Providing Excellent Customer Service to Library Patrons with Disabilities

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Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities
Our Mission

The Texas Governor’s Committee on People with Disabilities (GCPD) works to further opportunities for persons with disabilities to enjoy full and equal access to lives of independence, productivity and self-determination.
What Do We Do?

The Committee:

• Makes recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on disability issues;

• Promotes compliance with disability-related laws;

• Promotes a network of local committees doing similar work;

• Recognizes employers for hiring and retaining employees with disabilities; and

• Recognizes media professionals and students for positively depicting Texans with disabilities.

• Members and staff also provide technical assistance and information and referral services to citizens of Texas on issues affecting Texans with disabilities.

Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities
What is a “Disability”? Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) an individual with a disability is a person who:

1. has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; or
2. has a record of such an impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such an impairment.
Who Are People with Disabilities?

- People with hidden disabilities (e.g., emotional, epilepsy, immune system)
- People with sensory disabilities (deaf, hard of hearing, blind or low vision)
- People with a physical disabilities (orthopedic or mobility)
- People with an intellectual disability (e.g., developmental or learning)
Purpose of Accessibility at Your Library

To ensure that library patrons with disabilities can . . .

– access the same information
– receive the same services
– operate the same functionality and
– achieve the same goals as people without disabilities
– Have an excellent customer service experience
Disability etiquette is a set of guidelines dealing specifically with how to approach people with disabilities. It helps convey respect and ensure good customer service to all library patrons.
“People First” Language

Put the **PERSON** before the disability:

- Communicate with respect.
- Say “person with a disability” not “disabled person.”
- Avoid terms like “handicapped” or “crippled.”
- Avoid negative, disempowering words like “victim” or “sufferer.”
- If you are not sure what words to use, **ASK**.

**Remember**: The person is not the disability.
Interpersonal Interaction – Just Ask

Interacting with people who are blind “Just Ask”
Interaction Tips

• Approach, introduce yourself as a library employee and offer assistance.
• If you offer sighted guide assistance, extend your arm and allow them to hold on above your elbow.
• Do not touch, move or grab a person’s cane without the owner’s permission.
• Many people who are blind have some functional vision.
• Treat a person who is blind as just another person who may do some things differently.
• Never distract a guide dog from its job. It is not a pet.
• RELAX - Blind people use the same expressions as those who are sighted. So don’t be embarrassed if you use common expressions such as “See you later.”
Speaking with Library Patrons who are Hard of Hearing

- First get their attention
- Maintain a clear view of your face
- Avoid having anything in your mouth
- Speak clearly at a moderate rate
- Avoid noisy environments
- Rephrase when not understood

Let’s Make it Clear Video
Communicating with Library Patrons who are Deaf and Use Sign Language

• American Sign Language (ASL) is not English, it is a unique language developed by people who are deaf.

• Use qualified ASL interpreters.

https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing

• Provide written materials in advance for community presentations

• Keep language simple

• Video Relay Service (VRS)
Interacting with Library Patrons with a Mobility Impairment

• “Just Ask” – don’t make assumptions.
• Plan for an accessible meeting location with an accessible path of travel (accessible parking, no-step entrance, etc.).
• If the individual uses a wheelchair it is their personal space, don’t lean on it.
• Sit down at their eye level when having a longer conversation with an individual who uses a wheelchair.
• Offer assistance in accessing books and materials on higher shelves that may be out of reach.
• Offer an adaptive computer station where a wheelchair can fit comfortably.
• Is your drop box for returning library materials at an accessible height?
Interaction with Library Patrons who use Service Animals

What questions can you ask?

1. Is the animal required because of a disability?
2. What work or task has your animal been trained to perform?

Emotional Support Animals vs. Service Animals
Potential Issues for Accommodating Service Animals

An animal can be properly excluded if:

1. The animal is out of control and the animal's handler does not take effective action to control it; or
2. The animal is not housebroken.
Library facilities are covered entities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Texas Accessibility Standards (TAS)
Exterior Accessible Route

- At least one accessible route shall be provided from public transportation stops, accessible parking spaces, and public streets or sidewalks, to an accessible building entrance.
- Accessible parking must include some van accessible parking spots.
- 1 in 25 parking spots must be reserved for van access and/or parking for people with disabilities.

