

Disability Access Training Tips

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Paulo Freire on mutual helps

I remember what this South American educator, Paulo Freire declares:

"Authentic help means that all who are involved help each other mutually, growing together in the common effort to understand the reality which they seek to transform. Only (then) can the act of helping become free from the distortion in which the helper dominates the helped."

Inclusion Question Examples:

Note: use your own language, then listen and take your cues from the answers.

- How would you like me to address you?
- What brings you here?
- How may I assist you?
- What information do you need?
- How does this work for you?

Fifteen Access Training Tips

1. Always introduce yourself by name & why you're there. "Hello. I'm Doctor Poles & I'm going to ..."
2. If you know it, address the client or customer by name and aim your voice their way. This supports direct communication and helps establish patient/customer's importance.
3. Speak necessary information plainly. If you need the patient/customer to come with you, first ask what information or assistance they need so together you can get the job done.
4. If you need the patient to go to another location (such as an inner office or exam room) ask if the patient would like to follow you, take your arm or move out of the way so the patient can fulfill the request.
5. If the patient requests guiding, offer your arm for the patient to gently grasp above your elbow.
6. If you are giving the patient verbal directions, you have two choices.
 - Give them from your own position and location. "Step to my right ... The door handle is by my left hand ..."
 - Give them from the patient's perspective or position. "Step to your right ... The door handle is by your left hand."
 - Never face a patient and give directions by reversing them in order to present them correctly for your patient. It gets too confusing!
7. Give the patient a brief description of the waiting room including location of closest bathroom(s), water, coffee and the like.

8. Address your comments, questions, instructions directly to patients not the attendant, spouse, or friend.
9. If paperwork needs to be completed, invite the patient into a private space to obtain the information.
10. When reading forms or other materials to nonprint readers, don't skip anything unless given permission; do not fill in info that hasn't been approved or provided by the patient (if capable to provide).
11. When in the exam room, give the patient/customer needed information so that they are aware of what procedures will take place.
12. If prescriptions are dispensed, give each to the patient and explain their usage.
13. When responding to questions, do it verbally in addition to any hand or facial movements given.
14. When follow-up appointments are scheduled, make sure patients get the information in ways that work for them. "Would you like a card ... Shall I leave the information on your phone?" If they need to record the information (in large print, Braille, recorder, cell phone, etc.) allow time.
15. Be proactive about adaptive aids or equipment, personal care attendants or sign language interpreters, mobility tools or service dogs who may be present. Note: patient care, conversations and services always come first. Please avoid talking to service animals or visually engaging them. This is typically viewed as distraction and interference. When speaking through a sign language interpreter to a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, speak directly to the person and not to their ASL interpreter. It is tricky, yet crucial in small medical spaces, to keep all adaptive equipment, service animals, sign language interpreters or personal care attendants available to those they serve without getting in your way.

Medical Caregivers and Patients with Disabilities – Perspectives

Doctors provide diagnoses & prognosis. They work to heal & cure. Doctors don't want responsibilities of driver's license pulling. They don't want to say, "You cannot drive anymore." Any failure to fix can be felt in deeply personal ways. This sharing experience can be informative, affirming, mutually encouraging and dignity restoring. But, all too often, it is others who must assist with emotional supports.

Some Important Local Resources

Note: Driving is not a right but a privilege.

1. Department of Public Safety – Motor Vehicles

Issue MN ID cards & licenses

Main number: (651) 296-2940

Medical unit number: (651) 296-2021

Address: 445 Minnesota St.
St. Paul, MN 55101

Vision report form number: PS30338:

Lists all potential driver/driving restriction information

Form signers include: Licensed ophthalmologists, optometrists, or DMV personnel

2. SSB – Minnesota State Services for the Blind

Provides basic, extensive services

Individuals, family members, or professionals can register

You do not have to be legally blind to request/obtain services.

SSB serves customers on basis of shifts in daily life function resulting from changes in vision.

Note these particular services: training toward employment or independent living, the Radio Talking Book Network, and the Communications Center.

SSB's Main number: (651) 642-0500.

Address: Suite 240
2200 University Ave. West
St. Paul, Minnesota 55114.

3. VLR – Vision Loss Resources

Main number: (612) 871-2222.

Address: 1936 Lyndale Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55403.

4. Minnesota Braille and Talking Book Library

Minnesota Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

Toll free: (800) 722-0550.

Local: (507) 333-4828.

FAX: (507) 333-4832.

E-mail: Mn.Btbl@state.mn.us

Web: <http://www.klas.com/mnbph>

Address: 388 SE 6th Ave.
Faribault, MN 55021.