



Tools for Life: Exploring Your Assistive Technology Program, Strategies and Solutions in Georgia

Agenda



- Introduction to AMAC Accessibility and Tools for Life at Georgia Tech
- Guiding Principles
- Assistive Technology Strategies
- Funding Solutions and Resources
- What's New in AT Solutions and Trends in the Workplace
- Exploring Disability Awareness and Culture
- People First Language
- Communication and Etiquette
- Ask It Basket/Q&A

What are your questions?
Here is your opportunity!

AMAC Accessibility



AMAC creates practical solutions that work, with a focus on utility, ease of use, and high quality.

- **Accessibility Consulting** focuses on organizational accessibility needs with evaluation, technical assistance, customer support, and website accessibility solutions.
- **Braille Services** produces customized projects from both print materials and electronic text including partial books and chapters or graphics only using cutting-edge technology.
- **Captioning Services** makes classrooms, meetings, labs and other audio environments fully accessible for deaf or hard-of-hearing.
- **Professional E-Text Producers** provide high-quality e-text in many formats such as PDF, DOC, DAISY, and HTML.
- **Certified Assistive Technology team** provides on-site and remote assessments, demonstrations, training and technical assistance for education, work, and daily living environments.

For more information, please visit our website at www.amacusg.org

Tools for Life (TFL)

Tools for Life (TFL), Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program, provides Georgians of all ages and disabilities the opportunity to gain access to and acquisition of assistive technology devices and services so they can live, learn, work, and play independently in the communities of their choice.



Tools for Life Core Services



As the Assistive Technology Program in Georgia, we are charged with core activities:

1. Information & Assistance
2. AT Assessments
3. AT Demonstrations
4. AT Equipment Lending
5. Training (Individuals & Groups)
6. Funding Education & Solutions
7. AT Reuse

Assistive Technology Services



Assistive Technology Services are any services that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. These services include:

- Evaluating
- Providing devices
- Selecting, Designing, Customizing
- Maintaining, Repairing
- Coordinating
- Training/Technical Assistance – student, family, and school service providers

Public Law 105-394 [29 USC 2201]

Tools for Life Website



The screenshot shows the Georgia Tech Tools for Life website. The header features the Georgia Tech logo and the Tools for Life logo, with the tagline "Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: HOME, ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, TEL NETWORK, CALENDAR OF EVENTS, and social media icons for YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. A search bar is also present.

The main content area is divided into several sections:

- Left Sidebar:** A vertical list of links: TRAINING, FUNDING, PUBLICATIONS, TEL INFO, MEET THE TEL TEAM, MEET THE ADVISORY COUNCIL, DIRECTIONS/Map, JOIN OUR MAILING LIST, HOW CAN WE HELP?, and AT RETERVALS.
- Navigation Tabs:** A row of tabs: HOME, AT SERVICES, TEL AT, Get AT, AT GAMES, and Research.
- Main Content Area:**
 - Top Image:** A collage of two photos showing people interacting with assistive technology. The left photo shows a man and a woman looking at a device. The right photo shows a woman and a child looking at a device.
 - Text:** "Stay up-to-date on the latest assistive technology strategies and solutions with customized individual and group trainings."
 - Buttons:** A row of five buttons: * * * * *
 - Welcome to Tools for Life:** A section with a heading and a paragraph: "Tools for Life, Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program, is dedicated to increasing access to and acquisition of assistive technology (AT) devices and services for Georgians of all ages and disabilities so they can live, learn, work and play independently and with greater freedom in communities of their choice."
- Right Sidebar:**
 - GATE 2018 CALL FOR PRESENTATIONS:** A section with a date "JUL 31" and a link "Georgia Tech Student Leader".
 - WEBINARS:** A section with links "Current Webinars Schedule" and "Webinar Archives".
 - TOOLS FOR LIFE APPFINDER:** A section with a graphic of a smartphone and icons, and a link "...for Living, Learning, Working, and Playing".
 - AT ONLINE EXCHANGE:** A section with the gTRADE logo.
 - AT FUNDING GUIDE:** A section with the DOLLARS & SENSE logo and the tagline "A GUIDE TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY FUNDING".

