

TIP SHEET

- ☐ Use person-first language unless the person asks you not to.
- ☐ Focus on the person, not on their disability or their supporters.
- ☐ Do not lean on or touch a person's assistive technology or wheelchair.
- ☐ Do not assume a person needs help. **Always ask before assisting.**
- ☐ Know the location of accessible parking spaces, rest rooms, drinking fountains, telephones.
- ☐ Recognize factors that can impact a person's ability to make decisions:
 - Not having accommodations
 - Stress, grief, depression
 - Institutionalization
 - Medical factors
 - Time of day
 - Education, cultural, and social barriers
- ☐ A diagnosis does not tell you everything (in fact it often tells you very little) about a person.
- ☐ Public benefits like Medicaid Waivers & Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are deficit-based. Receipt of these benefits does **not** mean guardianship, conservatorship or other protective arrangement is needed.
- ☐ A person almost always has way of communicating. If you struggle to communicate with someone, recognize that the difficulty rests on communication barriers **between** you, not with them.
- ☐ If a person has a speech disability:
 - Do not try to guess what they are saying.
 - Repeat back what you are hearing to confirm that you understood.
 - Do not speak for the person or try to finish their sentences.
 - Do not raise your voice. People with speech disabilities do not necessarily have hearing disabilities.
- ☐ If a person has a cognitive disability:
 - Use clear, concise and simple language.
 - A slow or lack of response does not mean the person isn't aware of what you said, give them time to respond in their own way
 - Ask the person what helps them understand information and how they communicate
 - Do not assume all people read
 - Consider breaks and timing
 - A person may have difficulty picking up on social cues, be clear about what you are asking.
- ☐ If you are working with a person who has a visual disability:
 - Identify yourself when entering a conversation and announce when you leave.
 - Face the person and speak in a natural tone.
 - Avoid pointing when giving directions and describe the setting, environment, and obstacles to them (i.e. how many steps).
 - Ask if they would like you to take their arm to guide them, **never** touch without asking.
- ☐ If you are working with a person who has a hearing disability:
 - Look directly at the person and speak clearly and slowly in normal tones
 - If a person uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter
 - Pause to make sure you are understood
 - Inquire about communication devices/tools.