

Tip Sheet Regarding Students With Disabilities

Source: *Wiley Periodicals, Inc., A Wiley Company. Disability Compliance for Higher Education. (2012). Vol 17(10).*

If you are not educated on disabilities, you may feel uncomfortable when attempting to communicate with a student with a disability. To help all your students feel at ease and respected, it is important to be well-informed on various disabilities and how to effectively communicate with those individuals. Despite the fact that there are no concrete rules or requirements for communicating with individuals with disabilities, there are some tips that will be helpful when attempting to effectively communicate with individuals with disabilities.

General Communication Tips

- Ask students if they would like help before providing them with any assistance
- Talk to students directly, rather than through their interpreter, coach, or assistant
- Avoid interacting with service animals unless you have been given permission first

Students with Visual Limitations

- Use descriptive speech when possible
- Offer your arm to help guide students instead of grabbing them
- Avoid summarizing if reading to a student with visual limitations, this way they will get the full content just as the person reading it does

Students who are Hard-of-Hearing / Deaf

- Face students when speaking to help them understand you
- Speak clearly and at normal volume, raise your voice only if asked
- Write on paper if deaf student doesn't have an interpreter or if you cannot sign
- Raise a hand when speaking in a group setting so that the deaf student can identify who is speaking

Students with Learning Disabilities

- Offer directions both verbally & in writing, be willing to read them out loud if asked

Students with Mobility Limitations

- Sit or position yourself at the height of the person sitting in the wheelchair

Students with Speech Impairments

- Listen carefully, then repeat what they said to avoid any miscommunication

Students with Psychiatric Disabilities

- Speak in a clear, calm, and respectful tone when communicating
- Allow time to answer questions, even if you think you explained it enough