Your TFL AppFinder

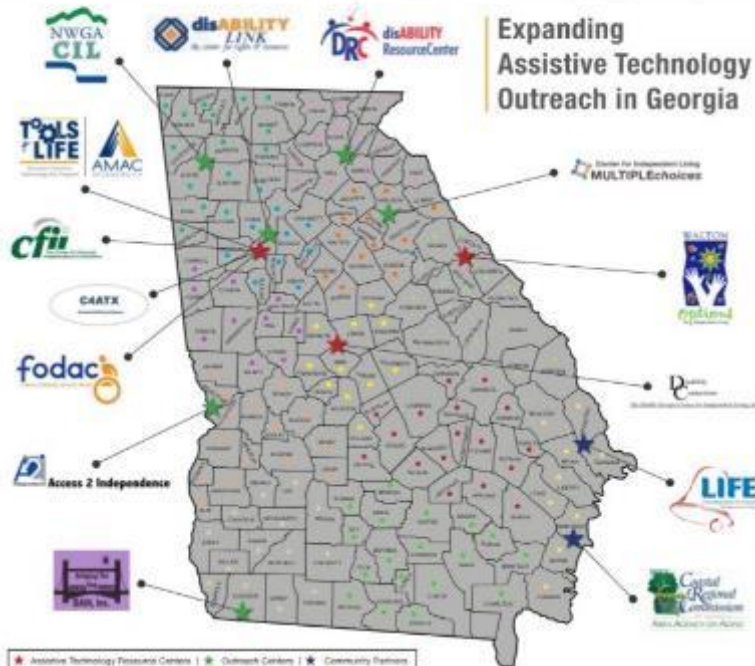


Search by:

- ✓ App Name
- ✓ Categories
 - Books/Reading
 - Education
 - Environmental Adaptations
 - Hearing
 - Vision
 - Navigation
 - Cognition, Learning, and Development
 - Personal Care and Safety
 - Productivity
 - Communication
 - Therapeutic Aids

Tools for Life Network

Assistive Technology Resource Centers, Outreach Centers, Community Partners and Affiliates



GEORGIA'S AGING & DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTERS

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kennesaw Regional Commission Aging Division Kennesaw Regional Commission Aging Division, Kennesaw, GA 30144 Conroe Georgia Area Agency on Aging Conroe Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Conroe, GA 37426 CSW Area Agency on Aging CSW Area Agency on Aging, Columbus, GA 31906 Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging Heart of Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Macon, GA 31204 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowndes-Lumpkin Georgia Mountain Area Agency on Aging Lowndes-Lumpkin Georgia Mountain Area Agency on Aging, Milledgeville, GA 31061 Middle Georgia Area Agency on Aging Middle Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Macon, GA 31204 Northwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging Northwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Dalton, GA 35705 Northwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging Northwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Dalton, GA 35705 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West Valley Area Agency on Aging West Valley Area Agency on Aging, Marietta, GA 30067 Southwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging Southwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Albany, GA 31707 Southwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging Southwest Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Albany, GA 31707 West Georgia Area Agency on Aging West Georgia Area Agency on Aging, Columbus, GA 31906 |
|---|--|--|

Guiding Principles



- We, collectively, are brilliant and can find innovative paths and create brighter futures.
- We must think, live, and act from a place of abundance. We do have enough time, money and resources.
- We must focus on abilities.

Who are We Serving



Over 54,000,000 individuals in the United States have disabilities that affect their ability to:

- see
- hear
- communicate
- reason
- walk
- perform other basic life functions



People with disabilities are the largest minority group in America.

This group cuts across racial, ethnic, religious, gender and age boundaries.

Anyone can become a member of this minority group at any time.

