Using Positive Images & Graphics

Watch out for stereotypes in graphics. A cartoon of a person who is visually impaired being directed to the wrong door promotes negative attitudes. A picture of a person in a wheelchair at a computer emphasizes ability.

Speaking with People with Disabilities

Remember that I am a person first; and also happen to have a disability. If you need information about the disability, don't hesitate to ask me about it directly. Ask me how you should refer to my disability.

Ask if assistance is needed rather than assuming it is. Then be sure to follow my instructions to avoid possible injury to me or to yourself.

Do not assume that a person with one disability also has others.

Maintain eye contact and talk to me even if I am using an interpreter.

If I have a speech impairment or use an augmentative communication system, be patient and give me time to respond to your question. Don't try to finish a sentence for me. If you don't understand what I've said, say so and ask me to repeat the statement or say it another way.

Use a normal tone of voice. You don't need to speak loudly.

Do not lean on a wheelchair or distract a working animal. Do not *play* with assistive equipment.

Don't hesitate to use everyday expressions. It's fine to say "*See you later"* to a person who is blind, or "*Let's take a walk"* to a person in a wheelchair.

Pamphlet is available in alternate formats.
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Choosing Words with Dignity

Communicating With and About People with Disabilities

People with disabilities, like other groups, are actively seeking full civil rights. We want to be accepted in our communities as equals.

What you write and what you say can enhance the dignity of people with disabilities and promote positive attitudes about our abilities.

Let your descriptive words emphasize our worth and abilities, not the disabling condition. Refer to the person first, rather than the disability. The phrase "*people with disabilities"* is preferred over "*the disabled*".

Use Affirmative Phrases

… people with disabilities

… people who are blind; people who are visually impaired

… people who are deaf; people who are hard of hearing; the Deaf

… people who have multiple sclerosis

… people with cerebral palsy

… people with developmental disabilities

… people who use a wheelchair; wheelchair user

… people without disabilities; non-disabled people

… unable to speak; non-verbal

… seizure

… successful; productive

… people with mobility impairments

… people with mental illness; psychiatric survivors.

Do Not Use Negative Phrases

… the handicapped; the disabled

… the blind

… suffers a hearing impairment; hearing impaired

… afflicted by MS

… CP victim

… retarded; mentally defective; slow

… confined to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound

… normal person

… dumb; mute

… fit

… courageous

… cripple; lame

… mental; crazy; psycho; nutcase

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