



# DON OEEQ QUICK GUIDE

## Disability Etiquette

*In the workplace, respecting one another and practicing good etiquette are fundamental to a positive and productive professional environment. When interacting with individuals with disabilities, the general rules of etiquette also apply; however, below are some specific tips that may arise when interacting with individuals with disabilities:*

### Encouraged Actions

- ✓ **Be mindful**; think before you speak, and show that you are actively inclusive in your actions.
- ✓ Put the **person first**: say "individual with a disability" instead of "disabled person."
- ✓ If someone asks you to assist and you are unsure of what to do, feel free to **seek clarification**.
- ✓ **Ask first** before opening doors or providing any other type of assistance.
- ✓ **Speak directly to an individual** with a disability, not to the interpreter or attendant.
- ✓ **Respect an individual's privacy** regarding his/her disability.
- ✓ **Respect an individual's personal space**.
- ✓ **Try to sit at the same level** when talking to an individual in a wheelchair or scooter. If this cannot be done, stand at a slight distance so that he/she does not have to strain his/her neck.
- ✓ When **introducing an individual** who is visually impaired or blind to a group of people, try to **do so in an organized manner** by stating the person's name as well as their role.
- ✓ When walking with an individual who uses a cane or service animal, be sure to **walk on the opposite side of the cane or animal**.
- ✓ When guiding an individual who is blind or has vision impairment, be sure to **describe the setting and note any obstacles**. For example, "we are approaching a flight of stairs going up one floor."
- ✓ If providing directions to an individual who is blind or has vision impairment, be sure to **give non-visual cues**, such as "go to the end of the aisle and make a left."
- ✓ When communicating with an individual who is deaf or has hearing impairment, follow the **person's cues to find out if he/she prefers sign language, gesturing, writing or speaking**. In addition, make sure to get his/her attention first before attempting to communicate.

### Actions to Avoid

- ✗ **Do not ask personal questions about a person's disability**.
- ✗ **Do not make individuals into disability heroes or victims**; treat everyone as individuals first. Adjusting to a disability requires adapting to a lifestyle, not courage.
- ✗ **Do not use outdated and negative terms** such as "handicapped," "crippled," "retarded," "physically challenged," "differently abled," "victim" or "sufferer."
- ✗ **Do not assume** that an individual with a disability **needs assistance**.
- ✗ **Do not assume** that everyone with a certain type of disability has the **same limitations**.
- ✗ **Do not decide for individuals with disabilities regarding whether they can participate** in workplace activities due to limitations. Excluding individuals from equal work and opportunities is discriminatory by presuming that they cannot perform the task or participate.
- ✗ **Do not touch** a person's wheelchair, scooter, cane, or service animal without asking.

*If you have any questions, please contact Meena Shoyooee, Department of the Navy Disability Program Manager, at [meena.shoyooee@navy.mil](mailto:meena.shoyooee@navy.mil) or (202) 685-6238.*