
Tips to Remember when Assisting People with Severe Disabilities in their Advocacy Efforts

Do's and Don'ts when Mentoring to Individuals with Disabilities

Do's:

- ▶ Do consider the person as a person first, as a customer second, and thirdly as a consumer.
- ▶ Do make every effort to understand what the person with speech impairment has to say.
- ▶ Do take time to listen and do not assume you know what the person wants to say.
- ▶ Do look at the person you are talking to and give him/her/them your full attention; this means do not fiddle with paper, read, or look at your watch.
- ▶ Do be open-minded when he/she is telling you what their vocational goal is.
- ▶ Do keep your expectations high and believe that the person has the ability to know their own capabilities.
- ▶ Do communicate with the person even if they are accompanied by a parent or an attendant.
- ▶ Do be courteous to the person.
- ▶ Do be encouraging and supportive. Avoid comments like “Come now, be realistic,” or “You know you’ll fail if you try that.”
- ▶ Do be sensitive and willing to offer accommodations appropriate to the person’s disability. Examples include offering to read documents to the person with a visual impairment, having a sign interpreter for the deaf, or providing a solid writing surface for people who have difficulty in using their hands.



Don'ts:

- ▶ Don't be negative when talking to a person with a severe disability. Negativity is stifling to a person not used to expressing themselves.
- ▶ Don't be loud when conversing with a person with a disability who has no hearing impairment.
- ▶ Don't try to be a mind reader when you are listening to a person with speech impairment. Believe me; this can be irritating because pretending to understand is insulting.
- ▶ Don't underestimate the determination of the person you are talking to.
- ▶ Don't let the appearance of the person influence your judgment of their abilities. A good rule to remember is the old saying, "Don't judge a book by its cover."
- ▶ Don't be overprotective and deny the person their right to learn even if that means failing. A mentor can point out obstacles but should never force their opinions of what not possible.
- ▶ Don't fail to offer appropriate accommodations if you are talking to a person with a disability.
- ▶ Don't position yourself in such a way as to make it difficult to maintain eye contact with the person.
- ▶ Don't talk to a person with speech impairment in a noisy environment. If possible, talk to them in a quiet environment.
- ▶ Don't ever talk down to a person with a disability; this includes persons with cognitive disabilities.

For further questions contact us at
304-422-3151 or toll-free at 1-877-334-6581
Kevin Smith - ext. 102 or kevin.smith@peoplefirstwv.org
James McClain – ext. 104 or james.mcclain@arcwd.org

A PROGRAM OF
The
Arc
of West Virginia

Program funded by the West Virginia Developmental Disabilities Council
912 Market Street, Parkersburg, WV 26101 • 304-422-3151 ext 106 • www.peoplefirstwv.org