Disabilities Act (adopted in 2000), defines "developmental disability" as a severe, chronic disability of an individual due to a



mental or physical impairment, or combination of mental and physical impairments, identified before age 22 and likely to continue indefinitely. People with developmental disabilities have substantial functional limitations in three or more of the following areas of major life activity:

- Self-care.
  - Receptive and expressive language.
  - Learning.
  - Mobility.
  - Self-direction.
  - Capacity for independent living.
  - Economic self-sufficiency.
- People with developmental disabilities often need specialized, interdisciplinary services or other forms of assistance that may be lifelong or of extended duration and are individually planned and coordinated.
  - People identified as having developmental disabilities represent a broad range of disabilities including:
    - Autism Spectrum Disorders (See Autism Spectrum Disorders topic in this guide).
    - Behavior Disorders.
    - Brain Injury.
    - Cerebral Palsy.
    - Down Syndrome.
    - Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.
    - Intellectual Disability (See Intellectual Disability topic in this guide.).
    - Spina Bifida.
  - Developmental disabilities may also include an intellectual disability. (See section on Intellectual Disabilities below.)
  - People who have DD can and do work in integrated community employment settings. A misperception about people who have DD is that they can only do specific types of jobs, which is not true. This misperception limits individuals' choice in job options and does not acknowledge the capabilities of people with DD.
  - Accommodations for individuals with DD depend on which form of DD the person has. See the JAN Web site for information about accommodating individuals with DD at <http://askjan.org/media/ment.htm>.



## INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

- Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. (Source: <http://aaidd.org>) The degree of limitation varies among individuals.
- Do not use the words “retarded” or “mentally retarded.” These words are looked upon with great disdain by individuals with disabilities, their families, and their friends. In fact, these terms no longer used in Federal documents, as President Barack Obama signed a law in 2010 decreeing that Federal statutes must no longer use the term “mental retardation” or “mentally retarded.”
- When meeting someone who may have a significant intellectual disability, do what you would do when meeting anyone else. If you do not understand a person with an intellectual disability, do not pretend you know what he or she has said and just nod your head. It’s best to ask the person to repeat the statement or consider alternative or supplementary forms of communication (e.g., assistive technology, pictures, graphics, sign language, gestures, etc.).
- In some instances, an intellectual disability will not be obvious from a person's appearance. Be aware that not all people with intellectual or cognitive impairments will need accommodations to perform their jobs, and many others may only need a few accommodations. See the JAN website for information about accommodating individuals with intellectual disabilities at <http://askjan.org/media/ment.htm>.

## HIDDEN, INVISIBLE OR NON-APPARENT DISABILITIES

- Invisible, non-apparent, or hidden disabilities include a broad variety of disabilities: chronic health conditions, mental health disabilities, learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders (ASD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders (ADHD), and others.
- It is important to note that the 2008 Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) expanded the definition of disability to include people with diabetes, multiple sclerosis, cancer, seizure disorders, heart conditions, and many other health conditions among those with protected status under the 2008 ADAAA.





## Helpful Tips – Inclusive ways to communicate with people who have non-apparent disabilities:

- Allow an individual to audio record any verbal directions or information offered by staff at the AJC. Recording information during a meeting will permit the individual to listen to the directions or information as often as necessary.
- Offer verbal instructions and follow up by providing written instructions in print or in an email.
- Provide print information in a concise manner by using straightforward language, graphics, or pictures as a supplement.
- Ensure email and print communications include high color contrast between print and background (e.g., black print and white background).
- Face-to-face meetings may need to be in an environment with minimal distractions and noise.
- After providing information verbally, ask the individual if he or she has any questions and check for understanding.
- Adjust time, if needed, to accommodate an individual so he or she can fully participate in programs and services.

## MENTAL HEALTH DISABILITIES

- When referring to people with mental health disabilities, use terminology related to the specific disability, such as depression. Mental health disabilities include a wide range of disorders, including seasonal affective disorder (SAD), bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, and many others.
- Communicate with people who have mental health disabilities in the same manner as you would speak with anyone else.

## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

- Autism is sometimes referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).



- Autism is a developmental disability that may affect how a person experiences sensory stimulation, learns, solves problems, focuses attention, moves his or her body, communicates, or relates to other people. (Source: Autistic Self Advocacy Network, <http://autisticadvocacy.org/home/about-asan/about-autism>)
- When meeting a person with ASD, communicate as you would do with anyone else.
- For more information about accommodation and communication related to people with autism, visit <http://autisticadvocacy.org/home/about-asan/about-autism> .

## SPEECH IMPAIRMENT

- Delayed or slow speech does not indicate slow mental process.
- Do not act as if you understand the conversation with someone who has a speech impairment when you do not.
- If you did not understand, ask the person to repeat what he or she said.
- Do not finish the sentence or talk for someone who has slow speech or other speech impairment.
- Be patient.
- Some people with speech impairments will use a voice synthesizer or an augmentative and alternative communication device. They will push keys that may look similar to a computer keyboard and the voice synthesizer speaks the words they want to communicate.

