

Washington State Disability Inclusion Network



Disability Inclusion in the Workplace

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Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are the pillars of a successful, modern workplace. At every agency, current employees and prospective new hires alike should feel that they have an equal opportunity to work and grow their careers.

From Executive Order 21-01, Governor Inslee stated, “The diversity of people and cultures is a critical component of who we are as a state. State employees deserve respectful, supportive, and inclusive workplaces. Our diverse perspectives stimulate innovation and help us address complex issues.”

One important component often overlooked when considering diversity, equity and inclusion is the population with disabilities. Six percent of the available labor force in Washington identifies as having a disability, but only three percent are employed in the Washington State Executive branch (see Statewide HR Management Strategy Roll-up Report below). This toolkit is intended for use by all employees to foster a more inclusive workplace to hire, promote, and retain talent in this underrepresented segment of the available labor force.

Disability inclusion in the workplace must include awareness strategies that foster inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of the employment settings (i.e., work retreats, yearly picnics, lunch venues, and celebrations). By removing obstacles to success, disability awareness and inclusion strategies foster positive morale and allow employees to be as productive as possible. Our awareness will help re-shape preconceived, limiting ideas about individuals with disabilities and instead amplify what they can do at work ensuring people feel valued and respected for their abilities and strengths.

This document has been compiled by the Disability Inclusion Network (DIN) Business Resource Group (DIN@ofm.wa.gov).

The Statewide [HR Management Strategy Roll-up Report](#) highlights for People with Disabilities:

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- *"Agencies should create a safe and inclusive environment so that employees feel safe to disclose their disabilities.*
 - *People self-reporting a disability in the Executive branch workforce increased from 3.0% in fiscal year 2019 to 3.3% in 2020. However, the state is still falling short of the 5% target in Executive Order 13-02.*
 - *People with disabilities are also retiring at twice the rate of those without a disability (4.9% retirement rate compared to 2.6%).*
 - *Agencies must ensure their recruitment and retention plans include a specific focus on ensuring fair access and inclusion of people with disabilities."*
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Definitions

Disability

An actual, perceived, or non-apparent physical, sensory, mental, or cognitive condition that has an adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out day-to-day life functions. Attitudinal barriers may hinder persons with disabilities from fully and effectively participating on an equitable basis.

Inclusion

Intentionally designed, active, and ongoing engagement with people that ensures opportunities and pathways for participation in all aspects of a group, organization, or community, including decision-making processes. Inclusion is not a natural consequence of diversity. There must be intentional and consistent efforts to create and sustain a participative environment. Inclusion refers to how groups show that people are valued as respected members of the group, team, organization, or community. Inclusion is often created through progressive, consistent, actions to expand, include, and share.

Equity

The act of developing, strengthening, and supporting procedural and outcome fairness in systems, procedures, and resource distribution mechanisms to create equitable (not equal) opportunity for all people. Equity is distinct from equality, which refers to everyone as having the same treatment without accounting for differing needs or circumstances. Equity has a focus on eliminating barriers that have prevented the full participation of historically and currently oppressed groups.

Cultural Humility

Cultural humility is a mindset and a process that allows an individual to be open to other peoples' preferences through demonstration of respectful inquiry and empathy.

**Please refer to Glossary A at the end of this document for source information.*

General Disability Awareness Tips

- Put the person first and their disability second.
- Do not make assumptions about needs, abilities, or limitations.
- Not all people with disabilities have the same support needs.
- Create an environment that permits people with non-visible disabilities to disclose.
- If you want to help someone, ask first, and honor their choice.
- If a person needs help, they will tell you on how to assist.
- Apply basic courtesies to all people.
- Ask people before physically helping them.
- Always speak to people with a disability directly.
- Include the person in conversations and talk directly to that person, not to someone such as a personal care attendant or interpreter.
- Do not assume that people do not understand just because they do not use words to communicate.
- It is OK to use phrases such as "Walk with me," "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" People with disabilities will do so, too.
- Do not ask personal questions you would not ask of a person who does not have a disability.
- Some people prefer disability first not person first (i.e., Autistic or Deaf versus a person who is Deaf, etc.). Ask the individual how they would like to be addressed.
- If you meet somebody with a non-apparent disability and you learn that they have a disability, don't say, "I'm so sorry" just have a normal conversation. Saying "I'm so sorry" can be perceived as offensive to the person with a disability.

