

## Glossary

**Ability:** Having the mental and/or physical condition to engage in one or more major life activities (e.g. seeing, hearing speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning or caring for oneself).

**Ableism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination against people with disabilities. A system of advantage based on physical or mental characteristics.

**Advocate:** a person that argues for a cause, a supporter or defender.

**Allocation:** to set apart for a special purpose, to distribute according to a plan.

**American Sign Language (ASL):** A means of communication that uses hand gestures to represent letters and words, and the primary sign language used by people with hearing disability in the United States and Canada (devised in part by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet on the basis of sign language in France).

**Assimilation:** The process through which one cultural group adapts to the attitudes, belief systems and ways of life of another culture. Degrees of assimilation range widely. In some cases a group will, over time, lose its cultural distinctiveness and adopt the attitudes, belief systems and ways of life of a dominant culture. In other cases a cultural group will become part of a new culture, while maintaining important aspects of its tradition and cultural distinctiveness.

**Assistive Technology:** A device or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the capacity of people with disabilities (e.g. brace, crutches, descriptive video, hearing aid, prosthetic device, walker, or wheelchair).

**Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder:** Attention-deficit (hyperactivity) disorder is a condition affecting children and adults that is characterized by problems with attention, impulsivity, and over activity. Science recognizes three subtypes of ADD or ADHD: inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive, and combined. A diagnosis of one type or another depends on the specific symptoms that person has.

**Bias:** A conscious or unconscious preference that inhibits a person's capacity for impartial judgment. An unfair act or policy which results from a prejudicial mindset.

**Braille:** A written language that uses bumps in the paper, instead of ink, to make letters. People read it by using their fingers instead of their eyes.

**Cane:** A piece of metal, wood, or plastic that helps a person walk if they cannot balance themselves very well, or a tool who a person who is blind uses to help them walk (instead of using a Guide Dog).

**Cerebral Palsy:** A disorder caused by damage to a child's brain during pregnancy, delivery, or shortly after birth. Cerebral Palsy is characterized by one or more movement disorders, such as spasticity (tight limb muscles), purposeless movements, rigidity (severe form of spasticity), or a lack of balance. People with cerebral Palsy may also experience seizures, speech, hearing and/or visual impairments, and/or mental retardation.

**Closed Captioning:** An on-screen system that allows people with a hearing disability to view television with spoken words written across the bottom of the screen.

**Community:** A group of people whose members are connected to one another through a common identity, set of experiences or shared purpose.

**Culture:** A description given to a group of people who share a common experience or history. They may also share common language, religion, tradition, values, etc.

**Curb Cut:** A lower portion of sidewalk where a person using a wheelchair can easily access the street.

**Deafness:** A total or partial inability to hear, which can be genetic or also acquired through disease, most commonly from meningitis in childhood or rubella in a woman during pregnancy.

**Deaf-Blindness:** A hearing and visual disability, the combination of which can cause severe communication and other developmental and educational difficulties.

**Descriptive Video:** Film media designed for people with visual disability that narrates the visual elements of a film (the action of the characters, locations, costumes, etc.) without interfering with the actual dialogue and sound effects.

**Developmental Disability:** A long lasting cognitive disability occurring before age 22 that limits one or more life activities (self-care, independent living, learning, mobility, etc), and is likely to continue indefinitely (e.g. Autism).

**Disability:** A mental or physical condition that restricts an individual's ability to engage in one or more major life activities (e.g. seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, working or caring for oneself).

**Disabled Parking:** A parking space which is wider than other parking spaces, near the entrance of a building. The extra space makes it easier for a person with a disability to get in and out of their car.

**Discrimination:** An action or behavior which favors some people and disadvantages others.

**Diversity:** The collective identities or characteristics of a group of people.

**Down Syndrome:** A chromosomal condition (trisomy 21) caused by the presence of one extra chromosome, and characterized by delayed physical and mental development, and often identifiable by certain physical characteristics, such as a round face, slanting eyes, and a small stature.

**Dwarfism:** A genetic condition resulting in short stature.

**Emotional Disability:** One or more psychiatric disabilities exhibited over a long period of time, e.g. an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with others; inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under ordinary circumstances; a generally pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression; or a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal problems.

**Epilepsy:** A physical condition that occurs when there is a sudden, brief disturbance in the function of the brain, and alters an individual's consciousness, movements or actions. Most individuals with epilepsy can reduce or eliminate the risk of seizures through the regular use of appropriate medication.

**Guide Dog:** A dog that has been trained to "see" for a blind person. A guide dog will have a special harness over his body, instead of a leash. Also known as a Seeing Eye Dog.

**Handicap:** Any obstacle that decreases a person's opportunity for success (e.g. discriminatory practices, inaccessible buildings, public places, transportation, insufficient insurance, training, resources, or negative attitudes).

**Health Disability:** A temporary or permanent health impairment that affects one or more major life activities (e.g. AIDS, arthritis, cancer, diabetes, drug addiction, heart disease).

**Hearing Disability:** Partial or full hearing loss due to either a decibel loss (person hears all sounds much more softly than a person with complete hearing), or a frequency loss (person hears a pitch of a sound better than others, thus a person with frequency loss would hear all of some words, some parts of other words, and would not hear some words at all).

