



# Inclusive Interactions

How to consider disability as you serve and communicate with others



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# Introduction:



## Who we are, why we need this resource and what it helps us achieve

The Inclusive Interactions booklet was created by the City of Bellevue DART Employee Resource Group (Disabilities Allyship Resource Team) to help guide city staff members as they serve the public and interact with people on the job, as well as outside of work. 26% of people nationally\* and 10% of people in Bellevue report having a disability. Experts believe these numbers are still underreported due to continued stigma around disabilities.

*\*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Employee surveys conducted at the City of Bellevue have shown that staff members with disabilities report lower levels of workplace satisfaction than their colleagues without disabilities. Staff members with disabilities are also less likely to report having a best friend at work.

Being intentional about creating and supporting accessibility and inclusion makes the City of Bellevue more effective as a workplace and more inviting as a community. This booklet will help us achieve a more culturally competent, connected and inclusive environment where all feel welcomed and have the freedom to be successful without the added stress of isolation or disconnection from others.

## Community demographics



**10%** of adults in **Bellevue** report having a **disability**.

**9%** of students enrolled at **Bellevue School District** are receiving **Special Education Services**.

Source: 2021-2022  
Bellevue Human Services  
Needs Update



## Workplace demographics

In 2021, **8%** (670/8440) of City of Bellevue **job applicants** reported on their application they have a **disability**.



In an anonymous **employee** survey, **7%** of City of Bellevue **staff** reported having a **disability** that same year. In both instances, these numbers are believed to be underreported.



A study done in 2017 by the Center for Talent Innovation found that most people don't report their disability to their employer. In 2016, the average percentage of employees who self-identified to their employer that they have a disability was 3.2%. The study found that the actual percentage of people with disabilities was closer to 30%, with more than 60% of disabilities being considered "invisible", or not obvious unless the person with a disability discloses that information. 34% of study respondents who reported having a disability also said they had faced discrimination or bias at work.

In her book, 'What Can a Body Do?: How We Meet the Built World' Sara Hendren explains why disability affects all of us saying, "Disability is not a fixed or permanent label that belongs only to some people; it arrives for each of us. If it's not a reality in your life now, it's sure to be so in some form, in your own body or among those who share your intimate life. Not everyone should call themselves disabled, but everyone should recognize that both giving and receiving assistance are actions we will each take up in turn, every one of us. Human needfulness really is universal."



## Bellevue's Diversity Advantage Initiative

In 2014, the City of Bellevue first adopted the Diversity Advantage Plan, a 60-point action plan that is part of a broader diversity initiative designed to advance the principles of equity, access, inclusion, opportunity and cultural competence within the organization and the community of Bellevue. The plan uses these principles to improve city policies, staffing and hiring, training, communications, services and outreach.

Equity, access, inclusion, opportunity and cultural competence relate to immigrant communities, communities of color, the disability community and many other marginalized groups. Disability is part of our rich diversity.

As you will learn in the Intersectional Allyship section of this booklet, people often belong to many different communities related to their identity (e.g., I may be a white, transgender woman with a disability - these are all distinct parts of my identity that intersect as I go about my life.) These intersecting parts of our identities come with different sets of advantages, or privilege, and disadvantages. Disability is one community that often experiences disproportionately negative outcomes in life, or disadvantages. This is why the city's diversity work is closely related to and even interwoven with its disability work. The City of Bellevue strives to recognize and understand these intersecting relationships and works to provide equal access and inclusion to all.





# Understanding Disability



If we want to ensure we are a community and organization that consistently and thoughtfully considers the needs of people around us and approaches disability equity in a culturally competent way, we first need to be clear about what it is we're talking about. What constitutes a disability and, importantly, do policy definitions give us the entire picture of how disability shows up in our lives and community?

## Definition

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was amended in 2008. The law's (42 U.S. C 12102) current definition is:

The term "disability" means, with respect to an individual –

- A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual;
- A record of such an impairment; or
- Being regarded as having such an impairment.

The definition from the Washington State Law Against Discrimination (RCW 49.60.040) is:

(7)(a) "Disability" means the presence of a sensory, mental, or physical impairment that:

- (i) Is medically cognizable or diagnosable; or
- (ii) Exists as a record or history; or
- (iii) Is perceived to exist, whether or not it exists in fact.

(b) A disability exists whether it is temporary or permanent, common or uncommon, mitigated or unmitigated, or whether or not it limits the ability to work generally or work at a particular job or whether or not it limits any other activity within the scope of this chapter.

## The problem with definitions

As with other identities that make up the diversity we see in the world, the effort to define disability is complex and in that complexity, we see moments for learning and growth.

Definitions like those provided by the state of Washington and the federal government can be useful to ensure those who are entitled protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Civil Rights Act and other equal opportunity laws are afforded those rights. Even so, it should be noted that terms such as “substantial limitation”, “impairment” or “limits” are not affirming terms. Those with disabilities often bring substantial talents and lived experiences. This is why seeing disability as a strength rather than a limitation is so important. Disability inclusion enriches us all. The use of deficit-based and ableist (a concept further described in this booklet) terms like these could be seen as institutional ableism, because they are created by government institutions.

Similar to institutional ableism, in the early 20th century in the U.S., state governments created a legal definition of racial classification that is an example of institutional racism. The states defined what constituted Black or African American as any person with even one ancestor of black heritage, and the resulting policies lived on for decades, causing severe disadvantages and harm to many people. We all must consider, especially as representatives of a government institution, if these kinds of definitions, whether intentionally harmful or not, serve as ways to decide who does and does not have full personhood and therefore who gets marginalized in our society. The City of Bellevue is a government institution and is not immune to perpetuating ableism in our policies, processes, programs or infrastructure. To guard against any kind of institutional marginalization, we must learn to see it where it occurs. This booklet aims to help you do that.

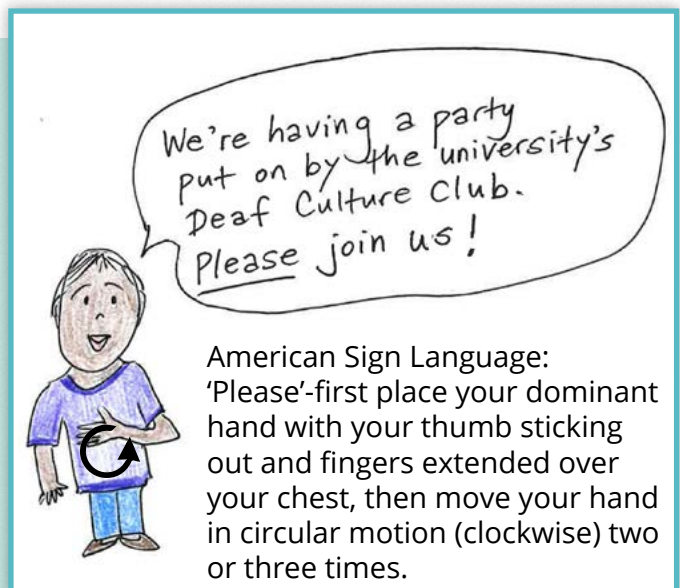
## History

Because people with disabilities are a part of our everyday lives, whether we have personal experience with disability or we know people with disabilities in our families, social circles, the media, our workplaces or the public we serve, it is important to consider the rich history of how disability has shaped our society and how the experiences of people with disabilities have evolved over time. This history helps us to contextualize our interactions today.

## Real-Life Reflection:

### Deaf not Disabled

The history of Deaf people in the US is rich, varied, and full of calls for equity and access—just like people with disabilities. However, many in the Deaf community do not consider themselves disabled. Instead, it is a culture with a shared language and customs.



The right for people with disabilities to live full lives and reach their fullest potential is one that has been hard fought and is still in process.

While in recent years we have many examples of people with disabilities living lives with robust relationships, careers, and goals, this has not always been the case. The history of people with disabilities in the United States is one full of isolation.

Before the 1970s, people with disabilities were not guaranteed the right to attend school. It was not until 1990 that we saw the Americans with Disabilities Act signed into law. The purpose of the ADA is to ensure people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Even with these protective laws, we still see unequal access to systems and outright discrimination. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in 2021, 19.1% of people with a disability were employed. For people without a disability, three times as many – 63.7% – were employed.

This same source shows further disparities in educational attainment. People with a disability are less likely to have completed a bachelor's degree than people with no disability.

Among people who were age 25 and older in 2014, 16.4% of people with a disability had completed at least a bachelor's degree. By comparison, 34.6% of people with no disability had completed at least a bachelor's degree. About 1 in 5 people with a disability had less than a high school diploma, compared with 1 in 10 people with no disability.



