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Disability Awareness and Sensitivity

Disability awareness is the process of educating staff, students, and employers about disabilities to promote inclusion. In Job Corps, disability awareness can help staff, students without disabilities or potential employers overcome any preconceived ideas they may have about students and future employees with disabilities. Disability awareness can also help others understand that some individuals may be receiving reasonable accommodations to help them remove barriers to participation in the Job Corps program and to have equal access to information, to instruction, etc.



Sometimes invisible barriers exist such as misconceptions about an individual with a disability's ability to accomplish certain tasks or program requirements. Disability awareness training can be very effective for dispelling these barriers by improving the overall culture and environment of the program including overcoming misconceptions potentially resulting in improved participation, performance and even program outcomes. Awareness training topics might include such subject matter as disability etiquette, communication, correct use of language, and inclusive behavior, as well as legislation, disclosure and adapting the physical environment.

The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) reminds us that there are many things we can do to be “disability inclusive.” If you are just starting out, here are some basics, or ABCs, of inclusion:

- A. Adjust Your Attitude:** Check your attitude and adjust outdated thinking. Find ways to make people with disabilities (everyone) feel welcome by accepting and embracing differences. None of the steps that we take toward inclusion are likely to work unless we really want people with disabilities in our classrooms/workplaces/organizations to believe that they will be a productive part of the group.
- B. Build in Accessibility and Flexibility:** Practice universal design, build in physical and programmatic accessibility as much as possible, provide alternative ways to communicate, and have flexible training, education, and workplace policies.
- C. Change Your Culture:** Change your culture so that everyone welcomes and values people with disabilities. All your hard work adjusting your own attitude and building accessibility and flexibility can be undermined if supervisors, managers, teachers, and coworkers are not on board.

For more information on the ABCs of inclusion visit: [JAN's ABCs of Inclusion Page](#).

Disability Awareness and Sensitivity (cont'd)

Accessible Communication and Disability Etiquette

The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) requires that state and local government organizations and businesses communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

Communication effectiveness is a separate legal requirement from providing general accommodations because communication is essentially “meaningless” if it is not effective. *See [PRH Chapter 2: Appendix 201, Communicating with Persons with Disabilities](#).*



Some ways communication is effective, and information is accessible is by using audio files, demonstration videos, adjustable fonts, read aloud technology, check/task lists and frequent checks for understanding.

General Tips for Communicating with People with Disabilities:

- **Be Yourself:** Relax! Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions that seem to relate to a person's disability such as “See you later,” or “Did you hear about that?”
- **Use “Person/People First” Language:** Emphasizes the individuality, equality, and dignity of **people** with disabilities. Rather than defining **people** primarily by their disability, **people-first language** conveys respect by emphasizing the fact that **people** with disabilities are **first** and foremost just that—**people**.
- **When Speaking with a Person with a Disability:** Talk directly to the person, not his/her companion. This applies whether the person has a mobility impairment, a speech impairment, a cognitive impairment, is blind or deaf and uses an interpreter.
- **Introductions:** When introduced to a person with a disability, extend common courtesies. It is acceptable 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).
- **Offer Assistance:** If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen to or ask for instructions.
- **Respect the Individual as an Adult:** Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to others.
- **Ask Questions:** Do not be afraid to ask questions when you are unsure of what to do.
- **Relax:** Focus on the subject matter and not on disability related issues. Treat the individual with the same respect and courtesy that you extend to all students, employees, co-workers, family members, etc. Any initial concerns will quickly disappear as you focus on effective communication.

For more on information visit: [Office of Disability Employment Policy's Effective Interaction: Communicating with and About People with Disabilities in the Workplace Page](#)

Spotlight on Accessible and Assistive Technology

The explosion of new and exciting technology has been a great enabler of the last decade especially during these challenging pandemic times. Digital inclusion is more important than ever before. Assistive Technology (AT) has opened a world of convenience and accessibility as we have all experienced firsthand with the Job Corps program's rolling out of virtual learning platforms and other distance learning and program participation opportunities.



Multiple resources have been developed to aid and assist staff in using technology in distance learning to accommodate and support students with disabilities.

