



ADA Coordinators' Academy

Session V

Effective Communication:

A Toolkit for Communicating with People with Nonvisible Disabilities

**Presented by the San Francisco
Mayor's Office on Disability**

Today's Learning Objectives:

- ❑ Get practical tips on communicating with people who often have non-visible communication disabilities such as intellectual, learning, mental health etc.
- ❑ Learn from people with disabilities about their experiences accessing City services.
- ❑ Assess your knowledge on how to provide effective communication.



A Quick Review:

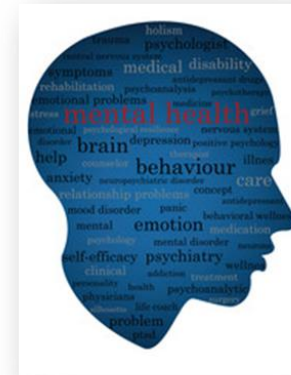
What is Effective Communication?

Equal Access to Information:

- We have the obligation to provide people with disabilities information in a way that they are able to understand it.
 - This is done through the provision of equipment **or** auxiliary aids and services.
 - The choice of what to provide lies with the person with the specific disability.

Examples:

- A blind person receives information electronically instead of print; a sign language interpreter is scheduled for a Deaf individual to attend a meeting.



Non-visible Communication Disabilities

Intellectual, Learning & Mental Health Disabilities

Intellectual Disabilities

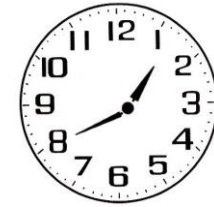


What is an intellectual disability?

- Usually occurs before the age of 18
- Categorized by deficits in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors:
 - Intellectual functioning, also called intelligence, refers to general mental capacity such as learning, reasoning and problem solving;
 - Adaptive behaviors are a collection of conceptual, social and practical skills that are learned and performed in every day life, such as the following:



Adaptive Behaviors



- Conceptual skills-time, money, number concepts.
- Social skills-social responsibility, self-esteem, social problem solving, ability to follow laws.
- Practical skills-activities of daily living (personal care), healthcare, travel/transportation, safety, use of telephone, ability to follow a schedule/routine.



Communication Tips For People with Intellectual Disabilities

- Get to know the person's communication method.
- Use pictures and other visual aids.
- Ask the individual to repeat if you do not understand their speech.
- Focus on one topic at a time.
- Demonstrate verbal instructions.
- Break down tasks into smaller pieces.
- Give timelines and inform people before transitions take place.



Exercise Caution!

DO:

- Ask the person to repeat back what they understood, in their own words
- Check in with the person periodically to see how they are doing or if they need additional assistance

DON'T:

- Ask “yes” or “no” questions
- “Baby talk” or talk down to people
- Assume that the person cannot make their own decisions

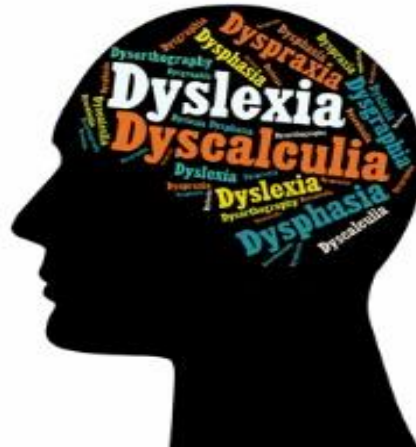


Learning Disabilities

What is a learning disability?

- A genetic or neurobiological disability that effects the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of verbal or nonverbal information.
- Generally affects reading, math, writing.
- A learning disability is not to be confused with an intellectual disability.
- Most people with a LD have average or above-average intelligence.

Communication Methods for People with Learning Disabilities



- Ask the person how you can best relay information.
- Demonstrate the task while giving verbal instruction.
- Break learning down into smaller steps.
- Try to minimize distractions. Move person to a quieter environment, if possible.

Communication Methods for People with Mental Health Disabilities



- Speak calmly and quietly
- Respond with quiet reassurance
- Slow down the pace
- Be willing to repeat yourself
- Listen carefully and don't interrupt
- Be respectful
- Do not challenge delusions
- Make no sudden moves
- Be patient

Communication Methods for People with Mental Health Disabilities

- Some people might experience hallucinations or delusions – this is their reality.
 - Communicate that you understand but don't pretend that you experience it.
- Some people may be frightened; be mindful that they may need more personal space than you.
- Do not pass the person to another person just to get rid of them.
 - Refer them to someone else only when it is an appropriate referral.
- If needed, set limits with the person as you would with anyone.
 - If you are limited on time tell them, "I have only 10 minutes to talk with you".
 - If they scream, say, "If you scream, I will not be able to talk with you".

See you in 10 minutes!

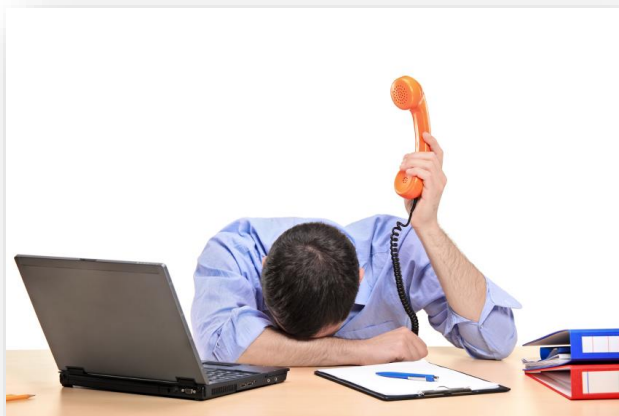


Group Activity



Intake workers serving the front desk for Cal Fresh report that a client, Gerald Santos, has stopped by several times asking about the program only to come back the next day, asking the same questions and leave mumbling under his breath. Staff has repeatedly given him informational material and the application packet, but the situation persists; what do you do?

Group Activity



Mike Edwards calls your office and tells you he wants to file a complaint. When you try to get additional information from him about the nature of the complaint, he answers your questions with a rapid speech pattern and stutters. You have him repeat himself but you still have difficulty understanding him. What do you do?



The panelists are here to share their personal experiences and tips!

A Quick Review:

Tips for working with people with Non-Visible Communication Disabilities

- It's always a good idea to ask people how they receive information.
- Find out which learning technique, such as hearing, reading, viewing, or doing, works best for the person.
- Present complicated information in a variety of ways during the course of an interaction.
- Ask if you don't understand a person. Don't pretend to understand if you don't.



“Not every
disability
is visible.”

A Quick Review:

More tips for working with people with Non-Visible Communication Disabilities



- Provide a quiet environment free of distractions.
- Be flexible and try different methods to make yourself understood.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Break complicated instructions into single steps.

A Final Word

RELAX!

*Respectful and compassionate
attitude is key to effective
communication*



Coming Up ...

Session VI

You Are Invited...

Event Planning For the Whole Community

Tuesday, May 23, 2017

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

1155 Market Street., 10th Fl.

LightHouse Meeting Room