



MINING QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY

## TYPES OF DISABILITIES AND ETIQUETTE



*“Focus on one’s abilities rather than the different disabilities”*

# Chapter 3

## CHAPTER 3 Types of Disabilities and Etiquette

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## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 Some types of disabilities

The following list contains all the disability categories referenced in the reasonable accommodation toolkit.

<p><b>Attention deficit disorder (difficulty focusing)</b></p>	<p>Attention deficit disorder (ADD) is a biologically-based condition causing a persistent pattern of difficulties resulting in one or more of the following behaviours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inattention</li> <li>• hyperactivity</li> <li>• impulsivity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Albinism</b></p>	<p>Albinism is an inherited condition present at birth, characterised by a lack of pigment that normally gives color to the skin, hair, and eyes. Many types of albinism exist, all of which involve lack of pigment in varying degrees. The condition, which is found in all races, may be accompanied by eye problems which can result in blindness and may lead to skin conditions that result in cancer later in life. Precautions become necessary if the employee works outdoors. The employer can assist by ensuring large text screens and sunglasses to accommodate an employee with albinism.</p>
<p><b>Cannot walk without aid</b></p>	<p>It is important that these individuals receive proper workstation ergonomic assistance. Problems in the legs often cause poor posture, which put the person at risk of developing other problems such as back strain.</p>
<p><b>Cerebral palsy</b></p>	<p>Cerebral palsy is the damage to the brain that causes muscular incoordination.</p>
<p><b>Cognitive impairment</b></p>	<p>Cognitive impairment affects the ability to think, concentrate, formulate ideas, reason and remember. It is distinct from a learning disability insofar as it may have been acquired later in life as a result of an accident or illness.</p>
<p><b>Deaf (+/- deafened)</b></p>	<p>Refers to those persons with hearing impairments with a loss so severe that it precludes the use of the auditory channel as the primary means of speech/language and information processing.</p>
<p><b>Deaf-Blind</b></p>	<p>Deaf-Blind refers to sensory impairment, visual impairment and hearing impairment, occurring in combination with one another. Frequently, other disabilities also occur with the combination of a visual and hearing impairment. The combination of these disabilities causes significant challenges to accommodation. Tactile solutions are often appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Developmental disability</b></p>	<p>Developmental disability is any disability that results in problems with growth and development. Although the term is often used as a synonym or euphemism for intellectual disability, the term also encompasses many congenital medical conditions that have no mental or intellectual components, for example spina bifida.</p>

<b>Dexterity impairment (arms/hands/fingers)</b>	Dexterity impairment (arms/hands/fingers) reduces the function of arms and hands, making activities relating to moving, turning or pressing objects difficult or impossible. This does not influence speech communication itself but makes it hard to make a phone call or use a wide range of other equipment.
<b>Diabetes</b>	Diabetes is NOT a disability but a medical condition that if not properly managed in the workplace can result in complications such as blindness, septicaemia and amputations resulting in an individual becoming disabled.
<b>Down syndrome</b>	Down syndrome is a common chromosome disorder due to an extra chromosome number 21 (trisomy 21). Down syndrome causes mental retardation, a characteristic face and multiple malformations. Down syndrome is a relatively common birth defect. The chromosome abnormality affects both the physical and intellectual development of the individual.
<b>Epilepsy</b>	Epilepsy is a physical condition that occurs when there is a sudden, brief change in how the brain works. When brain cells are not working properly, a person's consciousness, movement, or actions may be altered for a short time. These physical changes are called epileptic seizures. If it is well managed, an employee with epilepsy is able to function optimally in the workplace with no interruptions. Employers can accommodate individuals with epilepsy by allowing time to source the correct medication.
<b>Hard-of-hearing</b>	This is a generic term including both hearing loss and hard-of-hearing, which refers to persons with any type or degree of hearing loss that causes difficulty working in a traditional way. It can affect the whole range or only part of the auditory spectrum which, for speech perception, the important region is between 250 and 4 000 Hz. The term deaf is used to describe people with profound hearing loss such that they cannot benefit from amplification, while hard-of-hearing is used for those with mild to severe hearing loss but who can benefit from amplification.
<b>Head injuries / brain disability</b>	This as a disability that occurs due to a brain injury and can range from mild, moderate or severe. There are two types namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Acquired brain injury - a hereditary type defect that occurs after birth</li><li>• Traumatic brain injury - is as a result of an injury which can cause emotional and behavioural disturbances.</li></ul>
<b>HIV / AIDS</b>	HIV and AIDS are lifestyle conditions where an employee will ultimately need ongoing chronic medication such as Antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. As the condition progresses an employee can become very ill and this can be disabling in the workplace. In most cases, based on the inability to function, employers will medically board such an employee.

