

**POLICY: COMMUNICATING WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

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- 1.0 When interacting with the public, LHIN employees should take the following into consideration in order to communicate more effectively with people with various disabilities and in keeping with the principles of dignity, independence, integration, and equal opportunity.

**PROCEDURES - TERMINOLOGY**

- 2.0 The terminology we use can influence the way we see people and may unintentionally create a negative perception. The words we use can be very powerful.
- 3.0 It is more appropriate to use the word “disability” or “disabled” as opposed to “handicap” or “handicapped”.
- 4.0 Remember to put people first. It is preferable to say a “person with a disability” instead of a “disabled person.”
- 5.0 However unintentional, many words used to describe the nature of a disability can be demeaning and disrespectful. Please refer to the LHIN Best Practices, Tools and Templates document to assist you in making your communication with or about people with disabilities more successful.

**COMMUNICATING IN DIFFERENT WAYS BY TAKING AN INDIVIDUAL’S DISABILITY INTO CONSIDERATION**

- 6.0 A key aspect is taking into consideration the specific needs of an individual. Employees may need to utilize a variety of different techniques to best interact with a person with a disability in order to effectively provide goods and services to that individual.

To assist people with disabilities access our services, employees should utilize the following general guidelines:

- 7.0 Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration you have for everyone else.
- 8.0 If you're not sure what to do, ask the individual "May I help you?"
- 9.0 Ask before you offer to help — don't just jump in. People often have their own way of doing things; individuals with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- 10.0 If you don't know someone or if you are not familiar with the disability, it's better to wait until the individual describes his/her situation to you, rather than to make your own assumptions. Many types of disabilities have similar characteristics and your assumptions may be wrong.
- 11.0 Some disabilities are not visible. Take the time to get to know the individual's needs.
- 12.0 Speak normally, clearly and directly. Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their interpreter or someone who is with them.
- 13.0 Be patient; give the individual time to explain him/herself.
- 14.0 Utilize the materials provided in the LHIN Best Practices, Tools and Templates document to assist you with individual/specific situations, techniques, best practices, and alternate communication methods to assist with the provision of goods and services based on the needs of the individual.