

Tips for Mammography Staff:

How to Serve Women with Disabilities More Effectively

Establish policies and procedures that ensure:

- Adequate physical access is provided for women with disabilities throughout the department and adheres to the American with Disabilities Act standards.
- Appropriate questions are asked while scheduling appointments.
- Training of new personnel on issues relating to women with disabilities.

Scheduling

- Ask the patient if she might need special accommodations.
- Provide longer appointment times and/or exams conducted by two technologists, when necessary for a patient.
- Occasionally, a patient will have traveled a significant distance and will have experienced difficulties obtaining accessible transportation (e.g. accessibility of vehicle, burden associated with cost, etc.). It would be helpful if a radiologist was scheduled to read the mammogram at such an appointment to ensure that the mammogram image is clear and does not need to be repeated.

Day of Appointment

- Let the patient know what to expect.
- Ask the patient if she needs assistance and listen for her answer.
- Communicate directly with the patient.
- Assure the patient that any discomfort experienced during the exam only lasts a few seconds.
- To assist with future mammograms, put notes in the patient's chart about successful positioning techniques and the accommodations that were provided.

On-going Training

- Make all staff members aware of the special accommodations that may be required for women with different types of disabilities.
- Portray women with disabilities as women first by using "People First Language".

Resources:

American Association on Health and Disability: <http://www.aahd.us/>
Center for Research on Women with Disabilities: www.bcm.tmc.edu/crowd
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - The Right to Know Campaign: www.cdc.gov/righttoknow
North Carolina Office on Disability and Health/Chapel Hill, NC: www.fpg.unc.edu/node/2884
Office on Women's Health: www.womenshealth.gov/
Susan G. Komen for the Cure: www.komen.org

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 interact with the animal 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 or communication boards.

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.
- Speak clearly and slowly in a normal volume.
- Communicate in writing, if necessary.

Emotional Disabilities

- Speak calmly and clearly to the patient.
- Explain what will happen, 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 proceed slowly and calmly.
- 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, changing room, 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.