



Q&A/Facts about Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

What is a developmental disability? Developmental disabilities are a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavior areas. These conditions begin during the developmental period, may impact day-to-day functioning, and usually last throughout a person's lifetime.

Disability can be related to conditions that are present at birth and may affect functions later in life, including *cognition* (memory, learning, and understanding), *mobility* (moving in the environment), *vision*, *hearing*, *behavior*, and other areas. They can also be associated with developmental conditions that become apparent during childhood, related to an injury, or associated with a longstanding condition. Additionally, disability can be progressive, static, or intermittent.

Although disabilities are associated with health conditions or events, the functioning, health, independence, and engagement in society of people with disabilities can vary depending on several factors:

- Severity of the underlying impairment
- Social, political, and cultural influences and expectations
- Aspects of natural and built surroundings
- Availability of assistive technology and devices
- Family and community support and engagement

What is the difference between an intellectual and developmental disability?

Intellectual disability starts any time before a child turns 18 and is characterized by differences with both:

- intellectual functioning or intelligence, which include the ability to learn, reason, problem solve, and other skills; and
- adaptive behavior, which includes everyday social and life skills.

Developmental disabilities is a broader category of often lifelong challenges that can be intellectual, physical, or both.

What is disability inclusion? Disability inclusion means making sure everyone has the same opportunities to participate in every aspect of life to the best of their abilities and desires.

Disability Facts:

- Disability affects approximately 70 million, or more than 1 in 4 adults, in the United States have a disability.
 - It is estimated that 1 in 6 children are dealing with developmental disabilities.
- Older Americans are significantly more likely than younger adults to have a disability.
- Adults with disabilities are three times more likely to have heart disease, stroke, diabetes, or cancer than adults without disabilities.
- The most common types of disability in the United States involve difficulties with walking, independent living or cognition.
- President Ronald Reagan declared March National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in 1987.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act was passed in 1990, making it illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Disability Etiquette

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Disabilities are common and there are many different kinds of disabilities, including visible and invisible ones. Being more informed about disabilities can prevent you from saying something to an individual with a disability that is unintentionally offensive. This is true even if you mean well or if you have a difference or disability yourself. Use these disability etiquette tips from some of our ambassadors to respect people's differences and help make your community more inclusive.

- **Be respectful, disability or not, it's the golden rule.**
- **Conversations**
 - Speak to the individual first; if the individual has difficulty responding, the caregiver will know to answer on their behalf.
 - Make eye contact and acknowledge individuals with disabilities.
 - Speak to individuals with challenges just as you would anyone else. The individual will let you know if you need to speak slower or louder.
 - Don't speak to individuals with disabilities like children or use the 'baby voice.'
 - Maintain eye contact with individuals with disabilities. Especially for those in wheelchairs, their eye level is different than yours!
 - Step back so that they can look at you too. This makes sure everyone feels seen and heard.
 - Let people with speech or language challenges finish their sentences/thoughts.
- **Always ask first!**
 - If you see someone with challenges struggling with a physical task, ask the individual if they need assistance before helping them.
 - Don't assume that the person who may be struggling can't do something, assume competence instead.
 - Always respect the answer!
 - Additionally, ask for consent before touching an individual with a disability or their assistive equipment. Individuals with sensory disorders may react differently to a hug, hand on shoulder, etc.
- Treat us as you would want to be treated, were you to ever find yourselves in our place.
- If you see an individual with a disability alone in public, don't assume they need to have another adult, caregiver, or parent with them or ask where they are.
- Remember boundaries are important when approaching an individual with a disability and it is not always easy to know who to trust.