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# TAD Module 3

## Customer service

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## Objectives and Contents of the Module 3

This module examines all aspects of the relations between the tourism operators, or the service suppliers and the tourists as customers. The principles of a good welcome will be explained as well as how to show appropriate behaviour and attitudes towards people with disabilities and specific access requirements.

### **Skills – LEARNING OUTCOMES**

You will be able to:

- Relate properly to tourists with specific access requirements
- Welcome tourists with disabilities and other access requirements
- Cater for tourists' access requirements in a satisfactory way
- Adapt a Customer Relationship Management system in line with accessibility requirements within the organisation

### **Theoretical-technical skills:**

- To know welcoming techniques
- To know interpersonal communication techniques
- To know basic techniques of problem-solving
- To be able to approach customers fairly in correct communicating and catering manner.

### **Contents**

- Concepts of autonomy and integration, independent living principles
- Prejudices and stereotypes: self-analysis and self-evaluation to counteract personal biases
- Understanding the desires and the abilities of people with disabilities – Psychology of the Disability
- How to relate to the customer with disabilities: behaviour and body language
- Management of specific situations/ complains

## Introduction to Module 3

The material presented in the first modules introduced you to a wide range of visitors with specific access requirements, which must be taken into account by service providers willing to provide Accessible Tourism services.

You already get acquainted with the different customer groups with specific access requirements. It is clear now that we all have such requirements, and we all want them to be properly taken into account while receiving a service. We need to assess the appropriateness of a service for a particular customer not only according to their possible disability but also their individual condition, the constraints they have, and our ability to respond to them.

You also were introduced to the principles of Universal Design and to some examples of how they apply to accessible routes, accessible facilities or means that makes service suitable for persons with sensory impairments. Properly designed from the outset these may not require additional investments but in the case of necessary adaptations to existing environments or services there would inevitably be extra costs.

However, a wide range of tourism services can be improved without additional cost: the **proper customer service** that eliminates many invisible but critical attitudinal barriers.

Imagine you are at a luxurious party where you do not know most of the guests. Suddenly, you accidentally “decorate” your white suit with a red wine stain. You feel very embarrassed, it seems to you that from now on everyone sees only your stain instead of you. How can the host of the party act in this situation?

- A. Show active and demonstrative attention to you, apologize, try to clean the stain and lament that, unfortunately, he/she cannot offer you a suit to change into, and then calls you a taxi home.
- B. Pretend that he/she hasn't noticed the accident.
- C. Smile and encourage you saying, “it is just a stain”.

Of course, yours and the host's attitudes in this situation may be different, but in many cases, the demonstrative attention would make any of us feel uncomfortable, and the case when the situation is ignored, makes us feel like an unwanted guest. You will certainly agree that the positive approach is often a starting point for finding the right solution.

This example can be used to imagine how a person with disabilities/specific access requirements could feel in the unfamiliar environment of a tourist service provider, for example, in a hotel. Try to remember how you have behaved yourself when dealing with

person with any disability or specific access requirements. Or maybe you have witnessed an example of inappropriate behaviour? By reading the information and examples in this module, you will be introduced to the practical tasks of accessible customer service. How do we behave when catering for persons disabilities? What do people with specific access requirements expect from us? What impact can appropriate staff training have on the tourism business? All this will be assessed after having a look at the material in Module 3.

## Point of View: Why we need to discern services for customers with specific access requirements?

The starting point to develop and match services to people's specific access requirements will be an example from the book „[Disability Etiquette Matters](#)“:

“Butch is a forty-year old male who has sustained a disability as a result of a motorcycle crash, which left him a double amputee; as a result, he uses a manual wheelchair for mobility. He states, his experience in going to restaurants was very similar to Khi Khi's<sup>1</sup>. The waitress or waiter will have a tendency to ask my wife: “What would he like to order?” As if I weren't there. I look them straight in the eye and will say: “You need to ask me what I'd like to order.”

It infuriates me to know in this age and time, people still have attitudes like this. It makes me feel devalued. Even when we go to the movies, if we are at the counter to buy popcorn, the employee will ask my wife: “What would he like?” Again, I say: “Look here! I'm paying for this. You need to ask me!”<sup>2</sup>

This is just one of the stories told by a person with the disability. However, after assessing the situation described above, may you suggest that the person using the service has specific access needs? Why does this happen? How such situations can be prevented by an Ability advisor?

Many companies and their representatives are unable to provide appropriate service to customers with specific access requirements since it may make them feel unsure or uncomfortable around these people. However, most of them fail because they are usually unsure of the best approach and attitude towards such individuals. Companies may tend to avoid interactions for fear of saying or doing inappropriate things that could be mistaken for rudeness, or poking fun, or even misdemeanor. The stringent laws against discrimination against people with disabilities, is possibly another reason that many companies hesitate to interact and help. Therefore,

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOUR OF SERVICE PERSONNEL WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC ACCESS REQUIREMENTS IS DETERMINED BY:

A. NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THEM



B. LACK OF KNOWLEDGE HOW TO SERVE THEM PROPERLY



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<sup>1</sup> Character of the book.

<sup>2</sup> “Disability Etiquette Matters”, Ellen L. Shackelford & Marguerite Edmo, [https://books.google.lt/books?id=fDTKI7FSWDkC&pg=PT67&lpq=PT67&dq=disability+etiquette+matters&source=bl&ots=are\\_t0RV8P&sig=ACfU3U2d7eGL2UW00WricO6KZi2qMzCZWQ&hl=lt&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewizn46PooHhAhVtvaYKHQBqMAR0Q6AEwCHoECACQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.lt/books?id=fDTKI7FSWDkC&pg=PT67&lpq=PT67&dq=disability+etiquette+matters&source=bl&ots=are_t0RV8P&sig=ACfU3U2d7eGL2UW00WricO6KZi2qMzCZWQ&hl=lt&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewizn46PooHhAhVtvaYKHQBqMAR0Q6AEwCHoECACQAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false)

As we already know – it may not always be possible to notice that a customer has such needs, while at other times it may be obvious. A customer in a wheelchair or a visually impaired person would obviously have different and specific access requirements, but other disabilities and/or conditions may only become apparent when representatives listen attentively and spend time trying to understand, e.g. a customer may have forgotten his reading glasses and hence may be unable to read the menu, while another may not be able to comprehend the direction signs due to language or educational challenges. All these would constitute specific access requirements.

What should be the possible reactions of the customer service provider?

- A. STANDING AFAR AND OBSERVING 
- B. RECOGNIZE SUCH SPECIFIC ACCESS REQUIREMENTS AND OFFER HELP 

Sometimes companies decide to leave their customer service providers on their own and trust they will make right decision. Look what can happen:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gv1aDEFIXq8>

In the video you could see that customers with certain impairments or conditions MAY NOT ALWAYS require help or extra service. Purposive staff training, provided by the Ability Advisor would enable tourism service providers to identify the need for timely and appropriate service as well, along with access to all the facilities that everyone else receives. Businesses must make time to guide, train, and instruct their staff on being polite, patient, considerate, and empathetic towards customers with specific access requirements, as with all clients. The knowledge that some staff representatives may be afraid of interacting with such customers could be the starting point for the Ability Advisor and a tourism service provider to cooperate and adapt the company's Customer Relationship Management system towards such customers. It must set an example, thereby giving confidence to the rest of the employees to manage interactions that may previously have seemed difficult and out of the ordinary. The very premise of service excellence is to ensure that all customers – irrespective of who they are or what their abilities may be – receive the very best service from everyone in a company.

Information for You – the future Ability Advisor, will find further, will enable to help the tourism service providers choose the right communication technique for the individual customer, manage possible conflicts and ensure proper service for the specific access requirements groups.

