

Keeping it Inclusive: National Service Style

Keeping it Inclusive: ASSET Style

Presenters

Salena Acox: ASSET*AmeriCorps Program Coordinator

Easter Seals Central Texas

Dana Carpenter: ASSET*AmeriCorps Member Support Specialist

Easter Seals Central Texas

What is ASSET?

Active Service Solutions for Economic Transition

Assistive Technology*

*AT is any item or piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the abilities of people with disabilities.

Affordable Housing

Financial Literacy

Where is ASSET?

Local non profit organizations in cities across Texas

Abilene*

Alvin*

Austin*

Clear Lake*

Corpus Christi*

Crockett*

El Paso

Fort Worth*

Houston*

Lubbock*

Odessa

Palestine*

Tyler

*Person with a disability in service

Disability Inclusion in ASSET

Members with Disabilities

08-09 Term 52% of Enrolled Members

09-10 Term 44% of Enrolled Members

Members in 2nd term with ASSET 60%

Challenges/Fears

COST

RELIABILITY

PERFORMANCE

INTERACTIONS

Challenges/Fears

COST

Member receive same health insurance as any other members

Accommodation cost should be written into program budget and additional funds may be available at state commission office

RELIABILITY

Sometimes people have challenges at work and people with disabilities should be treated like everyone else. Some accommodations may include, flexible scheduels or the ability to work from home.

PERFORMANCE

Any person with a disability who applies for a job should be able to perform all of the essential functions of a position with or without reasonable accommodations

INTERACTIONS

People with disabilities should be treated like everyone else in an organization. If you are unsure about something, ask.



Disability 101

Including Strategies for Supporting AmeriCorps Members who have Disabilities



Goals for this Session



- ✓ Defining disability
- ✓ Understanding and applying People First Language
 - ✓ Defining what a reasonable accommodation is
- ✓ Learning strategies for interacting with People with Disabilities

Defining a Person with a Disability

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, defines a person with a disability as an individual who:

Has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities. Examples of major life activities include:

- **Caring for yourself**
- **Hearing**
- **Learning**
- **Walking**
- **Breathing**
- **Working**
- **Seeing**
- **Speaking**
- **Performing manual tasks**

Defining disability cont'd

Any mental or psychological disorder, such as a developmental disability, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities.

- Has a record (history) of such an impairment or
- Is regarded (perceived) as having such an impairment.

Different Types Of Disabilities

- **Mobility impairments:** these disabilities affect basic mobility, coordination and balance, strength and endurance. Many people who have mobility impairments use adaptive equipment, such as canes, crutches, walkers, and wheelchairs.
- **Vision impairments:** the terms "blindness" and "vision impairment" may mean either a complete or partial loss of vision. Many people who are blind get around on their own by using a guide dog or cane.
- **Hearing impairment:** the term "deaf" is sometimes used to describe hearing loss. Severity can be described as mild, moderate, severe, or profound. People with hearing loss cannot use hearing to process speech and language.
- **Developmental Disabilities:** people with developmental disabilities may not be able to think, reason, or remember as well as others, but they have their own strengths and weaknesses. The effect of the disability can be lessened, and skills and abilities increased, through rehabilitation, education, and experience.

Types Of Disabilities cont'd

- **Psychiatric Disabilities:** are diverse and include anxiety disorders, depression, bipolar disorders, schizophrenia, and other conditions. A person may need to be provided with unique accommodations to prevent from exacerbating behaviors.
- **Speech Impairments:** you might observe some lisping, indistinct speech or flatness of tone due to lack of fine motor control of the tongue and lips. The severity and functional effects of the disability vary from person to person.
- **Invisible (Hidden) Disabilities:** there are many disabilities such as asthma, arthritis, heart disease, environmental illness, AIDS, chronic fatigue, psychiatric or mental illnesses, ADHD, learning disabilities, and mild developmental disabilities that are not visible to the onlooker.

Types Of Disabilities cont'd

- **Alcoholism:** individuals who abuse alcohol may be considered disabled under the ADA if the person is an alcoholic or a recovering alcoholic, and it substantially limits any of an individuals major life activities.
- **Illicit Drug Users:** individuals who are current illicit drug users are not protected under the ADA. It protects individuals who are participating in a supervised drug rehabilitation program, have completed a treatment program, or have been rehabilitated through self-help groups, employee assistance programs or any other type of rehabilitation, and are no longer using drugs.

