

Working with People from Different Backgrounds: Multicultural Communities & Persons with Disabilities.

*Stronger Bridges to Health Forum
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Anne Cohen, Disability Health Access, LLC, Anne@disabilityhealthaccess.com

Objectives

- History of Disability Rights Movement and Disability Right Laws
- To feel confident in the ability to interact with people with various types of disabilities
- Understand issues and barriers to services for people with disabilities

Who Are People with Disabilities ?

- 1 in 5 people (54 million Americans)
- Our nation's largest and most inclusive minority group: all ages, genders, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic levels are represented
- Most people will be included in this group at some point in their lives
- They all have in common is being on the receiving end of societal misunderstanding, prejudice, and discrimination.

How does the Plan / State Define Disability?

- Eligible because income was low and the Social Security Administration verified they were disabled
- Receives Medi-Cal as a result of disabled status
- Members can have a variety of disabilities (physical, mental, developmental, hearing, visual, or chronic conditions such as HIV)
- Disability Aid Code, 60, but other aid codes can have disabilities, too

Disability Right Laws

- Civil Rights = equal access to social, economic and political opportunities which can be compared to expecting equal access for ethnic minorities.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and portions of California law protect people with disabilities from discrimination.
 - Delivery of services in a way that ensures that all people have an equal opportunity to achieve the full benefit services and programs.

People are People

- Not everyone thinks of themselves as having a disability
- Not all cultures view disability as positive or know how to ask for help
- No two people are the same (even with the same type of disability)
- People with disabilities are not always “sick” many are healthy and active.
- People with disabilities have the same dreams to work, have a home, have relationships.

What You Say Matters

- Don't focus only on one aspect of a person – their disability – and ignores their other roles and attributes, for example they may be also a parent, a musician or an athlete
- There is no “the disabled.” *Terms implies people are part of a group which is somehow separate from the rest of society.*
- Like other minorities, the disability community has developed preferred terminology -- People First Language” -- Person before
- People with a Disability
- Person with _____ (developmental, visual, speech, hearing)

Avoid Words That Have a Negative Tone

- Do not refer to a person as bound to, or confined to, a wheelchair.
- People are not homebound
- Avoid negative words that imply tragedy, such as afflicted with, suffers, victim, prisoner and unfortunate, crippled
- Emphasize abilities not limitations. For example, say a man walks with crutches, not he is crippled.
- Do not use special to mean segregated, such as “special school” or to suggest a disability itself makes someone special

The Basics

- Ask people if they need help before trying to assist them. Don't be offended if they don't want help. If they want assistance, ask for specific instructions on how you can be helpful.
- Don't make assumptions about what someone can or can't do.
- Avoid personal questions
- Be considerate about the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to say or do something.
- Speak with people using your normal volume and pace, unless they ask you to speak louder or slower.

People with Physical Disabilities

- Shake hands with the person, even if person has hand deformities or artificial limbs.
- If you don't understand what someone is saying, ask the person to repeat it or offer another form of communication
- Do not push, lean or hold on to the wheelchair. The wheelchair is part of their personal space.
- Sit in a chair so you are at eye level

Person with a Visual Disability

- Identify yourself and others when you first arrive and be sure to let him or her know when you are leaving the conversation or room.
- Ask, "Would you like me to guide you?" Never push or pull them. Let them take your arm and then walk slightly ahead.
- Using audible cues, such as a tap or pat on an object (such as a chair or doorway), Commenting, 'Here's the chair,' while tapping on it helps a person quickly locate it.
- Don't touch, pet, or feed a guide dog while wearing a working harness. It's important to allow the dog to concentrate and perform for the safety of the owner.

People with Developmental Disabilities

- Allow the person to make their own decisions
- Involve an advocate /family member if necessary
- Use clear sentences, simple words, and concrete concepts.
- Gauge the pace, complexity, and vocabulary of your speech to match theirs.

Individuals who are Deaf / Hard of Hearing

- Being Deaf is considered a “linguistic minority” not a disability.
- American Sign Language (ASL) is not English, like other languages it has unique words, meanings and cultural references.
- Requires an interpreter not a family member
- Speak to the person not the interpreter
- People who lose hearing later in life (hard-of-hearing) may prefer to read lips or use taking notes to communicate.

Individuals with Mental Health Conditions

- Assume they are capable of making their own decisions.
- Allow the person time to express thoughts
- Be empathetic show, that you have heard them and care about what they have told you.
- Avoid interrupting the person
- Don't talk down to them, yell or shout.
- If the person is delusional, or expresses something unusual don't argue with them or try to talk them out of it.

What are Access Barriers ?

- Barriers that prevent access to services can be:
 - Physical/ architectural (office has stairs, no wheelchair accessible parking)
 - Communicative (need for an interpreter)
 - Programmatic (need for longer appointment time)
 - Attitudinal (don't need access to recreational programs)
 - Social/ Economical (lack of employment opportunities, programs don't cover everything someone needs)

Thinking About Accessibility In Your Organization

- Is your department and work stations accessible by individuals who use wheelchairs?
- Are handouts available in large print, online, in Braille, in audio formats or assistance with reading?
- Is your website 508 compliant to allow people who use adaptive software to access information?
- Does your phone system have a long message & phone tree? (*not useable by people with physical or hearing disabilities using a TTY or relay operator*)
- Have your staff taken disability awareness training?

Communication Access: Alternative Formats for People with Visual, Learning and Physical Disabilities

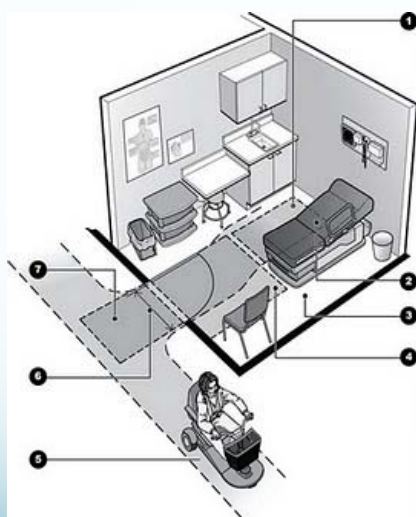
- Print materials in alternative formats:

- Braille
- Audio formats
 - CD
 - Cassette



LARGE PRINT

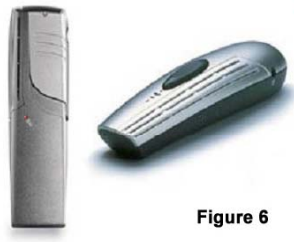
Facility Accessibility



- Architectural Accessibility
 - Parking Lot
 - Entrance
 - Restroom
 - Waiting Area
 - Meeting Room

Communication Access (In Person) People who are Hard of Hearing

Assistive Listening Systems/Devices



Simple language/pictures



Programmatic Access



- Modification of standard policies and procedures
 - Flexible appointment time
 - Longer appointment time
 - Providing drop-in hours
 - Providing assistance filling out forms
 - Providing print materials in alternative, formats (*large print, braille, audio, electronic*)
 - Providing interpreter services
 - Allowing service animals

Final Thoughts

- You can't go wrong if we apply the principals of good customer service
- The way an institution assists its customers and staff with disabilities says a lot about its values
- If your client was your son, daughter, brother, sister, mother, father what would we expect
- We have an opportunity to go through life looking at every encounter as a chance to make a positive difference.

More Information

Anne Cohen, MPH

Disability Health Policy Consultant

Disability Health Access, LLC

415-239-9100,

anne@disabilityhealthaccess.com