

The Bergen County
Division of Disability Services

Disability Awareness Guide

Bergen County Division of Disability Services
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THE BERGEN COUNTY DIVISION OF DISABILITY SERVICES

DISABILITY AWARENESS GUIDE

We believe the first step to providing good service to our clients with disabilities is to help staff and the public feel comfortable. The following guidelines function as a resource to provide information concerning various disabilities and helpful suggestions for positive interaction. Much contained in this handbook is applicable not only to people with disabilities, but also to those with hidden disabilities, senior citizens, and the public.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- ❖ See the person who has a disability as a person, *not as a disability*.
- ❖ Let the person set the pace in walking or talking.
- ❖ Do not "talk down." Treat adults as adults. Do not speak as if physical disability implies a diminished mental capability / capacity.
- ❖ Speak directly to the individual, *not to a companion or an interpreter*.
- ❖ Do not use first names unless extending that familiarity to everyone present.
- ❖ Be patient. It might take extra time for the person with a disability to speak or act.
- ❖ In the event of an emergency, seek the help of the person's companion and/or family member.
- ❖ Relax, use common sense and when in doubt, **ASK!**

PEOPLE WITH MOBILITY IMPAIRMENTS

- ❖ Do not assume that the wheelchair user requires assistance. Offer first, by **asking** if the person needs assistance.
- ❖ Do not be offended if the person declines, politely or otherwise.
- ❖ Do not lean or hang on the person's wheelchair. It is part of that person's body space.
- ❖ Whenever possible, allow the client or person who transfers from the wheelchair or uses crutches, to keep these items within reach.
- ❖ Check that the venue or meeting area has adequate space for the wheelchair to enter, turn around and exit.
- ❖ Consider distance, weather conditions, and surfaces such as stairs, curbs, or inclines when giving directions. Also, relate the location of all ramps, restrooms and telephones that are accessible to persons with mobility impairments.
- ❖ NEVER push a power chair or manual chair without asking the person with the disability.

PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS, LATE-DEAFNESS AND DEAFNESS

American Sign Language (ASL) is an entirely different language from English, with a syntax all its own. Speech reading (lip-reading) is difficult for people who are culturally Deaf, if their first language is ASL because the majority of sounds in English are formed in the mouth, and it is hard to speech read a second language. Many late deafened do not understand ASL.

- ❖ Do not assume that people can hear you, especially when counseling, interviewing or providing directions.
- ❖ To get the person's attention, use a wave of the hand, a tap on the shoulder, or some other visual signal. Move away from background noises and bad lighting.

PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS, LATE-DEAFNESS AND DEAFNESS (Cont.)

- ❖ Speak clearly and slowly. Keep sentences short. Do not shout or exaggerate lip movements.
- ❖ Be a lively speaker. Use facial expressions that match your tone of voice, and use gestures and body movements to aid communication.
- ❖ Be flexible in your language. If the person has difficulty understanding you, rephrase your statement using simpler words. If difficulty persists, do not keep repeating - write it down.
- ❖ In many cases, it may be helpful to have a small pad of paper and pen in your pocket.
- ❖ Many people with hearing loss or deafness use "hearing ear dogs." Under the ADA (American with Disabilities Act), these dogs are allowed to enter into facilities. These are "working dogs," *not pets* and should not be distracted. NOTE: Never pet a working dog without first asking permission.
- ❖ Many devices assist people with hearing loss, such as infrared and induction loops. Become familiar with your organization's system and method of equipment distribution.
- ❖ People who are deaf or hard of hearing may use a TTY to make and receive telephone calls. A TTY is a small device with a keyboard and electronic print display. Those without a TTY or calling an establishment without a TTY will use a relay call with the assistance of a special operator. If you receive such a call, the operator will identify it as such.
- ❖ Also, organize a list of sign language-interpreters and open-captioned (CART) providers in your area that are available for hire.

