

Tips for inclusive communication with people with disabilities

General tips

- ✓ Talk directly to people with disabilities rather than people who might be assisting them (e.g. interpreters, family members, personal assistants)
- ✓ Ask people with disabilities how they prefer to communicate, where they prefer to meet, where they prefer to sit in meetings, etc.
- ✓ Try to sit or stand so that you are talking at eye level (rather than looking down at someone)
- ✓ When communicating with a whole community or a group of people with different types of impairments, use more than one type of communication – both visual and verbal.

Tips to include people with vision impairments

- ✓ Ask how people prefer to access written material (e.g. Braille, large print or electronic format) and provide materials in this format as much as possible
- ✓ Read out loud descriptions of written material or pictures that are used in any meeting
- ✓ In a group meeting or event, introduce yourself every time you speak (so that a person with vision impairment knows who is speaking).
- ✓ Try to make sure only one person speaks at a time in meetings.
- ✓ Tell the person if you are leaving the conversation or room

Tips to include deaf people and people who are hard of hearing

- ✓ Ask a person what type of communication is best for them – for example, sign language, lip reading, using help of a family member
- ✓ If a person uses sign language it is important to use a sign language interpreter
- ✓ When there are no sign language interpreters, close family members might be able to interpret for the person

- ✓ If a person can lip read, look directly at them, make sure they can see your lips and speak clearly
- ✓ Use multiple different types of communication – pictures, writing, demonstrations, etc.
- ✓ Make sure only one person speaks at a time in meetings and encourage people to raise their hands before speaking so the person (or interpreter) can follow the conversation (particularly if they are lip reading).
- ✓ Ask people where they would like to sit so they can hear better.

Tips to include people with intellectual disabilities

- ✓ Use clear language, simple words and avoid long sentences
- ✓ Use pictures and photos instead of lots of words
- ✓ Do not speak to adults or teenagers/youths like they are children
- ✓ Repeat information and demonstrations to help understanding
- ✓ Use hands-on (practical) activities and give examples
- ✓ Give people lots of time to understand and think about what is being said
- ✓ Remove other distractions in a room to help people focus

Tips for including people with psycho-social disabilities

- ✓ Keep discussions calm, and do not make people feel as though you want to end a conversation or leave them out of interactions
- ✓ Some people might feel uncomfortable being in a very big group, so make arrangements for a smaller group meeting if necessary
- ✓ If a person seems like they are not interested, give them encouragement to participate
- ✓ Treat the person with respect at all times and ask their opinion in discussions
- ✓ Be flexible and give opportunities for people to make a choice about how they want to participate in a meeting – some people might feel worried in situations where they do not have any control