Disability-Friendly Workplace Strategies



Employers who include disability in diversity efforts enrich and enhance the workplace with diverse leadership, innovation, intersectionality, and the ability to cast a wider recruiting net. Below are strategies to incorporate people with disabilities into the workplace. In each section are a series of questions that will help you assess your agency's approach to disability inclusion.

Make an agency commitment to include persons with disabilities among your stakeholders

Is the agency leadership committed to a disability-positive workplace? Do agency policies, procedures, and practices specifically mention disability? Do people with disabilities serve on the board? Are workers with disabilities employed at all skill levels in the workforce, including senior management positions? Are your products or services accessible and marketed to customers with disabilities?

Educate all staff on disability

Does new staff orientation include disability awareness training? Are training materials available in formats such as large print, Braille, accessible PDFs, and captioned videos? Do employees with disabilities serve as mentors for new hires who do not have disabilities?

Provide ongoing information on disability

Are staff familiar with legislation pertaining to disability? Is disability information provided routinely in the agency newsletter or website? Does your agency contact disability resources in the community to help injured workers return to the workplace as soon as possible?

Form a disability employee resource group

Do employees with disabilities meet to discuss disability issues? Does this group have authority to make recommendations to management? Is all staff aware of this group and the contributions it makes to agency success?

Provide accessible facilities and services

Are buildings, parking areas, parking spaces, workspaces, online platforms, and communication systems fully accessible to people with disabilities? Do workers have the option to work remotely due to an accommodation request?

Accommodate applicants and workers with disabilities

Is there a central source and budget for accommodations? Are applicants and employees informed that accommodations are available if needed? Does staff routinely stay current on new developments in universal design and assistive technology? Are interview panelists provided with information on best practices for in-person and virtual interviews?

Project a disability-positive image to attract candidates and customers and to hire people with disabilities

Do state agency recruiters target students with disabilities when making campus calls? Do recruiters search for resumes on disability-related websites? Are recruiters and other personnel responsible for establishing working relationships with community agencies serving applicants with disabilities? Do recruiters regularly attend employment fairs for candidates with disabilities or work with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Services for the Blind who have qualified candidates with disabilities looking for work?

Consider a working interview or alternative methods to promote inclusive hiring practices.

Train, promote, and empower workers with disabilities

Do employees with disabilities routinely participate in employer-sponsored training opportunities? If not, has this issue been brought before the Disability Employee Resource Group (DERG) for recommendations? (If your agency has a DERG, if not, consider developing one). Are procedures in place to promote qualified employees with disabilities to management and supervisory positions?

Encourage staff to volunteer in the community

Are staff encouraged within work hours and outside them to build relationships with disability community service organizations? Do staff make regular visits to high schools to inform administrators, teachers, and students with disabilities about open houses or job trends in your industry?

Inclusion in the Workplace: Why It Matters

Common characteristics of disability-inclusive agencies include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Fostering an INCLUSIVE AGENCY CULTURE, starting with expressions of commitment from the highest levels and carried across organization-wide practices such as disability-focused employee resource groups and engagement activities.
- Ensuring representation of employees with disabilities at all levels of the agency including leadership positions.
- Ensuring disability-inclusive OUTREACH & RECRUITMENT by developing relationships with a variety of [recruitment sources](#) in order to build a pipeline of qualified candidates with disabilities for the future.
- Promoting disability-inclusive TALENT ACQUISITION & RETENTION PROCESSES by establishing personnel systems and [job descriptions](#) that facilitate not only the [hiring](#) but also advancement of qualified individuals with disabilities.
- Providing the ACCOMMODATIONS employees with disabilities may need to do their jobs effectively, whether that means assistive technology, a [flexible schedule](#), or numerous other [reasonable accommodations](#) or productivity enhancements.
- Taking steps to ensure EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION OF AGENCY POLICIES & PRACTICES around its [commitment to disability inclusion](#) and provide training on disability-related workplace issues to staff.
- Ensuring a barrier-free workplace by maintaining ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY, as well as a workplace that is [physically](#) and [attitudinally](#) accessible.
- Promoting ACCOUNTABILITY & SELF-IDENTIFICATION, if appropriate, by adopting written policies, practices, and procedures, and measuring their effectiveness in order to identify areas for improvement.