## Ableism

As we read in the introduction of this booklet, the history and even present state of the experiences of people with disabilities in the United States provides us with many examples of unequal treatment.

One of the logical questions we may ask ourselves is why does this inequity exist? Like systems of racism (systemic bias impacting people of color), sexism (systemic bias impacting women), classism (systemic bias impacting those of low socioeconomic status), or ageism (systemic bias impacting those who are deemed too old or too young), many in the field of disability studies have explained the unequal treatment of people with disabilities as a systemic bias.

The phrase commonly used to refer to this bias is **ableism**.

Here at the City of Bellevue we define ableism as:

A set of thought practices and **subconscious or conscious behaviors against people with disabilities and illnesses which assumes that “able” is the norm, and people who have disabilities must either strive to fit that norm or keep their distance from people who are “able”.**

So where does ableism come from?

- Engaging in ableism often starts as subconscious thoughts developed from the time many of us were children and conditioned to only consider the needs of non-disabled culture. It takes practice but ableism can be unlearned.
- These thoughts lead many of us to engage in ableist behaviors until we relearn a different way of thinking and interacting with people with disabilities.

- Many of our spaces, policies, behaviors, interactions, processes, and customs are created or designed to meet the needs of the non-disabled. Ableism says that people with disabilities must fit within this design and if they cannot, they risk being excluded.
- Ableism often sees disability as an error of life, a wrong way to live, and therefore often negates any life experiences of individuals with disabilities.

This means that at the core of ableism is a false notion that there is something wrong or broken about the disabled body or mind and that existing as a person with a disability while not trying to emulate the non-disabled is the wrong way to live. Therefore, the needs of people with disabilities are often ignored when they fit outside of this norm.

Ableism is present in every area of culture and society and is commonly categorized in the following ways:

- **Individual Ableism:** Ableism from an individual who is NOT disabled which is directed at someone with disabilities.
- **Structural Ableism:** A physical environment that is designed only to meet the needs of the non-disabled.
- **Institutional Ableism:** The ways in which government, private and public entities engage and participate in ableism.
- **Horizontal Ableism:** Oppression from an individual who has a disability but oppresses other people with disabilities.
- **Internalized Ableism:** When a person with a disability believes that they are less worthy due to their disability and act accordingly.

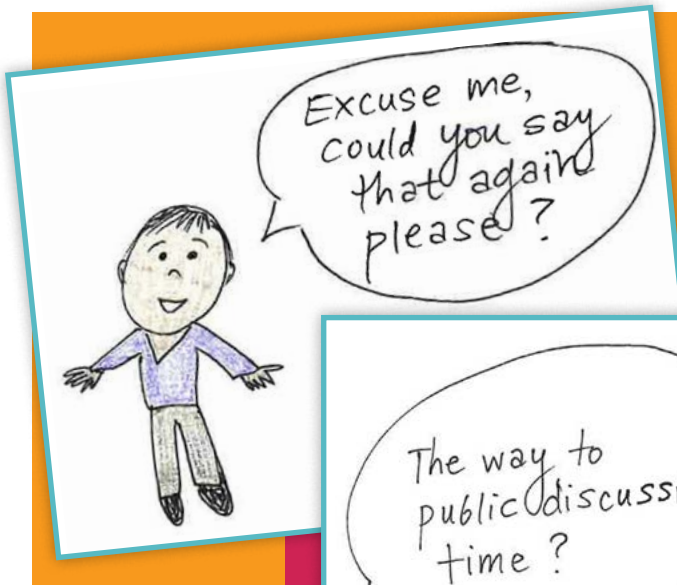
“ Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

–Martin Luther King Jr.

# Real-Life Reflection:

## Ask for Clarity

If you have trouble understanding a person with a disability that affects speech, ask them to repeat or show you what they need.



## Disability allyship

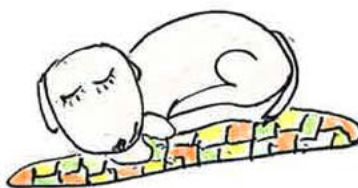
Now that we understand what ableism is, it is important to explore what each of us can do to take an active role in dismantling it with the goal of getting to a place where people with disabilities face no added barriers because of this identity and can reach their full potential. This section will give us our most powerful tool in combating ableism: a clear understanding of what it means to be a disability ally.

### **Here at the City of Bellevue we define disability allyship as:**

**A person working to end a form of oppression from which they receive privilege, or a special, unearned right, benefit or advantage granted only to some groups or people based on some aspect of their identity. Allies align themselves with people over whom they hold privilege and work to dismantle the system(s) of oppression holding those privileges.**

Ableism is a form of oppression impacting people with disabilities and people without disabilities do not face this form of oppression.

In the context of allyship, the non-disabled have an amazing power to end this systemic oppression by learning to recognize it in themselves and society and taking an active role in confronting it. This is called being anti-ableist, which is an important component of disability allyship.





## Intersectional allyship

Disability is one aspect of an individual's identity. Each person has multiple identities that intersect. Examples include a Black, queer, Deaf woman or a Hispanic man with cerebral palsy. These intersecting identities impact the way an individual engages with the world and the way the world engages with them.

If we want to be allies, we must recognize and value the full identities of others and the unique contributions each individual brings to our workplace and community. We must be willing to identify how each individual aspect of someone's identity and their intersecting identities can result in privilege or oppression.

Just as there is a history and current reality of oppression for individuals with disabilities, there is also a history and current reality of oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status and age. One individual can experience multiple forms of discrimination and bias, which can have a cumulative effect on their life. An individual with a disability experiences less privilege and experiences more oppression than someone without a disability. Also, an individual of color with a disability would experience the compounding oppression of racism in addition to ableism, which a white individual with a disability would not. The same compounding effect would be true for an individual with a disability with other intersecting identities that are subject to oppression, such as gender and sexuality.

As allies, we cannot seek to end only one form of oppression or view inequities for individuals with disabilities in isolation. While this booklet will help guide interactions with those with disabilities, we encourage you to explore the experiences of individuals with intersectional identities that may impact their power, privilege, or oppression. Only when each identity is given equal access and space to thrive can we all thrive together.

**“ If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” –Lilla Watson**

Now that you have a foundational understanding of the concepts of ableism and disability allyship, keep these concepts in mind as you use this booklet to guide your interactions with the disability community.

It is only when we learn to see ableism that we can be an effective ally in removing it from our personal and city practices. It may be a helpful practice to refer to this section and ask yourself how the example or topic area discussed might apply to the two core concepts of ableism and disability allyship.

As you engage in this practice of identifying and unlearning ableist thoughts and behaviors we encourage you to be gracious with yourself.

**“ Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.” –Maya Angelou**



# Thought Processes and Assumptions

As we continue to build on our foundational knowledge related to ableism (systemic bias impacting people with disabilities), we now understand the history that was oppressive to people with disabilities and how the underlying belief systems continue to permeate our collective attitudes and behaviors related to disability today. We have seen examples of disparities in education, laws, and employment experienced by people with disabilities. We read how landmark laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have attempted to correct these injustices. We now know about the key concepts of ableism and disability allyship that aim to help us analyze disability bias and know what to do about it.

To round out this foundational knowledge, we want to explore how history and existing systems of oppression may impact our own thoughts and assumptions related to individuals with disabilities. It is critical that we expand on two additional concepts: **explicit bias** and **implicit bias**.

These concepts are at the root of many of the negative interactions people with disabilities experience, which this booklet aims to correct. Learning to identify them puts you well on the path to effective disability allyship.

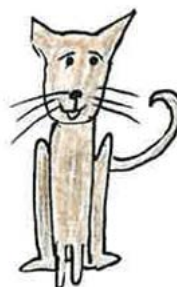


## Explicit bias

We use the term **explicit bias** to describe **when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them and we are conscious of this bias** that we hold.

Examples of explicit bias may include:

- Using the words “retarded” or “lame” when you know these are both slurs that carry a painful history in the disability community.
- Intentionally deciding not to include the ADA statement (which informs those with disabilities about their right to participate in city programming with or without modifications) on publications, documents or event announcements, because you don’t want to have to modify your public event.
- When choosing a location for a community event you hold it at a location that you know is not wheelchair accessible because a wheelchair user “shouldn’t ruin the fun for everyone else” and holding the event at another location feels inconvenient for non-disabled participants.
- When editing a job description for a new hire, you remember that you have been told that a requirement of valid driver’s license, unless required as an essential function, should be removed as it creates an unnecessary barrier for people with disabilities. You decide to leave it in anyway.



## Implicit bias

We use the term **implicit bias** to describe **when we have attitudes towards people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge**. We saw this concept used when discussing ableism earlier in this guide with the understanding that ableism often starts as a subconscious thought about people with disabilities.

