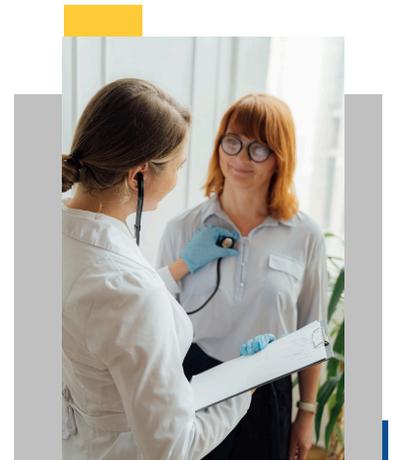


Effective Communication Tips for Health Care Professionals

A quick-reference guide for health care professionals to support respectful, inclusive, and accessible patient interactions across a range of disabilities.



General Best Practice

- Speak directly to the patient, not their companion or interpreter.
- Assume competence. Treat adults as adults.
- Service animals are working—don't distract or pet them.
- Offer help if needed but wait for acceptance.
- Use inclusive language: ask individuals their preference.
- Be flexible in communication—masks, noise, or lighting can affect understanding.
- Notify patients of any unexpected changes in care or appointments.
- Mistakes happen—apologize and learn.
- Patients with disabilities are individuals first. Avoid stereotypes.



Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Face the patient; speak clearly without shouting.
- Use visual aids or writing if needed.
- Minimize background noise and ensure good lighting.
- Provide an ASL interpreter upon request.



Sensory Sensitivities

- Use fragrance-free products.
- Reduce noise and visual distractions.
- Ask before touching; approach from the front.
- Allow breaks if patient appears overwhelmed.



Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

- Use simple, clear language.
- Give one instruction at a time.
- Be patient; check for understanding.
- Offer help with forms if needed but wait for acceptance.



Speech Disabilities

- Don't interrupt or finish sentences.
- Allow extra time to respond.
- Use alternate communication methods if needed.



Mobility Disabilities

- Ask before moving a wheelchair or device.
- Position yourself at eye level when possible.
- Allow extra time for physical movement.

