

Accessibility in Action October 17, 2007

Tip #17: Working with Individuals with Mobility Impairments

Communicating with Individuals with Mobility Impairments:

- If possible, put yourself at eye level with the wheelchair user.
- Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive mobility device.
- Never patronize individuals who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
- Do not assume the individual wants assistance – ask first.
- Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door. Wait for response.
- If you call the individual, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time to reach the telephone.

Accommodations for People with Mobility Impairments:

- Modify the work-site to make it accessible:
 - Provide parking close to the work-site.
 - Provide an accessible entrance.
 - Provide an accessible route of travel to other work areas used by the employee.
 - Provide an accessible restroom and break room.

- Modify the workstation to make it accessible:
 - Adjust desk height if wheelchair or other mobility device is used.
 - Make sure materials and equipment are within reach.
 - Move workstation close to other work areas, office equipment, and break rooms.

Remember:

- Relax.
- Treat the individual with dignity, respect and courtesy.
- Listen to the individual.
- Offer assistance but do not insist or be offended if your offer is not accepted.

ACTION

- Review the suggestions in this tip with staff, volunteers, CSOs and partners (VSPs).
- Apply the suggestions in this tip to the appropriate situations.