May 2018 Disability Employment Statistics Ages 16 years and over

Labor Force Participation

- People with disabilities: 20.1%
- People without disabilities: 68.6%

Unemployment Rate

- People with disabilities: 7.0%
- People without disabilities: 3.4%

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)

Statistics to Digest



- 14% of People with disAbilities are fully employed. PayDay!
- 16% of People with disAbilities are underemployed. Snickers!
- 70% are unemployed or out of the work force entirely. Kisses!
- Adults with disabilities work fewer hours, command lower wages, and earn less annually.

Guiding Principle and Public Law



Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to:

- (A) live independently;
- (B) enjoy self-determination and make choices;
- (C) benefit from an education;
- (D) pursue meaningful careers; and
- (E) enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society in the United States.

Public Law 108-364

Why Assistive Technology?

- For a person without a disability, assistive technology makes life easier.
- For a person with a disability, assistive technology makes life possible.

Tip: USE AT! We have yet to meet a successful person who doesn't use any AT.



Assistive Technology Services and Strategies



Martha Rust

AT Direct Services Team Manager

What is Assistive Technology?

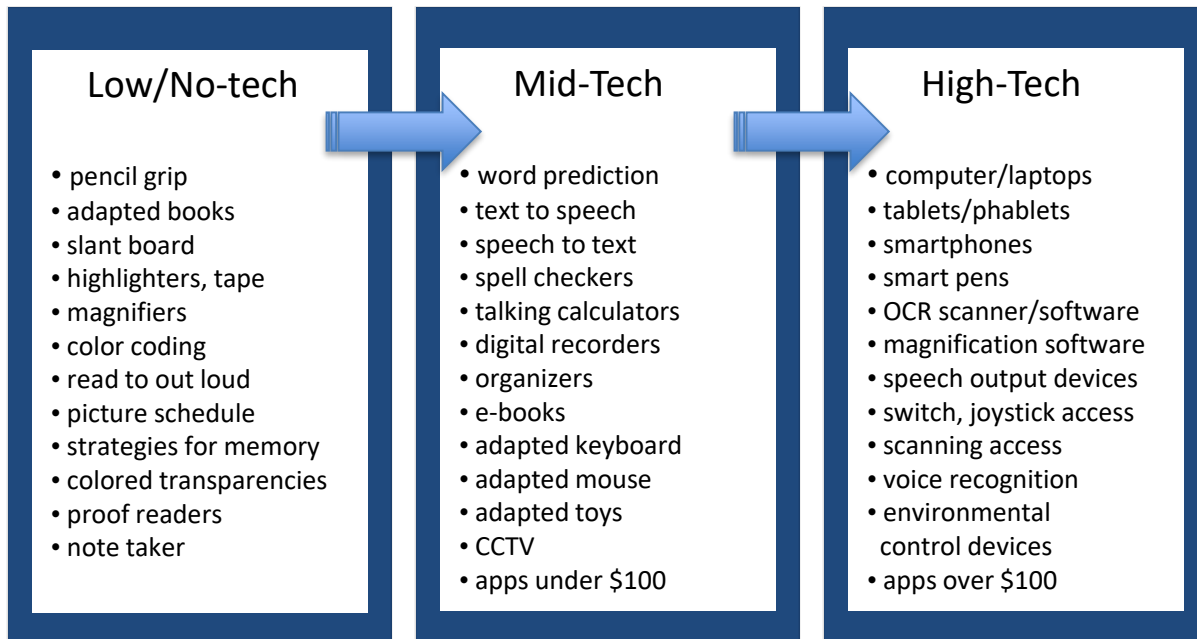
- Assistive Technology (AT) is any item or piece of equipment that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of life, including at school, at work, at home, and in the community
- Assistive Technology ranges from no/low/light tech to high tech devices or equipment



Assistive Technology Continuum

Observations and “Hanging out with Intent”

Assistive Technology is a ***continuum of tools, strategies, and services*** that match a person's needs, abilities, and tasks.



