

CREATING AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT



GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Be proactive in anticipating things that may cause difficulties in participating successfully and result in physical or psychological discomfort.
- Do not focus on the disability but on the individual and issue at hand.
- Always direct your communication to the person with the disability.
- If you are uncertain about what to do, ASK.
- Do not ask about the nature of the disability or other personal questions unless the individual indicates a desire to share that information with you.
- Respect adaptive/assistive devices (canes, communication boards, crutches, wheelchairs) as personal property. Do not or allow others to move, play with, lean on, or use these aids unless given explicit permission.
- If you blunder or make a mistake, apologize, correct the problem and learn from the mistake.

PLANNING FOR INCLUSION: DISCUSS WITH PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS:

- General Characteristics - What are the youth's strengths and weaknesses?
- Physical Disabilities – What situations may affect participation?
- Mental Capabilities – What is the youth's present grade, developmental level, reading ability and listening ability?



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PLANNING FOR INCLUSION: DISCUSS WITH PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS, continued

- Medication – What are the possible side effects of medications?
- Discipline – What are expectations for conduct and rules for participation?
- Dietary and Eating Problems – Is there a special diet or restriction?
- Living Skills – Is the youth able to handle his/her personal needs?
- Transportation – Reinforce that transportation is the parent's responsibility.
- Emergencies – Discuss procedures to be taken in the event of an emergency. Who is the contact and where can critical information be easily found?

CREATING INCLUSIVE MATERIALS

Print Materials

- Bind materials with flexible bindings and use one-inch margins.
- Avoid complicated fonts and use a large font size.
- Use contrasting and saturated colors and don't depend solely on color to convey information.
- Use off-white or yellow paper with little glare.
- Make material available in Spanish and other languages.

Presentation Materials

- Simplify information and display one idea per visual.
- Use at least 20-point to 24-point typefaces and limit the number of words on a slide.
- Use saturated, high contrast colors and keep graphics simple.

Videos

- Limit length to 3 minutes or less for on-line clips and keep the clip to one primary focus or theme.
- Provide visual and written information and audio descriptions.
- Provide Closed Captioning and transcripts.

Web-based materials

- Keep page layout simple and use contrasting colors for easier reading.
- Provide a clear navigation pattern.
- Text should be clear and uniform with alternate text to explain images.

HEARING

Impairments

- Treat people individually and do not make assumptions based on experiences with other people.
- Always look directly at the person.
- To get the attention of the individual – call his/her name. If there is no response, lightly touch him/her on the arm or shoulder.
- Do not obscure your face and mouth with your hands, hair or other obstructions.
- Speak clearly and evenly in a normal tone and style. Do not exaggerate your speech.
- If you encounter extreme difficulty with oral communication, ask if you can write.
- Ask short questions that require short answers.
- Be aware of the environment. Large and crowded rooms and hallways can be difficult. Bright sunlight or shadows can also present barriers if the individual is trying to read lips.



Creating an Inclusive Environment

HEARING, continued

Accommodations

- Allow a caregiver to facilitate involvement and feedback.
- Provide ASL interpreters.
- Use visual aids.
- Reserve seating in the front.

MOBILITY

Impairments

- Treat people individually and do not make assumptions based on experiences with other people.
- Remember a wheelchair is part of an individual's "personal space". Do not touch it without explicit permission from the individual.
- Always ask if you can provide assistance before you do so.
- If an offer of assistance is accepted, wait for directions. If denied, do not take it personally.
- When given permission to push a wheelchair, go slowly at first as wheelchairs quickly gain momentum.
- Do not pat an individual who uses a wheelchair on the head or back.
- Sit down when talking so that you are at eye level.

Accommodations

- Allow a caregiver to facilitate involvement and feedback.
- Provide facilities free of architectural barriers.
- Use adaptive equipment such as lower workbenches or modified foot controls.
- Raise the bed of a garden or work area.
- Use lighter equipment and allow for rest periods.
- Adapt game rules to allow for extra time and consider a lower playing net when appropriate.