## Concept of autonomy, and integration, independent living principles.

When analyzing the concept of a suitable service for customers with specific access requirements in the context of all accessible tourism services environment, it is important to define the basic principles that must be used today as the basis for the service standard and to highlight the details relevant to the direct tourist service provider.

State parties of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities “Recognize the importance for persons with disabilities of their individual autonomy and independence, including the freedom to make their own choices” and agrees on the general principle of “Respect for inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one’s own choices, and independence of persons.”<sup>3</sup> The implementation of this principle is based on successful integration and development into the national legal acts, programmes and daily service standards.

### How can **tourism services take these principles into account?**

The principle of **individual autonomy** - or being independent has to be observed by the tourism service provider when designing services for people with specific access requirements. The visitor should have sufficient information to estimate potential risks or benefits and choose the services they want, with the level of support they agree to. In the light of this principle each tourism service provider should ensure that responsible staff will be able to provide all the necessary information enabling an individual to make his/her own decision about the feasibility of the service.

Concept of “**Independent Living**” is defined by European Disability Forum:

"Independent Living is a daily demonstration of human rights-based disability policies. Independent living is possible through the combination of various environmental and individual factors that allow people with disabilities to have control over their own lives. This includes the opportunity to make real choices and decisions regarding where to live, with whom to live and how to live. Services must be available and accessible to all, and provided on the basis of equal opportunity, free and informed consent and allowing disabled people flexibility in our daily life. Independent living requires accessible built environment, transport and information, that there is available technical aid, access to personal assistance and/or community-based services. It is necessary to point out that independent living is for all people with disabilities, regardless of the gender, age and the level of their support needs."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:  
<https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> European Disability Forum: <http://www.edf-feph.org/>



This principle is also important when we talk about the particular tourism service provider - capable to ensure that individual with the specific needs will be able to use service independently and use access to personal assistance by the need. Customer care representatives should be aware about the abilities of people with specific access requirements and respect their independent right to use a service with the maximum of personal dignity, allowing them to control their interactions with others.

The concept of **integration** could be defined as availability to participate in society to the largest possible extent. The principle is contained in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, stating that ‘the EU recognizes and respects the right of people with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration and participation in the life of the community.’<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU prohibits any discrimination on the basis of disability. It means that tourism service professional must be able to ensure equal service content provision for persons with disabilities avoiding any social exclusion or physical barrier.

Summarizing, the path to autonomous, independent and integrated tourism services can be outlined in these general steps:

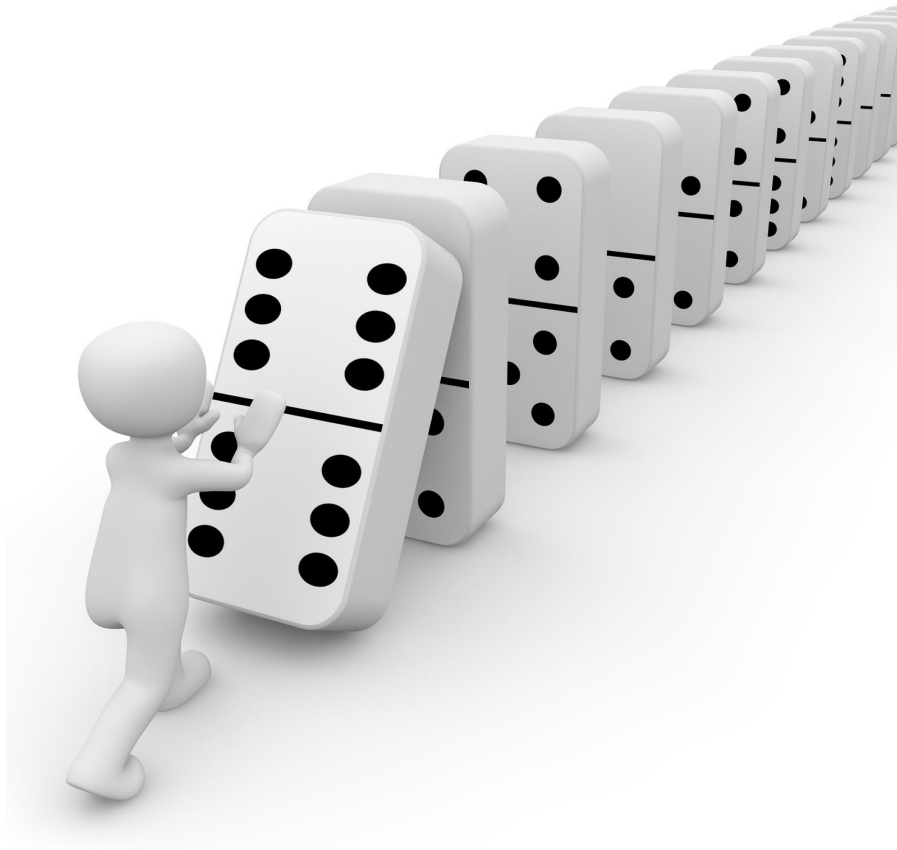
- Proper communication enabling to establish, explore and promote preferences;
- Balance of rights, assessed possible risks that may occur and agreed responsibilities between service provider and customer;
- Respect to the person’s right to autonomy;
- Agreement to the person-centred support;
- Implementation and evaluation of supportive actions.

The steps highlight significant stages in the accessible service process and are compatible with a human-rights approach of supported decision-making.

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<sup>5</sup> Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text\\_en.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf)

*What kind of the domino effect does the provision of such services give?*



**FOR SPECIALISTS:**

- to improve one`s qualification, get to know new work methods and strategies;
- to gain more competence to provide appropriate support;
- to assess the importance of an individualized assessment;
- to make a more subtle assessment of an individual's abilities and specific access needs.

**FOR PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC ACCESS REQUIREMENTS:**

- to empower being an equal part of the community;
- to gain a different life experience;
- to expand the circle of communication;
- to test new skills, reveal one`s abilities;
- to make decisions independently;

**FOR ALL OF US:**

- to eliminate barriers;
- to understand different life experiences;
- to destroys stereotypes prevailing in society;
- to increase equal opportunities for all members of society;
- to encourage openness and inclusive attitude.

One of examples of the application of such principles is the award-winning film Forrest Gump. Until now, the film scenes, character disability symptoms, its consequences and opportunities have been actively discussed and analysed on the various media/social network sources.

Watch one of the film scenes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ASAat2WKS68>, which perfectly reflects the various aspects of this topic. Discuss: sources.

- Is the bus driver communicating properly with the character?
- What were the reasons for people`s behaviour and unwillingness to see a character sitting next to them?

How does a girl accept the character`s disability and how does she interact with him?

When considering these principles, one more noteworthy concept is the **QUALITY OF LIFE**. The degree of integration of people with disabilities - or specific access requirements in general - affects their quality of life in terms of:

- Health: mental and physical health;
- Living conditions and adaptations to their personal requirements
- Material situation of a person;
- The influence of a family on an individual;
- Employment, occupational and professional activities;
- Social relations at the institutional level: ensuring communication needs, social assistance;
- Self-assessment – approach to life, satisfaction with one's being;
- Quality of leisure;
- Religion;
- Meeting and assessing individual needs.

More about this topic You can find here:

<https://www.independentliving.org/docs5/RoleofOrgDisPeople.html>

## TASKS

**How are these principles put in practice by particular tourism providers actions?**

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=leBXeAAQ1hc>.

**Can You find such examples in your country?**

**Try to look and survey/ discuss them.**

**In accordance with this principle, what information, in your opinion, should be provided to a person with reduced mobility so that he/she could independently dine in your favourite cafe?**

Example: You can use city transport to visit a café. At the bus stop, you will find a schedule of low-floor buses. Entrance to the building – swing doors, but on the right there are the doors that you can open and enter the building by yourself. The café is located on the ground floor, but a part of it is located on a higher podium, so during peak hours, we recommend to book a table in the place below or you can take advantage of the access to the tables on the tier (there is no ramp).

