

## Excellent Customer Service

By providing service that welcomes people with disabilities, you can offer better service to everyone. Treating all your customers with individual respect and courtesy is at the heart of excellent customer service.

You can broaden your customer base by welcoming everyone, including customers with disabilities. By learning how to serve people with differing disabilities, you can attract more customers and improve your service to everyone.

- Mood swings
- Bipolar disorders (depression and manic phases)

### Tips:

- Treat customer with the same level of respect and consideration
- Be confident and reassuring
- Listen carefully and work with your customer to meet their needs
- Do not be confrontational
- If the customer is in a crisis, ask how best to help
- Take customer seriously
- Don't take things personally



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Serving Customers  
with Intellectual  
or Developmental,  
Learning or Mental  
Health Disabilities

## Serving Customers Who Have Intellectual, Developmental or Learning Disabilities over the Phone

“Customer” refers to a person seeking or receiving a service

- Speak normally, clearly and directly.
- Concentrate on what’s being said
- Be patient, don’t interrupt and don’t finish your customer’s sentences
- Don’t try to guess what your customer is saying. If you don’t understand, don’t pretend. Just ask again
- If you’re not certain what was said, just repeat or rephrase what you’ve heard
- If a telephone customer is using an interpreter, just speak normally to the customer, not to the interpreter
- If your customer is having difficulty communicating, make arrangements to call back when it’s convenient to speak with someone else

## Serving Customers with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

People with intellectual or developmental disabilities may have difficulty doing many things most of us take for granted. These disabilities can mildly or profoundly limit one’s ability to learn, communicate, do everyday activities, and live independently. You may not be able to know that someone has this disability unless you are told, or you notice the way people act, ask questions or use body language. As much as possible,

treat your customers with intellectual or developmental disabilities like anyone else. They may understand more than you think, and they will appreciate you treating them with respect.

- Speak directly to your customer, not to their companion or attendant
- Use plain language
- Speak in short sentences
- Take your time, be patient
- If you can’t understand what’s being said, don’t pretend. Just ask again
- Ask “Do you understand?” after giving information
- Provide one piece of information at a time – step-by-step instructions
- Offer information in simpler concepts

## Serving Customers with Learning Disabilities

Learning disabilities can result in a host of different communication difficulties for people. You may not know that someone has one of these disabilities unless told, or you notice by the way a person acts, asks questions or uses body language.

### Description:

- Affects how a person acquires, interprets, retains or takes in information
- In many cases persons with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence
- May affect:
  - Language-based learning
  - Mathematics
  - Writing, fine motor skills

### Tips:

- Demonstrate a willingness to assist and to find a way to communicate
- When you know that someone with a learning disability needs help, ask how you can best help
- Speak normally, clearly and directly to your customer
- Take some time — people with some kinds of learning disabilities may take a little longer to understand and respond
- Provide information in a way that works for the customer (e.g. pen and paper)
- Be prepared to explain any materials you provide

## Serving Customers with Mental Health Disabilities

People with mental health disabilities look like anyone else. You may not know that your customer has a mental health disability unless informed. Usually it will not affect your customer service at all. But if someone is experiencing difficulty in controlling their symptoms or is in a crisis, you may need to help out. Be calm and professional and let your customer tell you how you can best help.

### Description:

- Defined as the absence of psychological well-being and satisfactory adjustment to society
- Some common features of mental health disabilities are:
  - Phobias, panic attacks
  - Hallucinations

*Continued on reverse.*