



# Disability 101:

Understanding the Terms of Engagement

Learning Takeaway Resource

View the webinar at [DisabilityInclusionPgh.org](https://DisabilityInclusionPgh.org).

# Disability 101: Understanding the Terms of Engagement

## Engagement Strategies

### ◆ Speech Difficulty

- A speech difficulty does not equate to poor communication skills or lack of understanding.
- If you are having a problem understanding what a person who has speech difficulty is saying, ask the individual to repeat, rather than pretending to understand.
- Listen carefully and repeat back what you heard to ensure effective communication.
- In some instances, it may be helpful to ask 'yes' and 'no' questions to ensure understanding.
- Do not finish the sentences for others.

### 💡 Discussion Starter

Let's take a moment to focus on one of the engagement strategies outlined in the webinar and discuss what we can do to improve our reputation of being an inclusive organization.

What are some of the suggestions from this training that we can apply to our programs?

### ◆ Deaf

- If you wish to get the attention of a person who is deaf, tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm.
- Look directly at the person & speak clearly in a normal tone of voice.
- Keep your hands away from your face, and use short, simple sentences.
- Make sure only one conversation is occurring at the same time.
- If the person uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not to the interpreter.

### ◆ Wheelchair User

- Treat the wheelchair as an extension of the person using it.
- Never lean on or touch a person's wheelchair; it is part of the person's personal space.
- If you are having a conversation with a person who uses a wheelchair, if at all possible, put yourself at the person's eye level.

### ◆ Service Animals

- Service animals are working. Interacting with people while on duty negatively impacts training.
- If you encounter an individual with a service animal, please do not touch, make eye contact with, feed or distract the animal.
- These distractions can be dangerous for the individual relying on the service animal for assistance and the service animal itself.
- When the animal is not working, some owners may allow interaction.
- Remember, the choice of the service animal owner to allow interaction should always be respected.

### ◆ Blind

- Be sure to identify yourself at the beginning of the conversation with a person who is blind and announce when you are leaving.
- Don't be afraid to use common expressions that refer to sight, such as, "See you later."
- When directing a person who is blind to a location, offer them an arm to hold. Do not grab the person's arm and drag them.



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## Engagement Strategies

### ◆ Autism

- When interacting with someone with autism, it is suggested that you communicate with concise and clear language.
- Some people with autism may not make eye contact or may speak with a flat affect. This does not signal the individual's level of engagement.

### ◆ Mental Health

- People with mental health disabilities regularly do not disclose their disability due to stigma. If someone discloses a mental health disability, be respectful of the person's privacy.
- Don't make mental health jokes.
- Everybody's experience with mental health is unique. Allow them to identify their needs and remember mental health disabilities are real.

### 💡 Discussion Starter

Disability affects all other cultural groups, regardless of race, gender, religion or sexual orientation. Why is this an important consideration for your programs?

### ◆ Other Non-Apparent Disabilities

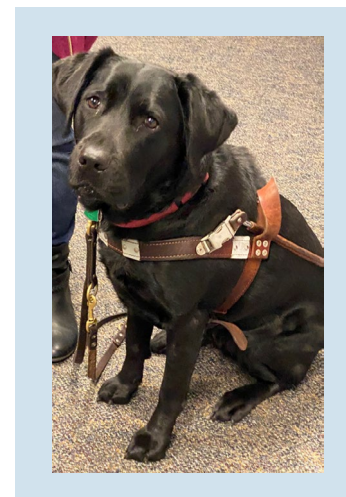
- This includes a variety of disabilities, such as epilepsy, diabetes, cancer, AIDS/HIV, MS, traumatic brain injury and more.
- Non-apparent disabilities are just as real as those that can be seen.
- Don't assume that because you can't see the disability that it is not impacting the person's life.

### ◆ Intellectual Disability

- If you are speaking with an individual with an intellectual disability, you may need to repeat or rephrase what you say.
- Provide step-by-step instructions.
- In some circumstances, when you are giving instructions on how to perform a task, you may need to give the instructions in writing or use pictures or diagrams.

## Communications Checklist

- Use the term disability, not the term handicap
- Use people first language
- Avoid using offensive references to disability and disability euphemisms
- Treat people with disabilities as you would anyone else
- Offer to shake hands when greeting someone
- Speak directly to the individual, not to others with them
- When offering assistance seek direction from the person with a disability
- Do not talk about an individual's disability unless they address it first
- Be respectful of cultural differences in the disability community
- When unsure, ask the person with a disability for their preference



# Disability 101: Understanding the Terms of Engagement

## Scenarios for Removing Inclusion Barriers

### ◆ Alternate Format Requests for Program Materials

**Scenario:**

Person who is blind requests materials in electronic format.

**Barrier:**

Materials only available in print.

**Impact:**

Not all program participants can engage equally.

**Solutions:**

- Ensure program participants are asked about accommodations during enrollment.
- Provide materials in an accessible electronic format via email.
  - It can be beneficial to provide these files prior to the program.
- Create a link that can be shared with participants to access materials online.

### ◆ Inclusive Volunteer Programming

**Scenario:**

Person with a mobility disability applies as a volunteer.