**In accordance with this principle, what information, in your opinion, should be provided to a family with small children who intend to visit your city`s art gallery?**

We hope that information and task helped you to understand the main principles of the topic. Further, we will discuss the most common prejudices and thinking stereotypes that prevent a tourism service provider from pursuing the principles of Accessible tourism.

## Prejudices and stereotypes: self-analysis and self-evaluation to counteract personal biases

We are constantly being affected by the world around us, and this reflects our attitudes and approach even towards persons with disability. According to the World Health Organisation (World Report on Disability<sup>6</sup>), the situation of persons with disabilities is even today threatened by stereotypes, prejudices and beliefs, common among non-disabled people. How we can identify someone or even ourselves are prejudiced or give in into stereotypes towards someone? “Prejudice is an unjustified or incorrect attitude (usually negative) towards an individual based solely on the individual’s membership of a social group. For example, a person may hold prejudiced views towards a certain race or gender etc. (e.g. sexist)”.<sup>7</sup> Definition of a stereotype is “...a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people.” (Cardwell, 1996). For example, a “hells angel” biker dresses in leather. One advantage of a stereotype is that it enables us to respond rapidly to situations because we may have had a similar experience before. One disadvantage is that it makes us ignore differences between individuals; therefore we think things about people that might not be true (i.e. make generalizations).

The use of stereotypes is a major way in which we simplify our social world; since they reduce the amount of processing (i.e. thinking) we have to do when we meet a new person. By stereotyping we infer that a person has a whole range of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of that group have. Stereotypes lead to [social categorization](#), which is one of the reasons for prejudice attitudes (i.e. “them” and “us” mentality) which leads to in-groups and out-groups<sup>8</sup>.

“Stereotypes influence the ways that people without disabilities react to people with disabilities. For example, people with disabilities are sometimes considered to be childlike and innocent, and are spoken down to. People with disabilities are thought of as dependent and incompetent. Yet, in reality, people with disabilities are like everyone else, with strengths and weaknesses”. ([www.disabledlives.blogspot.com](http://www.disabledlives.blogspot.com))

Why it happens? It is known that kids start understanding prejudice by the time they’re three years old. [They can](#) distinguish between physical traits—hair colour, height, weight, etc.—even earlier. But by the time children enter preschool, they can already tell how certain characteristics, like skin colour or gender, affect how people see them and their peers. Our own or instill experiences forms our attitude about diversity and can cause beginning of our prejudices and stereotypes modeling. So the beginning of the good service for the people with the specific needs should be own/ team identification – how we see them?

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<sup>6</sup> World Report on Disability: [https://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/accessible\\_en.pdf](https://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/accessible_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.simplypsychology.org/prejudice.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.simplypsychology.org/katz-braly.html>

## **INDIVIDUAL PRACTICAL TASK. PORTRAIT OF PERSON WITH A DISABILITY**

### **Goals:**

Think and discuss how we imagine a person with the disability and how different people view the individual with the disabilities.

Figure out an individual approach to a person with the disability.

**Duration:** 10-15 minutes.

**Tools:** task description, paper sheet(s), marker pens, other writing tools.

### **Individual part of the task.**

You work at the Tourist information centre. You find out that a person with a disability is coming to your office tomorrow. You will have to serve him/her. Think for 5 min. to imagine what person will come. Try to present the most detailed description of that person: how he/she looks, how old he/she is, what kind of disability he/she has, his/her positive and negative personal qualities, how he/she will communicate with you.

### **Questions to discuss the task:**

- Have you described a person with disabilities leaning on your experience or imagination?
- What feelings did you have when trying to describe a disabled customer to yourself/the group?
- What are the positive features or traits attributed to a disabled person? How many features can you name?
- What are the negative features or traits attributed to a disabled person? How many features can you name?
- What is your/group's attitude towards a disabled person?
- What prejudices might influence Your behavior towards such client?

Watch and discuss the video: does it match your customer`s stereotype?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwW6mYdJ7Xc>

### **Additional sources for discussion:**

The stereotypes media using to portray people with disabilities:

<https://www.hwms.com.au/about-us/blog/run-forest-run-disability-stereotypes-in-the-media/>

How people with specific access requirements - disabilities, deal with the stereotypes and prejudices:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HqQH4kmoSYE>

You also can find a lot of information about myth and facts that influence our thinking about the people with the disability in the official sites of associations of people/ their parents with the disability (e.g. <https://www.ds-int.org/myths-and-facts>)

By evaluating your stereotypes that you associate with a person with the disability and specific access requirements, you will help to lay the foundation for rejection of these stereotypes. This will be supported by your already existing knowledge on summarised groups of specific needs (Module 2), the ability to carefully and cautiously consider the abilities, disabilities and needs of each customer, and the knowledge of the peculiarities of a proper direct contact with people with specific needs. We will discuss them further in the topic:

**What to say?**

**How to say?**

**Why to say?**

## Psychology of the Disability. Principle “Put the person first”



One of the major improvements in communicating with and about people with disabilities is "People-First Language." People-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability. The importance of the principle person-first language can reveal a simple exercise. Think for a minute how you would feel to be defined by your perceived “negative” characteristics. For instance, being referred to as the heavy boy, the acne girl, or the bald man. To be known only by what society perceives as negative characteristics or “problems” would completely disregard all of the positive characteristics that make you as an individual who you are (Snow, 2009).

To solve this situation helps the simple approach to the individuals with disabilities, **They are more than their diagnosis. They are people first.** The boy curiously observing you in the front desk of the hotel is more than a boy with Downs Syndrome, he is a brother, a son and a friend who happens to have Downs Syndrome. The girl who stutters ordering the cup of tea is more than a stutterer – she is a daughter, a sister, and someone’s best friend who has a fluency disorder.

Contrary to society’s definition, having a disability is not a problem. When defining a person by their disability, there is a negative implication, that the person is impaired. Within the service field, it is imperative that professional service providers and all human beings begin to focus on other’s strengths. Focus on the strengths of the individual in front of you who has a disability and you will set him/her up for success<sup>9</sup>.

Using “person-first” language is a great first step to this change of thinking. How it is implemented practically? Find the examples below.

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<sup>9</sup> The Importance of Person First Language: <https://nspt4kids.com/parenting/importance-person-first-language/>



You should use expressions such as:

**“person with a disability”**

rather than “disabled person.”

**“people with disabilities”**

rather than “the disabled.”

Also saying **“person with Tourette syndrome”** or **“Person who has cerebral palsy”** also reflects the person-first principle better.

Service provider must know that individuals may have their own preferences, so if he/she is not sure what words to use – should ask. Adequate conversation should be eliminated from the outdated terms like “handicapped”, “crippled”, or “retarded”.

”Be aware that many people with disabilities dislike jargony, euphemistic terms like “physically challenged” and “differently abled.”

It is always better to describe an individual as

**“a person who uses a wheelchair”**

rather than “confined to a wheelchair” or “wheelchair bound.”

A wheelchair is what enables the person to get around and participate in society - it is liberating, not confining.

With any disability we should avoid negative, disempowering words, like “victim” or “sufferer” but use “person with AIDS” as a description, instead of “AIDS victim” or “person who suffers from AIDS.”

Service providers may be afraid to offend when talking to people with disabilities using ordinary idiomatic expressions.

For example, saying, “It was good to see you,” and “See you later,” to a person who is blind is completely acceptable as they use these expressions themselves all the time.

Many people who are deaf communicate with sign language and consider themselves to be members of a cultural and linguistic minority group. They refer to themselves as Deaf with a capital “D,” and may be offended by the term “hearing impaired.” Others may not object to the term, but in general it is safest to refer to people who have hearing loss but who communicate in spoken language as “hard of hearing” and to people with profound hearing losses as Deaf or deaf.