PEOPLE WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS AND BLINDNESS

- ❖ Introduce and identify yourself and any others who are with you. Speak directly to the person. Use a normal tone of voice.
- ❖ Ask the person their name and use it to ensure that the person knows when you are speaking to them. Let the person know when you are ending the conversation or moving away. It is helpful to describe where you will be during a session if they need assistance or information.
- ❖ When giving assistance, first ask the person if they need assistance. Next, allow the person to take your arm - do not pull the person along. Walk alongside and slightly ahead of the person. Notify the person of any steps or changes in ground level. Use specifics such as left or right, upstairs and downstairs.
- ❖ On stairs, identify if there is a rail and where. Ask the person if he or she would prefer to use it. Place the person's hand on the railing.
- ❖ Be aware of places not well lit, and/or that have uneven ground surfaces (parking lots, plazas that may present difficulty to persons with visual impairments).
- ❖ If the person wants assistance with sitting, place the person's hand on the back or arm of the seat.
- ❖ Remember: Do not pet a "seeing eye" dog. Always walk on the side of the person away from the dog. These are service animals and they are working!
- ❖ As you approach doorways, when leading a person with visual impairments or blindness, tell the person which way the door opens and on what side. For example, the door pulls towards left or right or pushes away from left or right. The person with visual impairments or blindness will usually control the closing of the door.
- ❖ Mention to the person where all exits are located, including emergency doors. Provide assistance if asked, to restrooms.

PEOPLE WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENTS

- ❖ Give your complete attention to a person who has difficulty speaking.
- ❖ Do not correct and do not speak for the person. Allow extra time.
- ❖ Keep your manner encouraging.
- ❖ Ask questions that require short answers or, when possible, ask questions that have a response of just a nod or shake of the head.
- ❖ If you have difficulty understanding, **do not pretend**. Repeat as much as you do understand, then allow the person's reaction to clue you in.
- ❖ You may wish to have a pad and pencil available if unable to comprehend what the person is saying.

PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGES / IMPAIRMENTS

- ❖ Speak slowly and distinctly. *Showing* may be more effective than telling.
- ❖ Tell the person what to do - *not what not to do*.
- ❖ Help the person feel comfortable. Maintain a gentle voice and be expressive.
- ❖ Treat the adult person who has an intellectual impairment or challenge as an adult.

PEOPLE WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

- ❖ Due to an injury of the central nervous system, people with Cerebral Palsy have difficulty controlling their muscles and many have slurred speech and involuntary body movements. Interact as you would with anyone else.
- ❖ A person who may appear drunk, sick, or have a medical emergency might in fact have CP or another disability. Get the facts first.

PEOPLE WITH TOURETTE SYNDROME

The person may make vocalizations or gestures such as tics they cannot control. A small percentage involuntarily say ethnic slurs or obscene words. Simply wait for them to finish, and then calmly move on.

The more the person tries to contain these urges, the more they build up. They may need to step out of a meeting to release this urge.

PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY (SEIZURE DISORDERS)

Epilepsy is a neurological condition characterized by seizures that occur when the brain malfunctions. The seizures may be compulsive, or the person may appear to be in a trance. During complex partial seizures, the person may walk or make movements when he is in effect unconscious.

You cannot prevent nor do anything to stop a seizure. When it has ended, the person may feel embarrassed. Give them privacy to collect themselves.

*****Remember Always State the *Person* before the Disability*****

Language Guide		
OUTDATED OR OFFENSIVE	REASON	CURRENTLY ACCEPTED*
<p>The <i>anything</i>: The “<i>handicapped.</i>” The “<i>disabled.</i>” The “<i>blind.</i>”</p>	<p>It views people in terms of their disability. Groups people into one undifferentiated category. Condescending.</p>	<p>People with disabilities. People who are deaf. People who are blind.</p>
<p><i>Deaf and dumb.</i> <i>Dumb.</i> <i>Deaf-mute.</i></p>	<p>This implies mental incapacitation.</p>	<p>People with hearing loss or deafness. Hard of hearing.</p>
<p>“<i>Confined</i>” to a <i>wheelchair.</i> <i>Wheelchair-“bound”.</i></p>	<p>Wheelchairs do not confine; they make people mobile.</p>	<p>Wheelchair-user. Person who uses a wheelchair.</p>
<p>Cripple. Crippled. Handicapped.</p>	<p>From Old English: to creep Also: inferior. Dehumanizing. Disabilities do not handicap, attitudes and architecture handicap.</p>	<p>Physical disability.</p>
<p>Deformed. Freak. Vegetable.</p>	<p>Connotes repulsiveness, oddness. Dehumanizing.</p>	<p>Multiple disabilities.</p>
<p>Crazy. Insane. Psycho. Maniac.</p>	<p>Stigmatizing.</p>	<p>Behavior Disorder. Emotional disability.</p>
<p>Retarded. Slow. Moron. Idiot. Mongoloid(ism).</p>	<p>Stigmatizing.</p>	<p>People with intellectual impairment /disability. Developmentally delayed. Has Down/Down's syndrome.</p>