Tips for Individual Disability Categories



The following awareness tips address a wide range of workplace situations involving employees with motor or mobility disabilities, sensory disabilities, speech or communication disabilities, respiratory disabilities or chemical sensitivities, cognitive disabilities, mental health disabilities and non-apparent disabilities. This publication is not a comprehensive guide to disability etiquette in the workplace.

Disability statistics that might surprise you:

- "Around 1 billion people—15% of the world population—live with disabilities. This makes them the world's largest minority.
 - The figure is continuously increasing through population growth, medical advances, and the ageing process
 - Women with disabilities are recognized to hold multiple disadvantages, experiencing exclusion on account of both their disability and gender."
 - Minorities with disabilities face a range of issues relating to access, health, and independence. As members of a minority group, they experience barriers of a traditionally underserved community, and as individuals with disabilities they experience additional barriers within their own communities. Minorities with disabilities face higher unemployment and poverty rates, as well as less access to services, than their non-minority counterparts.
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**Please refer to Glossary A at the end of this document for source information.*

Service Animals



Definitions

Service animals are defined under the [ADA](#) as any dog or miniature horse that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual or other mental disability.

Emotional support animals, comfort animals and therapy dogs are not service animals.

- There are several types of service dogs:
 - Mobility
 - Hearing Dog
 - Medical (Diabetic Alert Dog (DAD), seizure alert dog, etc.)
 - Behavioral Health Service Dog
- Service dog etiquette:
 - A service dog is working. The dog's job is to focus on completing tasks for its owner.
 - Don't assume because the dog is lying down that they are not at work.
 - Speak to the owner not the dog.
 - Don't touch the dog. If you ask to pet, do not be offended if the person doesn't want you to pet the dog.
 - Don't offer food to the dog.
 - Do let the owner know if a service dog approaches you.
 - Service dogs are not required to wear vests or harnesses that identifies them as a service dog according to the ADA and state laws.

Mobility Disabilities



Definitions

Physical disability is a condition that substantially limits one or more basic physical activities in life (i.e., walking, climbing stairs, reaching, carrying, or lifting). These limitations hinder the person from performing activities of daily living.

Activities of daily living, or ADLs, are the basic tasks of everyday life, such as eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, and transferring.

Some mobility disabilities are caused by conditions present at birth, while others are the result of illness or physical injury. Injuries cause different types of mobility impairments depending on what area of the body is affected.

People with physical disabilities may need assistance with mobility. Some mobility aids include crutches, canes, scooters, wheelchairs, and walkers.

Examples of Mobility Disabilities

- Absent limb/reduced limb function
- Amputation
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)
- Arthritis
- Back Injury or Degeneration
- Cerebral Palsy
- Developmental Coordination Disorder
- Neuromuscular Disorders
- Neuropathy
- Nerve Damage
- Parkinson's disease
- Spina Bifida
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Stroke

Awareness Tips

- Do not make assumptions about needs based on appearance or the use of assistive devices. For example, individuals who use mobility aids such as canes, walkers, or wheelchairs have different needs and may use a mobility aid regularly or only as required by their limitations on a daily basis. 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 (e.g., a person with asthma, back injury, a heart condition, or neuropathy).
- Do not touch or lean on a wheelchair, move a person's walker or cane without either asking or being asked by the individual with the disability if it is okay. A wheelchair or mobility aid is part of an individual's personal space, as such consider it an extension of that individual.
- Be aware of the worksite and its accessible and inaccessible elements.