Example
accessible parking & passenger loading zones

public streets and sidewalks

public transportation stops
The design of library facilities shall include an accessible route to reading and study areas, stacks, reference rooms, reserve areas, and special facilities or collections.
Objects protruding from walls, mounted above the finished floor, and free-standing objects mounted on posts or pylons shall not reduce the clear width of an accessible route or maneuvering space.
Wheelchair Access at Magazine Displays and Stacks

Minimum clear aisle space is 36 inches width with 42 inch preferred, if possible.
Website Accessibility
Effective Communications

ADA Title II State and Local Government 28 CFR §35.160

...shall take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, participants, members of the public, and companions with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.
Assistive Technologies

• Any equipment or product whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of people with disabilities.
• Does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted,
• Includes hardware and software as well as stand-alone devices.
• Allows access to computers, telephones and mobile devices that are not natively accessible
• Provides support for visual, hearing, mobility, speech and cognitive disabilities
Screen Readers

- Read electronic text and text equivalents
- Provide keyboard navigation for documents and forms
- Output information about the interface and the content by means of synthetic speech or braille
- Are used by people who are blind or have reading disabilities
- JAWS has been the standard in rehabilitation services in Texas
Screen Magnifiers

Allow users to:

• Control magnification, foreground and background colors
• Manage focus between tabbed objects
• Can be used in conjunction with a screen reader
• ZoomText has been the standard used by rehab services in Texas
Texas Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities

Speech Recognition Software

• Converts users voice to text
• Controls operating system and software by speech
• Branded as dictation software
• Used by people with manual dexterity issues
• Dragon Naturally Speaking has been the standard used by rehabilitation services in Texas
Operating System and Browser

- Allows some control over font size and face
- Allows some control of foreground and background colors
- Allows keyboard access for people who cannot use a mouse
Assistive Technology Limits

- Screen readers cannot interpret images or operate improperly coded controls.
- Screen magnifiers do not work well with low resolution images or poor contrast.
- Speech recognition requires native controls.
- AT is not Magic.
Accessibility
Best Practices
1. Provide Library Staff Training Appropriate to Each Person’s Job Duties

- Webmaster should receive web accessibility training, including applying WCAG 2.0 Level AA Standards.
- Front desk staff should be trained in disability etiquette.
- Facility staff should be trained on TDLR TAS training.
- Contracting and procurement staff should be trained on purchasing accessible goods and services to meet the needs of all library patrons.
- All staff should receive training in effective communications and disability etiquette.
2. Develop or Update Policies and Procedures

- Update and/or develop your libraries effective communication and accessibility policies and operational plans.
- Publish a web accessibility policy on your website.
- Include contract language in policies that require purchasing preference for accessible goods and services.
- Require reoccurring accessibility audits of your facilities and programs.

Examples
3. Create Accessible Content

Ensure library websites and web applications are accessible on all platforms.

Ensure documents are accessible in all formats.

Offer materials in alternate formats.

Large Print &/or Braille
4. Multimedia Accessibility

• DVD collection should include videos with closed captioning and some titles with audio description for library patrons who are blind.

• Web videos must also be captioned, and use an accessible video player or be posted to YouTube with captioning. Note: avoid relying solely on You Tube’s audio captioning feature which is not accurate.
Example of closed captioning

Bell spent her time pursuing her education and
5. Does your Library Collection Address the Needs of all Readers?

• Does your collection include fiction and non-fiction about people with disabilities.
• Does your collection include audio books for patrons who are blind or have a reading disability like dyslexia?
• Does your collection include high interest, low reading level, age appropriate books for young readers with dyslexia?
• Does your online e-book collection have an accessible user interface for patrons using assistive technology?
6. Tap into your Resources

- Texas State Library Talking Book Program Disability Information and Referral Center
  [https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/dirc.html](https://www.tsl.texas.gov/tbp/dirc.html)
- Electronic and Information Resources (EIR) Accessibility
  [http://accessibility.hhs.texas.gov/resources.asp](http://accessibility.hhs.texas.gov/resources.asp)
- Job Accommodations Network
  [http://www.askjan.org](http://www.askjan.org)
- Governors Committee on People with Disabilities
  [http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities](http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities)
- Texas Accessibility Standards
  [http://www.tdlr.state.tx.us](http://www.tdlr.state.tx.us)
Additional Library Specific Resources


• Assn of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies - Library Accessibility: What You Need to Know (Toolkit Series - 15 tipsheets) [http://www.ala.org/ascla/resources/tipsheets](http://www.ala.org/ascla/resources/tipsheets)


Additional Resources

- ADA Best Practices Toolkit for State and Local Governments
  https://www.ada.gov/pcatoolkit/toolkitmain.htm
- DADS People First Respectful Language
- DHS Tips On Interacting With People With Disabilities
- U.S. Department of Justice: Information and Technical Assistance on the ADA
  https://www.ada.gov/2010ADAstandards_index.htm
Contact Information

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http://gov.texas.gov/disabilities

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