Team Approach

1. The Person with the disAbility

- ✓ Circle of Support – Family of Choice
- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ Case Managers
- ✓ Technologist
- ✓ Occupational Therapist
- ✓ Speech & Language Pathologist
- ✓ Physical Therapist
- ✓ Engineer

Frustration

Anxiety

Stress

Tension

AT Assessments

- Offer comprehensive AT Assessment
- Certified AT Team!
- \$125/hour
 - Written report and recommendations
- Area:
 - Workplace
 - Ergonomics
 - Hardware/Software
 - Strategies



Workstations

- Many options
- Stature considerations
- Task considerations
- Needs based on injury or disability



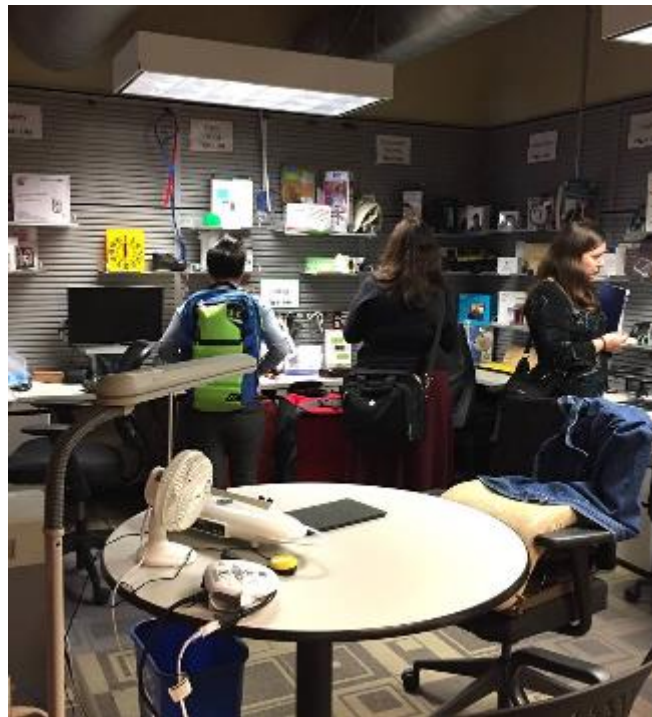
TFL AT Demo Lab

- Tablets
- Vision Items
- DME
- Communication
- Games
- Software
- Switches
- Keyboards



AT Loans

- Try before you Buy!
- Loans usually 3 - 4 weeks
- Train on items before borrowed if needed
- Contact Asha Kumar
Asha.kumar@gatfl.gatech.edu



Funding Solutions, Strategies and Resources



Danny Housley
AT Acquisition Manager

Credit-Able

- Georgia's alternative financing program for assistive technology
- Thanks to a partnership between Center for Financial Independence and Innovation and Tools for Life



Alternative Financing Programs

AFPs are here to serve communities that don't have access to traditional financing

Some are CDFIs

Narrow focus (tribes, people with disabilities, locations, etc.)



AT Loan Details

- Range: \$250-\$10,000
- Length: 6 months-8 years
- Interest: 3%-8%



First \$TEP Program



- For Georgians with disabilities
- Small low interest loans to establish/repair credit
- Can be used for anything
- 4% interest
- \$1,000 max
- 18 months max term



Eligibility Criteria

Be a resident of Georgia

AND

A person with a disability

or

A family member/guardian of a person with a disability

or

An employer of a person with a disability

Able to pay back the loan

AND

Using the loan for AT

How to Prepare for Your Credit-Able Loan



Know Your Finances

INCOME

Earned Income

- Received from work

Unearned Income

- Pensions, SSI, etc

Gross Earning

- Income *before* taxes

Net Earnings

- Income *after* taxes

EXPENSES

Fixed Expenses

- Do not change monthly
- Rent, mortgage, insurance

Flexible Expenses

- Can change monthly
- Utilities, groceries, etc

Discretionary Expenses

- Items not necessary
- Eating out, movies, etc

What Can I Afford?

