Tips for Mammography Staff:
How to Serve Women with Disabilities More Effectively

General Tips for Mammography Staff on How to Serve Women with Disabilities:

Policies and Procedures
Establish policies and procedures that ensure:
- Adequate physical access is provided for women with disabilities throughout the Department and adhere to standards of the American with Disabilities Act
- Appropriate questions are asked while scheduling appointments
- Documentation of issues relating to encounters with women with disabilities
- Training of new personnel on issues relating to women with disabilities

Scheduling
- Ask the patient if she has a disability, and if so, what accommodations she might need
- Provide longer appointment times for the patient, when needed

Day of Appointment
- Let the patient know what to expect
- Ask the client what assistance she needs
- Communicate directly with the patient
- Assure the patient that any discomfort experienced during the exam only last a few seconds
- Put notes in the patient’s chart about the positioning techniques that worked and the accommodations that were provided. This will make the next mammogram easier

On-going Training
- Make all staff members aware of the viewpoints of women with different kinds of disabilities
- Portray women with disabilities as women first

Tips on How to Serve Women with Specific Types of Disabilities:

Blind or Visual Disabilities
- Tell the patient you are in the room before you approach her
- Ask if she would like a sighted guide to walk through the facility with her
- State directions and describe materials clearly
- Provide information in alternative formats (e.g. Braille, large-print, or audio format).
- If the patient has a Service Animal, allow the animal to accompany the patient. Do not pet or talk to it without permission.
Communication Disabilities

- Listen carefully and let the patient know when you don’t understand her
- Allow extra time for the patient to communicate with you
- Find ways to facilitate communication, such as using paper and pencil

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Learn how to use the Relay Telecommunications system
- Provide a certified sign language interpreter, if requested by the patient
- Speak directly to the patient and face her when you are talking so your lips are visible
- Communicate in writing, if necessary

Emotional Disabilities

- Speak calmly and clearly to the patient
- Explain what will happen to her before it happens
- Interact with individuals based on your experience with that person, not on assumptions about mental illness or a particular diagnosis

Intellectual Disabilities

- Greet and speak directly to the patient, using her name and plain language
- Explain each step clearly before it happens and calmly proceed slowly
- Be prepared to provide the same information several times over
- Allow the caregiver to be present. Demonstrating the exam on the caregiver may help

Physical/Mobility Disabilities

- Have positioning supplies available (e.g. pillows, foam, chair) before exam
- Clear paths of travel to reception area, restrooms, and mammography room
- If possible, sit down when talking to a woman in a wheelchair so you are eye level
- Always ask permission before moving or touching the patient or her assistive equipment

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