

Communications Tips

1. When talking with a person with person speak directly to that person rather than through or to a companion or interpreter.
2. When meeting a person who is blind or has low vision always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
3. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
4. Treat adults as adults. Address people by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others. (Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.)
5. Leaning on or hanging on to a person's wheelchair is similar to leaning on hanging on to a person and is generally considered annoying. The chair is part of the personal body space of the person who uses it.
6. Listen attentively when you're talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for the person. If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, a nod or shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond. The response will clue you in and guide your understanding.
7. When speaking with a person who uses a wheelchair or a person who uses crutches, place yourself at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.
8. To get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip-read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source and keep hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking.
9. Relax. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.