Words are powerful.

Describing People with Disabilities

Historically, people with disabilities were regarded as individuals to be pitied, feared or ignored.

- “Handicapped” is the “Old English” word for a bartering game, in which the loser was left with his “hand in his cap,” and was thought to be at a *disadvantage*.
- Later, “disadvantage” was equated to having a disability, and people started using “handicapped” to refer to a person with a disability... begging with his “cap in his hand.”

Thankfully things have changed.

Eliminating Stereotypes

- Every individual regardless of sex, age, race or ability deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. As part of the effort to end discrimination in employment, education, and our communities, it's important to eliminate prejudicial language.
- Like other minorities, the disability community has developed preferred terminology -- People First Language.

People First Language

- More than a fad or political correctness, People First Language is an objective way of acknowledging, communicating and reporting on disabilities.
- It eliminates generalizations, assumptions and stereotypes by focusing on the person rather than the disability.
- As the term implies, People First Language refers to the individual first and the disability second.

Choosing your words

A few guidelines on appropriate language.

- Never equate a person with a disability -- such as referring to someone as retarded, an epileptic or quadriplegic. These labels are medical diagnosis. Tell what a person HAS, not what a person IS.
- Emphasize abilities not limitations. For example, say a man walks with crutches, not he is crippled.
- Do not refer to a person as bound to or confined to a wheelchair. Wheelchairs are liberating to people with disabilities because they provide mobility.
- Avoid cute euphemisms such as physically challenged, inconvenienced and differently abled.
- Avoid referring to people with disabilities as "the disabled, the blind, the epileptics, the retarded."

What Should You Say?

Labels that Stereotype

- ✓ the handicapped/disabled
- ✓ normal people
- ✓ the mentally retarded;
retarded people
- ✓ the deaf
- ✓ a person confined to a
wheelchair
- ✓ handicapped buses,
bathrooms, hotel rooms, etc.

People First Language

- ✓ people with disabilities
- ✓ people without disabilities
- ✓ people with intellectual and
developmental disabilities
- ✓ a person who is deaf
- ✓ a person who uses a
wheelchair
- ✓ accessible buses, bathrooms,
hotel rooms, etc.

What is a Reasonable Accommodation?

- Adapting the service site for a qualified person with a disability to enable them to enjoy equal opportunities. *** This does not mean that the program must lower the standards of service for the position or change the service position requirements. ***
- Agencies/companies are required to make reasonable accommodations for employees with a disability unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the agency, such as a significant difficulty or expense in relation to the employer's size, financial resources, and the nature and structure of the operation.

Reasonable Accommodation cont'd

There are three categories of reasonable accommodations:

- Modifications or adjustments to an application process to permit an individual with a disability to be considered for a position (such as providing application forms in alternative formats like Braille);
- Modifications or adjustments necessary to enable a qualified individual with a disability to perform the essential functions of the position (such as providing purchasing speech to text software); and
- Modifications or adjustments that enable individuals with disabilities to enjoy equal benefits and privileges of service and volunteering (such as removing physical barriers in a cafeteria or lounge).

Reasonable Accommodation cont'd

A “**low-tech**” accommodation is any accommodation that is technologically simple or unsophisticated, and readily available in most offices.

Examples include:

- ✓ modifying a workspace (risers for a desk)
- ✓ adjusting work schedules
- ✓ providing alternative formats (scanning documents)
- ✓ using instant messenger service
- ✓ colored tape or post-its to color code calendars, categories, files
- ✓ modifying a service site (rearranging desk/tables)
- ✓ tools, pens, scissors attached to cords for easy retrieval

What are some low-tech accommodations that are not listed in the slide?

Reasonable Accommodation cont'd

A “**high-tech**” accommodation is any accommodation that uses advanced or sophisticated devices.

Examples include:

- ✓ automatic door opener
- ✓ a Braille printer/embosser
- ✓ Video relay, TTY (teletypewriter)
- ✓ digital recorder
- ✓ specialized computer software
- ✓ ramp or elevator installation

What are some high-tech accommodations that are not listed in the slide?