Upon hiring a person who has an apparent mobility impairment, offer to provide a tour, and evaluate the worksite for accessibility. Make sure that this tour includes all areas where the person might work, enter or exit, eat, use the bathroom, or connect with other colleagues. Ensure that the tour includes safety planning and orientation to safety protocols and procedures.

- Make workplace accessibility changes according to the specific work-related needs of the employee (e.g., making workspace modifications, keeping paths clear, and positioning items at appropriate reach heights, etc.).
- Keep disability awareness in mind when planning work-related social events or training opportunities. Host events at accessible locations and design activities that include all employees.
- Ask whether a person needs assistance before you help. Extend the same courtesies to individuals with disabilities as you would others. Do not be afraid to ask how you can help.
- Sit down when speaking for more than a few minutes with a person who uses a wheelchair, so you are at eye level.
- Be careful about the language you use. For example, people who use wheelchairs or scooters are not confined or bound to them. The wheelchair enables the person to get where they need to go. It does not confine the person.

Visual Disabilities



Definitions

Blind

Person who is unable to see because of injury, disease, or a congenital condition.

Blindness

Blindness is defined as the state of being sightless. A blind person is unable to see. In a strict sense the word "blindness" denotes the inability of a person to distinguish darkness from bright light in either eye. The terms blind and blindness have been modified in our society to include a wide range of visual impairment. Blindness is frequently used today to describe severe visual decline in one or both eyes with maintenance of some residual vision.

Color Blindness

Color blindness means you see colors differently than most people. Most of the time, color blindness makes it hard to tell the difference between certain colors. The most common type of color blindness makes it hard to tell the difference between red and green. Another type makes it hard to tell the difference between blue and yellow. People who are completely color blind don't see color at all, but that's not very common.

Legal Blindness

Legal blindness is not a medical diagnosis, it is a level of vision loss that has been legally defined to determine eligibility for benefits. In the United States, this refers to a medically diagnosed central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction, and/or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Often, people who are diagnosed with legal blindness still have some usable vision.

Low Vision

A person with low vision is one who has impairment of visual functioning even after treatment and/or standard refractive correction and has a visual acuity of less than 6/18 to light perception, or a visual field less than 10 degrees from the point of fixation, but who uses, or is potentially able to use, vision, compensatory visual strategies, low vision devices, and environmental modifications for the planning and/or execution of a task for which vision is essential.

Visual Disorders

Visual disorders are abnormalities of the eye, the optic nerve, the optic tracts, or the brain that may cause a loss of visual acuity or visual fields. A loss of visual acuity limits your ability to distinguish detail, read, or do fine work. A loss of visual fields limits your ability to perceive visual stimuli in the peripheral extent of vision.

Visual Impairment

Often defined as a best corrected visual acuity of worse than either 20/40 or 20/60. A term that encompasses both those who are blind and those with low vision. Additional factors influencing visual impairment might be contrast sensitivity, light sensitivity, glare sensitivity, and light/dark adaptation.

Vision loss

Refers to people who have trouble seeing, even when wearing glasses or contact lenses, as well as to people who are blind or unable to see at all.

Examples of Visual Disabilities

- Congenital abnormalities
- Glaucoma
- Hereditary Diseases of the Eye
- Injury
- Macular Degeneration
- Ocular Complications of Diabetes

- Ocular Inflammatory Disease
- Primary or Secondary Malignancies
- Retinitis Pigmentosa

Awareness Tips

- Verbally greet and identify yourself before extending your hand. Use the same courtesy when entering or leaving a room or saying goodbye when ending a conversation. Do not just walk away when talking with a person who is blind or visually impaired.
- Offer your arm instead of taking the arm of a person who is blind or visually impaired when guiding the person. As you walk, tell the person where you are going, make note of steps or slopes, and point-out opening doors or other obstacles.
- Offer a guided tour of the workplace. Provide descriptive directions that do not require the person to rely on visual references. When appropriate, note if Braille signage is posted on walls and doors. Ensure the tour includes safety features and orient the person to safety protocols and features.
- Inform a person who is blind or visually impaired of structural changes or hazards they may need to be aware of in the event of new construction or workplace modifications.
- Offer to read written information, when appropriate.
- Provide work-related materials, such as employee handbooks or benefits information, in an accessible format (e.g., large print, Braille, or accessible web page accessed with a screen reader).
- Include text as well as color to point out meanings or emphasize words.
- Do not use color when giving directions for individuals who are colorblind.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Disabilities



Definitions

Deaf (uppercase D)

The "uppercase D" Deaf is used to describe people who identify as culturally Deaf and are actively engaged with the Deaf community. Deaf with a capital D indicates a cultural identity for people with hearing loss who share a common culture and have a shared sign language.

