



DISABILITY ETIQUETTE: DO I OPEN THE DOOR FOR SOMEONE IN A WHEELCHAIR?

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Workshop Report

Background Quiz ...

True / False

- Q:** The greatest barrier to those with disabilities is attitude.
A: True (It's difficult to overcome low expectations.)
- Q:** It's acceptable to lean on a person's wheelchair.
A: False
- Q:** You can generally tell by looking at someone if they have a disability.
A: False
- Q:** You should address questions to the able-bodied person with the person who has a disability.
A: False
- Q:** If assistance seems to be needed, jump right in.
A: False (Always ask first if they would like help. If they say no, respect that.)
- Q:** All people with disabilities need someone to take care of them.
A: False

Common Terms ...

- **Handicapped:** This term originated from sports/games and is used to give advantage to those with less ability, or to "level the playing field." People with disabilities, however, do not wish to have an advantage, only to be considered equal to others.
- **Special Needs:** People with disabilities do not have needs that are different from those without a disability. They need the same things – food, shelter, transportation – it's the access to these needs that are different for this population.
- **Challenged:** Just because a person may have to accomplish a task differently than someone else, does not mean they are "challenged."
- **Confined/Bound** – A person in a wheelchair is not tied to it, and they are not always in it. For them, a wheelchair means mobility and freedom.
- **Homebound** – What causes a person to not be able to leave their home is a lack of modifications to their environment, not their disability.
- **Defect** – The term "Birth defect" is a negative term. If you had a new car with a defect you would take it back, but you don't do this with a child. It should be referred to as "congenital condition" rather than a defect.
- **Disabled Community** – There is really no such thing. Just because one person is in a wheelchair, doesn't mean they know everyone else who is as well. The exception involves those who are deaf. They generally have a large network of acquaintances who are also deaf.

Service Animals ...

- Service animals involve animals that are trained to provide a specific act or service for someone with a disability.
- Not all animals should be used; however dogs are the most common.
- If you are a business owner, you are allowed to ask whether the animal with the person is a “service animal,” as well as what the service animal does for the person. A business owner is not allowed to ask what the disability is of the person with the service animal.
 - A service animal should not be asked to leave unless the animal is misbehaving or relieving itself in an inappropriate area.
- The person is responsible for any damage caused by the service animal.

Tips...

- If you are leading a blind person, take their elbow rather than their hand. By taking their hand, it will not allow them enough time to let go if you were to trip or fall.
- When communicating with someone who is deaf, do not look at the interpreter; look at the person you are talking to, so you can also read body language and facial expressions.

Resources...

- HANDOUT: [Disability Etiquette](#)
- Disability Rights & Resources [website](#)