Developmental Disabilities

APD serves five Developmental Disabilities:

- Prader-Willi Syndrome
- Mental Retardation
- Spina Bifida
- Cerebral Palsy
- Autism
Words can make a difference

The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and lightning bug.

-Mark Twain
Negative versus Affirmative Phrase

- The disabled
- Afflicted with CP
- Epileptic
- Confined, restricted, or wheelchair bound
- Slow

- Person with a disability
- Person who has Cerebral Palsy
- Person with Epilepsy
- Person who uses a wheelchair
- Person who needs assistance
Communicating with People with Intellectual Disabilities

People with developmental disabilities may learn slowly. They sometimes have a hard time using what they have learned and applying it from one setting or situation to another.
Intellectual Disabilities

- Speak to the person in clear sentences, using simple words. Complex ideas can be broken into smaller parts.

- Remember that the person is an adult and, unless you are informed otherwise, can make his or her own decisions.
Intellectual Disabilities

- It can be difficult for people with developmental disabilities to make quick decisions. Be patient and allow the person to take their time.

- Repetition works well - use short and frequent teaching sessions.
Communicating with People with Cerebral Palsy

Cerebral Palsy is a result of an injury to the central nervous system. People with cerebral palsy have difficulty controlling their muscles. It does not effect intellectual functioning.
Cerebral Palsy

- Give the person time to say what he or she wants to say (some people with cerebral palsy have very slow speech).

- Don’t interrupt, don’t finish sentences, or guess what someone is trying to say.

- Don’t speak for people.
Cerebral Palsy

- Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish.

- Ask short questions that require short answers, or a nod of the head.
Cerebral Palsy

- Never pretend to understand; instead repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.

- If the person uses a wheelchair, if possible, place yourself at eye level when speaking with him or her.
Communicating with People with Autism

Autism is a complex disability that is the result of a neurological disorder that affects functioning of the brain, mainly impacting the development of social interaction and communication skills.
Autism

- Be structured and well organized when speaking to someone with Autism.

- Non-verbal body language is difficult for people with Autism to understand, so do not use it when communicating an issue.
Autism

- Be aware that people with Autism interpret language literally.

- Hearing someone say “I punched the time clock” may be looked at as violent. Don’t use metaphors such as “I’m just pulling your leg” or “Knock ‘em Dead!”
Building social relationships and maintaining conversation on general topics may not be of particular interest.

Don’t be offended.
Communicating with People who are Deaf

People who are deaf or hard of hearing use a variety of ways to communicate, including:

- American Sign Language
- Interpreters
- Speech Reading/Lip Reading
Deaf

- Get the person's attention before speaking. A tap on the shoulder, a wave, or another visual signal usually does the trick.

- Speak directly to the person, rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter who may be present.
Deaf

- Look directly at the person when speaking. Avoid turning away or looking down. Don’t chew gum or put your hands in front of your mouth.

- Use pantomime, body language, and facial expression to help supplement your communication. A lively speaker always is more interesting to watch!
Some people rely primarily on written messages. Be patient, as this takes time.

Many people can speak even though they cannot hear. Don’t act surprised or say “Wow, you can speak?!”
Deaf

- Tap a person on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention.
- Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to establish if the person can read your lips.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking. Never shout to a person. Just speak in a normal tone of voice.
Communicating with People who are Blind

- People who are blind know how to orient themselves and get around quite well.
- They may use a cane or a guide dog.
- You may or may not need to assist.
Blind

- Always identify yourself and others.

- When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
Blind

- If you are walking, describe the setting, noting any obstacles, such as stairs (Up or Down), and objects protruding from the wall.
- If you are going to give a warning, be specific.
- If you have changed your facility (i.e., rearranged the furniture) notify people of the changes.
Blind

- If the person has a guide dog, approach them on the side opposite the dog.

- Never distract a working animal from their job without the owner’s permission. The animal is working, and an essential element to the person with a disability.
Blind

- People who are blind need their arms for balance, don’t just take their arm and guide them somewhere.
- Offer your elbow if you need to lead someone.
- However, it is appropriate to guide a person’s hand to a banister or the back of a chair.
Additional Tips…..

- Offer to shake hands when introduced. People with limited hand use or an artificial limb can usually shake hands.

- Offering the left hand is an acceptable greeting.
Additional Tips…..

- People who have limited mobility may lean on a door for support as they open it. Pushing the door open from behind or unexpectedly opening the door may cause them to fall.

- Even pulling out or pushing in a chair may present a problem. Always ask before offering help.
Relax!

- Don’t be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as “Nice to see you!” or “Would you like to take a walk?”, that seems to relate to a person’s disability.
Questions or Comments
Thank You!

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