<b>Hearing impairment</b>	Refers to those persons with hearing impairments with a permanent or fluctuating hearing loss which permits the use of the auditory channel for a certain amount of speech/language and information gathering functions with the use of an aid.
<b>Hemiplegic</b>	This term is used to describe a person who has paralysis on one side of the body. This may affect the upper or the lower limbs.
<b>Intellectual impairment</b>	People with intellectual disability find it difficult to learn new information, and often struggle to adapt to new situations. Children with intellectual disabilities often develop more slowly than their peers and require additional support to develop.
<b>Invisible disability</b>	A disability that is not immediately apparent to others e.g. hearing impairment.
<b>Language impairment</b>	Is an impairment in the ability to understand and/or use words in context, both verbally and non-verbally. Some characteristics of language impairment include improper use of words and their meanings, inability to express ideas, inappropriate grammatical patterns, reduced vocabulary and inability to follow directions. One or a combination of these characteristics may occur in those who are affected by language learning disabilities or developmental language delay. The person may hear or see a word but not be able to understand its meaning. They may have trouble getting others to understand what they are trying to communicate.
<b>Learning disability</b>	A learning disability is a specific learning disability that results from problems in one or more of the central nervous system processes involved in perceiving, understanding and/or using concepts through verbal (spoken or written) language or nonverbal means. It manifests with a deficit in one or more of the following areas: attention, reasoning, processing, memory, communication, reading, writing, spelling, calculation, coordination, social competence and emotional maturity.
<b>Mental or mood disorders</b>	A mental disorder or mental illness is a psychological or behavioral pattern generally associated with subjective distress or disability that occurs in an individual which is not part of normal development or culture. The recognition and understanding of mental health conditions has changed over time and across cultures and there are still variations in the definition, assessment and classification of mental disorders, although standard guideline criteria are widely accepted.
<b>Mobility / physical impairment</b>	Mobility impairment is a reduced function of legs and feet that leads to users depending on a wheelchair or artificial aid for walking. In addition to people who are born with a disability, this group includes a large number of people whose condition is caused by accidents or age.
<b>Paraplegic</b>	Complete paralysis of the lower half of the body including both legs, usually caused by damage to the spinal cord.
<b>Quadraplegic</b>	This term is used to describe a person that has paralysis of the upper and lower limbs and uses a wheelchair for mobility. The individual may or may not be able to move part of the upper limbs such as the arms and hands.

**Reduced strength (arm or hand)**

Persons who have disabilities that affect depressing computer keys, mouse clicks, lifting reference material etc. It may require adaptations to the workstation that allow for low or no-impact computing as well as other workstation modifications.

**Repetitive strain injury (RSI)**

This condition is extremely prevalent in recent years due to the intensive use of computers. It is a separate category even though many of the symptoms are covered in other categories. RSI is a result of repetitive procedures that gradually affect the user. It sometimes becomes so severe that the person cannot even pick up a pencil. The risk of RSI can be reduced dramatically through ergonomically-designed workstations and prevention training. All computer users should take frequent short breaks and vary physical activities during the day. Some health professionals say it is much harder to get RSI than to get rid of it. Prevention is key. Treatment can last up to a year or longer and may include surgery. Assistive devices are designed to aid persons with RSI work in a more natural position and put less strain on the body.

**Sensory disability**

Sensory disability is an impairment of one of the senses. The term is used primarily to refer to vision and hearing impairment, but other senses can be impaired.

**Speech and language impairment**

Speech impairment may influence speech in a general way or only certain aspects of it, such as fluency or voice volume. Language impairment may be associated with a more general intellectual impairment.

**Spina bifida**

A congenital defect of the spine in which part of the spinal cord and it's meninges are exposed through a gap in the backbone. It often causes paralysis of the lower limbs and sometimes mental disabilities.

**Spinal cord injury**

An injury that mostly occurs due to severe accidents affecting messages conveyed by the spinal cord. In some cases it can be a birth defect.

**Visual impairment**

Visual impairment (or vision impairment) is vision loss (of a person) resulting from either disease, trauma, congenital or degenerative conditions that cannot be corrected by conventional means, such as refractive correction, medication or surgery. This functional loss of vision is typically defined to manifest with:

- best corrected visual acuity of less than 20/60, or significant central field defect,
- significant peripheral field defect including homonymous or heteronymous,
- bilateral visual, field defect or generalised contraction or constriction of field, or
- reduced peak contrast sensitivity with either of the above conditions.

**Wheelchair user**

An employee who uses a wheelchair, often requires a modified workstation. The keyboard height, desktop and monitor height needs to be adjusted to assure proper ergonomics.

