

People with disabilities face many barriers. The most difficult barrier that most have to deal with is the attitudes some people have regarding those who have disabilities.

Some negative attitudes include:

Focusing on a disability rather than on the individual's abilities.

Feeling pity for the person with a disability can lead to patronizing attitudes. Most people with disabilities do not want pity. They want equal treatment.

Thinking that a person with a disability is not as smart, skilled, or as capable as those without disabilities.

Many disabilities are hidden. Some people believe if you can't see the disability, it is not a bona-fide disability that warrants an accommodation.

Using insensitive language or phrases.

How you can help in eliminating barriers for people who have disabilities.

Encourage participation of people with disabilities in activities by making sure the activity is accessible.

Speak up when negative words or phrases are used in connection with disabilities.

Accept people with disabilities as individuals with the same needs and feelings you have.

Listen to the person with a disability. Don't make assumptions on what the person can or cannot do.

Avoid attaching labels to people. For example, the word "normal" is acceptable when talking

about statistical norms but not as a label for a person who has no disability.

Interacting with people who have disabilities

It is not unusual to feel uncomfortable around people with disabilities. In fact, that is often a common experience at first. However, think "person first" instead of disability first.

When meeting someone with a disability, always offer to shake hands, like you would normally. If the person cannot shake hands they will let you know. For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.

Don't pretend to understand a person's speech if you don't. Offer paper and pen if you can't understand.

If you notice someone who might need your help, offer it by asking, "May I help you?" Don't assume they need your help.

If the person has a hearing impairment, face the person while speaking.

Always use a normal tone of voice.

Be patient and give the person time to speak without supplying words or finishing sentences.

Accommodating a person who has a disability

In meetings or the classroom, have printed materials available for those who cannot take notes or who have hearing problems.

Arrange tables and chairs so those with wheelchairs and crutches can get around.

Have accessible parking near the building for those needing it.

Arrange for quiet work areas and testing areas.

Explore adaptive technology such as monitors, keyboards, etc. Look into special software.

Be sure to give praise and positive reinforcement.

Allow for frequent breaks.

Prioritize job assignments in writing. Provide more structure, minimize distractions. Divide large assignments into smaller tasks.

Give clear expectations of responsibilities and consequences in writing.

Provide sensitivity training to co-workers.

If posting a position on the web, make sure the site is accessible to people with disabilities.

Allow telephone calls during work hours to doctors and others for support.

During an emergency a person who is blind may not see visual alarms. Get the person's attention by tapping them on the arm. A person with a hearing impairment may not hear an alarm. Get the person's attention by turning the lights off and on, write them a note, or gesture to them what is going on.

Those with mobility impairments cannot use the elevators during an emergency. Procedures should be planned ahead. Call Occupational Safety and Health Services at 7-2118.

Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is an international information network and consulting resource for accommodating persons with disabilities. Call 1-800-526-7234 or <http://janweb.icdi.wvu.edu>

Web-site Design

Most web sites contain barriers for many people who are disabled and/or elderly. You can design your web site so it is accessible by all.

Some tips:

- › Use consistent structure
- › Use default font settings so users can increase font size
- › Keep paragraphs short
- › Never use flashing text
- › Use plain backgrounds and simple layouts
- › If using color, ensure that foreground and background color combinations provide sufficient contrast.
- › Avoid using background images, unnecessary icons, and graphics.
- › Provide text only alternatives
- › Test your site for accessibility.

To learn more about web site design:
WEB Accessibility Initiative (WAI)
<http://www.w3.org/WAI/>

Facts

According to census 2000 there are 49.7 million Americans with disabilities. That is one in every five persons.

9.3 million have a disability involving sight or hearing.

12.4 million have a physical, mental or emotional condition causing difficulty in learning, remembering, or concentrating.

According to Job Accommodation Network 31% of accommodations cost nothing.

Michigan Tech ADA Statement:

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, prohibits job discrimination because of handicap.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

Inquiries related to Section 504 should be directed to:

Employees: Sherry Kauppi, Affirmative Action Officer, 7-3310 or slkauppi@mtu.edu

Students: Gloria Melton, Dean of Students, 7-2212 or gmelton@mtu.edu

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, protects qualified applicants and employees with disabilities from discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, pay, job training, fringe benefits, classification, referral, and other aspects of employment on the basis of disability.

Elliot-Larson Civil Rights Act of 1976

Prohibits discrimination in employment, education, housing, public accommodation or public service based on religion, race, color, national origin, age, sex, marital status, height, weight, arrest record, or handicap. Persons denied equal opportunity based on these conditions may file a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

<http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aao>

Michigan Technological University is an equal opportunity educational institution/equal opportunity employer and complies with the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Disabilities

**How you can help
Eliminate barriers**

**Affirmative Programs Office
Michigan Technological University
487-3310**