Person First Continued...

Say...

Instead of...

child with a disability	disabled or handicapped child
person with a cerebral palsy	palsied, CP, or spastic
person who has...	afflicted with, suffers from, or victim
without speech or nonverbal —	mute or dumb
developmental delay —	slow
emotional disorder, or mental illness	crazy or insane
person who is deaf or hard of hearing—	deaf and dumb
uses a wheelchair —	confined to a wheelchair or wheelchair-bound
person with mental retardation	mentally retarded
person with epilepsy	epileptic
with Down Syndrome	mongoloid
has a learning disability	is learning disabled
nondisabled	normal, healthy
has a physical disability	crippled
congenital disability	birth defect
condition	disease (unless it is a disease)
seizures	fits



THE "AD" INSIDE AN OUTLINE OF A TV SCREEN MEANS THAT A FILM OR VIDEO PRODUCTION INCLUDING AN AUDIO DESCRIPTION OF THE VISUAL ACTION TAKING PLACE.



WHILE THE OTHER "AD" DESIGN INDICATES THAT A PRODUCTION WILL BE AUDIO DESCRIBED FOR THOSE WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED.



THE WALKING FIGURE WITH CANE CAN BE USED TO INDICATE THE ACCESS NEEDS OF THOSE WITH VISUAL LIMITATIONS ARE FULLY ADDRESSED.



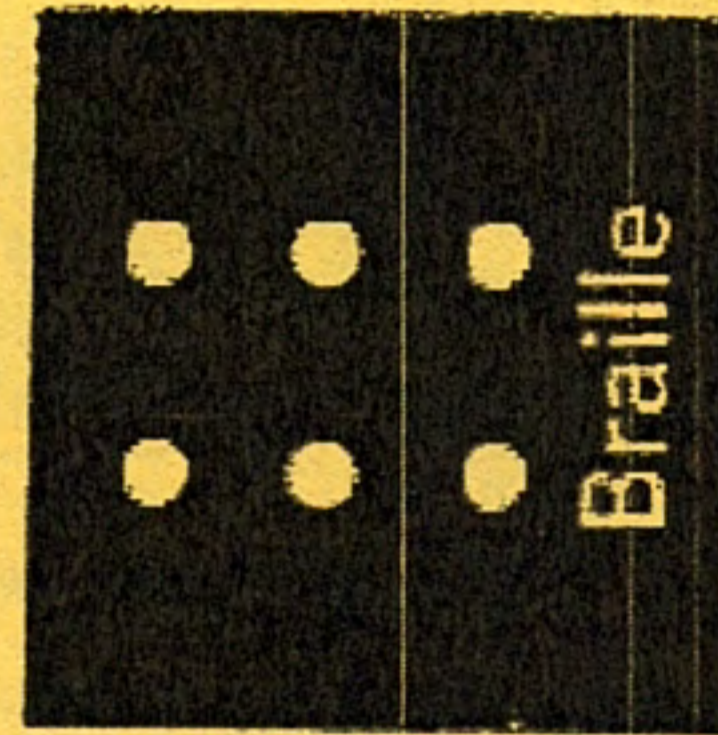
THE QUESTION MARK MAY BE USED TO INDICATE THE LOCATION OF AN INFORMATION DESK.