- Determine how much you need to cover all necessary expenses
- Subtract from NET (after taxes) income

Net Income

- Fixed Expenses

- Flexible Expenses

= Money available for loan

| My Expenses | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Fixed Expenses</i> | <i>Amount</i> |
| 1. Rent/Mortgage | |
| 2. Insurance Payment | |
| 3. Other Loan Payments | |
| ETC. | |
| TOTAL #2 | |
| <i>Flexible Expenses</i> | <i>Amount</i> |
| 1. Groceries | |
| 2. Heating Bill | |
| 3. Electric Bill | |
| 4. Savings Deposit | |
| ETC. | |
| TOTAL #3 | |

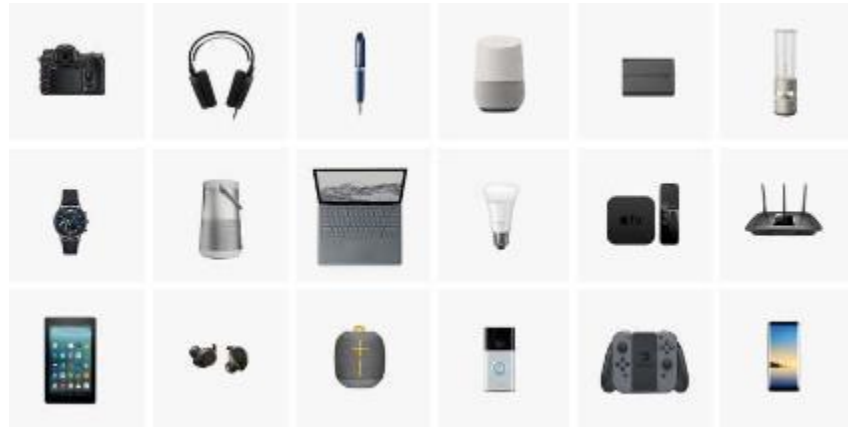
What's New in AT Solutions and Trends in the Workplace



Ben Jacobs

Accommodations Specialist and Special Projects

Accommodations Specialist and Special Projects



- Emerging and Cutting Edge Technologies
- Consumer Tech
 - Affordable
 - Easily acquired
 - Effective
- How can this tech be used by people with disabilities?

Bring Your Best Self to Work

- Stress

- FAST Track
- Lack of Sleep
- Insufficient self care
- Lack of independence
- Lack of social outlet
- Lack of recreational outlet



Smart Home Technologies



- Smart Speakers
 - Google Home
 - Amazon Echo
 - Apple Homepod
- IoT Devices (Internet of Things)
 - Lights
 - Security
 - TV
 - Other

Gaming Accessibility



- Social and Recreational outlet
- Achievements
- Benefits
 - Cognitive
 - Motor Control
 - Decision Making
 - Sense of belonging

3d Printed Technologies



- Inexpensive
 - Free to download
 - Printing Services
- Complex mechanisms
- Quick Prototyping
- www.thingiverse.com

Exploring Disability Awareness and Culture



Carolyn Phillips, Director and PI

Liz Persaud, Program and Outreach Manager

The Importance of Disability Awareness



- There are more than one billion people with disabilities in the world who must overcome challenges every day – including stigmatization. As a society, we are all different and must recognize the importance of acceptance.
- Disability awareness is important when it comes to breaking stereotypes and overcoming preconceptions regarding disabilities.
- Learning about disabilities, the ADA, and taking part in awareness activities and events is a step towards breaking these barriers and promoting change.

Carolyn - Why Am I Here Today?

Master Our Skills!

Expand Our Knowledge and
Build Stronger Schools to Create an
amazing, Inclusive and United
Community!



Liz - Why Am I Here Today?



**disability
is often a
consequence of the
environment**

One Definition



What is Disability Culture?

“People with disabilities have forged a group identity. We share a common history of oppression and a common bond of resilience. We generate art, music, literature, and other expressions of our lives and our culture, infused from our experience of disability. Most importantly, we are proud of ourselves as people with disabilities. We claim our disabilities with pride as part of our identity. We are who we are: we are people with disabilities.”