Watch the video about it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz40q5lydnQ>

More information on the people first language:

<https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>

<https://www.disabilityisnatural.com/people-first-language.html>

# How to relate to the customer with specific access requirements: behaviour and body language

## Verbal communication and welcoming techniques

As we have already mentioned in the previous sections of this program and module, people with specific access needs should not be artificially separated from other customers during the service, but it is important to be prepared to pay special attention or provide physical help when needed. Particular attention should be paid to the customer and his/her specific needs to the extent necessary for the proper provision of the service.

Each service provider should remember that everyone is an individual, so while these are recommendations for positive interactions, they may not work well with everyone. If the individual with the disability reacts negatively, apologize and ask what would be the most appropriate way of communicating with him/her.

- Ask : -“May I assist you?” or “How can I best assist you?”
- Even before you ask the question, ask yourself: - “Does the person look as though they need help?”. When you inquire, don’t assume that they do – listen for their response.
- Common courtesy and common sense are always appropriate.
- Every disability has a broad range and a spectrum of severity.
- A mobility impairment can be visible through the use of a wheelchair, crutches, or cane. However, with some mobility issues there may be times where the person is using a wheelchair and other times when the person can walk without assistance.
- Invisible disabilities / specific needs should be kept in mind and prevented. Special questionnaires might help to identify this.
- When planning an event, add a note about wanting to accommodate for accessibility needs with a direct number to a real person to contact. That opens the door for an individual to reach out and not feel like they are imposing.
- Simply talk to a person and ask what they can and cannot do.
- Invite partial participation, and ask what you can do to make participation possible.

- People's abilities typically vary, even with a similar disability. For example, you will not know how long the person has had the disability, whether they have worked through the mourning process, or if it is a newly acquired condition.
- Micro-inequities refer to the ways that people may be ignored, disrespected, undermined, or somehow treated in a negative way because of their disability or some other intrinsic characteristic. A micro-inequity can be very small. It can involve an action, or words, or a tone of voice, or a gesture. The inequity can be a deliberate attempt to harm someone or it can be unintentional, rooted in a person's perceptions about others. Whatever the source and however minor each separate event, over time the "cumulative effect" of these little incidents, words, or gestures on an individual with a disability can cause the person to act out, become depressed, or feel hyper-sensitive.<sup>10</sup>

More about the topic: <https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/#Introduction>

## Role of non-verbal communication, elements

- Always speak directly to the person with a disability. If the person is with a carrier or interpreter, do not direct your conversation at them.
- When interacting for a period of time with someone using a wheelchair, sit down so you can be at eye level. This helps the individual feel included as an equal in the conversation and avoids neck strain.
- It is perfectly acceptable to offer to shake hands when you are introduced to a person with a disability, even when the disability involves limited hand use or an artificial limb. Shaking hands with the left hand is also acceptable.
- You may offer to assist a person with a disability, but wait until your offer has been accepted. Then, ask for instructions on how you can best assist.
- Things like eye contact, body movements and tone of voice can give signals which can convey important information that isn't put into words. A person's overall demeanor is far more telling than a single gesture viewed in isolation.

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<sup>10</sup> Tips and Techniques to Provide a Welcoming Environment for People with Disabilities:

[https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/handout\\_tips\\_and\\_techniques\\_to\\_provide\\_a\\_welcoming.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/handout_tips_and_techniques_to_provide_a_welcoming.pdf)

- Remember that verbal and nonverbal communication work together to convey a message. You can improve your spoken communication by using body language that reinforces and supports what you are saying as some people rely on visual cues.
- If you are confused about another person's nonverbal signals, don't be afraid to ask questions. A good idea is to repeat back your interpretation of what has been said and ask for clarification. For example, someone may tell you they are happy while frowning and staring at the ground.
- When people fail to look others in the eye, it can seem as if they are disinterested or not entirely truthful. On the other hand, too much eye contact can seem confrontational or intimidating. While eye contact is an important part of communication, it's important to remember that good eye contact does not mean staring fixedly into someone's eyes. How can you tell how much eye contact is correct? Some communication experts recommend intervals of eye contact lasting four to five seconds.<sup>11</sup>

Of course as all of us could underline the most important specific access requirements we might have, the people with different impairments will also have personal approach to the way they would like to be treated. As You already get acquainted with the blogs/ personal websites, that reflect the experience of the people with the specific access requirements in the Module 2, here You also are invited explore some of them. We hope that they also will help You assess the person as individual and chose the right communication technique.

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<sup>11</sup> 10 tips for communicating with people with disabilities:  
<https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/10-commandments-for-communicating-with-people-with-disabilities>

# Different ways of communication. Persons with various disabilities and people with other access requirements

## Physical impairments

People with physical impairments are likely to be noticed because of the commonly used devices necessary for mobility. These people need a specially adapted physical environment. In the communication process, at the very beginning of a conversation, it is important "not to overdo" offering support or assistance, but to help a disabled person only to the extent he/she requests.

### Mobility impairment:

- Remember that people with mobility impairments are usually good at expressing their thoughts.
- Some people with mobility issues have problems with balance. Offer to assist the person when he/she is putting on a coat, but ask the best way to do so. Similarly, if you grab to help open a door, the person may be balancing on it, so speak before you assist and wait for a reply.
- Be careful when you help open the door to a person using crutches, because he/she will lean on them to open it.
- Find out what abilities a person in a wheelchair has. Not all people who use a wheelchair can't walk. They can use a wheelchair because of a broken leg, due to saving energy or to increase the speed of movement.
- Falling or overturning are major problems to people with physical impairment. Warn them if the floor is slippery or just washed.
- When assisting a wheelchair user go up or down a step, tilt the wheelchair back at all times while descending or ascending the stairs.
- If you need to help lifting or lowering a wheelchair from the sidewalk, ask how a person is used to doing this – face or back forward.
- When sliding down, keep the wheelchair from rolling too fast.
- Learn how to control a wheelchair while driving on sidewalks.

- Do not lean on a wheelchair. A wheelchair is a part of the human space. Do not push or touch a wheelchair without asking permission.
- If during a meeting you are standing behind a table that prevents you from seeing a person in the wheelchair, move away. For saying goodbye to another person, do not bend over the person sitting in the wheelchair.
- Learn the location of wheelchair-accessible ramps, restrooms, elevators, doors, water fountains, and telephones.<sup>12</sup>

More practical tips about communication with the wheelchair user shares Gem Hubbard in her personal Youtube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIT822wWbho>

## Sensory impairments

### Visual impairment

- When meeting or serving a blind person or person with visual impairment - focus all your attention on the verbal language, as it is the only key to quality communication. Before you start communicating, introduce yourself, say, "Good day. I am ... "
- Not everyone recognizes or remembers voices. If you last saw each other later than yesterday or if a person with visual impairment can't remember your name, add: "We met there and there."
- You should greet a person with visual impairment in a way he/she understands that you are greeting him/her. You must not greet him with a head nod or hand wave, as it is often done in the case with others. A few words have to replace the head nod: "Good day, Mr. x ... I'm ... employee."
- While communicating, a person with visual impairment accepts only audio and verbal information. Non-verbal communication tools are not informative. No matter how nice a smile or a head nod is, this means nothing to him.
- Speak directly to the blind person or person with visual impairment. Do not address family or friends by ignoring him. He can speak himself. Talk in the usual manner and look straight at the person. Do not shout. Sight loss is not connected with hearing.