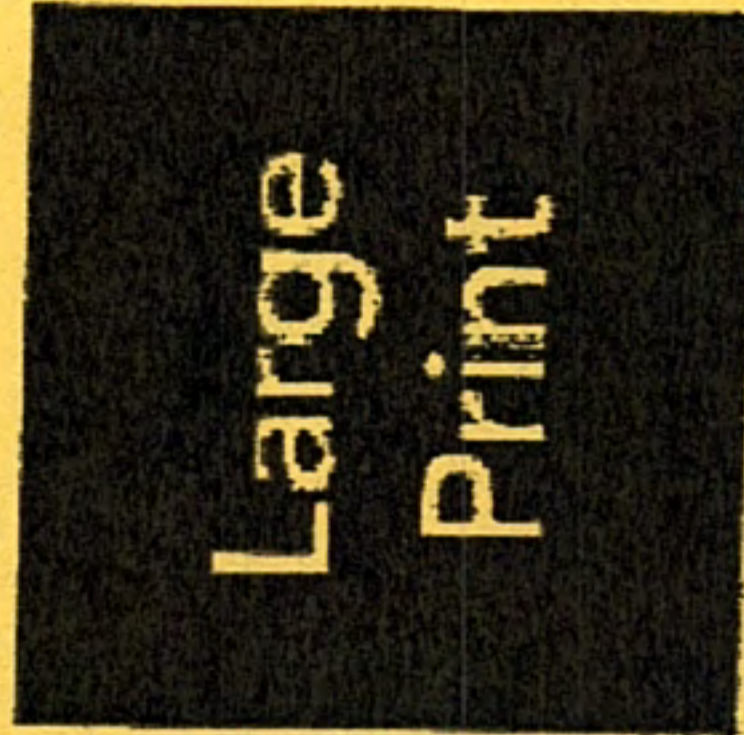
THE FAMILIAR INTERNATIONAL SYMBOL INDICATES ACCESSIBLE FACILITIES, PATHS, REST ROOMS AND PARKING AREAS FOR PEOPLE WITH LIMITED MOBILITY.



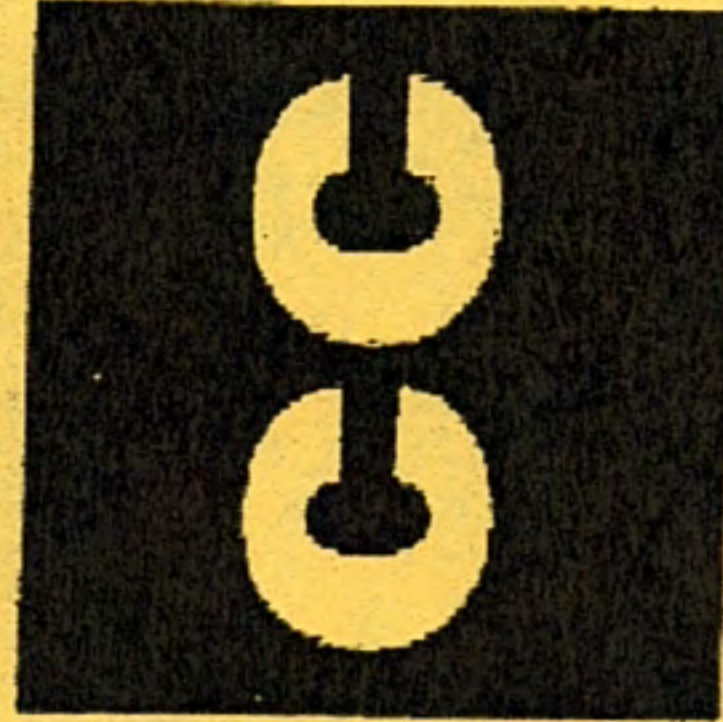
WHILE THE RECEIVER SYMBOL INDICATES THAT AMPLIFICATION IS AVAILABLE ON SELECTED TELEPHONES.



