



Molina Healthcare · Bridge 2 Access

Disability Language & Etiquette: **the do's and don'ts**

Disability often refers to a physical, psychological, cognitive, or sensory limitation that restricts one or more major life activities (e.g., self-care, communication, self-direction, learning, mobility, independent living, economic self-sufficiency, recreation).

Guidelines: The following tips reflect generally accepted protocol and the language of the Independent Living/Disability Rights Movement. Molina Healthcare encourages adherence to these guidelines even though you may know or observe some persons with disabilities who do not.

Language	
DON'T's	DO's
Don't say the disability first (e.g. disabled person, deaf woman, blind man)	Do use Person First Language (e.g. person with a disability, women who is deaf, man who is blind)
Don't say the "H Word" (handicapped, handicap)	Do say disability or accessible
Don't use terms that imply pity when describing disability, such as (e.g. suffers from, afflicted with, has birth defect, victim of, etc.)	Do use terms that are neutral when describing disability, such as "congenital" (since birth) or "acquired" (onset of condition occurs later in life – injury, illness, or with age)
Don't say "wheelchair bound" or "confined to a wheelchair". Wheelchairs are mobility devices.	Do say wheelchair-user.
Don't use euphemisms (e.g. mentally challenged, differently-abled, special)	Do call it what it is and just say disability.

Etiquette	
DON'T's	DO's
Don't assume a person needs help or try to assist them without asking permission first.	Do ask before you assist and respect the answer you receive.
Don't touch wheelchairs, service dogs, and other assistive devices without first asking. These are part of a person's personal space.	Do focus on the person, not their disability or assistive devices.
Don't think of disability as a tragedy or problem.	Do remember that disability is an identity, community, and culture. Be supportive and respectful.
Don't assume the absence of disability if you don't see one.	Do recognize that several disabilities are not visible, a.k.a. hidden disabilities.
Don't impose limitations or assume what a person with a disability can or cannot do.	Do offer resources to aid in independence and remove barriers.
Don't pity or admire.	Do relax and be yourself.

Comply with the ADA: Make sure the people you serve with disabilities have equal access to the same goods and services you would provide a person without a disability. Should you need information about how to reasonably accommodate persons with disabilities, please contact Molina Healthcare.