SPEECH

Impairments

- Treat people individually and do not make assumptions based on experiences with other people.
- Do not ignore a person even though you might not understand them.
- Speak when you are certain he/she has finished and avoid interruptions.
- Plan to allow for more time to avoid rushed conversations.
- Do not pretend to understand a conversation if you do not.
- Do not assume a person with a speech impediment is unable to understand you.
- Consider someone's communication device to be an extension of one's personal space and avoid playing with it.

Accommodations

- Allow a caregiver to facilitate involvement and feedback.
- Face the individual and maintain eye contact. Give the conversation your full attention.
- If you encounter extreme difficulty with oral communication, ask if you can write.



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VISUAL

Impairments

- Treat people individually and do not make assumptions based on experiences with other people.
- Direct your comments, questions or concerns to the person with the visual impairment, not to his or her companion.
- Guide dogs are working animals and should not be treated as pets. Do not give the dog instructions, play with or touch it.
- Do not grab or steer the cane of a person with a visual impairment.
- Offer the use of your arm/elbow. Do not clutch the person's arm or steer him/her. Walk normally.
- Offer a brief description of the environment such as "There is a table in the front of the room about 8 feet ahead of you with the chairs and tables arranged in a U-shape around the room" or "Coat racks are on the left side of the door as you enter".
- Use descriptive phrases that relate to sound, smell and distance when guiding a visually impaired person.
- Ask in what format the person desires information whether Braille, large print or audiotape.
- If you are reading for a person with a visual impairment, first describe the information to be read. Do not skip information unless requested to do so.

Accommodations

- Allow a caregiver to facilitate involvement and feedback.
- Give clear, specific directions using left, right, up, down, etc.
- Keep room arrangements consistent.
- Maximize the use of other senses in the design of activities and delivery of programs.

COGNITIVE AND LEARNING

Disabilities

- Treat people individually and do not make assumptions based on experiences with other people.
- Direct your comments, questions and concerns to the individual.
- Remember that persons with developmental disabilities are legally competent. They can sign documents, vote and give consent to medical care.
- Use clear language that is concise and to the point.
- Do not "talk down" to the individual.
- Demonstrate the steps of a task or project. Let him/her complete each step as you explain it.
- Assume that a person with a developmental disability has had the same experiences as anyone else and engage in everyday conversations.
- Stress strengths and not weaknesses.

Accommodations

- Allow a caregiver to facilitate involvement and feedback as appropriate.
- Utilize the IEP (Individual Education Plan) as a guide.
- Use precise language and give exact instructions.
- Allow extra time for the completion of tasks/activities.
- Alternate between calm and action oriented to avoid over stimulation.
- Use repetition and speak clearly with the use of gestures.
- Use demonstrations and break activities down into small planned steps.
- Give directions one step at a time and offer written or verbal forms.
- Use a multi-sensory approach.



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PSYCHIATRIC

Disabilities

- Treat people individually and do not make assumptions based on experiences with other people.
- Do not assume that people with psychiatric disabilities are more likely to be violent.
- Do not assume all people with psychiatric disabilities take or should take medication.
- Assume people with psychiatric disabilities are capable of working, signing contracts, or giving consent for medical care.
- Do not assume that people with psychiatric disabilities also have cognitive disabilities.
- Do not assume people with psychiatric disabilities are less intelligent, do not know what is best for them, have poor judgment or are unable to cope with stress.

Accommodations

- Allow a caregiver to facilitate involvement and feedback.
- Utilize the IEP (Individual Education Plan) as a guide.
- Use precise language and give exact instructions.
- Allow extra time for the completion of tasks or projects.
- Alternate between calm and action oriented activities to avoid over stimulation.
- Use repetition and speak clearly with the use of gestures.
- Use demonstrations and break activities down into small planned steps
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Adapted from:

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<http://www.uvm.edu/~aaeo/>

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