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<sup>12</sup> United Spinal's Disability Etiquette Publication: <https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>

- Many believe that it is necessary to speak all the time in a person`s with visual impairment company ("Otherwise he/she won't know I'm still there" or "He/she anyway has nothing to do").
- There is no need to avoid words like "look", "see", etc. A person with visual impairment not be offended if you use these words, they understand that this is a part of the normal conversation.
- Remember that people with visual impairment can`t see, but they can hear, so any "whispered" notes will most likely be heard.
- Always ask a person with visual impairment if he/she needs help before helping. This will show respect for his/her freedom. Never hesitate to offer your help, but you do not have to insist on helping.
- If your offer is not accepted, do not offend. Be attentive to your own reaction.
- If you are in a noisy place, do not leave the person with visual impairment in the middle of the conversation or immediately after the conversation without warning that you are leaving. Otherwise, the he will speak and will not notice that no one is listening.
- Never leave a person with visual impairment in an open area or in a space without tangible landmarks. It is best to bring the person with visual impairment to the wall of the room or any other landmark from which he/she can already choose his/her own direction of movement.
- Never read the information to a person with visual impairment silently under your nose before having summarized it. Read slowly and clearly. If you are not asked, never comment on the content you read.
- The tidy environment is very important for people with visual impairments. Everything must have a permanent place. If you take something, put it in the same place.
- If a person with visual impairment does not tell you what amount of money he/she is giving to you when paying, tell this yourself: "You are giving me 20 euros". Reminding him/her of the amount, you will avoid misunderstandings.
- Ideally, you would count money in the hands of person with the visual impairment when you pay or exchange money – so it will be much easier for him/her to deal with it.
- Remember to offer your hand when you are walking with a blind person or person with the visual impairment. Otherwise, it will be difficult to accompany and he/she will feel

unsafe. Do not grab a his hand or push him/her in front of you - visually impaired people use their hands to balance.

- As a guide, go next to a person with visual impairment a little bit ahead. Never hold a person's hand, let him/her stick to you.
- Make clear the direction of movement, e.g. go to the end of the handrail and then turn right. If the person with visual impairment needs to turn, specify one of two directions – left or right.
- Describe the environment to a person with visual impairment when walking with him/her, indicate any obstacles such as up or down stairs, wall angles, and so on. Additional risks include things such as rotating doors, semi-open drawers or doors, items that protrude from walls, such as lamps, shelves.
- It is not enough to say “watch out.” When warning a person with visual impairment, it is necessary to specify exactly what a person has to do to avoid danger, such as: do not run, bend, do not jump.
- When passing through a door or a narrow passage, the guide must always go the first. A guide draws a person with visual impairment by the hand, which he/she follows.
- If you climb up or go down the stairs with a person with visual impairment, tell him/her, "Careful, we're climbing up (going down) the stairs now." Then suggest your hand and climb the stairs.
- If a person with visual impairment goes up or down the stairs alone, he/she will feel the end of the stairs with a white cane. If you accompany him/her, tell him/her that you are approaching the last stair, warn a person with visual impairment when one of the stairs ends and the other begins.
- If you do not guide him/her, then specify the stairs and tell on which side handrails are.
- If you need to choose a staircase or an escalator, you must always ask a person with visual impairment. Do not forget to warn a person when you step on or off the sidewalk.
- When you help him/her to sit down, take his/her hand and put it on the chair's armrest or backrest. Do not touch the persons's white cane, do not move it, leave it where the person has put it.



- Accompanying a person with visual impairment to a car, open the car's door and place his/her hand on the upper edge of the door. With his/her other hand, he/she will feel the height of the car and where he/she needs to sit.

### **People with visual impairments in your facility:**

- When inviting a person with visual impairment to your facilities, remember to clearly describe the visual landmarks: doors, stairs, any obstacles, and so on.
- If a person meets you for the first time, describe your premises. It would be best to meet him/her at the entrance and describe the way to your office while going there (which door from the entrance is yours, etc.).
- If you want to give something to a person with visual impairment that you know, just call his/her name, but if you do not know him/her, touch that person. He/she will understand that you are talking to him/her.
- The doors must be either fully open or fully closed. Cabinet doors must always be closed.
- Make sure that buckets, brushes, or garbage bins do not lie where he/she walks. Fixate the carpets and hide electrical wires. This will help to prevent accidents. Before leaving or suddenly returning to the room, warn the person you are talking to.
- Let the person with visual impairment choose by himself or herself whether to sit or not. Do not use force to make him/her sit. Put a person's with visual impairment hand to the backrest, saying:
- "Here's a chair, and here's a backrest," or put his/her hand on the chair, saying, "The chair is on your right."
- Never say: "A chair is there" or "There is a rack at the wall." Such expressions are meaningless to a person with visual impairment. It is better to say: "The chair is in front of you" or "In three meters on the left there is a rack at the wall."
- If a person with visual impairment often visits your premises, warn him/her about the changes, such as removed furniture, equipment, etc. <sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> United Spinal's Disability Etiquette Publication: <https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>

See this example of a guide on how to welcome customers with assistance dogs:

[https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/ehrc\\_guide\\_to\\_assistance\\_dogs.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/ehrc_guide_to_assistance_dogs.pdf)

Visit and get acquainted with the opinion of the girl with the visual impairment - “10 ways you can help a blind or visually impaired person”.

<https://lifeofablindgirl.com/2019/02/13/10-ways-you-can-help-a-blind-or-visually-impaired-person/>

## Hearing impairment

The main contributor in communication with a person with hearing impairment or a deaf person is body language. Expression of body language will help the interlocutors to make a contact faster and understand each other better. In the beginning, it is very important to know what kind of communication is most convenient for a person – sign language, written language or communication with an interpreter. Follow these tips when communicating:

- Use mimics, body language, other non-verbal communication techniques during a conversation. If you are unable to communicate, write the words on a sheet of paper.
- Stand or sit close to the person so that he/she could see your face.
- Keep an eye contact. Look directly at the person you are talking to. Even if you interact with the help of an interpreter, still look at the person with hearing impairment.
- Speak in short sentences, slowly and clearly, keeping the natural tone and pace. Make pauses between sentences. Introduce the interlocutor to the topic of the conversation.
- If there are several people, talk to one at a time.
- Do not shout. If a person is using a hearing aid, it is tailored to the person's sound, and your voice can distort words.
- If you have to ask the person with hearing impairment to repeat the information you have said ( to ensure that the information is accepted), make sure to do in polite, cooperative manner and avoid offence by imperative tone.
- If a person does not understand the information, you can repeat the phrase one or two times; if he/she still does not understand it, then repeat the information using simpler words, if he/she does not understand it – write the sentence on the paper (or point with fingers).
- Face and lip movements should be clearly visible.

## **What you should not do when communicating with a person with a hearing impairment**

- Do not hide your mouth while talking. Do not stand in direct light (with your back to the sun), to allow easy lip-reading.
- Do not exaggerate gestures. Do not walk while talking. Do not touch the hearing aid.
- If a person speaks, do not interrupt him/her and do not complete the sentence he or she has started. Do not use ambiguous interpretations (head nods, etc.).
- Do not use sign language if you do not know it properly.

## **Communication in a group with a deaf or person with hearing impairment.**

- Sit a deaf person or a person with a hearing impairment in a convenient place, preferably next to an interlocutor, so that he/she can see the lips of the interlocutor.
- Introduce the topic and new terminology. If it is not possible to discuss the new terminology beforehand, write it down on paper.
- Use visual aids such as handouts, paintings, and others.
- Wait for the material to be read by people with hearing impairments before explaining it in details or explain the material before handing it out.
- Ensure that people with hearing impairments do not miss any important information.<sup>14</sup>

Experience by Natalie, the girl with the hearing loss: 5 things I wish hearing people should know:

<https://www.hearinglikeme.com/what-you-should-know-about-living-with-hearing-loss/>

Experience by the deaf traveler - communication issues has to be solved:

<https://thedeaftraveller.com/2018/04/26/tips-communicating-deaf-travellers/>

## **Intellectual impairments**

People with intellectual impairments or “cognitive impairments” often cause fear, expressions of ignorance, and sometimes even feelings of anger in people who are not familiar with their condition. This disability is not always noticed immediately, sometimes it takes time to realise it and understand it.

