

ADA ETIQUETTE

Interacting with People with Disabilities

The rules of etiquette and good manners for dealing with people with disabilities are generally the same as the rules for good etiquette in society. The guidelines provided address specific issues which frequently arise for people with disabilities in terms of those issues related to disability and outline basic etiquette for working with people with different kinds of disabilities.



City of Norwalk
Human Relations Commission
125 East Avenue
Norwalk, CT 06865
Phone: 203.854.7989
Fax: 203.854.7767
Email: humanrelations@norwalkct.org
Web: www.norwalkct.org





Access to civic life by people with disabilities is a fundamental goal of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). To ensure that this goal is met, Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities. This requirement extends not only to physical access at government facilities, programs and events, but also to policy changes that governmental entities must make to ensure that all people with disabilities can take part in and benefit from the programs and services of the City of Norwalk.

We are obligated to ensure effective communication, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services, so that individuals with disabilities can fully participate in civic activities. The purpose of this booklet is to make available to all employees information on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and provide etiquette strategies that fosters inclusion of people with disabilities. These basic tips are meant to be a guide for how we can better serve the public and relate to each other in the workplace. Also included, is a directory of local organizations that provide services for people with disabilities and special needs.

The City of Norwalk does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission to, access to or operations of its programs, services or activities. The City of Norwalk does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring or employment practices. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Human Relations and Fair Rent Department.

Keystone House, Inc.

141 East Avenue, Norwalk, CT
203.855.7920 www.keystonehouse.org

Services for adults: advocacy, assessments, evaluations, community programs, employment options and social rehabilitation. Residential program for individuals with psychiatric disabilities.



Norwalk Hospital

34 Maple St., Norwalk, CT 06586
203.852.2000 www.norwalkhosp.org

Acute care community hospital offering complete inpatient and outpatient services, including health education and support services.

- Hospital translation service available

Norwalk Transit District

275 Wilson Avenue, Norwalk CT 06854
203.299.5161 or 203.852.0000 www.norwalktransit.com

Service: Door - to -door transportation for people with disabilities qualifying under ADA.

Office of Protection & Advocacy (OPA)

60-B Weston Street, Hartford, CT 06120
(860) 297-4300 (p) (860) 297-4380 (TTY)
1-800-842-7303 (V/TTY) (860) 566-8714 (f) www.ct.gov/opapd

Seeks to protect the rights of and to advocate for people with disabilities. Provides information, referral services, case advocacy services, abuse investigation, and community development activities.

STAR, Inc., Lighting the Way

182 Wolfpit Avenue, Norwalk, CT
203.846.9581 www.starct.org

Services for infants, children and adults: Child development/early intervention (formerly birth to three), education, training and residential services for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Department of Developmental Services

460 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106
For Eligibility call 1 866.433.8192 www.ct.gov

Serves people with mental retardation: Residential programs, job training, supported employment programs, day and recreation programs, individual and family support, case management and respite care.

DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS DIRECTORY, *cont'd*

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Department of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

55 Farmington Avenue. 12th fl. Hartford, CT 06105

1.860.424.5055 Toll Free: 1.800.537.2549 www.ct.gov/dors

Disability Resource Center of Fairfield County

80 Ferry Blvd. Suite 210, Stratford, CT 06615

(203) 378-6977 (p) (203) 378-3248 (TDD)

Services: Information and referrals for individuals with disabilities including, support, benefits, housing and personal assistance services, independent living skills training, disability awareness training, adaptive technology technical assistance, advocacy.

Family & Children's Agency, Inc.

9 Mott Avenue, Norwalk, CT

203.855.8765 www.familyandchildrensAgency.org

Counseling, family support and care, including respite care for Parents of children with serious psychiatric diagnosis.

- American Sign Language Interpreter available

Jewish Family Service

431 Prospect Street, Suite 11, Westport, CT

203.454.4992 www.ctjfs.org

Services for adolescents, adults and families: counseling, therapy and social services.

- Interpreter available for Russian & Hebrew

Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)

(Southwest Connecticut Chapter)

Norwalk Senior Center, 11 Allen Road, Norwalk, CT 06851

203.656.2733 www.heareez.org

Help hearing people understand how to communicate with the hearing impaired; help hearing impaired live as full a life as possible in the hearing world. Conduct education and awareness workshops in schools, senior centers and other groups.

THE BASICS



DON'T MAKE ASSUMPTIONS about people and their limitations based on appearance or the use of assistive devices. For example, people who appear to be mobile may require accommodations such as accessible parking because they are unable to walk long distances due to a medical impairment; individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing communicate in various ways, or a legally blind person may still be able to see. Don't assume you know what someone wants, what they feel, or what is best for them. If you have a question about what to do, how to do it, what language or terminology to use, or what assistance to offer, simply ask. That person should be your first and best resource.

