

# Patients First: Disability and Disability Accommodations

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# Agenda

- Disability, ADA, and importance to NM
- Identifying Accommodation Needs
- Disability Accommodations available at NM
- Effective Communication tips
- Questions?

# Disability, ADA, and importance to NM

# Day-to-day: Major Life Activities

A word cloud of major life activities. The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern. The largest word is 'Caring for oneself' in blue. Other large words include 'Seeing' (blue), 'Hearing' (blue), 'Thinking' (green), 'Communicating' (orange), 'Learning' (orange), 'Sleeping' (orange), 'Completing manual tasks' (blue), 'Reading' (orange), 'Concentrating' (blue), 'Speaking' (blue), 'Walking' (green), 'Breathing' (orange), 'Eating' (green), 'Working' (green), 'Standing' (blue), 'Bending' (orange), and 'Lifting' (green).

Concentrating

Reading

Speaking

Walking

Seeing

Hearing

Breathing

Caring for oneself

Eating

Working

Thinking

Learning

Sleeping

Completing manual tasks

Communicating

Bending

Standing

Lifting

# Defining Disability

A disability can be any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for a person with the condition to do certain activities and interact with the world around them (NMHC Quality Division, 2025).

- Examples: vision, hearing, mobility, cognitive, or psychiatric disabilities.
  - An impairment does not become a disability until they converge with the environment and the individual cannot do what they WANT or NEED to do.
    - Think: a physical environment that is not accessible, lack of assistive technology, negative attitudes of others.
    - Services, systems, and policies
- To enhance your learning and YOUR role, search [“Disability Sensitivity Self-study Booklet”](#) on NM Interactive.



# ADA and Northwestern Medicine

## Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

A federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination based on disability including employment, **state and local government services**, public transit, businesses, and telecommunications.

Health care organizations must provide full and equal access for people with disabilities through:

Reasonable Modifications  
Service Animals  
Effective Communication  
Accessible Facilities

[ADA.gov](http://ADA.gov)

## Non-Discrimination

“Northwestern Medicine is a community of caregivers who welcome, respect and serve all people without regard to age, race, color, national origin, religion, culture, language, **physical or mental disability**, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identify or expression, and military or veteran status. Our commitment to inclusive care extends to patients and companions who have disabilities, and we will provide reasonable accommodations and accessible care at no cost to you for those who benefit from these aids and services.”

Retrieved from NM Patient Relations

**Mission:** “Northwestern Medicine is a premier integrated academic health system where the patient comes first”

**Values:**

Patients First

Integrity

Teamwork

Excellence

[NM Toolkit](#)

# Identifying Accommodation Needs

How do I go about asking patients of needs?



# How to go about asking patients of needs ?

Do not be afraid to ask! Sometimes patients may have difficulty advocating for themselves or are unaware that accommodations are available to them.

## Patient facing

Due to a disability, do you need any additional assistance or accommodations during your visit?

Yes, I need additional assistance or accommodation.

No, I don't have a disability, or I don't need additional assistance or accommodation.

I am not sure if I have a disability or if I need additional assistance or accommodation.

I don't wish to answer.

## Disability and Accommodation Questionnaire for NM MyChart

Under “Your Menu” → Questionnaires

If yes --> prompts questions focused on disability type, and type of accommodations patients may need.

Once a patient has filled out Questionnaire, it can be found under demographics and displayed under the storyboard in EPIC

## Prompting Questions

Examples:

How should we best communicate (provide examples if needed)?

How would you like to receive new information (read out loud, PDF copy, electronic version, etc.)?

Do you need any assistance to do your daily activities at home or have certain things become more difficult for you?

## Communicating observation noted and asking if assistance is needed

Example:

I noticed that you are having a hard time reading the paperwork... do you have glasses that I can bring to you? Would you like the paper work in a larger font? We have magnifiers, do you think that would be helpful?