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<sup>14</sup> United Spinal’s Disability Etiquette Publication: <https://www.unitedspinal.org/disability-etiquette/>

- Use short, clear sentences, simple words to communicate with people with such disability/impairment. If the information is complex, try to simplify it or split it into separate smaller parts.
- Speak to the person as to adults, not as to children.
- Remember that the person is an adult. Let him/her make decisions unless you have other instructions or information.
- People with intellectual impairments may find it difficult to make decisions quickly. Be patient and give them enough time to think properly.
- People with intellectual impairments are trying to give you satisfactory answers, saying what you would like to hear.
- Formulate questions so that you can get accurate information. Check the answers by asking the same question, but in different ways.

More information on the topic:

<https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/etoolkit/general-issues/communicating-effectively/>

### **Communication with people with Down Syndrome**

- Communicate in a simple way and clearly formulate statements or questions.
- Take more time to communicate than usual, so that a person with this syndrome can understand the information that is passed on. Use the language adjusted to the interlocutor's age and the situation.
- Avoid closed questions because the answers will not show what the person really wants.
- Notice when You understood each other and avoid pre-expect too much or too little from a person. It is important to find communication and behavioural rules that are acceptable and understandable to both sides.
- People with Down Syndrome may tend to want to please everyone, so sometimes they can agree with some things without understanding whether they want it or not.
- If an important question arises, it is necessary to check if the person whether he/she has understood the information - formulate a question to identify if You understood

each other. If he/she repeats your words, ask again, but formulate the question differently.

- Speak directly to a person with Down Syndrome, rather than with those who have come along with him/her.

More about the topic:

[https://ulusaldown.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Overcoming\\_communication\\_difficulties.pdf](https://ulusaldown.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Overcoming_communication_difficulties.pdf)

### **Communication with persons on the autism spectrum**

- Persons with autism may have different degrees and types of autism which affects their communication with others. This section gives some general guidance regarding communication with persons on the autism spectrum.
- Try to interest the interlocutor before you start talking and make sure the person is looking at you.
- Use the language that matches the age and situation of the interlocutor, and also use non-verbal language. Those affected with Autism understand visual information much better and easier than oral.
- It is important to know that a person with this disability is sensitive to sounds, colours, light and touch. Talk in a calm, quiet voice, the emotional tone of the human voice can disrupt and dispel the person. Many people with this disability do not speak verbally, but you can understand them watching the non-verbal language.
- Do not rush the person after giving the information, wait for the answer, be patient. Repeat the information only if you are asked to.
- Autistic people do not like innovations, so it is important that the people who communicate with them change as little as possible.
- A person with Autism often has an "attachment object" (a handkerchief, a rope, a pencil). Do not try to take it away, because it may make a person feel unsafe.
- If you plan any changes, notify the person or his/her guardian in advance.
- Tidiness is very important for them. All items must be in their places. When communicating, you should use only the things he/she is used to.

- An autistic person can show his/her dissatisfaction or anger by breaking things, do not make sudden movements to stop him/her. Talk and act as calmly as possible.

More about the topic:

<https://www.autism.org.uk/about/communication/communicating.aspx>

### **Communication with persons with other intellectual impairments**

- Treat adults with intellectual, cognitive or developmental impairments as adults.
- Adjust your method of communication as necessary depending on the individual's responses to you. Use simple, direct sentences or supplementary visual forms of communication, such as gestures, diagrams, or demonstrations, if indicated.
- Use concrete, specific language. Avoid abstract language and simplistic wording. When possible, use words that relate to things you both can see.
- Avoid using directional terms such as right, left, east, or west.
- Be prepared to repeat the same information more than once in different ways.
- When asking questions, phrase them without suggesting desired or preferred responses as some people with intellectual, cognitive or developmental disabilities may tell you what they think you want to hear.
- Give exact instructions. For example, "You will see the guide at 10:30," rather than "Come back to see the guide in 15 minutes."
- Avoid giving too many directions at one time, which may be confusing. Eliminate distractions and minimize background noise if possible.
- Avoid sensory overload by providing information gradually and clearly.
- Provide information in written or verbal form if that is the person's preference.
- Recognize that the person may need to have directions repeated and may take notes to help remember directions or the sequence of tasks. He or she may also benefit from watching a task demonstrated.
- Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what was said. Be patient, flexible, and supportive.

- Do not assume that the person will be able to read well; some may not read at all.

Watch the video to know more about it:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyV1v-nib38>

More about the topic:

<http://picturemyfuture.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Guide-to-Talking-to-someone-with-intellectual-disability-V3-23-May-2013.pdf>

## Mental disorders

People with mental disorders are often hard to understand, they are unfamiliar to us, and therefore the first reaction to such a person is avoidance, retreat or confrontation, confusion, due to ignorance of how to behave and what to expect. Our behaviour or the beginning of a contact does not go unnoticed by a person with a disorder, and communication often becomes ineffective.

According to the World Health Organisation, 1,500 million people worldwide have mental health problems, and this number is increasing. Knowing how to behave and how to interact with people with mental disorders will help us feel more confident in different life and work situations.

Let us discuss what signs indicate that a person has a mental disorder. The signs of a mental disorder:

- Emotionless expression: an inexpressible, immobile face, no eye contact, inexpressible body language.
- Poor, inconsistent language and decreased communication.
- Delusions and hallucinations: talking to voices that do not exist; talking about the delusions or hallucinations; the behaviour corresponding to the delusions or hallucinations.
- The delusions of persecution; a person can act as if persecuted, tracked.
- Impaired thinking and behaviour; inconsistent language, difficulty in accumulating attention, inability to perform routine actions, strange clothing.
- Difficulties in starting and continuing targeted activities: lack of motivation, sitting and doing nothing, unwillingness to participate in any activity.

### **What do you need to know about the people with mental disorders?**

- A person with a mental disorder often behaves abnormally, and this can frighten us, for example, he/she talks to himself/herself, worries about something, goes back and forth and may act strangely.
- A mental disorder can give rise to feelings of fear and a bad mood. This can result in a repetition of the same question, an extraordinary excitement, lack of communication with others, passivity, silence, and so forth.
- A person with a mental disorder may not take care of their personal hygiene, may dress strangely, for example, his/her clothes may be bright, inconsistent or out of season, sometimes dirty.
- Individuals may react sensitively to unforeseen or new circumstances, and as a result, they may start behaving aggressively. People with mental disorders can be strongly and unreasonably afraid of other people, things or places. The fear of other people can affect them so that they can begin to behave aggressively without a clear basis.
- A person can start acting aggressively if he/she is frightened.
- If a person lacks personal space, due to the surrounding people coming too close, this can also lead to aggression.
- People with mental disorders are no more dangerous than all other people. According to statistics, people with psychosis are less likely to violate the law than the general population. They are less dangerous than those who are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- People who have undergone psychosis are more likely to be victims than to commit a crime. They are not unpredictable, but simply confused if compared with what others call the reality.

