



**DISABILITY AWARENESS**

## **Disability Awareness**

We all know we shouldn't yell at blind people, but many people do not know what to say or how to behave when they meet someone with a disability. It is not uncommon for people to be apprehensive when meeting people with various physical disabilities. The important thing to remember is that despite the use of a wheelchair, canes or crutches, or the loss of a limb the individual is just like you.

Many people with disabilities have college degrees, are working professionals, have families and share other life similarities. Although each individual story is different, many of their dreams and goals are the same. One major goal that we all have in common is to be treated with respect.

Each person is different. There are some who will find working with people with disabilities easy and others who may be uncomfortable. We have compiled some basic information about working with people with disabilities that may help ease individuals' concerns.

### **Communication:**

- Speak directly to the person. Not to an interpreter or assistant.
- Speak in normal tones – Don't shout or exaggerate your words. Use eye contact.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to respond when you are communicating.
- When speaking with a person in a wheelchair, it is important to speak to the person at eye level.
- Behave normally.
- It is ok to ask a person how long they have been in a wheelchair or needed adaptive equipment. However, do not be offended if the person does not feel like discussing his/her disability or the assistance the service animal provides. Not everyone wants to be a walking-talking "show and tell" exhibit.
- Things to avoid:
  - Avoid derogatory terms such as: Handicapped or crippled.
  - Stay away from jargon such as: Physically challenged, differently-abled.
  - Wheelchair or scooters liberate a person with disabilities so avoid terms such as: Wheelchair bound; confined to a wheelchair.
  - Avoid disempowering terms such as: victim or sufferer.

### **When in Doubt...Ask:**

- Assume nothing. Just because someone is in a wheelchair don't assume they require help.
- Most people with disabilities can get around just fine. Offer assistance if the person appears to be struggling. If the situation requires, clarify what it is that you will be doing.

### **Wheelchairs and Adaptive Equipment:**

- Wheelchair users are people. The chair is what they use, not who they are.
- When planning a meeting or other event, try to anticipate specific accommodations a person with a disability might need. If a barrier cannot be avoided let the person know ahead of time.
- Do not ask the person in the wheelchair to hold personal items such as a coat or purse or rest drinks on their desktop.
- Always remember that wheelchairs are part of a person's personal space. Never push or pull a chair without speaking to the person first. The person in the wheelchair knows the best way to navigate things like curbs. If you don't wait for instructions you could dump them out of the chair.
- When speaking to a wheelchair user, pull up a chair and sit down to speak to them at eye level. If no chair is available, stand back a little so that the person is not straining their neck to see you. Kneeling, if possible, is an option too.
- Do not touch a person's canes or crutches without asking. Just like the wheelchair, people with disabilities consider their equipment to be part of their personal space.
- Many people with disabilities rely on their arms for balance. Do not grab their arms; you could knock them off balance.

## **Accommodations**

- Most chair users will know the width of opening they need. If you are organizing an event where a wheelchair user will be attending it may a good idea to ask what width of door their personal chair requires making sure they can access the facility.
- Make sure the facility you are hosting your event in provides handicapped accessible restrooms.

## **Hidden Disabilities:**

- Just because a person doesn't use a wheelchair or canes doesn't mean that they are not disabled.
  - For example: an otherwise healthy looking individual may request a chair when others are standing. They may be fatigued from a condition that is not visible such as fibromyalgia.

## **Service Animals:**

- Service animals are animals that are individually trained to perform tasks for people with disabilities such as guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling wheelchairs, alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, or performing other special tasks.
- Service animals are highly trained and well behaved.
- Service animals are working animals, not pets.
- Do not touch the service animal, or the person it assists, without permission.
- Do not make noises at the service animal; it may distract the animal from doing its job.
- Do not feed the service animal; it may disrupt his/her schedule.

## Adaptive Shooting Equipment

Many individuals with disabilities are able to compete by using equipment that has been specially adapted to provide assistance. Adaptive equipment does not give the shooter an edge but merely provides assistance for individuals who are not capable of certain physical activities such as supporting the weight of a rifle or squeezing a trigger. The most common pieces of equipment are rifle stands and power triggers.

### Stands

- A shooting stand is a center post stand that has a “U” shaped bracket on the top with a spring in the middle of the post.
- The support stand is placed under the center balance point of the rifle and is not supposed to touch on the sides.
- Because there is a spring in the middle of the post the rifle will be “wiggly.”
- The shooter is still responsible for controlling their shots.



### Power Triggers



- Power triggers or “Sip-n-Puffs” as they are referred to are battery activated solenoids that activate when air is passed through them either by blowing or sucking through a tube attached to a valve on the unit.
- Power triggers are ideal for individuals who have sustained high level spinal injuries that have resulted in quadriplegia or the loss of arms or hands.

*Note:* When working with the power triggers it is important to remember that when the tubing is attached to the valve that activates when blown through, the shooter should not talk with the tube in their mouth or the gun with fire.

## Glossary of Acceptable Terms

### Acceptable Terms

Person with a disability.

Disability, a general term used for functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability, for example, to walk, hear or lift. It may refer to a physical, mental or sensory condition.

People with cerebral palsy, people with spinal cord injuries.

Person who had a spinal cord injury, polio, a stroke, etc. or a person who has multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, etc.

Has a disability, has a condition of (spina bifida, etc.), or born without legs, etc.

Deafness/hearing impairment. *Deafness* refers to a person who has a total loss of hearing. *Hearing impairment* refers to a person who has a partial loss of hearing within a range from slight to severe. *Hard of hearing* describes a hearing-impaired person who communicates through speaking and speech-reading, and who usually has listening and hearing abilities adequate for ordinary telephone communication. Many hard of hearing individuals use a hearing aid.

Person who has a mental or developmental disability.

### Unacceptable Terms

Cripple, crippled, cripp and gimp - the image conveyed is of a twisted, deformed, useless body.

Handicap, handicapped person or handicapped.

Cerebral palsied, spinal cord injured, etc. Never identify people solely by their disability.

Victim. People with disabilities do not like to be perceived as victims for the rest of their lives, long after any victimization has occurred.

Defective, defect, deformed, vegetable. These words are offensive, dehumanizing, degrading and stigmatizing.

Deaf and Dumb is as bad as it sounds. The inability to hear or speak does not indicate level of intelligence.

Retarded, moron, imbecile, and idiot. These are offensive to people who bear the label.

## Glossary of Acceptable Terms

Use a wheelchair or crutches; a wheelchair user; walks with crutches.

Confined/restricted to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound. Most people who use a wheelchair or mobility devices do not regard them as confining. They are viewed as liberating; a means of getting around.

Able-bodied; able to walk, see, hear, etc.; people who are not disabled.

Healthy, when used to contrast with "disabled." Healthy implies that the person with a disability is unhealthy. Many people with disabilities have excellent health.

People who do not have a disability.

Normal. When used as the opposite of disabled, this implies that the person is abnormal. No one wants to be labeled as abnormal.

A person who has (name of disability.)  
Example: A person who has multiple sclerosis.

Afflicted with, suffers from. Most people with disabilities do not regard themselves as afflicted or suffering continually. A disability is not an affliction.