



# DISABILITY ETIQUETTE and TIPS WHEN INTERVIEWING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

## SCHEDULING

When scheduling interviews with persons with disabilities, prepare to accommodate their needs ahead of time. This will make the process more equitable and pleasant for the interviewer and the interviewee.

- a) Some interviewees with visual or mobility impairments may call prior to the appointment date, specifically for travel information. The scheduler should be familiar with the travel route and provide detailed information/directions to the interviewee.
- b) Ensure the physical and virtual interview site are accessible (e.g., ramps with steps, working elevator in building, closed captions available, if virtual).
- c) Persons with disabilities may need extra travel or prep time for an in-person interview. Let the interviewee know how long the interview is expected to last, and when possible, offer interviews during non-peak hours of the day.
- d) When giving directions to a person in a wheelchair, consider distance, weather conditions, and physical obstacles, such as stairs, curbs, and steep hills. Use specifics, such as “you will have to make a left in a hundred feet” or “right in two yards.”
- e) In advance, familiarize the interviewee with names of persons they will meet during the visit.
- f) Hold individuals with disabilities to the same punctuality and performance standards as any other prospective or current employee.

## INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE WITH PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- a) Conduct interviews that emphasize abilities, achievements, and individual qualities.
- b) Conduct your interview as you would with anyone. Be considerate without being patronizing.
- c) If it appears that a person's disability inhibits the performance of a job task, don't assume they can't do the job, rather ask: “How would you perform this job?”

*Examples:*

*Inappropriate: I notice you are in a wheelchair and wonder how you will get around.*

*Appropriate: This position requires digging and using a wheelbarrow, as you can see from the job description. Do you foresee any difficulty in performing the required tasks? If so, do you have any suggestions on how these tasks can be performed?*

This link to an EEOC website covers what can or cannot be discussed during an interview with a person who has a disability: <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/jobapplicant.html>.

## COURTESIES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- a) Interviewers need to know whether the job site is accessible and should be prepared to answer accessibility-related questions when:

- ✓ Interviewing a person using mobility aids.
  - ✓ Interviewing a person with vision impairments.
  - ✓ Interviewing a person with speech impairments.
  - ✓ Interviewing a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- b) Enable people who use crutches, canes, or wheelchairs to keep them within reach.
  - c) Be aware that some wheelchair users may transfer themselves out of their wheelchairs (into an office chair, for example) for the duration of the interview.
  - d) Place yourself at the person's eye level to facilitate conversation.

## **INTERVIEWING A PERSON WITH VISION IMPAIRMENT**

**When greeting a person with a vision impairment, always identify yourself and introduce anyone else present (this applies to in-person or virtual sessions).**

- a) If the person does not extend their hand to shake hands, verbally extend a welcome.
- b) When providing seating, it can be suitable to guide the individual's hand onto the back or arm of the seat, accompanied by a verbal prompt for added assistance.
- c) Let the person know if you move or need to end the conversation.

## **INTERVIEWING A PERSON WITH SPEECH IMPAIRMENT**

- a) Give your full attention when talking to someone with speech impairment.
- b) Ask short questions that require quick answers or a nod of the head.
- c) Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Try rephrasing what you wish to communicate or ask the person to repeat what you do not understand.
- d) Do not raise your voice. Most speech-impaired persons can hear and understand.

## **INTERVIEWING A PERSON WHO IS DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING**

- a) If you need to attract the attention of a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, you may wave your hand or touch them lightly on the shoulder.
- b) If the interviewee lip-reads, look directly at them. Speak clearly at a normal pace. Do not exaggerate your lip movements or shout. Speak expressively because the person may rely on your facial expressions, gestures, and eye contact. (Note: It is estimated that only four (4) out of 10 spoken words are visible on the lips.)
- c) Place yourself in the light source and keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking. Do not speak through a mask.
- d) Shouting does not help and can be detrimental. Only raise your voice when requested. Brief, concise written notes may be helpful.
- e) In the United States, most deaf people use American Sign Language (ASL). ASL is not a universal language. ASL is a language with its own syntax and grammatical structure. When scheduling an interpreter for a non-English speaker, be sure to retain an interpreter that speaks and interprets in the person's language.
- f) If an interpreter is present, it is commonplace for the interpreter to be seated beside the interviewer and across from the interviewee.
- g) Interpreters facilitate communication. They should not be consulted or regarded as a reference for the interview. Establish/maintain eye contact with the interviewee.