### **Practical tips for communicating with a person with mental disorder.**

- Stay in touch with a person with mental disorder, be attentive, calm, respectful.
- Accept the person as he/she is, accept the personality of the person and treat each person as an individual.
- Make contact with eyes, facial expression, voice tone, suggestion to talk things out will encourage a person with mental disorder to trust the interlocutor;



- Take care of your safety, choose a safe position, a suitable distance;
- Leave space for a person with a mental disorder, do not corner him/her, stay close to the door;
- Do not look at the person with too much attention, it can be perceived as a threat;
- If you need to get closer, go slowly, do not make sudden movements, do not raise your voice;
- Avoid topics that can confuse a person;
- Keep a distance between yourself and a person with mental disorder, do not touch him/her because it can increase anxiety, fear, or even lead to violence;
- If there is a noisy environment, try to find a quiet place;
- Put away the things that disturb the person; put the unsafe objects out of the person's sight, watch his/her hands;
- Observe a person's behaviour, body language, note if you hear that a person is talking to someone you don't see, as this may lead to turns in his/her behaviour;
- If a person is scared, angry, try to calm him/her down;
- Speak calmly, slowly and simply, ask short, clear questions, repeat them if necessary, give explanations clearly and briefly, write down the necessary information.
- If a person hears internal voices, is disordered or feels persecuted, remember that the person's ability to focus on you is limited.
- A person with a mental disorder may not understand the essence of the conversation and does not know what to say. Then he/she can answer anything disrespectfully because this answer ensures his/her safety in public places (e.g. in the street). Such a response can actually show a disorder and ignorance of how to behave.
- Ask if you can help him/her, or you need to inform or invite someone. You can ask if a person is taking medication or does not need to take it.
- There is a possibility that a person with mental disorder will not be able to communicate rationally, but try to make the conversation as specific as possible and, if necessary, return the person to the question.
- Listening is often helpful, even without real help.

- A person with mental disorder should be encouraged to speak on a specific topic, ask for facts, and express his/her opinion.
- Do not humiliate them and do not humiliate yourself; talk to them as with adults rather than as with children.
- If the interlocutor extends the conversation, he/she returns to the things you have already discussed, you need to say about it politely and finish the conversation.

More about the topic:

[https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/mmhm/pdf/full\\_communicating\\_0.pdf](https://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/mmhm/pdf/full_communicating_0.pdf)

## Other users

### Older people (aged 65 or over<sup>15</sup>)

- Address individual older persons formally, to show respect. Use "Mr.," "Mrs.," "Ms.," etc., unless you are on more familiar terms with the individual has expressed a preference for how he or she would like to be addressed, as you would to all other guests.
- Be aware that older people might have difficulty hearing. To address hearing impairments, speak in a clear voice and do not rush what you're saying. Avoid shouting, as it may distort your language and make you more difficult to understand. Face the individual and make eye contact while speaking so he or she can see your mouth movements and watch for visual cues.
- Avoid distractions and background noise as much as possible. Interruptions and competing noises (such as music, voices, computers, fans, etc.) can hinder effective communication and comprehension.
- Be aware that older people might have difficulty seeing. To address visual impairments, make sure the service spot has adequate lighting. Encourage the client use his or her eyeglasses, if applicable. If she/he has severe visual impairment, consider alternative ways to provide information, such as through audio recording.
- Don't interrupt or rush during communication. Doing so might imply lack of respect for the individual or general disinterest in what the client is trying to communicate. Many older people have trouble remembering small details and thus appreciate having things in writing. Whether it's a brochure or a quick note reminding the client necessary details, small gestures will have a big impact. Keep a notepad and pens near the service spot for convenience. Customer service representatives must be trained to communicate in a respectful, non-condescending tone, accurately answer any in-depth questions and make customers feel confident in their decisions.
- Avoid language that implies against stereotypes or might be viewed as disrespectful or patronizing. Even though these statements might be unintentional, they can negatively affect your ability to communicate well with older clients. Carefully consider your wording and whether it is appropriate for the individual and the situation.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/7012459/3-29092015-AP-EN.pdf>

- Acknowledge clients emotions and respond with empathy and understanding. Older persons face many challenges associated with ageing, and they may experience a range of emotions, such as fear, anger, uncertainty, anxiety, apathy, and more. Acknowledging these emotions and showing compassion, empathy, and understanding can facilitate communication. Avoid special jargon and technical language. Using plain language, clear descriptions of terms, and visual aids can help overcome any of literacy barriers. Additionally, if necessary, writing down key points and having residents explain their understanding of important information in their own words can improve comprehension.

Information as prepared under the guidance “Strategies for Communicating Effectively With Older Adults”<sup>16</sup>

Experience of the older traveller - considerations and discoveries:<https://www.nomadicmatt.com/travel-blogs/don-alison-success-story/>

## Small children

- Record essential information about families with special requests or allergies / other important information upon check in.
- Ask parents if they have specific requests such as a bigger table, feeding chair or extra bed;
- Service provider must be trained how to interact with families and children during their stay and to anticipate their needs. Make sure service will be provided in a patient, flexible and kind way to the kids;
- Whenever possible, always notice families with small children and offer to serve them without a queue.
- Always ask parents' permission before giving anything to children.
- Inform parents with small children about the availability of a lift, ramp or other convenient equipment or route if the family is using a stroller.

You can find a lot of discussion forums of the families eager to travel with the small kids and details how they define the proper service they expect. There is an example of airline

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.medpro.com/10-communication-tips-seniorcare>

company - how to present it in detail and help young families to avoid miscommunication:  
<https://corporate.airfrance.com/en/news/welcome-board-little-ones>

## Speech impairments

- Talk to people with speech impairments as you would talk to anyone else; use your regular tone of voice without shouting.
- Be patient because it may take the person extra time to communicate. Do not speak for the person or complete the person's sentences.
- Give the person your undivided attention and eliminate background noise and distractions.
- If the person uses a communication device, such as a manual or electronic communication board, ask the person the best way to use it.
- Do not pretend to understand if you do not. Tell the person you do not understand what he or she has said and ask the person to repeat the message, spell it, tell it in a different way, or write it down. Use hand gestures and notes.
- Repeat what you understand and note the person's reactions, which can indicate if you have understood correctly.
- Develop a specific communication strategy that is consistent with the person's abilities: nod of the head or blink to indicate agreement or disagreement with what you have asked or said.
- To obtain information quickly, ask short questions that require brief answers or a head nod. Avoid insulting the person's intelligence with oversimplification.

Get acquainted with the people who stutter- they communication experiences, fears and challenges they overcome: <http://www.say.org/mystuttervideos/>

## Invisible impairments/ disabilities

- Don't refuse to believe what you cannot see by doubting a person's truthfulness.
- The best tactic is to simply talk to a person and ask what they can and cannot do.
- Always assume there is a person with a hidden disability in a group. So always say "Rise if you are willing and able," and always plan quick stretch breaks every 30-45 minutes.
- If a person says they cannot do something, don't try to convince them to try anyway.
- Invite partial participation, and ask what you can do to make participation possible.
- A hearing impairment is a hidden disability; always assume there is a person in your group with hearing loss, so face your audience.
- Don't judge another person's pain or limitations; accept as true what the person tells you.

## Management Of Specific Situations / Complaints

The advice given in this module will allow a tourism service provider to choose the right communication style to interact with customers with various specific needs. Nevertheless, the service provider must be prepared to manage non-typical situations, in which a customer, whose needs are not met, accuses the personnel of providing the services that are not accessible to all, or the service personnel has to deal with non-typical conflict situations, in which people with specific access needs are involved.

Disability discrimination is when a person is treated less well or put at a disadvantage for a reason that relates to their disability in a certain situation<sup>17</sup>.

The [UK Equality Act 2010](#) says that nobody must not be discriminated against because:

- they have a disability
- someone thinks person they have a disability (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- the individual is connected to someone with a disability (this is known as discrimination by association)

It is not unlawful discrimination to treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person.

Resolving complaints from disabled customers can require wider investigation and resources. How should a service provider deal with the situations where customers complain they have been treated unfairly?

For example, a wheelchair user cannot get into a restaurant with friends because there are steps at the entrance and no ramp. They complain they have been partly or wholly denied access to a service.

A visually impaired person cannot read the menu.