Examples of biases we may not be aware we hold toward people with disabilities can include:

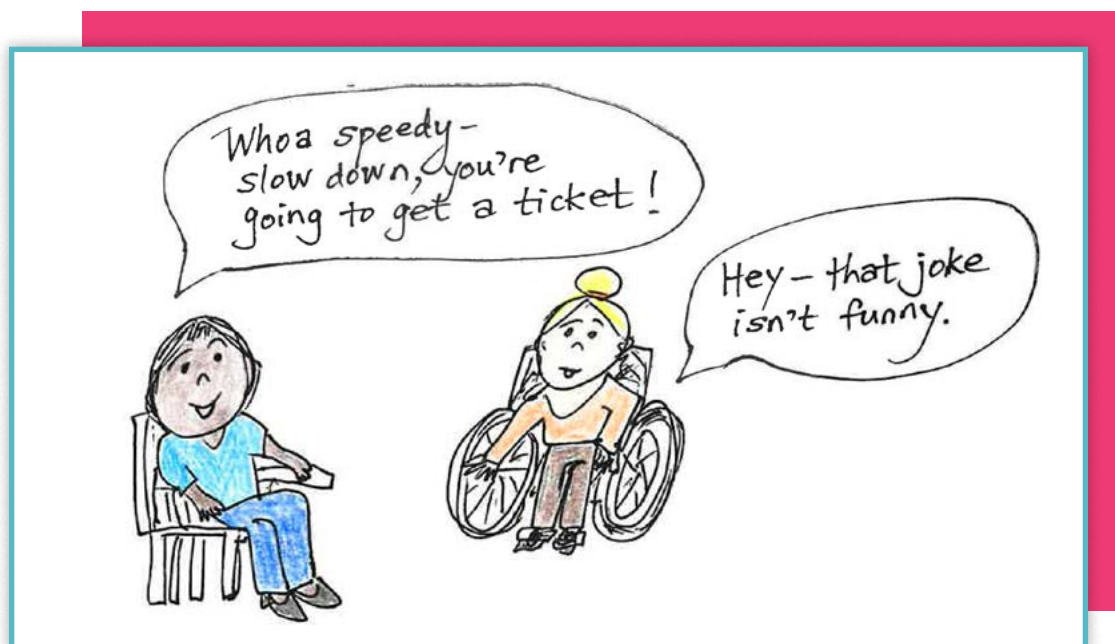
- When we see a wheelchair user at a new hire orientation, we wonder if they got the job because they use a chair or if the individual will be able to fulfill the requirements of the job.
- When we see someone talking to themselves while walking down the sidewalk, we cross the street and hold our bag tightly, almost as an automatic reflex without registering that this person's way of being made us feel unsafe.
- When meeting someone who speaks with a non-normative speech pattern, we unknowingly make assumptions about how smart they are and make adjustments to our interactions with them as a result.
- When we see a child who uses a walker coming toward us in the grocery store, we feel a sense of pity and sadness at the thought that their life is going to be so hard.
- When we hear about programs offering support for individuals with a mental illness, we become concerned about the safety of other residents in the community.
- When an individual identifies a disability that is not visible, we question the validity of the disability.

As you can see, implicit bias shows up in those private thoughts that feel almost automatic. They are not things we have brought to our conscious brain or interrogated to check their accuracy.

This lack of awareness can make them particularly difficult for us to challenge as we are not fully aware we hold these biases. Yet, it is critical that we work to accept that we all have implicit biases (even people with disabilities hold them) and that we do the work of questioning them within ourselves and with those we trust.

Even if we are not fully aware of them, our implicit biases impact our decisions and behaviors in ways we may not realize and contribute to the ableism people with disabilities experience.

The key difference between explicit and implicit bias is awareness. The examples of explicit bias all show conscious thought. They know what they are thinking is discriminatory and are choosing to do it anyway.



## **Real-Life Reflection:** Disability isn't a Joke

Sometimes the non-disabled will make jokes about disability to relieve discomfort they feel. It is exhausting for people with disabilities to hear these jokes over and over. Instead, get to know the person and the discomfort will lessen naturally.

But still there is good news! Research has shown that one of the primary ways we can work to reduce our biases is to become aware of them. So, the person who is experiencing explicit bias, when presented with new information or correction, may have an easier time removing this bias and moving to a place of allyship.

**Ultimately, implicit bias and explicit bias both lead to attitudes and behaviors that are harmful and oppressive to individuals with disabilities.**

We must challenge our ways of thinking in order to move to a place of allyship.

## Disability bias

The American Bar Association Commission on Disability Rights provides a series of questions to consider when thinking about disability bias.

Reflect on each of the questions below. Consider what informs your response. Consider whether and to what extent your response may be influenced by stereotypes and biases about people with disabilities and/or informed by objective facts and evidence and actual experiences with them.

### **Questions to Explore Bias**

When you think of a person with a disability, do you focus on the things the person can do or cannot do?

Do you think about people with disabilities as a group or as individuals?

### **Explanation**

Our thoughts on disability are often formed from a history of excluding, isolating, and limiting individuals

with disabilities. Reframe your thinking to consider each individual, their unique contributions, and their unique needs. Remind yourself that a disability is not a limitation, but a difference that can bring valuable diversity to the workplace or city programming.

### **Questions to Explore Bias**

Do you think of a person with a disability as working in certain careers? If so, which careers and why?

#### **Explanation**

We have historically limited access to certain careers based on many forms of diversity, including gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability. These restrictions are rooted in discriminatory beliefs that hold one group of people as more capable than others or that view certain skills as inherent to only certain groups of people. Each human has their own unique set of strengths and skills that are not pre-determined by disability, gender, race, sexuality, or class.

### **Questions to Explore Bias**

When you think of a person with a disability, do you have sympathy or feel pity for the person?

#### **Explanation**

A disability is a unique aspect of an individual's identity. It is a natural and beautiful part of human diversity. A disability makes an individual different, not worse or less than.



### Questions to Explore Bias

Do you perceive persons with mental illness as violent or dangerous? If so, based on what information?

#### Explanation

One in five American adults have experienced a mental health issue. The vast majority of people with mental health problems are no more likely to be violent than anyone else. Most people with mental illness are not violent and only 3%–5% of violent acts can be attributed to individuals living with a serious mental illness. In fact, people with severe mental illnesses are over 10 times more likely to be victims of violent crime than the general population. ([mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov))

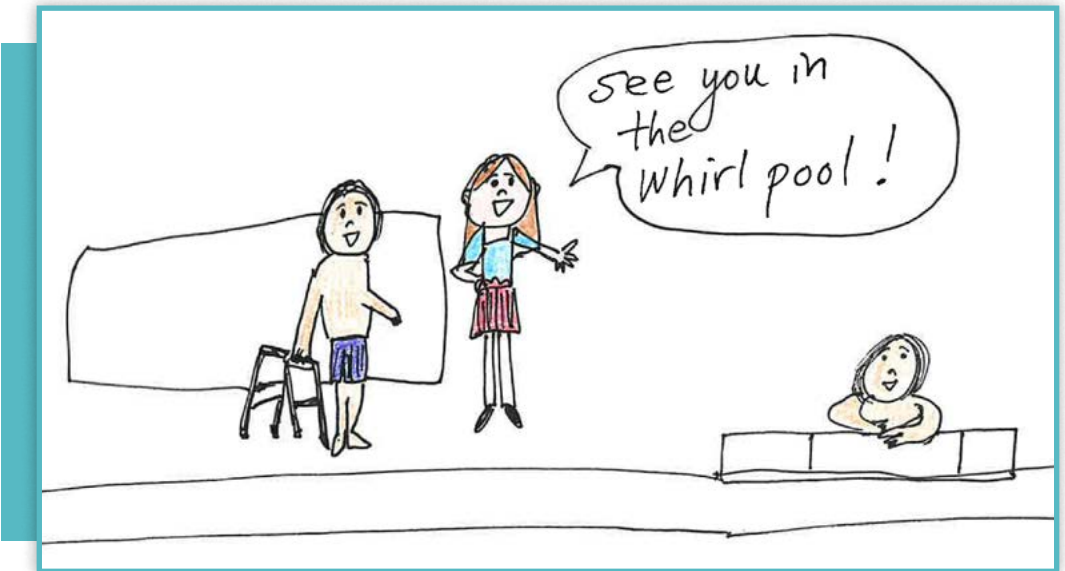
### Questions to Explore Bias

Do you consider people with disabilities as different from people without disabilities?

Do you believe that the lives of people with disabilities are different from the lives of people without disabilities?