Strategies/Etiquette for supporting AmeriCorps members with disabilities

Suggestions for interacting with individuals who have **mobility impairments**:

- When scheduling a meeting, make sure the location is accessible and that potential barriers such as a step at the threshold or parking will not preclude access. Proximity to a bus stop is also an important consideration
- Do not hold the person's wheelchair or assume the individual wants to be pushed; always ask first. A wheelchair should be considered part of the person's personal space.
- Offer assistance but do not insist. If the person needs help, they will accept the offer and explain exactly what will be helpful.
- Do not be sensitive about using words like "walking" or "running." People who use wheelchairs often use the same words.

Strategies/Etiquette cont'd

Suggestions when interacting with individuals who are **blind or who have vision impairments:**

- If a person who is blind needs guidance through a door or to a chair, let the person take your arm and follow the motion of your body. Tell him or her where the chair is in relation to his or her body. If the person approaches steps, mention how many and the direction.
- Be prepared to read aloud information that is written, or ask the person if he or she could use the services of a trained reader. If they read Braille, making sure materials are available in that format
- Introduce other people in the room or have them introduce themselves. This will assist the individual with orientation to the room and its occupants.
- Never touch or distract a service guide dog without first asking the owner for permission. Service animals are not pets and generally should not be disturbed while in a working mode.

Strategies/Etiquette cont'd

Suggestions when interacting with individuals who are **deaf or hard of hearing**:

- When speaking with someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, face the person directly. Attract his or her visual attention before starting a conversation. For instance, if you are entering a room and the person's back is to you, flicker the room lights
- Use meaningful facial expressions and gestures to emphasize your intent and attitude. This helps to substitute for your tone of voice.
- If using a sign language or oral interpreter, speak directly to the person with the hearing impairment, not the interpreter. Speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face.

Strategies/Etiquette cont'd

Suggestions when interacting with people with **developmental disabilities**:

- For the most part, you should talk to the individual in the same manner as anyone else, but be more specific.
- In an meeting/class room setting, ask questions and occasionally repeat responses to ensure effective communication.
- Provide specific information as to where things are located, such as the front entrance, elevators, restroom, drinking fountain, etc.
- Provide explanations about training issues such as hours, proper dress, location, what will be discussed, and transportation options.

Strategies/Etiquette cont'd

Suggestions when interacting with individuals who have a **psychiatric disabilities**:

- Talk to the individual as you would to anyone else. Integrate the person as fully into activities. Do not ostracize him or her due to the psychiatric condition.
- As many psychiatric medications cause extreme thirst, allow the person to have access to beverages upon request, even where food and drink are normally prohibited.
- Consider offering a flexible schedule to allow the person to attend medical appointments and therapy sessions and to deal with medication issues, insomnia, fatigue, or other conditions that often accompany psychiatric disabilities.

Strategies/Etiquette cont'd

Suggestions when interacting with individuals who have **speech impairment**:

- Concentrate on what the person is saying.
- If you do not understand something, ask the person to repeat what he said and then repeat it back to him.
- Be patient; take as much time as necessary to communicate effectively.
- When appropriate, ask questions which only require short answers, or a nod of the head.
- Do not speak for the person or attempt to finish his sentences.
- If you are having difficulty understanding what a person is saying, consider writing, text messaging, chat or email as an alternative means of communicating.

Strategies/Etiquette cont'd

- Suggestions when interacting with individuals who have **Invisible (Hidden) Disabilities:**

- If a consumer brings such a condition to the your attention, you can ask whether the condition might have an impact on their ability to perform their service duties and if any accommodation is necessary.



- Suggestions when interacting with individuals who have **alcohol and drug impairments:**

- Modify a schedule so a consumer can attend Alcohol/Narcotics Anonymous meetings or a leave of absence so they can seek treatment.
- Allow for frequent breaks
- Divide large assignments into smaller tasks and steps

Resources:

- The National Service Inclusion Project (NSIP)
<http://www.serviceandinclusion.org/>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN),
www.jan.wvu.edu
- The Resource Center
<http://nationalservicerresources.org/>
- Easter Seals National
<http://easterseals.com>
- Easter Seals Central Texas
<http://centraltx.easterseals.com>

Supporting people with disabilities in National Service

- Recruiting
- Interviewing
- Reasonable Accommodations
- Addressing Performance Challenges
- Planning Inclusive Trainings/Planning Inclusive Service Projects

Activity

Read through the scenario at your table

Work with your table to develop a solution to the challenge presented in the scenario