People who identify as Deaf are often born deaf and sometimes also have other family members who are deaf. However, many people who may have hearing parents or were not born deaf but lost their hearing later in life have become part of the Deaf community. Deaf people often prefer to use sign language and it may be their first language. Deaf people have often attended schools and programs for the deaf where they have been able to immerse themselves in Deaf culture. People who are Deaf take great pride in their Deaf identity.

deaf (lowercase d)

The "lowercase d" deaf simply refers to the medical condition of having hearing loss. People who identify as deaf with a lowercase d often do not have a strong connection to the Deaf community and most likely do not use sign language, preferring to communicate orally.

There are a variety of reasons a person identifies as deaf with a lowercase d. For instance, he or she may have been born to hearing parents and/or grown up in the hearing world with little or no exposure to the Deaf community.

Deafened or Late Deafened

Usually refers to a person who becomes deaf as an adult and, therefore, faces different challenges than those of a person who became deaf at birth or as a child.

Hard of Hearing

Hard of Hearing (HOH) is a widely accepted term to describe someone with mild to moderate hearing loss. A person who is hard of hearing often does not use sign language as the first or preferred language. This may be due to never having the opportunity to learn a sign language or preferring not to.

Examples of what a person who is d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing may display

- Is not responding or inappropriately responds
- Is asking for repetition or clarification
- Is staring intently at your face
- Seems confused
- Is pointing to their ears and mouth and shaking their head “no”
- Is using sign language
- Has a hearing aid or cochlear implant

Awareness Tips

- Be aware that individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing communicate in various ways. Pay attention to cues such as whether the person uses sign language, is reading lips, writing, or gesturing.
- Do not be afraid to say that you do not understand if you have trouble understanding the person’s speech. It is better to find another way to communicate, such as through writing notes, than to pretend to understand.
- Do not put hands in front of your face, or food or other items in your mouth when communicating with someone who is reading lips. Also, do not turn your head or walk away while talking. When possible, speak in a well-lit room that is free from background noises.
- Maintain eye contact and direct your communication to the person who is Deaf when using a sign-language interpreter.
- Speak using a normal tone of voice unless asked to raise your voice and rephrase rather than repeat the same words if you are not understood.
- Take turns when talking during a meeting so the person who is Deaf or

Hard of Hearing can read lips if they are able to.

- Get the attention of a person who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing before you start speaking by waving your hand, tapping them on the shoulder, or through some other appropriate gesture.
- Talk with the individual about their preferred method of communication for job training or complex work-related situations.
- When appropriate, provide a qualified sign-language interpreter, CART service, or training videos that are captioned.
- Remember to include employees who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing in casual conversation and social events.
- Provide a sign language interpreter for employer-sponsored social events, when appropriate.
- When speaking on a virtual meeting platform i.e., Zoom, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc., make sure to have your camera on so people who are Deaf and the interpreter can see you speaking.
- Background when speaking to an individual who is deaf needs to be out of the sun or dark for the person to see you speak and for the interpreters.

DeafBlind Disabilities



Definitions

DeafBlindness

Described as a unique and isolating sensory disability resulting from a combination of both a hearing and vision loss or impairment that significantly affects communication, socialization, mobility, and daily living.

The federal definition of DeafBlindness means both hearing and visual disabilities, the combination of which causes severe communication and other developmental and educational needs.

Congenital DeafBlindness

A term used if a person is born with a sight and hearing disability or when the combined hearing and vision disability occurs before spoken, signed or other visual forms of language and communication have developed. This may be due to infections during pregnancy, premature birth, birth trauma and rare genetic conditions.