#### Explanation

Individuals with disabilities often have the same wants, needs, dreams and desires as those without a disability. It is the limitations and barriers imposed by society that have made it difficult for individuals with disabilities to fulfill these things.



## Real-life Reflection:

### Making Assumptions

Don't make decisions for people with disabilities about what they can or can't do.

## Questions to Explore Bias

Do you use terms (e.g., “normal” or “able-bodied”) to differentiate between people without disabilities and people with disabilities?

Would you describe persons with disabilities as brave, courageous, inspirational, superhuman, and heroic?

Do you use terms such as wheelchair bound, impaired/impairment, damaged, limitations/limited when describing disabilities?

## Explanation

Our terminology on disability was formed in our shared history of oppressing and marginalizing individuals with disabilities. As we move towards disability allyship, our terminology should be informed by individuals with disabilities, themselves. It is appropriate to model your terminology based on that used by the individual with a disability. In general, currently preferred language includes “individuals with disabilities” or “disabled”. Disrespectful language can exclude people, create barriers to full participation, and/or communicate that there is something wrong or “abnormal” with individuals with a disability.

## Questions to Explore Bias

Do you perceive that people with disabilities are as productive or competent as people without disabilities?

Do you view people with disabilities as too costly for employers to hire?

Do you think workers with disabilities receive special advantages or are held to a lesser standard than workers without disabilities?

## Explanation

All employees need accommodations. Participating in a remote meeting requires the accommodation of a laptop with particular software. Working in a loud environment requires the accommodation of equipment that protects the employee's hearing. Working on the floor of a building above the ground floor requires the accommodation of stairs or an elevator. Society has dictated which accommodations are identified with a disability and thus we have come to view those accommodations as an "added expense", rather than a necessary part of doing business. An individual's disability does not pre-determine their level of productivity, competency, or ability to meet the essential functions of a position. As a city that recognizes diversity as a strength, we must remind ourselves that individuals with disabilities bring a unique and valuable perspective to our work.



**“ I don’t believe it’s humanly possible to be free of bias.” – Robin DiAngelo**

**Each one of us holds biases.** They take root in us early in our lives and are based in our beliefs. Beliefs originate from our history, our culture, the structures of systems we participate in, and what we hear – and keep on hearing from others, from the time we are children, and passed on through generations of our ancestors. The sources of beliefs include environment, events, knowledge, past experiences, visualization, and more.

Therefore, **to remove bias, we often must relearn what we believe about people with disabilities.** Like interrogating ableism, this process should not include guilt or shame— it is simply **an effort to get to a place of equity and disability allyship.**





## Real-Life Reflection:

Respecting Personal Space and Equipment

Don't use someone's wheelchair as a place to hang your things, especially without asking first.

# Physical Interactions



As we think about what physical interaction means, the first things that may come to mind are handshakes and hugs, but in our work here at the city, **there are plenty of ways that we physically interact with both staff and the community we serve.**

Have you ever held a door for a person with a disability and wondered if you are doing the right thing? When you encounter a person of short stature should you kneel or bend over? When a wheelchair user pulls up to a counter that is too tall for their comfortable use what should you do?

Just as it can be difficult to know how to interact with a different culture, it can be difficult to know the right things to do when the non-disabled interact with those with disabilities. We can be worried about offending a person with a disability—and this fear can prevent us from interacting at all. This fear-based lack of interaction is not helpful, because when we don't interact, we don't learn from each other.

When we think about disability as culture, we begin to see that people with disabilities have different ways of interacting with people and the environment.

**The more we make authentic efforts to interact with those with disabilities, the more we learn and the more comfortable we become.**

## Things to keep in mind

When you encounter a person with a disability that is apparent, **you may be nervous and unsure what to do. That is okay.**

Remember, it is not the first time they have had to navigate in a world that was built for non-disabled minds and bodies. It is not the first time they have had to navigate shaking hands, opening a door, an inaccessible counter, someone who didn't know they are Blind, or something they can't reach. **Breathe. Relax. And be authentic.**

## To help or not to help

**Knowing whether to offer to help** a person with a disability can be unnerving in the moment. You may offer, if you are comfortable doing so—know that if you do not, everything will likely be okay.

- Just like the rest of the population, **people with disabilities are all different.** It is impossible to know what any individual's reaction may be to every offer of assistance. If the person says no, accept that they know what is best for them. It is not helpful to ask if they are sure, as this often sends the message that you do not trust their own assessment of their ability.
- Know that **people with disabilities are typically familiar with how to ask for assistance** if they would find it helpful.
- **If you do assist, do so humbly and minimally** without drawing attention to yourself or the situation.
- **The need for assistance often says more about an inaccessible environment** than it does about the person's ability. An ally asks themselves how this interaction could have been made accessible allowing for independence and advocates for those changes.
- **The need for assistance is not unique to disability.** People with disabilities may also assist you.



## Best practices for physical interactions

Here are a few things you may find helpful when engaging in physical interactions with people with disabilities. Remember, every person is unique. What works for one person may not be what another prefers. Take your cues from the person you are interacting with and ask what they would prefer if you are unsure.



### Real-Life Reflection:

#### Offering Help

If a person who is Blind asks to be guided, offer your arm – don't take theirs. Be sure to ask first if they would like help or wait for them to ask you.



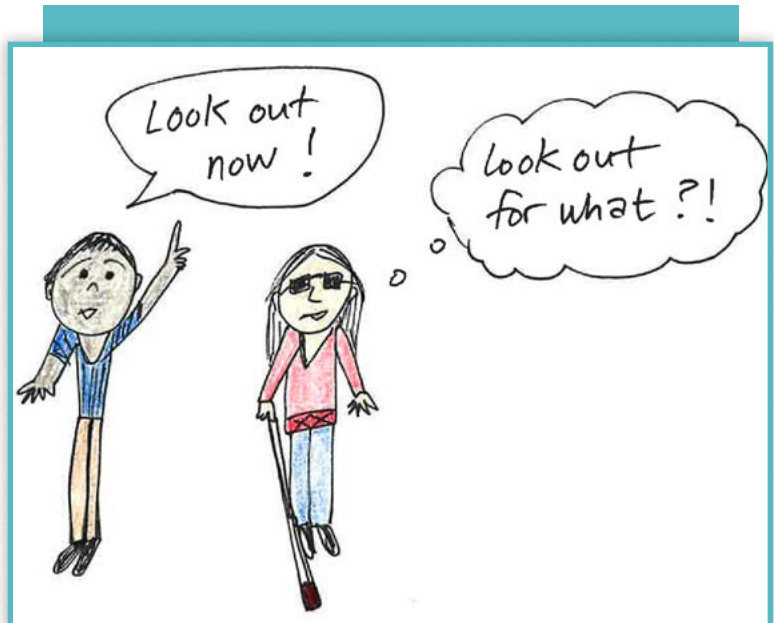
- Some people with disabilities, both apparent and non-apparent, rely on their arms for balance. **Grabbing someone without an expressed request to do so is considered rude** and could lead to a fall—even if you intend to assist.
- **Never pat anyone on the head.**  
This is considered patronizing.
- **Do not touch or move a person’s wheelchair, cane, or other mobility device** without being requested to do so. In disability culture these devices are often considered part of an individual’s personal space.
- **Do not lean over or step over a wheelchair user** to interact with someone else. This can feel dehumanizing.
- **Do not ask a wheelchair user to hold the bags or coats** or drape them on the chair. They are a person not a piece of furniture.
- **When approaching a person who is Blind it is appropriate to identify yourself** each time, even if they already know you well.
- **It is often helpful to offer to show a person who is Blind around** when they first arrive to a facility, being careful to verbalize important locations such as the restrooms, elevators, or cafeteria.
- If a person who is Blind asks for assistance in navigating an unfamiliar space, **offer your arm at the elbow. Do not take theirs.** They may need their arms to navigate.
- If a person is using a Guide Dog for navigation, **walk next to the person not the dog.**
- When walking with a person who is Blind, **if they are unfamiliar with the space it is okay to verbalize the location of obstacles** such as a trash can, step up or down, or large break in the sidewalk. Check with them to make sure your assistance is helpful.

- **When providing navigation instructions for someone who is Blind, be specific.** Rather than saying “the restroom is right around the corner” say, “follow this hallway to the end, then take a right.
- If you are leaving a person who is Blind in a space they are unfamiliar with, inform them you are leaving and **tell them how they can find the exit** based on the location they are in.

