



DISABILITY FACT SHEET

Physical Disabilities

Communication strategies

- When communicating with a person with a physical disability it is important to acknowledge that each person is an individual and should be approached as such.
- Ask the person about the most appropriate way of communicating with them.
- Do not assume that people with a physical disability cannot comprehend because of physical appearance.
- Speak directly to the person and not with someone who maybe assisting them.
- DON'T SHOUT. Speak in a tone appropriate to the setting.
- Make eye contact. Where possible, position yourself at the same level as the person.
- Make sure the person has understood you. If necessary write the information down.
- Check with the person about use of adaptive technology to aid with communication

Disability Overview

A physical disability is one that affects the person's mobility and or dexterity. Physical disabilities fall under the following headings:

- Limited control of some or all voluntary muscles,
- Underdeveloped skeletal structure, and
- Dysfunctional joints

Each person will have different causes, symptoms and management strategies making it difficult to generalise physical disabilities. A physical disability may have existed since birth or it could be the result of an accident, illness, infection, disease, degeneration, medical condition or the result of congenital factors. Physical disabilities can also affect speech.

Chronic health conditions include arthritis, chronic fatigue syndrome, asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, hepatitis, cancer, HIV/AIDS, kidney disorder. Some of these conditions are life-long, while others vary over time.

Chronic health conditions may cause fatigue, stress and difficulty with memory, handwriting and concentration. Mood swings and depression can be associated. Medication may also affect performance.

A person with a physical disability may require some assistance or the use of some sort of equipment to aid with mobility.

Implications

- Some disabilities are invisible, but will affect the person's ability to complete tasks.
- People with a mobility impairment rely on effective signage that is up-to-date and consistent in both style and placement.
- For people who use a wheelchair it is like a part of the person's body; do not lean or hang on to the chair.
- Offer assistance if it appears necessary, but do not assume a person with a disability will require or accept it.
- Make sure that there is a clear pathway for a person in a wheelchair and do not leave articles such as chairs or boxes in areas that may block access.