



REMOVING BARRIERS

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# UNDERSTANDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

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THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE

# UNDERSTANDING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## What types of disabilities are there?



### DEVELOPMENTAL

Autism Spectrum Disorder  
Down Syndrome  
Cerebral Palsy  
Intellectual Disabilities



### SENSORY

Deafness  
Visual Impairment



### PHYSICAL

Amputation  
Muscular Dystrophy  
Paralysis  
Polio  
Spina Bifida  
Spinal Cord Injury  
*[Paraplegia or Quadriplegia]*  
Stroke

## When speaking to persons with disabilities...

### 1 Ask before you help

Some appreciate help while others are able to move around on their own and do not require help. Do not be offended or embarrassed if your help is declined.

### 2 Speak directly to him or her

Speak directly to the person, not to his companion [eg. sign language interpreter, caregiver].

### 3 Be sensitive about physical contact

Wheelchairs, white canes and guide dogs are considered personal space. Do not touch these without first asking the person for permission.

### 4 Don't make assumptions

Persons with disabilities know themselves best. Allow them to make their own decisions about participating in any activity.

# TERMINOLOGY TIPS

**X**

**Avoid using**

**✓**

**Instead, use**

Disabled persons	Persons with disabilities
Person suffering from..., Victim of...	Person who has...
Disabled children	Children with special needs
Autistic persons	Persons with autism
Physically disabled, crippled, invalid, lame	Persons with physical disabilities
Wheelchair bound	Wheelchair user
Mentally retarded, intellectually disabled	Persons with intellectual disabilities
Spastic	Persons with cerebral palsy
Deaf and dumb, deaf and mute <i>[deaf individuals are able to use their voice]</i>	Deaf, hard of hearing
Blind	Visually impaired
Normal	Persons without disabilities



# UNDERSTANDING AUTISM



Autism is a brain-based developmental disorder with no known cause or cure. It is a spectrum disorder, ranging from mild to moderate to severe.

## Traits of autism

Autism is characterised by a triad of impairments in:

### Examples

Difficulty maintaining eye contact

Appears unaware of others' feelings or responses

Social interaction

Language and social communication

Flexibility of thought (imagination)

### Examples

Difficulty in "reading between the lines" in conversations

Talks about own interests regardless of listener's response

### Examples

Difficulty in engaging in make-believe play

Performs repetitive movements or activities

Difficulty in accepting or adapting to changes

## When interacting with a person with autism...

### 1 Be patient

Give the person time to process and respond to you.

### 2 Speak literally and directly

Describe the request. Tell them, "Please do your homework" instead of "What should you be doing now?"

### 3 One voice at a time

Persons with autism find difficulty listening to two people speaking at the same time.

# UNDERSTANDING INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES



## What is it?

### INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY



#### IQ <70

The average person has an Intelligent Quotient (IQ) of between 90 and 110.



#### Significant limitations in adaptive functioning

## Intellectual disability is characterised by a triad of impairments in:

### ACADEMIC FUNCTIONING

*such as:*

Skills in language, math, reasoning, knowledge, memory

### SOCIAL FUNCTIONING

*such as:*

Social judgement, interpersonal communication skills, ability to make and retain friendships

### PRACTICAL FUNCTIONING

*such as:*

Self-management, personal care, job responsibilities, money management, recreation, organising tasks

## When interacting with a person with an intellectual disability...

- 1 Maintain eye contact
- 2 Speak directly to the person and not to his caregiver
- 3 Speak simply and avoid using complex words
- 4 Consult the person instead of making decisions on his behalf
- 5 Ask for the person's opinion and give him time to respond
- 6 Do not be offended by a lack of response or unconventional behaviour

UNDERSTANDING

# SENSORY IMPAIRMENT



## Deafness

Deafness is the partial or complete loss of hearing in one or both ears.

	41 to 70 dBs	71 to 90 dBs	91 dBs and above
<i>Level of Hearing Loss</i>	Moderate hearing loss	Severe hearing loss	Profound hearing loss
	Has difficulty hearing conversation, especially with background noise. May use a hearing aid to amplify sounds.	Normal conversations will not be audible. Loud speech is also difficult to hear or understand.	Difficulty understanding even amplified speech. May not be able to distinguish any sounds.



### DID YOU KNOW?

'Deaf' with an upper-case 'D' refers to persons or a community of persons with hearing loss who have chosen to communicate primarily through sign language.

'deaf' with a small letter 'd' is a general term used to describe people who have a physical condition of hearing loss, whether or not they communicate through sign language.

## When interacting with deaf and hard of hearing individuals...

### 1 Face the person when speaking

Look and speak directly to the person, even when an interpreter is present.

### 2 In a group, speak one at a time

### 3 Speak clearly, do not shout and do not obscure your face

The person always needs to be able to see your face, including the lips if he has learned to read lips.

