



South Gippsland  
Shire Council

# Communicating with people with a disability

You may feel uncomfortable communicating with people with disabilities because you may be unsure of what to do, say or how to behave. The best approach is to be sensitive and flexible as you would when meeting any person for the first time. A lack of sensitivity or flexibility can make situations awkward and could in some instances, cause unintentional discrimination.

Address people with disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all people and most importantly, always treat adults as adults. Above all use common sense, be respectful, polite, considerate, offer assistance, communicate and don't hesitate to ask questions. People with disabilities expect and are entitled to be treated just like everyone else.

## Things to do:

- Look at a person with a disability when addressing him or her.
- Ask a person with a disability about the best way to communicate with him or her, if you are unsure.
- Speak directly to a person with a disability, even if he or she is accompanied by a person without a disability.
- Offer assistance to a person with a disability if it appears necessary, but don't assume he or she will accept it.
- Extend your hand to shake when meeting a person with a disability, even if the person has a physical disability.
- If you offer assistance, wait for acceptance and instructions before proceeding.
- Remember that not every person with a disability will want or need assistance and their wishes should be respected.

## Please don't use the terms:

- Victim, suffers from, deformed
- Affected by or blind/can't see
- Crippled, crippling or invalid
- Wheelchair bound, confined to a wheelchair
- Deaf and dumb, deaf-mute, mute
- Disabled toilets, handicapped parking etc.

### **Dialogue to use**

- Person with disability
- Person with cerebral palsy or vision impairment
- Person with a physical disability
- Uses a wheelchair
- Person with a hearing impairment, hearing loss, person who is deaf
- Accessible parking, accessible toilets, etc.

### **Please contact Council if you would like a copy of this information in any of the following formats:**

- Large print
- Electronic format via CD or email
- Languages other than English (on request)
- Braille (on request\_

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