

# TIPS FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

## All Types of Disabilities

- Always ask before providing assistance and wait until the offer is accepted.
- Speak directly to the person and not their attendant, interpreter, family member, etc.
- Do not pet service animals without checking with the owner first.

## Mobility Disabilities

- Don't touch a person's mobility device without their permission. This includes wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, and canes. Treat a person's mobility device like a part of their body.
- If you are speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a mobility device, place yourself at their eye level to facilitate the conversation.

## Blind or Low-Vision

- Always introduce yourself and anyone else present for the conversation.
- Speak directly to a blind person.
- If asked for help navigating a space, ask how best you can guide them. Proceed at a normal pace and announce any obstacles.
- A Guide Dog walks on the left, so you should walk on the right. Don't pet a Guide Dog—the dog is responsible for guiding their master.

## Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing

- Get their attention before you begin to communicate. It is not rude to lightly touch people you don't know to get their attention.
- Speak directly to the person in a normal voice—make eye contact.
- Let them establish a preferred method of communication, such as lip reading, signing, or note writing.
- Use gestures and visual cues.

## Speech or Language Disabilities

- Be patient and respectful as it may take people longer to communicate.
- Be sensitive not to interrupt or finish their sentences.
- Ask one question at a time and give them time to respond.
- If they use an assistive device, don't touch it without permission.

## Learning, Behavior, and Mood Disabilities

- If a person seems anxious, confused, or distracted, ask if you can do anything to help. Be patient. Give the person additional time if they need it.
- Don't assume anxious, confused, or distracted behavior means someone has a disability. Likewise, don't assume someone with a disability will be anxious, confused, or distracted.