## 3.2 Etiquette

### 3.2.1 Appropriate Etiquette:

- Do not push someone's wheelchair without asking if the person requires assistance or help or without being asked to do so
- Do not grab a blind person's arm and move them along without asking if they want your help
- Do not pet a guide dog
- Talk directly to a person with a disability. Do not talk at them or via their companion
- Do not shout to communicate with a deaf person
- Do not use overhead projectors for presentations in the presence of a blind person or a person with a visual impairment
- When talking to a person using a wheelchair, bend/kneel down to eye-level contact and do not look down on a wheelchair user

Courageous, brave, inspirational and similar words are routinely used to describe people with disabilities. Adapting to a disability does not necessarily mean someone acquires these traits.

### 3.2.2 DOs and DON'Ts

DO's	DON'T's
<p><b>DO: Acknowledge us without staring.</b> This means letting us place our own coffee orders and noticing when we are trying to get around you in crowds</p>	<p><b>DON'T: Stare.</b> I know we're fun to watch. Sneak surreptitious glances instead. And please keep the look of disgust off your face</p>
<p><b>DO: Give up your seat on the bus or train</b> for people with disabilities if you were sitting in the accessible seats</p>	<p><b>DON'T: 'Help' without asking.</b> If someone in a wheelchair has rolled up to a door, they probably have some sort of a plan. Leaping over us and flinging the door into our shins is not a noble gesture. And NEVER just grab the back of someone's wheelchair or a blind person's arm and start 'helping.' Imagine how startling it would be if random strangers started shoving you around</p>
<p><b>DO: Remain calm if your child loudly asks such questions.</b> Clutching her to your bosom and running like there's a fire is a bit of an overreaction. Instead, pay attention. Does the disabled person lean forward and smile at your child? Let your child ask her questions. Does the person look annoyed? Gently tell your child that people move, look, and act in all kinds of ways and it's best to give people privacy</p>	<p><b>DON'T: Ask strangers intrusive personal questions such as "what's wrong with you."</b> Sure, you are curious. I myself find some fashion choices curious, but I have learned to live with mystery</p>
<p><b>DO: Use "people first" language</b> to respect that people with disabilities aren't defined by their disability, they are people first, disability second</p>	<p><b>DON'T: Make condescending jokes about a person's mobility devices,</b> like: "Have you gotta register those crutches as lethal weapons? Haw, haw, haw," or "Not fair! I want a wheelchair!" Just because you are deeply uncomfortable with disability doesn't mean you should make us uncomfortable too</p>

<b>DO: Speak directly</b> to people with disabilities and with age-appropriate language-not to the people who may be accompanying them	<b>DON'T: Refer to them in third person</b> , as if he/she was not present
<b>DO:</b> Remember that some people who were born with a hearing disability may find it difficult to understand idiomatic expressions and abstract concepts – <b>use basic language</b>	<b>DON'T: Touch someone or pat them on the head</b> - it is patronizing and not respectful
<b>DO:</b> Remember that some people who were born with a hearing impairment can use their voice	<b>DON'T: Assume someone who is Deaf can read lips.</b> Lip reading is very uncommon
<b>DO:</b> Remember that the person with a hearing disability may need help if they need to phone someone	<b>DON'T: Assume all people with a hearing disability use or understand sign language.</b>
<b>DO: Turn your face to the light</b> – they need to see your face clearly.	<b>DON'T: Speak to a deaf person with your back to a light</b> , window, or mirror
<b>DO: First determine which language the person with a hearing disability can communicate in.</b> Use the language in which both of you can comfortably communicate.	<b>DON'T: Assume all sign languages are the same</b> – there are different dialects
<b>DO: Look directly at the person facing toward the deaf person</b> , keeping your hands away from your face	<b>DON'T: Have objects in your mouth or cover your mouth</b> while speaking or look away
<b>DO: Be patient in communication</b>	<b>DON'T: Assume communication is occurring correctly</b> – Nodding does not always mean understanding or agreement
<b>DO: Repeat if needed</b>	<b>DON'T: Yell</b>
<b>DO: Have paper and pencil ready</b> and write in short simple sentences	<b>DON'T: Laugh</b> because of lack of control or co-ordination
<b>DO:</b> Ask the deaf individual directly the best way to interact	<b>DON'T: Avoid me</b> , I am human and have feelings like everybody else
<b>DO: Maintain eye contact</b> and be sensitive	<b>DON'T: Laugh at me</b> , I did not choose to be disabled

**Source:** *Haddayr Copley-Woods and Independent First, the resource for people with disabilities.*  
**Additions:** *NID, Worcester*