Acquired DeafBlindness

A term used if a person experiences sight and hearing loss later in life. Anyone can become DeafBlind at any time through illness, accident, or as a result of aging.

- People who are born Deaf or Hard of Hearing and later experience deteriorating sight. Usher syndrome, for example, causes deafness or hearing impairment at birth and vision impairment later in life.
- People who are born with a vision disability or Blind and go on to experience hearing loss at a later stage.
- People who are born with vision and hearing that deteriorates later in their life through accident, injury or disease; for significant numbers

of people the aging process is a cause of dual sensory loss or DeafBlindness.

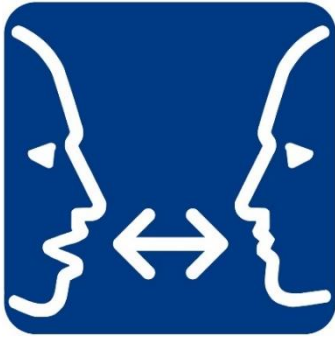
Awareness Tips

- Think of their skills and abilities first.
- Most people who are DeafBlind have some usable vision and/or hearing.
- Assistive technology can be used to enable an individual to do their job.
- Consider an assistive technology evaluation. The [Helen Keller National Center](#) has many resources available.
- Communication is a must. Understanding their communication needs is a priority.
 - Methods of Communication include: American Sign Language (ASL), tactile sign language, tracking, tactile fingerspelling, print on palm, lip reading, text, Braille, speech, and speech reading.
- Each DeafBlind person has their own communication methods and preferences from American Sign Language to spoken language.
- There is a common myth that DeafBlind people are fully blind and fully deaf which is false. Each person can have a combined hearing and vision loss in varying types and degrees.
- It is important not to assume that any DeafBlind person is incapable of doing anything or making decisions and requires support all the time.
- DeafBlind people are very capable of making their own decisions, are independent and can offer their employer a wide variety of skills and abilities. It is best not to assume but work with the person to understand their support needs.
- There are some DeafBlind individuals who do not appear DeafBlind but still will require reasonable accommodations. For example, in a meeting with three or more people an individual would need an ASL interpreter to hear the conversation versus having a one-to-one conversation.
- If someone needs sight guiding, offer your arm and do not grab or

pull on their hand or arm.

- People who are DeafBlind will often need touch (hands allow people who are DeafBlind to have access to objects, people and language that would otherwise be inaccessible to them) to communicate or explore their surroundings.
- Provide a tour of the work site and be sure to conduct safety planning with the individual at the work site with any communication support that may be needed.

Speech or Communication Disabilities



Definitions

Limitations in speech and communication may result from a number of different disabilities and disorders. An individual may be limited due to problems with articulation, voice strength, language expression, or may be non-verbal.

Additionally, speech and language limitations might occur due to stroke, cerebral palsy, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Huntington's Disease, oral and laryngeal cancer, hearing impairment, traumatic brain injury, dementia, chronic laryngitis, and vocal cord paralysis.

Examples of Speech or Communication Disabilities

- Aphasia is impaired expression or comprehension of written or spoken language. Aphasia is often caused by stroke, brain injury or Alzheimer's dementia.
- Dysarthria results in difficulty pronouncing words like "cat" or sounds like "sh" and "ba." Dysarthria may be caused by a degenerative neurological disorder or alcohol intoxication.
- Stuttering results in repetition, blocks or inability to say certain words, and/or the prolonging of words. An individual who stutters may also have distorted movements and facial expressions when trying to speak.

Awareness Tips

- Be patient and listen. Do not complete words or sentences for the individual. Do not be afraid to say you do not understand. Ask them to repeat and then listen carefully. Repeat what you heard to verify or ask them to write it down.

- Be attentive in your mannerisms by maintaining conversational eye contact and focusing on the content of communication rather than the delivery of the communication.
- Relax and communicate as you would normally.
- Provide interview questions in advance, if possible, to allow the individual time to prepare and deliver responses effectively.
- Consider offering a personal interview as an alternative to a phone interview for people who stutter.
- Some cultures and individuals with neurodiversity do not use eye-contact when communicating. Practice [cultural humility](#).