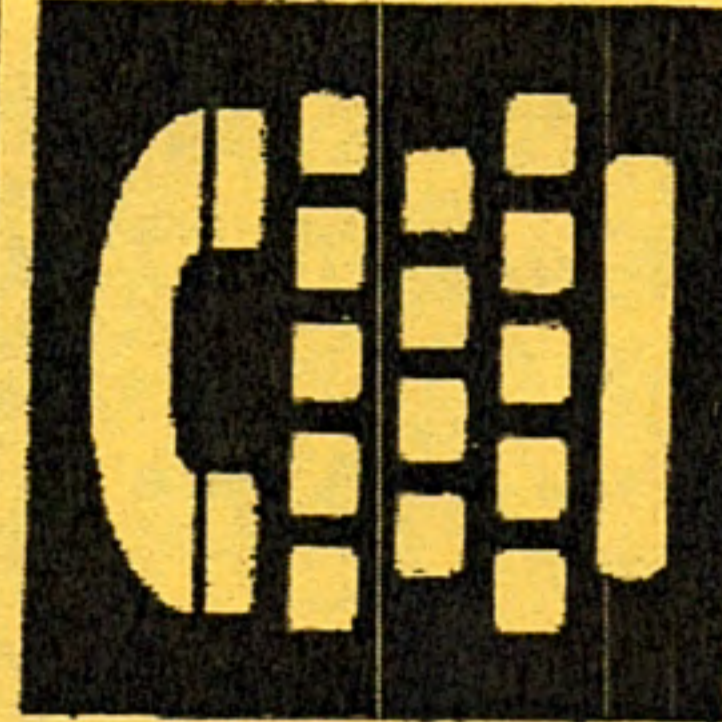
THE DESIGN WHICH INCLUDES A SET OF SIX DOTS INDICATES THAT PRINT MATERIALS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE IN BRAILLE UPON REQUEST.



"LARGE PRINT" SIGNIFIES PRINT IN 18 POINT OR LARGER.



THE "CC" SIGNIFIES THAT A GIVEN FILM OR VIDEO-TAPE IS CLOSED CAPTIONED.



THE TELEPHONE RECEIVER ABOVE A KEYBOARD NOTIFIES THE PUBLIC THAT A TTD (TEXT TELEPHONE) OR TDD (TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICE FOR THE DEAF) IS AVAILABLE.



THE HANDS ALERT THOSE INTERESTED THAT SIGN LANGUAGE IS PROVIDED.



THE DIAGRAM OF AN EAR INDICATES THAT ENHANCED HEARING DEVICES OR TECHNOLOGY ARE PROVIDED.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Speak to the person using simple words, rather than abstract concepts. Break it down into smaller parts. Do not use baby talk or talk down to them. Keep in mind that the person is an adult, and may make their own decisions.

People with developmental disabilities may be anxious to please, thereby affecting the information if the interview technique is not effective. Phrase questions in a neutral way to elicit accurate information. Verify responses by repeating questions in a different way.

People with developmental disabilities often rely on a routine and a familiar pattern to manage work and daily living. Be mindful that a change in the environment may require attention and a period of adjustment.

PEOPLE WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Learning disabilities are lifelong, and may not be apparent at first. They interfere with the person's ability to receive, express or process information.

People with dyslexia or other reading disabilities have trouble reading written information. Provide verbal explanations and allow extra reading time. Since spoken instructions may become scrambled, a person with a learning disability such as auditory processing disorder may need to have information demonstrated or written down. They may also request that you or they write it down.

They may do best in a quiet environment devoid of distractions. Additionally, they may have trouble grasping subtleties.

PEOPLE WITH TRAUMATIC OR ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURY

An accident, sport injury or stroke may result in brain injury. The person may have poor impulse control, make inappropriate comments, not understand social cues or understand they offended someone. They may have poor directional orientation.

In conclusion, it all comes down to realizing that people with disabilities are *people first*. They are all individuals with distinct personalities who will respond to your offer of assistance in different ways. Know you are working to become a more aware individual, more sensitive to other people's needs!

You are encouraged to reproduce this guide for others.
Thank you for playing such an important role!

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