

Tip Sheet 1

Library Accessibility: What You Need to Know: Developmental and Cognitive Disabilities

Patrons with developmental and/or cognitive disabilities have limitations in mental functioning. This can affect communicative ability, reasoning and social skills. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities may take more time to perform tasks and process information. Most people with intellectual and developmental disabilities will not have any distinguishable physical characteristics. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities may live independently. Disabled patrons have the same recreational and information needs as do all patrons. The disabled attend mainstream colleges, work in rewarding jobs, testify in court and enjoy sports.

Fast Fixes

- Develop programs that have universal appeal.
- Do not underestimate people with developmental disabilities.

Physical/Facility Tips

- Use universal or easily recognizable graphic representation on signage.
- The facility should be barrier-free, with easily manipulated door handles and doors. Restroom fixtures and water fountains should be easy to use.

Interpersonal Interaction Tips

- Talk directly to the patron, rather than a caregiver. Listen and be patient.
- Directions should be concrete.
- Demonstrate rather than relying on verbal directions.
- Provide appropriate materials immediately. Provide opportunities to try things rather than simply explaining a given task.
- Do not combine excessive instructions into a wordy command. Break instructions into steps, and relay steps individually.
- Provide positive reinforcement to employees, and answer questions quickly.
- Involve patrons in clubs or group activities that are age/interest-appropriate.

Materials

- Hi/Lo books, including new adult reader material
- Book and audio sets
- Magazines
- Books written for children only as appropriate

Assistive Technology

- Software programs such as vocabulary- and communication- building skills, such as those designed by Laureate Learning (<http://www.laureatelearning.net/professionals602/products/prodsby/category.html>).
- Touch screens enable the user to respond by simply touching the screen.
- Intellikeys is an alternative keyboard that is easy to see, touch, and understand.
- The Jelly Bean switch is a large, durable, single switch that activates regardless of where student presses and provides audible feedback.
- Voice synthesizers assist persons with vision impairments.

Resources

The ARC

[WWW.thearc.org](http://www.thearc.org)

An information, advocacy, and service provision organization with chapters in most states.

National Association of Council on Developmental Disabilities

www.nacdd.org

Focusing on public policy, this organization advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities.

National Down Syndrome Society

www.ndss.org

Basic information about Down Syndrome.