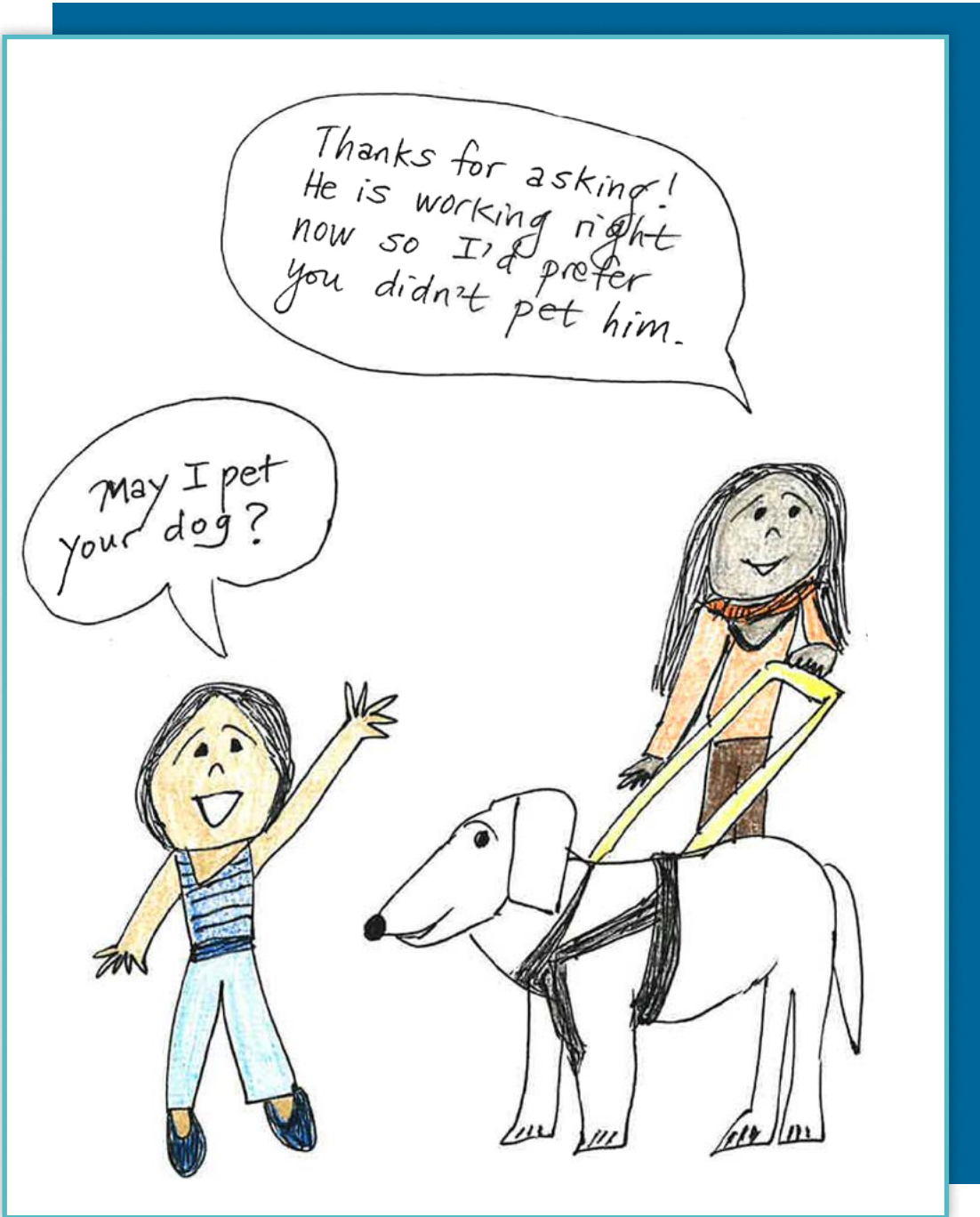
## Real-Life Reflection:

### Get Specific

Be precise when giving directions to people who are Blind or visually impaired.



- When food is served to a person who is Blind it is appropriate to **tell them where the food is on the plate using a clock face as a guide**. We all want to know what we have on our fork!
- **It is appropriate to offer to read information aloud** for a person who is Blind. Remember, they also have the right to request this information in a format that is accessible to them, and we should make every effort to ensure this happens.
- For wheelchair users and people of short stature, **communication can be made easier if all parties are at the same level**. Consider moving a chair so you can sit, kneeling if you are comfortable doing so, or standing a few steps back to limit strain on the neck of the person who is lower.
- Some disabilities cause frequent coughing, non-normative speech, or involuntary movements. **Do not make assumptions. Monitor your responses**, remembering what we have learned about ableism and allyship.
- **Do not ask about a person's disability** unless you need to know it as part of your job function. Focus on the relationship and what is being communicated.
- When introduced to a person with a disability, **it is appropriate to offer to shake hands**. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking hands with the left hand is an acceptable greeting.) If they prefer not to shake hands, they will tell you.
- **Do not touch a person's service dog**. It is considered rude and if the dog is working, a distraction could put their owner's safety at risk.



**Do not pet or speak to a service animal unless invited to do so by its handler.**



## Real-Life Reflection:

### Direct Communication

Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their companion or sign-language interpreter.



# Verbal Interactions

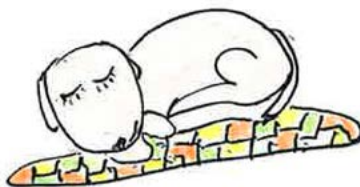


Communication is the process of passing information from one person to another. When communication is effective and considerate, it leaves every individual involved satisfied and feeling accomplished.

Communication is a key factor in how we interact with the world. By delivering messages clearly, there is little room for misunderstanding or need to alter messages, which decreases the potential for conflict. Often, communication with those living with disabilities is avoided or feared, leaving those with disabilities ignored with limited or no information.

If a person with a disability uses alternative ways to communicate such as sign language or communication boards, the fear and misunderstanding among non-disabled people tends to increase.

On the next page are culturally competent tips and alternate forms of communication you can use when interacting verbally with others, especially those with disabilities.



## Best practices for verbal communication

- **Be mindful of tone and pitch.** Many people unknowingly speak to adults with disabilities as they would a small child, using a higher tone of voice or phrases often reserved for young children. Think before you speak and do not make assumptions about someone's verbal abilities. Do not look at those who speak, think or communicate differently as something tragic.
- **Speak directly to the person** with a disability. There are some people who use interpreters or attendants/support staff. Speak directly to the person not to the support staff or interpreters.
- **Don't finish other people's sentences** or guess what someone is trying to tell you. The non-disabled have a tendency to do this when they perceive that communication is difficult. Ask yourself "is it difficult or just different?" Ask for clarification as needed.
- **Be patient.** Some individuals need more time to communicate. Don't rush or end a conversation early.
- **Rephrase rather than repeat.** If you are not understood, rephrase your comment/question.
- **Sit eye level with someone using a wheelchair** to prevent looking down at them while communicating.
- **Consider that English may not be the primary language** for some people with disabilities. Make appropriate modifications in communicating with them.
- **Try not to be self-conscious about your use of wording** such as "Do you see what I mean?" when talking with someone who is Blind or has low vision. It is good to be thoughtful about how your words may land. However, being overly sensitive can foster more fear of communicating rather than more communicating.



- **Be as specific as possible when offering directions to someone with low vision**, i.e., “Left about six yards” or “Right two steps.” Use clock cues, if the person is accustomed to using this approach: “The door is at 12 o’clock.”
- **Never pretend to understand** if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
- **Be open to requests for other communication methods**, even if you don’t understand the need. A person may make a request or act in a way that seems strange to you. They may have a learning disability that makes written communication easier. For example, you may give seemingly simple verbal directions to someone, but the person asks you to write the information down. Even though these disabilities are hidden, they are real. Even the non-disabled have preferred communication styles. Being open and flexible is good for everyone!
- **Be alert to your responses when speaking to someone who has an intellectual or developmental disability** and adjust your method of communication if necessary. For example, some people may benefit from simple, direct sentences or from supplementary visual forms of communication, such as gestures, diagrams, or demonstrations.
- **Use language that is concrete** rather than abstract. Be specific, without being too simplistic. For example, “Our board members will meet at City Hall in the City Council meeting room on the first floor.” may work better than “Our board meeting will be held in City Hall Council Chambers.”
- **Give people time to respond.** In conversation, people with cognitive disabilities may respond slowly. Be patient, flexible, and supportive.

- **Accept someone's need to have information repeated or if they want to repeat information** to you. People with brain injuries may have short-term memory impacts and may repeat themselves or require information to be repeated.
- **Don't be afraid if you make a mistake.** Mistakes can and will happen. Apologize, correct your action, and move on.



## **Real-life Reflection:** Communicating Clearly

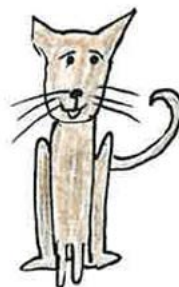
Do not obscure your face when communicating. This allows those who may be hard of hearing to hear you more clearly.

