



Working With Individuals Who Have Communication Disabilities

Individuals who have vision, hearing or speech disabilities have “Communication Disabilities” and use different ways to communicate. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that government and other public service organizations communicate equally as effectively with their consumers with disabilities as with others.

Your Organization’s Requirements under the ADA

1. Your organization must provide information to consumers in plain language. It must make all information accessible to individuals who have communication disabilities.
2. Your organization must provide auxiliary aids and services at no cost to the consumer when needed to provide effective communication. This includes providing assistive listening headsets, telecommunications devices, foreign language and sign language interpreters, and computers that offer voice input and output. Learn more about auxiliary aids and services at [Ada.gov/pcatoolkit](https://ada.gov/pcatoolkit)
3. The same rules apply to communicating with the individual’s parent, spouse, or companion in appropriate circumstances.
4. Your organization must provide oral interpretation free of cost to any individual who is limited English proficient. This includes telephonic interpreter services.



Tips for Working with a Person with a Communication Disability

1. Let the consumer take the lead in establishing the communication mode. Using the individual's preferred method of communication will help you work more effectively with them.
2. Think through the nature, length, complexity, and context of what you're communicating. Try to simplify and clarify the information when possible.
3. Pay attention, be patient, and wait for the person to complete a word or thought. Do not finish it for the person. Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to do or say something.
4. Talk directly to the individual, even when a companion or interpreter is present or on the phone.
5. Avoid asking personal questions about someone's disability. If you must ask, be sensitive and show respect.

Find more tips on effective communication at ada.gov/effective-comm

For more requirements, information and training, visit <http://adata.org/>