**Barrier:**

Understanding of a person's qualifications.

**Impact:**

Loss of talent contribution.

**Solutions:**

- Treat the person with a disability the same as you would any other volunteer applicant.
- Meet with the volunteer applicant to better understand qualifications and how they can best help the organization.
- Ask questions about how someone can perform the functions of the job, not questions about their disability.
- Discuss needs of the organization to determine the best way the person can contribute as a volunteer.
- Review volunteer roles to determine essential needs for roles

### ◆ Event Interpreter or Real-time Captioning Request

**Scenario:**

Person who is deaf requests an interpreter for a fundraising event.

**Barrier:**

Staff members are unaware of accommodations available. Fundraiser is not accessible to deaf individuals.

**Impact:**

Reputation in the Deaf community for not being deaf-friendly. Less program participants and funding.

**Solutions:**

- When hosting a large fundraiser, such as a gala, ensure members of the Deaf community are included by providing a sign language interpreter or live captioning.
- Ensure that team members are trained to handle questions about accessibility, understand how to answer video relay calls, and know what accommodations are available for all events.
- For one-on-one interactions or smaller meetings, it is not always necessary to have an interpreter.



### Discussion Starter

What are some steps we can take to increase inclusion of the disability community in our existing programs?

**Examples:**

- Post program accessibility statements
- Develop an accommodations request process for program enrollment
- Create an accommodation quick reference card
- Develop an accommodations checklist

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## Scenarios for Removing Inclusion Barriers

### Support Person Request for Program Participation

#### Scenario:

Parent of a student with autism requests to be present to provide support during program.

#### Barrier:

Concern about a welcoming environment.

#### Impact:

Student misses out on an opportunity to explore a career path of interest.

#### Solutions:

- Be honest about the level of experience the organization has with inclusion of someone with autism.
- Schedule a meeting with the student, parents and instructor to discuss possible accommodations and concerns.
  - If possible, allow time for the student to interact one-on-one with the instructor. During this time, ask direct questions.
- Ensure all programming instructors understand the importance of a strong no bullying platform.

### Request for Facilities Accommodation

#### Scenario:

Employee with PTSD requests to have desk moved as a mental health accommodation.

#### Barrier:

Changes to the physical environment.

#### Impact:

Changes to the employee's level of engagement and productivity.

#### Solutions:

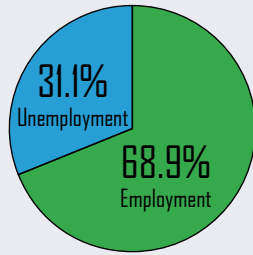
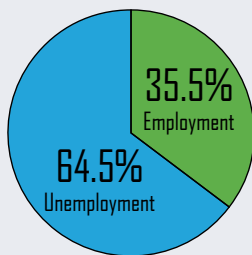
- The best resolution would be to meet the person's accommodation request.
  - Desk placement is a common accommodation for people with a varying number of disabilities.
  - For people with mental health disabilities, including disabilities like PTSD, having someone approach from behind can greatly interfere with work habits.
- Do not share the employee's disclosure of a disability.
- Explain that a few tweaks need to be made to meet organizational needs as they are becoming familiar with the changes to the office.

## Historical Perspectives and Current Trends

### Disability Employment Statistics (18-64): Oct. 2019

#### People with Disabilities

#### People without Disabilities



### Social Model

Focuses on the quality of life of the person with a disability, including work, family and community.

Sees the needs of the disability community from a civil rights perspective.

Replaces the medical model which focuses on finding a cure.

### Discussion Starter

People with disabilities promote a movement to a social model rather than a medical model that is cure-based. Why is this an important consideration when organizations integrate health and wellness into their workplace culture or for organizations that provide community services related to health and wellness? How do we maintain a culturally aware mindset while offering services related to increasing access to healthcare or managing medical conditions?

# Disability 101: Understanding the Terms of Engagement

## Disability Inclusion & Access: Moving Forward

FISA Foundation and The Heinz Endowments convened nearly 250 nonprofit and foundation leaders on November 21st 2019 to launch [www.disabilityinclusionpgh.org](http://www.disabilityinclusionpgh.org). We believe that our community is at its best when everyone is included, and no one is left out. Disability Inclusion & Access: Moving Forward is a new initiative to support nonprofits, foundations and community organizations to be more welcoming and inclusive of people with disabilities.

## About Bender Consulting Services

With 25 years of experience in supporting corporate and federal recruitment, workplace mentoring, and technology accessibility initiatives, Bender Consulting Services, Inc. is the leading national expert in disability employment solutions for private and public sector employers. To learn more about how to start your career with Bender Consulting Services, Inc., please visit our website at [www.benderconsult.com](http://www.benderconsult.com).

## Additional Resources

- [Bender Consulting Services](#)
- [iDisability](#): Civil Rights of Americans with Disabilities Free eLearning Module
- [FISA Foundation](#)
- [Heinz Endowments](#)
- [Disability Inclusion & Access](#)
- [Job Accommodation Network](#)
- [Caption First](#)
- [3Play Media](#)
- [We Will Slaughter Stigma Campaign](#)

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AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT 1990-2020

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