DISABILITY TIPS AND ETIQUETTE

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 was conceived with the goal of integrating people with disabilities into all aspects of life, particularly the workplace and the marketplace. Sensitivity toward people with disabilities is not only in the spirit of the ADA, it makes good business sense. When supervisors and co-workers use disability etiquette, employees with disabilities feel more comfortable and work more productively. Practicing disability etiquette is an easy way to make people with disabilities feel welcome. (Source: United Spinal Association; www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette)

TALK WITH CO-WORKERS. Communication is the key to building effective relationships with co-workers, with and without disabilities.
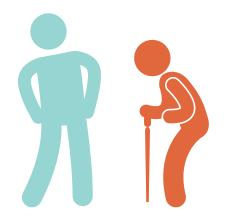
HAVE FUN. Everyone appreciates a smile or friendly greeting and people with disabilities are no exception.

EMPOWER CO-WORKERS. Focus on abilities rather than disabilities.

WORK TOGETHER. Collaboration is the key to accommodating everyone in the workplace.

HANDS OFF. Never touch someone's equipment such as wheelchairs or pet someone's service dog without asking.

OFFER ASSISTANCE. This is always the right thing to do.

LEARN ABOUT DISABILITIES. Do not ask directly about a disability, but do get to know your co-workers.

EMPATHIZE, DON'T SYMPATHIZE. A co-worker living with disabilities appreciates understanding, but not pity.

PRACTICE PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE. Use language such as, "people with disabilities," "person who uses a wheelchair," instead of "blind guy," or "deaf girl."

EXERCISE COMMON SENSE. Act naturally around co-workers who just happen to have disabilities.

RESIST STEREOTYPING. People living with disabilities are as unique as people who may not yet happen to have disabilities.

SUPPORT EQUAL ACCESS. Do not send out scanned documents which can't be read by talking computers. Do not locate objects up high where people who use wheelchairs can't reach.

OPT FOR INCLUSION. When planning activities/presentations, don't forget to consider how all can participate.

NEVER ASSUME. Ask when you are unsure.

The Whole Person
People with Disabilities Leading Independent Lives

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