- **How to Get Started:** A brief guide on accommodating students in the distance learning environment including step by step guidance on modifying existing accommodation plans by adapting for distance learning.
- **Windows and Office Accessibility:** Many access features exist within the Windows 10 platform as well as Microsoft Office and function within the variety of platforms being used to deliver distance learning opportunities. The Windows and Office Accessibility Guide reviews/highlights some of the more commonly needed/used accommodations in Job Corps distance learning.
- **Immersive Reader:** Microsoft's Immersive Reader is a free tool designed to increase readability of text in Microsoft applications using AT accommodations for individuals with many types of disabilities such as dyslexia, dysgraphia, vision impairments, and more. The Immersive Reader Guide provides screenshots and brief tutorials on how to get started using Immersive Reader.
- **Office Lens:** Microsoft Office Lens is a free app available on Android and Apple phones that uses Optical Character Recognition (OCR) to capture text in a variety of formats. Using a phone's camera, the app scans photos, documents, written text, signs, or whiteboard displays and converts the image to text which can be saved as a PDF file or upload the image into Word and use with Immersive Reader. The Office Lens Guide provides screenshots and brief tutorials for both Android and Apple Phone users.
- **Adobe Read Out Loud:** Adobe Reader (which is a free application) and Adobe Acrobat both have read aloud features that are extremely user friendly. The Adobe Read Out Loud Guide highlights key features and provides screenshots and tutorial guidance for each.
- **Accommodations and Resources for Supporting Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disabilities Guide:** Students with mental health disabilities and/or students with disabilities who have emotional and/or behavioral functional limitations are entitled to receive reasonable accommodations necessary to participate in the Job Corps Program – even in distance learning activities. This guide provides numerous accommodation suggestions and considerations for students who need emotional or behavioral accommodations.

These resources as well as PowerPoint presentations on distance learning are available in the Distance Learning section of [Job Corps Disability Website](#).

Spotlight on Assistive Technology (cont'd)

Disability Accessibility Apps

Google Assistant

[Google Assistant](#) is an artificial intelligence–powered virtual assistant developed by Google that is primarily available on mobile and smart home devices. Google Assistant is activated by voice; thus, individuals with limited or reduced dexterity can operate and control their phones via voice command to perform such tasks as calling or texting, sending emails, setting up alarms and much more.



Assistive Touch

The [Assistive Touch](#) app allows people with mobility impairments or physical disabilities to operate a smartphone. The technology enables users to create virtual buttons for things like the home or back button, screenshot, or volume control, and power. This is critical in allowing people to use their devices themselves and hold on to their independence.



ExSilent: HearYouNow

The [HearYouNow](#) app is a free amplification tool that uses state of the art ExSilent technology. It serves as a personal sound amplifier and can be adjusted to the user's personal needs. Conversations can be understood better in situations such as in a restaurant, during a meeting, at a large gathering, watching television, in classrooms, etc.



Be My Eyes

The [Be My Eyes](#) is a free app created to make the world more accessible to people with low vision or who are blind. The app connects people with low vision/blindness with sighted volunteers and companies from all over the world through a live video call. Users can request assistance in over 180 languages.



Regional Disability Coordinators

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Disability Resources: Awareness and Sensitivity

Job Corps Disability Website: Disability Awareness and Sensitivity

The [Job Corps Disability Website](#) includes a section for [Disability Awareness and Sensitivity](#) designed to support Disability Coordinators and all center staff with training, tips, and resources for disability awareness, sensitivity and etiquette. The awareness and sensitivity content can be utilized as center wide training which can serve as required yearly staff disability program training.

Also available on the Job Corps Disability Website is an [Accessibility within AFR Snapshot](#) that provides guidance on accessibility during the Applicant File Review process. This helpful snapshot defines accessibility as it relates to Job Corps and provides several examples of the types/forms of accessibility that may be considered for applicants.



Job Accommodation Network (JAN): Disability Awareness

[JAN and Disability Awareness](#) is a website section devoted to educating people in order to promote inclusion. The webpages include situations and solutions, as well as publications, articles, and events regarding disability awareness. Other helpful JAN links related to disability awareness and sensitivity include an [Awareness Training Video](#) and a [Consultants' Corner Provide Resources on Disability Awareness Training](#).

Americans with Disabilities (ADA): Effective Communication Fact Sheet

The [ADA National Network](#) includes webpages dedicated to effective communication with people with disabilities. The [ADA Effective Communication Fact Sheet](#) provides an outline of legal requirements, a definition and examples of auxiliary aids and service, information on sign language interpreters and telecommunications.

United Spinal Association: Disability Etiquette

The [United Spinal Association](#) provides a free publication on [Disability Etiquette: Tips on Interacting with People with Disabilities](#). The publication/handbook is an excellent source for sensitivity training and support for instructional/training staff, employers/employees (anyone) working with people with disabilities, and also for improving overall inclusion practices.

Upcoming Webinars

- Bookshare Recap
- Disability Coordinator Orientation Part 2
- Disability Coordinator Orientation Part 3

To register:

- Go to [WebEx](#)