Quick Reference(s): [Disability Accommodations Tips](#) and [How to Offer Help Guide](#)

# Disability Accommodations Available at NM

Accommodations are modifications that enable our patients to perform tasks, access services, and participate in activities that might otherwise be difficult

# Disability Accommodations

## Accessible Medical Equipment



Adjustable Exam Tables  
OR  
Hospital Beds



Accessible Weight  
Scales



Bariatric Equipment



Lift or Other Transfer  
Aids



Facility Wheelchair

## Accessible written materials



Written Materials in  
Braille



PDF



Large Print Font



Tactile Signature Guides



Plain Language

# Disability Accommodations

## Staff Assistance



Notetaking and Reading  
Written Materials



Assistance with Written  
Forms and Patient  
Kiosks



Human Guide for Room  
Orientation and Facility  
Navigation



Assistance with  
transferring, positioning,  
and procedural support



Assistance with Activities  
of Daily Living (e.g.  
changing clothes or  
toileting)



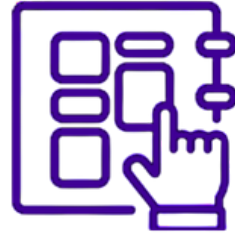
Assistance with  
wheelchair mobility  
after receiving  
permission

# Disability Accommodations

## Hearing and Communication



Sound or Voice Amplifier



Communication Boards



Clear Masks for Lip Reading



CART  
(e.g. captioning used through Microsoft teams)



ASL  
In person sign language interpreter or Video Remote Interpreter (VRI)



Providing simple explanations through conversation or written communication and allowing additional time to respond to questions

# Disability Accommodations

Bringing Personal Items or Assistance and other supports



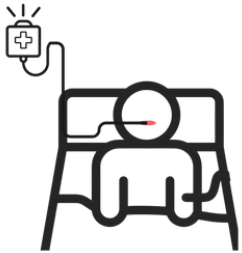
Bringing Personal Caregiver \*



Personal Wheelchair



Service Animal



Sip N Puff Call light



Light Touch Call Light



Magnifiers



TTY or TDD Phone



Adult Changing Area

\*personal caregiver is someone who remains with patient at all times (different from visitor/family)

# NMH Unit Specific Accommodations

All other accommodation can also be used- this is specific to availability on unit

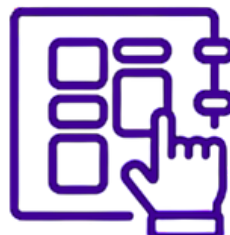
Clear Face Mask



Magnifier



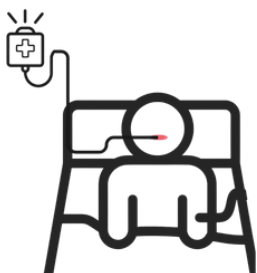
Communication Board



Soft Touch Call Light



Sip&Puff Call Light



Dry Erase Board



Large Text Print



Audio Amplifier

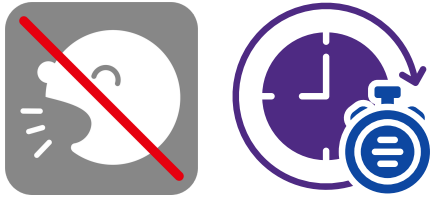


# Effective Communication Tips



# Effective Communication Tips

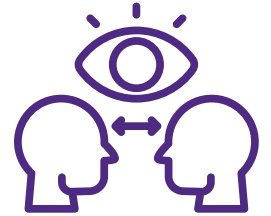
Some individuals might communicate in different ways



Use a normal volume level (**do not shout**) and a moderate pace, not too fast or too slow.



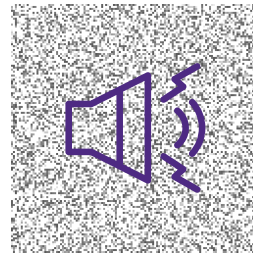
Speak clearly, but do not exaggerate words.



Face the patient with good eye contact (certain circumstances may require for you to ask FIRST)



If a patient has better hearing in one ear, position yourself closer to that side.



Reduce background noise by closing a door if in a noisy area or turning off a buzzing fan.



Ask the patient open-ended questions to confirm understanding

This resource has great tips of best practices with different populations: [How to Offer Help Guide](#)

Thank you