Incorrect communication with the client with a cognitive impairment put him in a dangerous situation. The service provider must ensure that such complaints:

- are understood and taken seriously
- are investigated thoroughly

### **What kind of comprehensive service tourism service provider should offer?**

- a calm approach to collect evidence
- a staff representative, responsible and able to resolve the complaint as soon as possible.

### **How to prevent the repetition of this situation in future?**

- meet and discuss it with customers with specific access requirements and your staff;

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<sup>17</sup> The United Kingdom Equality Act: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/equality-act-2010>

- plan a meeting with an access consultant to assess the built environment and management policies;
- prepare an action plan to stop repeat complaints;
- make sure your tourism service policy is in line with EU Equality legislation.<sup>18</sup>

Now let's go back to the situation discussed at the beginning of this module:

“Butch is a forty-year old male who has sustained a disability as a result of a motorcycle crash, which left him a double amputee; as a result, he uses a manual wheelchair for mobility. He states, his experience in going to restaurants was very similar to Khi Khi's. “The waitress or waiter will have a tendency to ask my wife: “What would he like to order?” As if I weren't there. I look them straight in the eye and will say: “You need to ask me what I'd like to order.”

It infuriates me to know in this age and time, people still have attitudes like this. It makes me feel devalued. Even when we go to the movies, if we are at the counter to buy popcorn, the employee will ask my wife: “What would he like?” Again, I say: “Look here! I'm paying for this. You need to ask me!”

- Explain why such behaviour of the restaurant staff is inappropriate and how it should be adjusted with reference to the information in this module.
- How should the cinema administration act upon a complaint about their employee's behaviour?

Watch the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tHEwEvAXxos>

The video aims to raise the disability awareness of all us, clients of the service. But put yourself in the shoes of the waitress. What are possible negative and positive reactions by her in this situation. How can these situations be prevented in future?

Despite the proper preparation of the staff, there are situations causing repercussions outside a business or service organisation. Probably you have read about such situations in social networks or news portals where people with disabilities describe their negative service experience in a particular public place.

Here is strategic approach to handle such customer complaints.

### **1. React immediately**

Make sure that everyone who complains gets a rapid response. Even if you cannot provide an immediate solution to their problem, you can at least let them know that their complaint is heard and taken into account. The official reaction should be provided by the official representative of the company.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://proudlockassociates.com/resolve-complaints-management-disabled-customers/>



## **2. Do not deny the fact**

Assume that the complaint is true - do not try to deny responsibility or wrongdoing, belittle the complaint, argue or try to convince the customer that he or she is wrong, give excuses or try to blame others. It may be that the problem has been a misunderstanding of what was to be expected from the service.

## **3. Get the facts and details**

Try to get as many details as needed to really understand the situation and the problem. It is important to investigate the causes of the situation as it will help to implement respective preventive actions in the future.

## **4. Acknowledge the problem**

If your company really made a mistake, admit it, acknowledge the problem and take responsibility for it. It also makes a perfect sense to apologize. Saying sorry doesn't necessarily taken blame. It's more about showing compassion and understanding of the client feelings and frustration with the situation.

## **5. Inform about the preventive actions**

The purpose of the corrective and preventive action procedure is to provide effective arrangements for communicating with customers in the event of an issue, complaint or otherwise in the controlling of foreseen or unforeseen errors within daily service workflow. Inform the client about specific means you will take to prevent or plan to take such complaints in the future. Invite the customer to re-use your services and evaluate the changes.

## **6. Thank the customer**

No matter how unpleasant the situation was, when [customers complain](#) you still need to be thankful in the end. Once the solution is made, thank the customer for bringing the complaint to your attention and giving your business an opportunity to improve. That is also how you let them feel important and valuable.

Knowing how and being able to resolve customer complaints successfully is essential to any business success. Learn from those situations and use that knowledge to minimize customer complaints in future is even more important: improve processes, train staff, review the provided information to avoid unrealistic expectations and disappointment.<sup>19</sup>

## **7. Adopt and Apply A Code of Good Conduct**

Following a Code of Good Conduct can be useful way of focusing the business on customer care and, at the same time, enhancing the reputation of the business as a competent and trustworthy supplier.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.providesupport.com>

In the area of Accessible Tourism, [ENAT - the European Network for Accessible Tourism](#) has produced the [ENAT Code of Good Conduct](#) which it makes available to ENAT members who provide tourism services.

Launched in October 2009, the ENAT Code of Good Conduct is a commitment label for tourism businesses and organisations, recognising their efforts to promote accessible travel and tourism. It is the first and only international label for the promotion of ethical business standards specifically in the field of Accessible Tourism for All.

The ENAT Code consists of 8 guiding principles which businesses and organisations follow, so as to make travel and tourism accessible for all visitors who experience access difficulties. The guiding principles of the Code are based on the objectives of ENAT, (as contained in the [Association's statutes](#)), and also on sound and ethical business practices which enhance accessibility, sustainability and the quality of customer service.

ENAT Members who sign the Code undertake a pledge to serve all their customers responsibly and with due care to their access needs. They also agree, as far as possible, to use only those suppliers who adhere to principles of the Code. After they have signed the Code and provided the details of an accessibility resource person in their organisation, ENAT issues the member with a Code of Good Conduct Certificate which can be displayed on their premises, as evidence of their commitment. The ENAT Code of Good Conduct logo may be used on their website or in printed marketing and advertising material. To date over 100 organisations have signed the ENAT Code of Good Conduct.

### **The ENAT Code of Good Conduct.**

#### **Our Commitment:**

**1. Recognition of equal rights:** We recognise that all people have the right to enjoy tourism, whatever their background or abilities, and we work to promote this right in our activities.

**2. Personal attention:** We welcome all customers and make it our priority to meet their individual needs.

**3. Removing and preventing access barriers:** We are committed to planning and carrying out improvements to our infrastructure, products, services and information, using a 'design-for-all' approach, in order to remove or minimise access barriers and contribute to sustainable and accessible tourism for all.

**4. Improving our knowledge, competences and skills:** We follow recognised "good practices" and guidance for tourism accessibility provided by ENAT, and we are committed to continual staff training which takes into account respect for human diversity and disability

awareness, ensuring that all customers are welcomed and served appropriately.

**5. Monitoring:** Our organisation ensures that customer services are monitored and access is improved as far as possible, within our financial means.

**6. Our suppliers:** Wherever possible, we work with suppliers who also recognise and respect the principles contained in the ENAT Code of Good Conduct.

**7. Complaints handling:** Our organisation has a complaints procedure available to customers so that they may report their possible dissatisfaction with our advertising, information, facilities or services. All complaints are handled promptly and fully.

**8. Management responsibility:** We regard good access for all visitors as part of our wider Social Responsibility. Our management team includes a resource person who is responsible for accessibility matters and who can be contacted by staff and clients.

Name: .....  
Position: .....  
Email: .....  
Telephone: .....  
Signature: .....  
Date: .....

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## Conclusions

- Companies and their representatives are unable to provide appropriate service to customers with specific access requirements because they are usually unsure of the best approach and attitude towards such individuals.
- The accessible tourism service must ensure individual autonomy, independence and social inclusion.
- The People first principle is the core module of the accessible tourism communication.
- The common rules of the accessible communication should go in line with the individual approach to the customer and his/her (diss)abilities.
- Physical disability causes different levels of impairments and necessity of support provision.
- Communication with people with sensory impairments requires appropriate attention to the details of the verbal communication and physical surroundings.
- Common understanding of the needs and expectations ensures the successful tourism service providers communication with people with intellectual impairments.
- Timely recognition of the mental disorder of a customer might ensure suitable service assurance for him/her.
- Acknowledgement of the possible difficulties and empathy of the service staff increase the accessibility of tourism services for older people.
- Accurate preparation to cater families with small kids helps to avoid difficulties during the service.
- Code of Good Conduct is a tool to make travel and tourism accessible for all visitors and avoid the conflict situations.