## COSMETIC DISFIGUREMENT

- When meeting a person with a cosmetic disfigurement, continue eye contact and act as you would with anyone else.
- The ADA provides protections for people with cosmetic disfigurements included in the regulatory definition of impairment.

## PEOPLE OF SHORT STATURE



- People who are short in stature may have a medical condition from one of the more than 200 medical conditions known as dwarfism. People with this condition are “people of short stature” or “little people.”
- Short stature does not imply any mental impairment. Communicate as you would anyone else.

## EXTEND AJC COMMUNICATION TO CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES

- In an effort to facilitate full access of services and products to customers with disabilities, ask persons with disabilities what assistance or accommodations they may need and provide the assistance as requested.
- Accommodations to customers or colleagues that attend AJC-sponsored meetings or workshops should continue if the activity extends into break time or small group activities.
- Utilize various communication techniques as appropriate:
  - Post notices in large print on bulletin boards at the AJC.
  - Post information on the AJC website.
  - Send out notices with pertinent information via email correspondence to customers about meetings and workshops that are available.

### Access to PowerPoint Presentations:

- If using a PowerPoint presentation, ensure the presentation is accessible to all participants. This may require creating an accessible version of the presentation in a text document. If requested, send out an accessible version in advance or post it on the website.
- Describe photos, other images, graphs, tables, or charts in the Notes section of the PowerPoint so that people who use screen readers can know what is on the slides when reviewing them on their own.
- During a PowerPoint presentation, describe the contents of the slides presented if someone in the audience is blind, has low vision, or may have a learning disability; especially describe tables, graphs, or charts.
- Ensure the visual accessibility of a PowerPoint by providing the PowerPoint slides as handouts, including large print copies of the presentation.

Individual PowerPoint slides work best for people with learning disabilities and increase access for everyone when:



- Slides have a high color contrast; consider white background and black print.
- Points to be made are concise and bulleted.
- Large spaces are between bulleted points.
- Font chosen has a straight up-and-down, sans-serif design such as Arial, Helvetica, or Tahoma.
- Words are not put in italics or in script unless absolutely necessary.
- Bolded words are used to assist.
- Unnecessary graphics are eliminated to limit clutter on slides.
- A large point-size font is used – usually 18-point type is sufficient. However, if possible, it is best to ask participants ahead of time what point size works best for them.

### **Access to Documents for Download or Viewing on website:**

- Provide documents used for trainings and meetings on an AJC website in Word or Plain Text files.
- Provide documents in advance so that individuals with some types of disabilities may download them for upcoming trainings or meetings, use a screen reader for access, or use for reference.

## **CUSTOMERS AND COLLEAGUES – AT WORK IN GENERAL**

**Abilities First:** Focus on the individual’s abilities.

### **Ask The Person First:**

- Ask the person first if he or she may need assistance or accommodations as you would anyone else. Do not make assumptions.

### **Communicate Directly with a Colleague or Customer with a Disability:**

- If a customer or colleague with a disability appears to need assistance, and you are able to provide help, offer assistance verbally. Say, “May I assist you?” and wait for a response.
- Do not be offended if your offer to assist is declined.
- If an offer of assistance is accepted, then ask, “How would you like for me to assist you?”



- If someone is using a wheelchair, do not lean on, push, or ask the individual using the chair to carry your belongings. If possible, communicate directly with an individual that uses a wheelchair by sitting down at face-to-face and eye contact level.

## HELPFUL TIPS

### Safety Concerns:

- If there is an apparent safety concern and you need to verbalize caution or feel that you should intervene, communicate to the person with a disability what the potential danger is (steps, an escalator, uneven sidewalk, etc.) and what you may do to intervene.
- If there is time, discuss and assess the safety hazard with the person with the disability, as he or she may already be aware and have developed strategies to keep out of harm's way.

### Make Eye Contact:

- It is important to make direct eye contact with all customers or colleagues, as eye contact is a sign of trustworthiness and demonstrates interest.
- When speaking to a customer or colleague who uses an interpreter, a personal attendant, or is accompanied by a parent or guardian, look directly at the person with the disability as you speak and not at the interpreter, personal attendant, or parent or guardian.
- Remember, some people who are blind or who have low vision may not make direct eye contact with you; do not perceive such lack of eye contact as being disrespectful.

### Engage Customer or Colleague First:

- If a personal attendant provides support in assisting a person with a disability, always engage the customer or colleague first, while making the attendant feel included.
- When parents or guardians accompany a customer, engage the customer directly in the conversation. Do not speak "about him/her." Speak directly to the customer.