People who are Deaf or are hard of hearing may rely on amplification, seeing the speaker's lips or watch closed captioning to communicate effectively.

## Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing considerations

The Deaf community has a clear set of norms and specific language. Many in the Deaf community do not consider themselves to be disabled at all. Instead, it is considered Deaf culture. Still, many Deaf people report that when they interact with hearing culture, they are feared and misunderstood daily. It is useful to understand some of these Deaf culture norms so that you can do your part to be welcoming, open and facilitate an effective interaction.

- **Establish the preferred language and mode of communication.** Ask if the person needs an interpreter or would prefer questions to be written. Do not pretend you understand.
- **Facial expressions** are part of Sign Language; the hearing community shows greater respect by using gestures and facial expressions.
- **Maintain eye contact** when communicating.
- **Avoid “tell her or tell him” statements.** Just speak directly to the individual rather than the interpreter. This is true when working with an interpreter in any language.
- **Do not make jokes** to make yourself feel more comfortable.
- **Do not chew gum or cover your face** when speaking. It is often helpful for Deaf individuals to read lips when communicating with a speaking person. However, do not rely on this as a primary mode of communication. The idea that anyone can read lips and be able to entirely understand is largely a myth.





## Real-Life Reflection:

### Getting an Interpreter

When an exchange of information is complex, the most effective way to communicate with a person who is Deaf is through a qualified sign language interpreter.



# Written Interactions/ Communication



When communicating in writing with other people, there are some easy-to-adopt best practices that can make your message accessible to anyone, including those with disabilities. Many of the ableist tendencies mentioned in the Verbal Interactions section of this guide can also occur in written communications.

**Always be prepared to communicate in writing.**

**Even for interactions you think will be entirely verbal, it is a good practice to always be prepared to adapt to different communication needs, including needing to write or type a message to someone.**

Especially for those who work at service counters or in roles where they regularly interact with customers or colleagues, **be prepared with something to write or type with** in case that is the preferred or required method of communication for someone (e.g., a person who is Deaf.) It may help to keep a pad of paper and pen handy in a fleet vehicle, office space, bag or pocket, depending on where you typically have interactions with others.

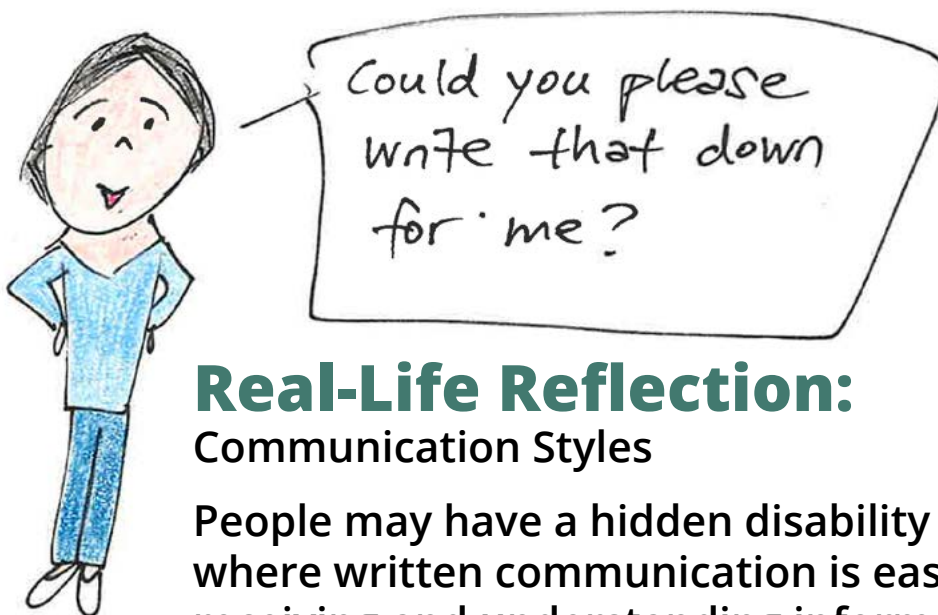
## Best practices for written communication

- Use accessible typefaces, fonts and text treatment
  - Whether you are sending an email, giving a presentation, or writing on a piece of paper or a white board, **use large text in a style that is simple** and easy to read and is not written in cursive. This makes it easier for those with low vision and certain intellectual

disabilities to more quickly read and comprehend the message.

- **Avoid using all capital letters and italics**, as they actually make it harder for people to read. People recognize the shape of familiar words rather than individual letters. Those patterns get distorted when using the above treatments.
- Think about your audience needs ahead of time and **print large-format presentations/documents** for those who may desire a larger text size.
- **Know how to translate content into Braille** or another alternate format if it's requested. Reach out to the ADA and/or Title VI Core Team member for your department if you have questions. Understanding where to find this information in advance of a request is a great way to reduce stress, so don't be afraid to be proactive!
- **Choose high-contrast colors in all written communications**, such as dark text on white or light-colored backgrounds. This allows better readability for all, especially those with low vision.
- **Use more than just color to differentiate meaning** for certain content, such as using different symbols in addition to different colors to show a chart with multiple items or meanings. This will allow those with low vision or color blindness to more clearly see the content that has different meaning or functionality.
- **Provide plenty of room in the text fields for forms**, and offer multiple ways to complete, either digitally or printed. Many people with certain physical disabilities find it easier to type than to write by hand, and those with low vision can write or type in larger sizes.

- **Simplify your language.** Most people read at an 8th grade level. Some disabilities or conditions may also affect reading comprehension. Use the simplest language possible to convey your ideas effectively for the highest number of people.
  - **Keep sentences short.** This helps everyone better comprehend your message. Short sentences are especially helpful for people with developmental/ intellectual or learning disabilities. They are also easier to understand for those who have had strokes, traumatic brain injuries or other conditions affecting the brain.
  - **Focus on active writing that uses simple sentence structure** with subject (the dog), verb (ran), and object (home) elements. This structure is easier to follow for many different types of disabilities and even those with limited English proficiency.
  - **Use the most common words possible.** This is helpful for people with certain disabilities and for people whose first language is not English proficiency.



## **Real-Life Reflection:** Communication Styles

People may have a hidden disability where written communication is easier for receiving and understanding information.

## ■ Use accessible formatting in written information

Written content, whether it's a policy document, marketing materials, a presentation or content for a website, should be formatted in a simple, hierarchical structure that both human readers and digital screen readers can follow easily.

- **Provide a table of contents or agenda slide** in long documents or presentations. This helps people find the information they are looking for quickly and helps people understand what to expect from the information.
- **Always use headings and subheadings.** This helps people find information relevant to them, and it is the central way screen readers process and order content for a person with low vision or Blindness.
- **Leave white space between paragraphs** and do not indent paragraphs. This provides clean formatting that is easy to follow.
- **Keep text aligned to the left of the page.** This follows the way a person naturally reads (for most languages) and does not create extra space between words (such as with text formatted to full justification on a page) which can be confusing.
- **Do not place text in front of an image** or over a busy, patterned background. This makes it harder to read, especially for those with low vision.
- **Use clear visuals**, such as iconic representations, to illustrate key content. This helps people with reading or comprehension difficulty and also those who speak other languages.
- **Provide printed copies** of presentation materials or relevant documents for in-person meetings.



- When using tables or columns, provide plenty of space between rows and columns and **simple table structures** from left to right and top to bottom.

## Use references to disability wisely and appropriately.

If you ever have to write something **about** disabilities, make sure you do some research on how to talk about a particular community or refer to disabilities in general. It is best to consult with someone from the disability community and/or an organization with disability expertise to review or contribute to your process and materials.

**Always be aware of the potentially different and unique lived experiences between people with disabilities and center their individual perspectives in your writing.**

Don't assume you know what someone with a disability feels, needs, knows or wants – you'll need to ask if you don't have expertise in that area.

- **Focus on the person first** (e.g., 'person with a disability' is preferable to 'disabled person', though many people with disabilities may be comfortable referring to themselves as disabled. Follow the lead of the person you are interacting with and if they correct your use of person-first language, simply acknowledge and move on.
- When you write about topics of concern for the disability community, **center the disability community in your writing** (e.g., rather than referring to someone without a disability 'able-bodied' or 'normal', use the phrase 'person without a disability', which centers the perspective of people with disabilities.)