Respiratory Disabilities or Chemical Sensitivities



Definitions

Respiratory Disabilities

Respiratory disability is a generic term that refers to a number of medical conditions that can affect the respiratory system and may result in limitations such as labored breathing or asthma attacks, fatigue and difficulty with mobility, heightened sensitivity to ordinary substances and chemicals, and compromised immunity to infection.

Examples of Respiratory Disabilities

- Allergies
- Asthma
- Chemical Sensitivity
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Cystic Fibrosis, Environmental Illness
- Emphysema
- Fragrance Sensitivity
- Latex Allergy
- Lung Cancer
- Pulmonary Hypertension
- Tuberculosis

Awareness Tips

- Be aware that products that are commonly used in the workplace (e.g., air fresheners, cleaning products, markers, soap) can trigger a reaction for someone who has a respiratory or chemical sensitivity. Use less toxic and fragrance-free products when possible.
- Encourage employees to use fragrance-free products and discontinue wearing fragrances and colognes in the workplace. Do not wear

fragrances and colognes when interviewing new employees. Fragrances, colognes, and fragranced personal products can make some people very ill.

- Make a commitment to maintaining good ventilation and indoor air quality. This can benefit all employees.
- Do not make assumptions based upon appearance. For example, a person with asthma may not appear to be limited but may need accessible parking because they are not able to walk long distances or be in the cold or humidity for long periods of time.
- In some cultures, scent is part of their culture. Reasonable accommodation may be needed for an employee that requires a scent free zone

Cognitive Disabilities



Definitions

Cognitive Disability

Refers to disturbances in brain functions, such as: memory loss, problems with orientation, distractibility, perception problems, and difficulty thinking logically.

These disabilities may have their origins in physiological or biological processes within the person, such as a genetic disorder or a traumatic brain injury.

Other cognitive disabilities may be based in the chemistry or structure of the person's brain.

Learning Disabilities

Lifelong disorders that interfere with a person's ability to receive, express, or process information (i.e. Dyslexia: a language processing disorder that impacts reading, writing, and comprehension, Dysgraphia: trouble converting thoughts into writing or drawing and Dyscalculia: a learning disability related to mathematical calculations).

Developmental Disabilities

Lifelong disabilities resulting from physical or intellectual disabilities, or a combination of both. These disabilities present themselves before the age of 22 and affect daily functioning in three or more of the following areas:

- Ability to support oneself economically
- Ability to live independently
- Learning
- Mobility
- Receptive and expressive language
- Self-care
- Self-direction

The disability can be severe, moderate, or mild, depending on a person's support needs. People with intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorders, or genetic disorders such as Down syndrome are said to have developmental disabilities.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Traumatic brain injury can result from blunt or penetrating causes. Mild traumatic brain injury may cause temporary dysfunction of brain cells. More serious traumatic brain injury can result in bruising, torn tissues, bleeding, and other physical damage to the brain that can result in long-term complications or death.

Examples of Cognitive Disabilities

- Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Developmental Disabilities
- Down Syndrome
- Intellectual Disability
- Learning Disabilities
- Stroke
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Awareness Tips

- Do not assume because someone has a cognitive impairment, such as a learning disability, they have below-average intelligence. The individual may have above-average intelligence, but may have difficulty receiving, expressing, or processing information.
- Ask the person if they prefer verbal, written, or hands-on instruction, or a combination of methods in training and work-related situations. For example, if providing verbal instructions, it may be helpful to follow-up with an e-mail that clarifies your request.
- Treat the individual as an adult. Speak directly to the individual, rather than their companion.
- Be patient. Allow the individual time to think and answer questions independently.

Mental/Behavioral Health Disabilities



Definition

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) defines a mental health condition as:

- A medical condition that disrupts a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others, and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life.