**Inclusion:** A set of community values, practices, and beliefs which suggest that people of all backgrounds, perspectives, and beliefs should have equal opportunity to belong, achieve and contribute to their community(ies) and be educated, regardless of disability, in an age appropriate, local, general education setting with appropriate supports and services. Inclusion requires people to value, respect and accept their differences.

**Inhaler:** A medical device that helps a person with asthma breathe easier by squirting medicine into their lungs to stop an asthma attack.

**Institutional “isms”:** Social systems of advantage which are held in place by unspoken “rules” that enable dominant groups to maintain power over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to necessary resources. Institutional “ISMS” involve every system in society: governmental/legislative, legal/justice, commerce, education, communication/media, police/public safety, health care, property ownership, financial/economic.

**Interpreter:** A person who has been trained to translate between a deaf person and a hearing person.

**Lip Reading:** A way to understand what a person is saying by watching their lips, instead of listening to them speak.

**Little Person:** A person with short-stature. In general, people with short-stature prefer the term “Little Person” to describe their physical condition. The term “dwarf” is considered derogatory.

**Learning Disability:** A cognitive impairment in comprehension or in using language, spoken or written, that manifests itself in a person’s ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations (e.g. Dyslexia, Dysnomia, Dysgraphia). The term does not include persons who have learning difficulties that are primarily the result of mental retardation, emotional disability, or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

**Marginalization:** to confine to a lower social standing.

**Mental Illness:** Refers to any illness or impairment that has significant psychological or behavioral manifestations, is associated with painful or distressing symptoms and impairs an individual’s level of functioning in certain areas of life (e.g. Anxiety Disorder, Depression, Bi-Polar Disorder, Obsession-Compulsion, Schizophrenia).

**Mental Retardation:** Consistent demonstration of general cognitive functioning that is determined to be below the mean of the general population on the basis of comprehensive evaluation.

**Mobilize:** to assemble, prepare, or put into operation for a purpose.

**Oppression:** The combination of prejudice and power which creates a system of advantage that benefits some groups (often called the “dominant groups”) and discriminates against other groups (often called the “target groups”). This system of advantages enables dominant groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to necessary resources. Terms commonly referred to as the “isms” are specific examples of oppression: racism, sexism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, anti-Semitism, ableism.

**Paraplegia:** The paralysis of the legs and lower part of the body, and is usually caused by injury or disease in the lower spinal cord, or by brain disorders such as cerebral palsy.

**Parkinson’s Disease:** A progressive disorder caused by the brain’s inability to manufacture a chemical that signals the muscles to move- symptoms include involuntary tremors, stiff movements, and /or lack of balance.

**People First:** Acknowledging the personhood of individuals before their disability (e.g. “people with disabilities”, “person who uses a wheelchair”, “ person with cerebral palsy”, “person has a physical disability”, etc).

**Physical Disability:** One or more physical impairment that substantially limit one or more major life activities (e.g. seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning, or caring for oneself).

**Placard:** A sign with the wheelchair symbol that a person can place in their car in order to park in a disabled parking space.

**Prejudice:** A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known or in disregard of facts that contradict it. A preconceived idea or unreasonable bias, favorable or more usually unfavorable.

**Prosthesis/Prosthetic:** An artificial device used to replace a missing body part, such as a limb, tooth, eye or heart valve.

**Quadriplegia:** The paralysis of a person’s four limbs.

**Ramp:** A slope at the entrance/exit to a building designed for a person who uses a wheelchair to easily enter/exit the building.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** A modification made in facilities, a job restructuring or rescheduling, or a modification of equipment and devices to make an environment accessible and useable by people with disabilities.

**Rehabilitation:** to restore to good condition, health, and capacity.

**Seeing Eye Dog:** A dog that has been trained to “see” for a blind person. A guide dog will have a special harness over his body, instead of a leash. Also known as a Guide Dog.

**Seizure:** When communication in a person’s brain gets confused for a little bit and makes the person’s body shake or tremble uncontrollably. The person will often have no idea they just had a seizure.

**Self-determination:** freedom of people to determine their own status and independence.

**Sign Language:** A language that uses hand motions to communicate instead of speaking.

**Speech Impairment:** A communication disorder characterized by impaired articulation, language impairment or voice impairment (e.g. Dysfluency, Stuttering).

**Stereotype:** A fixed image, exaggerated belief or distorted truth about a person or group of people that allows for no individuality, critical judgment or social variation.

**Sterilization:** the act of making a person infertile, or unable to conceive a child.

**Stigmatization:** to characterize as disgraceful.

**Support Dog:** A dog that has been trained to help a person with a disability. Support dogs do things like open doors, answer the phone, help get a person up if they fall down and many other ordinary things that may be difficult.

**Tourette Syndrome:** A genetic, neurological disorder characterized by repetitious, involuntary body movements and uncontrollable vocal sounds.

**Visual Disability:** A form of sight impairment that varies in severity, and in more acute cases cannot be corrected by glasses or contact lenses.

**Vocational training:** training for a job.

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