- Find references such as support organizations for certain disabilities to **understand how each community prefers to use terminology** or phrases.
- If you are writing about a specific person, **ask them how they prefer to use language and terms** related to their disability.
- **Avoid using ableist words or feelings** in your writing in general. Think about how a phrase or term might be perceived by someone with a disability and assess whether the words you use oppress someone or empower them.
- **Avoid offensive terms** in your writing related to disability such as crazy, lame, dumb, retarded, crippled, etc.

### **Oppressive**

Wheelchair-bound

Afflicted with autism disorder

Stricken with cancer or cancer sufferer

Handicapped

Hearing impaired

### **Empowering**

Wheelchair user

Person with autism

Diagnosed with cancer

Person with a disability

Hard-of-hearing

## Representation

Consider representation in your written materials. Are people with disabilities represented in presentations, photos, or policies and do those references and images portray them in a neutral way?

Focus on opportunities to show people with disabilities in everyday situations living their lives as part of the community.

Do not use people with disabilities in your written materials to represent either inspiration or fear in ways directly related to their disability (e.g., an article written about how amazing it is that a woman who uses a wheelchair is able to commute to work using public transit would be an example of focusing on the disability as central to a story that would otherwise be uneventful for a person without a disability.)

If your only aim is to use a person's disability to inspire, to evoke pity or to get more attention/clicks/likes, etc., you are likely using representation inappropriately.





# Considerations for Virtual/Digital and Hybrid Environments and Materials



Whether working from home, having a hybrid schedule or being at an on-site work location, it is now commonplace to experience some form of digital interaction or include some remote participants during meetings and presentations.

When in these virtual environments, are we creating accessible functions and allowing everyone to feel included? Are our presentations easily seen, heard, and understood by all? By creating inclusive environments and content for city employees and members of the public, we are not only making our communication better for people with disabilities but for everyone involved.

Always consider a hybrid option for your meeting or community event in addition to following the accessible physical space guidance in the Universal Design Guide, referenced on page 59 of this booklet. As we all managed through the COVID pandemic, people with disabilities were finding virtual programming as a way that they could engage with city processes without having to deal with the barriers of transportation, physical access, noise, health risks, etc.

If conducted properly, virtual meetings and community events can be especially beneficial for people with disabilities.

For example, some people with hearing loss, autism, or anxiety conditions can benefit by less background noise and commotion in virtual spaces than for in-person events. Also, live chat and

captioning are tools that make online events less stressful and more accessible for people with certain disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language.

Here are some terms and best practices to make digital/hybrid environments more inclusive for people with low vision or hearing loss, dyslexia, other cognitive disabilities, as well as those with no disability at all. More detailed information can be found through the World Wide Web Consortium's (W3C) Accessibility of Remote Meetings document at [w3.org/TR/remote-meetings/](https://www.w3.org/TR/remote-meetings/).

## Vocabulary

**Live Captioning**—Applications such as Microsoft Teams detect what is said and present it in text format. Captions can assist with note taking and be helpful in noisy situations but may not be accurate. Live caption only appears to the person who turns it on; no one else will be aware of it.

**Transcript**—A text record of what was said during a meeting alongside video or audio. Each speaker is identified, content is captured in real-time, and it's time stamped and available after the meeting. Speech clarity will affect accuracy of text.

**High contrast**—A setting on your computer or in specific applications to enhance digital color differentiation. Enhanced color contrast helps to see text and content items on screen better. This mode also reduces eye strain.

**Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning services**—Human-generated captions that are created in real-time by a trained captioner who listens to the conversation and instantaneously translates all speech to text. It is more accurate than automated captioning software. CART is not available in the City of Bellevue Teams application but can be used in other situations such as events or meetings.

**Alt text**—text that describes the appearance or function of an image on a page. Alt text is used by screen readers to better understand the content of your page. All images, charts and graphs require descriptive alt text for all relative information.

## Teams/virtual meetings

Teams meetings can be made more inclusive by utilizing tools already built in to the application. (Notice how many of these features are used by everyone without even realizing that they are accessibility tools!)

Before a meeting, inform everyone present how to turn on captioning, transcription, or high contrast (see bullets below for features and steps), all of which are available in your Teams app. For a complete list of accessibility features with detailed instructions, visit the Microsoft Teams support site at [tinyurl.com/TeamsSupportMicrosoft](https://tinyurl.com/TeamsSupportMicrosoft).

These features can be accessed during Teams meetings:

- **Live captions:** (U.S. English only) Once a meeting is in progress, navigate to the controls at the top of your screen and click '...More'. Then scroll down the list to the 'Turn on live captions' option. To turn it off, follow the same steps but select 'Turn off live captions'.
- **Transcription:** Once a meeting is in progress, navigate to the controls and click '...More'. Then select 'Start transcription'. For more information regarding transcripts visit [tinyurl.com/TeamsSupportTranscript](https://tinyurl.com/TeamsSupportTranscript) on the Microsoft support page.
- **Blur background or use a background image:** Click on the '...More', Select 'Apply background effects' then select 'Blur' or pick a default image. You can also upload your own background images.

- **Pin a meeting participant's video:** To focus on a particular video during a meeting, right click on the person or content and select 'Pin for me'. Right click again to unpin. Right click and select 'Fit to frame' to see the entire video.
- **Dedicated chats for each meeting:** Select 'Chat' from the control options at the top of your screen to access chat for any meeting.
- **Raise your hand in a Teams meeting:** Select 'Reactions' > 'Raise hand'
- **Reduce background noise in Teams meetings:** Go to 'Settings' > 'Devices' > 'Noise suppression' > Select desired level
- **Add someone, like a coworker or interpreter, to a call:** Select 'People' > type their name or phone number in the search box.
- **Mute channels:** 'Chat' > '...More' > 'Mute'

These features are available from your Teams profile:

- **High contrast:** Click the three dots (...) at the top of your Teams screen and go to 'Settings' > 'General' > 'High Contrast' (dark and light themes are also available)
- **Turn off animation:** Go to 'Settings' > 'General' > 'Display' > 'Turn off animation'.
- **Limit distractions with Do Not Disturb mode:** Go to your profile photo at the top of Teams and select desired status from the drop-down menu under your name.
- **Minimize communication barriers with language translation:** Hover over any message in Teams, then click the (...) and select 'Translate'. This will show a translation of the message into the language that you've set for Teams.
- **Pin chats, channels, apps, and documents:** (...) > 'Pin' or (...) > 'Unpin'



- **Zoom in and out of Teams:** To make the content in Teams larger or smaller, use the same controls you might already be using with your browser. (e.g., ctrl+ to zoom in and ctrl- to zoom out)
- **Use text telephone (TTY):** Next to your profile picture click the three dots (...) and select 'Settings' then go to 'Calls' > 'Accessibility' > Turn on 'TTY mode'.

## Promoting accessible hybrid meetings

- **Do not assume that everyone knows how to join a virtual meeting.** Check with your new team members if they need any help. People with disabilities are not obligated to reveal their disability by asking for help.
- Be punctual, **start and stop your meeting on time.**
- **Enable the live chat** feature.
- **Avoid ableist and negative language.**
- **Mute yourself** when not talking.
- **Describe yourself**, especially for community events. Restrict to one or two sentences. Think of how you'd describe yourself to someone who has never met you and needs to identify you in a crowd. Write it down beforehand and stick to that description or it may get too long. Example: "I am a white woman in my late 30s. I have thick orange glasses and red curly hair tied back in a ponytail. I'm wearing green overalls and a black t-shirt."
- **Identify yourself by name** each time you speak.
- **Avoid acronyms.** People may not be familiar with specific department/team lingo or may have trouble audibly differentiating the letters used, which is a barrier to comprehension.

- **Share information in more than one way.** Describe using graphics, charts, etc.
- **Consider how remote participants will engage** and ensure that everyone participating has the ability to engage freely.
- **Don't use a white board that is out of camera view or too far away** for the writing to be seen by remote participants.
- Respect how mentally taxing it is to be on camera. **Don't require cameras** unless it's essential to the purpose of the meeting, since they create constant perceived pressure to perform and maintain eye contact.
- For people who are Deaf or have low hearing, **seeing the speaker on camera is helpful** and the use of other engagement techniques/tools can be considered.
- **Useful information for employee hybrid meetings** can be found at [cityofbellevue.sharepoint.com/sites/ITD](https://cityofbellevue.sharepoint.com/sites/ITD)



## **Real-Life Reflection:** Universal Design

Designing spaces and processes so that anyone can use them is key to accessibility and inclusion.

- Find tips on accessible meetings and formatting and basic universal design principles in the **city's Universal Design Guide** at [BellevueWA.gov/universal-design](https://BellevueWA.gov/universal-design)

## Digital presentations

Presentations and web content are digital communication methods often consumed through technology such as screen readers, which process content in a certain way.