Remember that people with disabilities have different preferences. Just because one person with a disability prefers something one way doesn't mean that another person with the same disability also prefers it that way.

ASK BEFORE YOU HELP. Before you help someone, ask if they would like help. In some cases a person with a disability might seem to be struggling, yet is fine and would prefer to complete the task on their own. Follow the person's cues and ask if you are not sure what to do. Don't be offended if someone declines your offer of assistance.

SPEAK NORMALLY. Some people have a tendency to talk louder and slower to people with disabilities; don't. Don't assume that because a person has one disability, that they also have a cognitive disability or is hard of hearing. For example, a person with cerebral palsy might use a wheelchair, have uncontrolled upper body movements, have difficulty speaking, and yet have very good hearing, cognitive abilities, and intelligence.

TALK DIRECTLY TO THE USER, not to the interpreter, attendant, or friend. You don't need to ignore the others entirely; just make sure to focus your interaction with the user. When a user who is deaf has an interpreter, the user will look at the interpreter as you are talking. It might take a little extra effort to remember to face the user rather than the interpreter.

If you will be speaking for some time with a person in a wheelchair, scooter or using crutches, sit down so that you are at eye level in front of the person to facilitate the conversation.

BE AWARE OF PERSONAL SPACE. Some people who use a mobility aid, such as a wheelchair, walker, or cane, see these aids as part of their personal space. Don't touch, move, or lean on mobility aids. This is also important for safety.

THE BASICS, *cont'd*

WHEN MEETING A PERSON WHO IS VISUALLY IMPAIRED, always identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.

DO NOT TOUCH A SERVICE ANIMAL, or the person the animal assists, without permission. Noises may distract the animal from doing his/her job, and feeding the service animal may disrupt the animal's schedule.

TO GET THE ATTENTION OF A PERSON WHO IS DEAF, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to determine if the person can read your lips. Not all people who are deaf can read lips. For those who do lip read, be sensitive to their needs by placing yourself so that you face the light source.

USE "PEOPLE-FIRST" LANGUAGE when referring to people with disabilities. People-first language means put the person first and the disability second. For example, say "a man who is blind" rather than "a blind man," and "a woman who uses a wheelchair" instead of "a wheelchair-bound woman." Use people-first language when speaking with people with disabilities, and when speaking and writing about people with disabilities.

Use normal language including "see" and "look." It's fine to use common phrases such as, "Do you see what I mean?" even to people who are blind. People who are blind often make comments such as, "I can't find what I'm looking for," and "I don't see it on this [web] page."

AVOID POTENTIALLY OFFENSIVE TERMS OR EUPHEMISMS.

Commonly accepted terminology includes "people with disabilities" and "a person with a visual/hearing/physical/speech/cognitive impairment." Many people find annoying or offensive: restricted to a wheelchair, victim of, suffers from, retarded, deformed, crippled, and euphemisms such as physically challenged. If you are unsure, ask the person with a disability what terminology they prefer.

RELAX. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted, common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seems to relate to a person's disability. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you're unsure of what to do.

DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS DIRECTORY



Ability Beyond Disability

1 Park Street, Norwalk, CT 06851
203.957.3077 www.abilitybeyond.org

Ability Beyond helps to break down barriers and create new paths for people. Programs empower individuals, no matter their ability, to live with independence, work with dignity and thrive in their communities.

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

1642 Bedford Street, Stamford, CT
203.251.9430 www.brs.state.ct.us

Serves individuals with disabilities: vocational counseling, job search assistance, skill training, career education in vocational and other schools, on-the-job training in business and industry, vehicle and home modifications and supported employment services.

Catholic Charities of Norwalk

120 East Avenue., Norwalk, CT
203.750.9711 www.ccfairfield.org

Behavioral health services; psychiatric services; counseling to individuals, families and couples; child care services ("Room To Grow" center-based childcare); parent education programs (PEP).

CLASP Homes

246 Post Road East, Westport, CT
203.226.7895 www.clasphomes.org

Services provided for people with developmental disabilities: residential group homes, apartment program, career & community options program, sensory integration, pet companion program and recreation program.

CT Counseling Centers, Inc.– Norwalk

20 North Main Street, 3rd Floor, Norwalk, CT
203.838.6508 www.ct.counseling.org

Mental health counseling and day treatment programs for people suffering from co-occurring mental and substance abuse disorders

- Spanish Interpreter available