

Tip Sheet 12

Library Accessibility –What You Need to Know

Library Patrons with Multiple Disabilities

Overview

When referring to people with multiple disabilities, we might generalize to include children, youth, and adults with the following issues:

- Limited speech or communication
- Limited physical mobility
- Sensory loss including visual and hearing loss
- Tendency to forget skill through disuse
- Cognitive deficits, socialization or behavior issues (see other pamphlet for more information)
- Information or sensory processing issues

Library staff can encourage and help people with multiple disabilities to develop the capacity and motivation to communicate and relate to the world around them.

A beneficial library environment will include technologies that provide access to information and communication. There will be materials that can be accessed easily by these technologies where necessary. Even something as simple as Microsoft's text enlargement feature, or a wide, easy grip pen can be assistive. Most importantly, to encourage return library visits by disabled persons, create a welcoming and positive experience through friendly personal interactions.

Tips

- Speak directly to all patrons in a normal voice and tone.
- Offer to shake hands while accommodating the disability.
- Identify yourself and use the patron's name when appropriate.
- When offering assistance, ask how s/he would like you to assist.
- Never patronize adults *or children*.
- Allow patron time to respond.
- Listen attentively and briefly paraphrase after a question.
- Try to maintain eye level when comfortable and appropriate.
- Use normal language, "See you later," will not offend visually-impaired persons.