Examples of Mental/Behavioral Health Disabilities

- Bipolar disorder
- Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD)
- Major Depression
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Panic disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Schizophrenia
- Seasonal Affective Disorder

Awareness Tips

- Avoid stereotypes and assumptions about the individual and how they may interact with others. In most cases, it will not be obvious that someone has a mental health disability.
- Recognize and respect the differences in people. People with mental health disabilities may behave differently than other individuals, may have trouble interpreting social cues, or may have different ways of navigating their disability.
- Respect personal space and do not touch the individual or their personal belongings.
- Provide support and assistance, as requested.
- Offer mentoring, coaching and peer support to your employees.

- Conduct mental health awareness training and inform employees of available resources.
- Provide flexible work arrangements such as flex-scheduling and telecommuting, as well as work-life balance programs.
- Washington's SmartHealth is an employee's voluntary wellness program that supports whole person's well-being. Employees are able to participate in activities that support the whole person, including managing stress, building resiliency, and adapting to change. Find more information on the SmartHealth website at <https://www.hca.wa.gov/employee-retiree-benefits/pebb-smarthealth>.
- The Washington State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a free, confidential program created to promote, health, safety and well-being of public employees. Visit the [EAP website](#) for more information and resources.
- Involve employees in decision-making and problem-solving processes. For instance, involve them in identifying potential problems that exacerbate stress within the work environment and in proactively implementing solutions to improve working conditions. To the extent possible, create a work environment that connects with the outside world through natural light, plants, etc., and provide a versatile, flexible range of spaces. Think about ways to meet employees' needs for quiet and privacy, as well as spaces that promote positive collaborative work activities.
- If an individual who has a mental health disability informs you of that disability, believe them. No one should ever have to prove they have a mental health disability.

Non-Apparent/Hidden Disabilities



A person's disability may not be readily apparent

Examples of Non-Apparent/Hidden Disabilities

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Back Injury or Degeneration
- Developmental Disability
- Epilepsy
- Immune System/Autoimmune Disorders
- Mental Illness
- Nerve Damage
- Neuropathy
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD); Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)
- Pulmonary Disabilities

Awareness Tips

- Allow extra time for the person to process what you are saying and to respond.
- Be very cautious about seeking the assistance of the person's companion, caregiver, or personal assistant. While this individual may be able to assist you with communication and interpreting the person's meaning and/or responding to behaviors, it is easy to make an incorrect assumption and fail to communicate directly with the individual.
- Develop and implement anti-bullying policies.
- Sponsor awareness-building and anti-stigma campaigns.
- Epilepsy Tips: www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy

Appendix A – Sources

Employee Assistance Resource Network. [*Disability Inclusion in the Workplace: Why It Matters*](#)

Employee Assistance Resource Network [*AskEARN | Inclusion@Work: A Framework for Building a Disability-Inclusive Organization*](#)

Employee Assistance Resource Network. [*Mental Health Toolkit: Resources for fostering a mentally healthy workplace*](#)

Job Accommodation Network [*Accommodation and Compliance: Disability Etiquette*](#)

State of Washington Department of Health *Education for EMS - Disability Awareness* [*Travis Alert Act 43.70 RCW, 38.52 RCW \(SHB-1258\)*](#)

State of Washington Office of Financial Management - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Subcommittee. [*DEI-Glossary of Equity - Related Terms.pdf \(wa.gov\)*](#)

Swarts, Marlene, M.A., C.R.C. (2021). Regional Representative, [*Helen Keller National Center for DeafBlind Youth and Adults*](#)

[*United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Fact Sheet on Persons with Disabilities*](#)

[*U.S. Department of Justice Frequently Asked Questions about Service Animals and the ADA*](#)

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) and [*Disability:IN*](#) recognize the value of establishing a collaborative relationship to promote the employment of people with disabilities. ODEP and Disability:IN provide Disability:IN members and others with information, guidance, and access to resources that will help them to recruit, hire, and advance workers with disabilities.

National Rehabilitation Information Center Volume 5, Issue 3, May 2010: [*Dual Status: Racial and Ethnic Minorities, and Disability*](#)

[*Cultural Humility*](#)

Epilepsy Foundation [*Living with Epilepsy*](#)