**Tips for Increasing Inclusion of Employees with Disabilities**

**If an employee is blind or has a visual impairment:**

* Identify yourself and anyone else with you.
* If you have met before, state the context of the previous meeting to jog the person's memory.
* If you are speaking in a group, name the person to whom you are speaking.
* Speak in a normal tone of voice.
* Clearly indicate if you are moving from one place to another or the conversation has ended.
* Clear paths of obstacles.
* Describe the surroundings to advise the person of their environment. For example, say ‘There is a chair one meter to your right.’ or ‘Step down.’ or ‘The door is to your right.’ or ‘There are some obstacles in front of you on the left.’
* If offering to act as a guide, invite the person to take your arm and walk about a half a step ahead of the person. Then listen or ask for instructions.
* If appropriate, offer to read written information.
* Guide dogs are working dogs: speaking or interacting with the dog is distracting and inappropriate.
* Plan ahead to allow adequate time to prepare printed material in alternate formats (e.g. Braille, large print, audiocassette, or digital format).

**If an employee is deaf or hearing impaired:**

* When securing sign language interpreter services, specify the language(s) required.
* Attract the individual’s attention before speaking.
* Speak clearly and at a pace that allows the sign language interpreter to interpret for the person who is deaf and to allow this person to respond through the interpreter.
* Don’t shout.
* Consider captioning.
* Write notes or use gestures for one-on-one discussions.
* Face the person to facilitate lip reading. Keep hands and other objects away from your lips when speaking.
* Speak clearly, slowly, and directly to the person, not to the interpreter.
* Don’t assume that the individual knows sign language or can read lips.
* Reduce or eliminate disruptive background noises (e.g. tapping pens or shuffling paper), since amplification devices are very sensitive to ambient noise. Converse in a quiet environment, or move to one, in order to facilitate communication.

**If an employee has a physical disability:**

* Rearrange furniture or objects in a room to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility aids.
* Avoid leaning on someone's mobility aid.
* If you need to have a lengthy conversation with someone in a wheelchair consider sitting so that you can make eye contact.
* Know your workspace. Be aware of what is accessible and not accessible to people who use mobility aids.
* Push someone in a manual wheelchair only when asked.
* Give directions that include distance and physical obstacles. (For example, you might give a location as 20 meters away, or mention that there are stairs or a curb or a steep hill.)

**If an employee has a developmental or learning disability:**

* Offer and provide needed assistance.
* Repeat information when necessary.
* Speak directly to the person and listen actively.
* Use plain language.
* Provide one piece of information at a time.
* Ask the person to repeat the message back to you to confirm they understand.
* Be patient as some may take longer to process information and respond.
* Try to provide information in a way that takes into account the person’s disability.

**If an employee has a language or speech impediment:**

* Be patient - don’t interrupt or finish the individual’s sentences.
* Don’t assume that an individual with a speech impairment also has another disability.
* Try to allow enough time to communicate with the individual as they may speak more slowly.