Find tips on accessible formatting and universal design principles in the city's Universal Design Guide at [BellevueWA.gov/universal-design](https://BellevueWA.gov/universal-design)

Presentation slides are only meant to support the message and messenger.

- Information should be presented in a way that **does not distract from the speaker**, overwhelm, or disengage the audience. It is also important that information on slides works with digital screen readers, which process information in a specific way.
- **A printed version of the main takeaways gives** the audience an opportunity to review what was said and absorb it. If you have an opportunity to provide a hard copy of your presentation, do so.
- **Avoid information overload** for the audience. Too much text, graphs and images is especially hard for screen reader technology and for people who are neurodivergent (autism, ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, migraine, to name just a few) or have a visual disability.
- If at all possible, **include American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and live event captioners / translators** during presentations.

The City of Bellevue is required to comply with the AA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) ([w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/)). These guidelines specify access barriers to look for when reviewing not only a website or applications, but also digital documents and digital presentations. While barriers may not be noticeable by people without a disability, removal of such barriers will most likely be noticed by all since it will provide a better structure and usability of all digital content to all audiences.

## Using PowerPoint and/or other tools

Make sure all slides are created using accessibility in mind. A PowerPoint template with instructions on how to set it up is available in our asset management system Image Relay ([BellevueWA.gov/logos-photos](https://BellevueWA.gov/logos-photos)). Please reference the City of Bellevue Style Guide for all presentation templates.

- **Titles should be no less than 22pt in size.** Small text is hard to see for anyone.
- **Text should be sans serif and body text no less than 18pt** with line spacing of 24pt. Paragraphs with too tight or too loose line spacing is hard to read. For people with dyslexia, crowded text may appear to merge or distort.
- **Use only one main idea per slide.** Use handouts for long lists. This allows you to help all audience members follow along and remain engaged.
- **Each slide must have a title and each title must be unique.** Otherwise, it is incredibly difficult for a visually impaired person to navigate through a presentation.
- The amount of **text in the body of your slides (below the title) should contain no more than 5 lines.** Text heavy slides and a presenter talking is too much information to process quickly.

- **Do not use a single bullet point.** A minimum of two bullet points should make up a bulleted list.
- **Pay attention to line spacing.** Larger line spacing improves readability. Line height (line spacing) should be at least 1.5 times the font size.
- **Use multiple ways to convey meaning** (bold, italics, color, etc.) Most screen readers don't inform users about formatting.
- For public events **provide PowerPoint slides in advance** since not all virtual settings will allow people who use assistive technology to follow along.
- If PowerPoint slides are to be shared with anyone, make sure to **run Accessibility Check** and follow steps to fix all issues. PowerPoint > Tools > Accessibility Check.
- **Check text and background contrast.** The city must comply with WCAG 2.0 AA ([w3.org/WAI/WCAG2AA-Conformance](https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG2AA-Conformance)) and use at least a 4.5:1 contrast ratio. More information is at [webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker](https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker)
- **When writing email, use 12-14pt.** Text that is too large is just as hard to read as text that is too small. In email, each person can adjust the zoom level on their device as needed for personal preference.
- **For documents, use 12pt font on average or larger.** Those with tired or strained eyes or low vision will appreciate being able to consume your content without having to enlarge it.
- **Include ADA statements in your event marketing.** This will allow people to contact you and request alternate formats or presentation materials in advance of the event.
- **No busy images, patterns or textures should be used as background for text.** The text will not be readable to all people.

- Photos are a great way to enhance the presentation and can hold the audience's interest. **Use interesting photos that are not busy or complicated. Describe the images to the audience;** not everyone may be able to see them.
- **Charts and graphs should be clear and simple**, calling attention to the purpose/intent of the intended information. Use a handout to provide a more detailed chart/graph. **Describe charts/graphs to the audience.** Not everyone may be able to see or understand them.
- **Be careful how animation is used, it can affect people with vestibular disorders and seizures.** More information [medium.com/design-ibm/accessible-motion-why-its-essential-and-how-to-do-it-right-ff38afcbc7a9](https://medium.com/design-ibm/accessible-motion-why-its-essential-and-how-to-do-it-right-ff38afcbc7a9) If possible, **warn people that animation will be shown.** This will allow people with motion sensitivity to prepare accordingly.
  - **Avoid flashes** and complex animation sequences in your animation effects.
  - Be careful how fast it moves; **slower is better.**
  - **Avoid parallax scrolling** (background moves at a different rate than foreground) **and motion.**
  - **Describe animation to the audience.** Not everyone will be able to view it.
- **Add captioning to all your videos and embedded audio.** It allows Deaf and hard-of-hearing people to watch videos. It also clarifies language, poor audio, and complicated information.

- **Add Alt text** to all images, graphs and charts, if digital materials (PDF, PowerPoint) will be shared with audience to follow along or read later.
- **Use white space to improve accessibility.** White space is the space not used by text, photos, charts, or graphs. It helps provide balance and a place for the eyes to rest. This gives the brain a chance to receive the information without having to filter through a busy, wordy environment.



Closed Captioning

## Accessibility checks

Once finished with a presentation, be sure to **check accessibility as a final step before presenting.**

Manually checking the color contrast, font size and spacing, how much content is on each slide, alt text entered into the metadata for slide content, item order in each slide from top to bottom and left to right for screen readers, ensuring unique headlines, and that tables contain headers are good final steps. Accessibility checks can also be done within PowerPoint under 'Tools' > 'Accessibility Check'.

- Please **contact IT's Digital Government team for help checking accessibility** and branding for all public facing presentations. Please build in adequate time for this check.
- **Accessibility should be built into all internal and external materials.**
- **Additional tips** for accessible PowerPoint presentations can be found on the Microsoft site [support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/make-your-powerpoint-presentations-accessible-to-people-with-disabilities-6f7772b2-2f33-4bd2-8ca7-dae3b2b3ef25)





# Dispelling Myths and Misconceptions



Misunderstanding a person's disability can often come from harmful stereotypes that are not based on fact. Or, we may have a tendency to translate the experience of one individual with a disability to all others with that disability.

**It is important to see an individual with a disability as their own unique person and to form our understanding of a particular disability from facts and science.**

- Did you know not all disabilities are apparent? In fact, statistics show that many more people have disabilities we cannot see than those who have disabilities we can. In addition, some people with disabilities may not wish to disclose their disability, in part due to the harmful legacy of discrimination. Thus, it is even more important to structure our interactions, writing, events, and spaces in an inclusive manner that is accessible by all, using universal design principles.
- Did you know it is a myth that people who are Blind or Deaf have over developed senses in other areas to compensate? While they may learn to focus and rely more on other senses, they are no more developed than the non-disabled.
- Did you know not all Blind people use braille? In fact, as accessible tech has become more advanced, research is showing that far fewer Blind individuals are using or being taught Braille.

- Did you know that while Deaf people are protected under the ADA, many do not consider themselves disabled? Instead, it is common to refer to it as Deaf Culture with its own language, customs, and ways of being. This is why we always capitalize the D in Deaf just as we would with other cultures.
- Did you know many people who use wheelchairs can stand and even walk?

Increasing your confidence and competence in interacting with people who may be different from you takes time and practice. Try your best to not get nervous and remember that the more we interact the more competent we become!

Our awareness and increasing competence in providing inclusive interactions will improve our work environment and our community, and when disability becomes a part of our life or the life of someone we know – as the statistics show is very likely to happen – we will be an even better advocate for disability equity and gain even greater understanding of the importance of allyship.



After all, disability is a valuable part of the diversity of our community and when we foster inclusion, we improve the lives of all, those with disabilities and the non-disabled alike.

“ Acquiring or being born with the traits we call disabilities fosters an adaptability and resourcefulness that often is underdeveloped in those whose bodies fit smoothly into the prevailing, sustaining environment. This resourcefulness can extend to the non-disabled and the not yet disabled as they relate to and live with people with disabilities.”

–Rosemary Garland-Thompson



For more information, questions, or if you'd like to learn more about disabilities, or want to join the group, please contact DART at [DART@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:DART@bellevuewa.gov).

## Information

정보  
सूचना



情報  
資料

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సమాచారం Thông Tin  
Información معلومات  
اطلاعات Информация



For alternate formats, interpreters, or reasonable accommodation requests please phone at least 48 hours in advance 425-452-6168 (voice) or email [bamson@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:bamson@bellevuewa.gov). For complaints regarding accommodations, contact City of Bellevue ADA/Title VI Administrator at 425-452-6168 (voice) or email [ADATitleVI@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:ADATitleVI@bellevuewa.gov). If you are Deaf or hard-of-hearing dial 711. All meetings are wheelchair accessible.