### 4 Get a person's attention before speaking

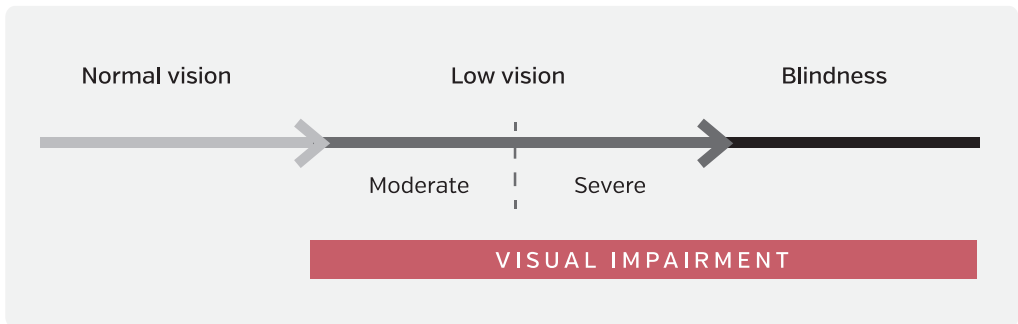
This can be done through a light touch on the shoulder, a wave or other visual signals.

# Visual Impairment

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Visual impairment is significant visual loss that cannot be corrected to a normal level by medication, operation or the use of optical lenses such as spectacles.

## Visual functions



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## When interacting with a person with a visual impairment...

- 1 Identify yourself before making physical contact
- 2 Do not touch the person's white cane or guide dog
- 3 Offer to read written information
- 4 Allow him to hold your elbow  
Do not hold the person's arms as he may need his arms for balance. Instead, allow him to hold your.
- 5 Inform the person before leaving  
Ask if he needs anything before you leave.
- 6 Give specific, non-visual information



# UNDERSTANDING PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT



## Physical impairment pertains to:



A total or partial loss of a person's bodily functions (eg. walking, fine or gross motor skills)



A total or partial loss of a part of the body (eg. amputation)

### People who use wheelchairs have different abilities.

Some are able to use their arms and hands, get out of their wheelchairs, or walk for short distances.



## The Accessible Icon

The Accessible Icon Project was started by Sara Hendren and Brian Glenney in 2009, to address the passive depiction of persons with disabilities in the old design.

The new icon is more active and engaged, and is meant to provoke a change in mindsets of how we view persons with disabilities in our society today.

- 1 Arm pointing backwards suggests the dynamic mobility of a wheelchair user.
- 2 Body in motion represents the active status of navigating the world.
- 3 Forward position of the body portrays an active image of a person with disability. The person is the "driver" or decision maker about his or her mobility.



## When interacting with wheelchair users...

- 1 Ask before giving assistance
- 2 Be aware of a person's reach limits
- 3 Do not push or touch the wheelchair without first asking the person
- 4 Converse at eye level. Sit down, if a chair is available
- 5 Make sure the environment is accessible (eg. ramps available, wide corridors)



— REMOVING THE 'DIS' FROM DISABILITY —

# REMOVING BARRIERS

## WHAT IS A BARRIER?

A barrier is anything that gets in the way of persons with disabilities participating in daily activities, or having equal access to opportunities that are available to the public.



## FOUR BARRIERS WE CAN REMOVE

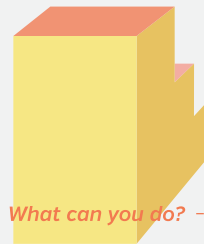
### 1 Physical barriers

are found in buildings and spaces, and stop people from accessing a service or place.

#### Examples

Staircases and narrow pathways are barriers for wheelchair users.

Poor lighting is a barrier for a person with low vision or a person who lip-reads.



What can you do? -----

*Keep corridors and passageways unblocked and free from clutter.*

*Ensure that spaces such as lifts are well lit.*

## 2 Attitudinal barriers

are when people have incorrect understanding and mindsets about disability.

### Examples

#### Ignorance

People often assume that persons with disabilities are not able to do certain tasks, even before giving them an opportunity.

#### Pity

Persons with disabilities do not want pity or charity, they want an equal opportunity to participate in society.

#### Fear

People avoid interacting with persons with disabilities for fear of saying or doing the wrong thing.



## 3 Information and communication barriers

stop persons with disabilities from getting information.

### Examples

Audio announcements without visual cues and videos without subtitles are barriers for the deaf.

Print and digital materials not available in Braille or not suitable for viewing on screen readers are barriers for the visually impaired.



### What can you do?

Include subtitles when producing videos or shows.

Braille your name cards and use large fonts with contrasting colours for menus and brochures.

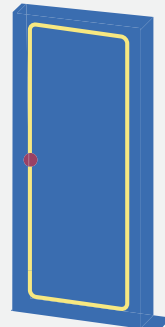
## 4 Systemic barriers

are policies and practices that discriminate against persons with disabilities.

### Examples

Hiring process that does not provide accommodations for persons with disabilities.

Not allowing persons with disabilities to take certain courses in universities.



# ABOUT THE UNCRPD

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** consists of 50 articles which outlines areas to ensure that persons with disabilities have the opportunity to live a dignified life and be given access to all areas of life, including health, physical environment, education and employment. Singapore's Enabling Masterplan had paved the way and laid the foundation to progressively realise the vision of the UNCRPD.



## 2007 - 2011

The first Enabling Masterplan charted the development of programmes and services in the disability sector for 5 years from 2007 - 2011.

## 2012 - 2016

The second Enabling Masterplan 2012 - 2016 sought to build on the foundation laid by earlier initiatives for Singapore to strive towards an inclusive society.

## November 2012

Singapore signed the UNCRPD

## July 2013

Singapore ratified the UNCRPD

## August 2013

UNCRPD came into effect



*"We Are Able!" is a project by the National Council of Social Service to promote an inclusive society for persons with disabilities.*

SUPPORTED BY

