

Etiquette/tips to communication with persons with disabilities

General tips when communication with a person with a disability:

- Treat adults with disabilities **the same way** you treat other adults.
- **Speak directly to the person** with a disability, not to the interpreter or caregiver.
- Ask for advice on how/what to do. **The person you are trying to work with is always your best resource.** Don't assume they need help, ask them first.
- Whenever possible, give preference to an **interview without an interpreter or an assistant.**
- Use **different mode of communication, such as plain language, writing or drawing**, if the person is willing to/asking to.
- Interact with them with empathy, without showing pity/indifference.
- Don't be frustrated if you have to repeat yourself, stay open and calm.
- Make sure the key message the person needs, is clear
- Communicate respectfully & allow time
- Keep in mind: we are not all the same! Respect diversity!
- Don't assume anything about the persons ability to understand

Table: Effective information dissemination methods for people with different types of disabilities¹

Methods	Accessible by people with physical disabilities?	Accessible by people with psychosocial disabilities?	Accessible by people with cognitive disabilities?	Accessible by people who are deaf or hard of hearing?	Accessible by people with vision impairments?
AUDIO (radio, sirens, loudspeaker)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
VISUAL (television news announcement, flags)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Only with sign interpreter (if applicable), captioning or transcript	Only with audio description
WRITTEN (signs on community board) (dependent on literacy levels)	Yes	Yes	Yes, with simplified messaging and images	Yes	Only with large print, Braille translation or electronic copy for screen readers
SMS/text messages (dependent on literacy levels)	Yes, if technology is accessible	Yes	Yes, with clear and simple messaging	Yes	Only with screen reading apps or for people with some vision
DOOR-TO-DOOR outreach	Yes	Yes, with preparedness	Yes, with clear and simple messaging	Only if person going door-to-door can communicate with sign language or clear visual messages	Yes

¹ This table has been adapted from: Women's Refugee Commission & International Rescue Committee (2015), Gender-based Violence Disability Toolkit, Tool #7, <http://wrc.ms/gbv-disability-tools-english>

Etiquette/tips to communication with persons with disabilities

When interacting with persons with physical disabilities

- Avoid walking too close when walking with people who use walking aids/assistant.
- When you talk, try to place your **gaze at the same level as the person you are talking to.**
- Ask for advice on how/what to do. **The person you are trying to work with is always your best resource.** Don't assume they need help, ask them first
- If the person is a wheelchair user and they need help to move, when going uphill, hold the rear handles of the wheelchair and push them from behind. When going down, hold the wheelchair in the reverse position and get off

When interacting with persons with visual impairments

- Make sure you catch their attention through approaching slowly or touching gently. Introduce yourself first and speak in a normal voice.
- Greet them when entering/exiting a room they are in.
- Avoid using words like "look"/"see"/"here"/"there" and speak clearly.
- If you want to help them move around, ask the person to put a hand on your shoulder and lead them when walking.
- When sitting, let them feel the seat and back of the seat with their hands.
- When riding a bus/train, let them hold the handrail/rail/help them hold it.
- If you are in a temporary shelter, let them know where the emergency entrances, exits, and restrooms are.
- When serving food, let him know by telling him and touching it/turning it clockwise.

When interacting with persons with hearing impairments

- When you want to communicate, start by getting his attention by facing the person and getting eye contact.
- Observe lip movements and facial expressions is often helpful, so don't hide your face with your hands/books/hands. Make sure there is good lighting.
- Avoid using slang when speaking and speak slowly and clearly.
- Communicate in writing or through images if needed.
- You can also communicate through sign language or with the help of an interpreter.

Etiquette/tips to communication with persons with disabilities

When interacting with a person with an intellectual disability

- Be observant and try asking questions in different ways to check that you have been understood and that you understand the person.
- Use everyday words that are easy to understand
- Avoid using abstract words to explain/describe something.
- Who, what and where questions are easier than when, why and how questions.
- If necessary, ask short questions that require short answers, or a nod of the head.
- People have different personalities; therefore, each person is different.
- Ask someone who knows the person well about how best to communicate with the person.

When interacting with a person with a speech impairment

- If the person can not talk or if her speech is hard for you to understand, Ask questions requiring a 'yes' or 'no' answer. If the person is unable to indicate yes/no in the mostly commonly understood manner, you might need to ask how the person indicates 'yes' and 'no'. Say to the person: 'Show me how you say YES. Show me how you say NO.'
- Ask if the person could use any alternative method to back-up their speech such as writing or drawing.
- Don't pretend to understand if you haven't. Ask the person to repeat what they have said in a different way, or ask if they can write it down.
- Remember you are talking to someone who has problems with their communication, not their intelligence.
- If you feel that the person is having difficulties understanding what you are saying:
 - short, clear sentences.
 - non-technical terms.
 - Write down key words if they are able to read.
- Demonstrate what you are saying using gestures, pictures and props.