Steven E. Brown, Ph.D., Co-Founder, Institute on disability Culture, Published in a 1996 issue of MAINSTREAM Magazine

Medical Model

- Under the medical model, impairments or differences should be 'fixed' or changed by medical and other treatments, even when the impairment or difference does not cause pain or illness.
- People with disabilities are to be adapted to fit into the world as it is.
- The emphasis is on dependence.
- Focus is on the impairment, rather than the needs of the person.
- Often, institution is the norm where basic needs can be met.
- Environmental and design barriers make it difficult to have a successful future whether it is in work, school, leisure and entertainment facilities, transport, training, higher education, housing or in personal, family and social life.

Social Model

- Disability is caused by the way society is organized, rather than by a person's impairment or difference.
- Views that the position of disabled people and the discrimination against us are socially created and has little to do with our impairments.
- Explores ways of removing barriers that restrict life choices for disabled people.
- When barriers are removed, disabled people can be independent and equal in society, with choice and control over their own lives.
- Traditional medical model did not explain their personal experience of disability or help to develop more inclusive ways of living.
- Encourages people with disabilities to redefine what "disability" means to them.
- Perpetuates confidence and self-esteem.

Common Ways People with Disabilities are viewed and treated:

Unfortunately, and inaccurately, people with disabilities are often viewed as:

- victims, or objects of pity
- horrible or grotesque
- burdens, either on society or on their families and careers
- evil, or some threat to the comfort and safety of others
- unable, or assumed to be unable, to do things
- having multiple disabilities (such as assuming that a person who uses a wheelchair also has an intellectual disability)
- childlike
- "special"

Such misconceptions are based on insufficient or inaccurate information about people with disabilities and can perpetuate inappropriate interactions.

Understanding Attitudinal Barriers



People with disabilities face many barriers every day—from physical obstacles in buildings to systemic barriers in employment and civic programs.

Often, the most difficult barriers to overcome are attitudes other people carry regarding people with disabilities.

Whether born from ignorance, fear, misunderstanding or hate, these attitudes keep people from appreciating—and experiencing—the full potential a person with a disability can achieve.

Types of Attitudinal Barriers

- **Inferiority** - Because a person may be impaired in one of life's major functions, some people believe that individual is a "second-class citizen." However, most people with disabilities have skills that make the impairment moot in the workplace.
- **Pity** - People feel sorry for the person with a disability, which tends to lead to patronizing attitudes. People with disabilities generally don't want pity and charity, just equal opportunity to earn their own way and live independently.
- **Hero worship** - People consider someone with a disability who lives independently or pursues a profession to be brave or "special" for overcoming a disability. But most people with disabilities do not want accolades for performing day-to-day tasks. The disability is there; the individual has simply learned to adapt by using his or her skills and knowledge, just as everybody adapts to being tall, short, strong, fast, easy-going, bald, blonde, etc.

More Types of Attitudinal Barriers

Ignorance - People with disabilities are often dismissed as incapable of accomplishing a task without the opportunity to display their skills. In fact, people with quadriplegia can drive cars and have children. People who are blind can tell time on a watch and visit museums. People who are deaf can play baseball and enjoy music. People with developmental disabilities can be creative and maintain strong work ethics.

The Spread Effect - People assume that an individual's disability negatively affects other senses, abilities or personality traits, or that the total person is impaired. For example, many people shout at people who are blind or don't expect people using wheelchairs to have the intelligence to speak for themselves. Focusing on the person's abilities rather than his or her disability counters this type of prejudice.

Even More Types of Attitudinal Barriers

Stereotypes - The other side of the spread effect is the positive and negative generalizations people form about disabilities. For example, many believe that all people who are blind are great musicians or have a keener sense of smell and hearing, that all people who use wheelchairs are docile or compete in Paralympics, that all people with developmental disabilities are innocent and sweet-natured, that all people with disabilities are sad and bitter. Aside from diminishing the individual and his or her abilities, such prejudice can set too high or too low a standard for individuals who are merely human.

Backlash - Many people believe individuals with disabilities are given unfair advantages, such as easier work requirements. Employers need to hold people with disabilities to the same job standards as co-workers, though the means of accomplishing the tasks may differ from person to person. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not require special privileges for people with disabilities, just equal opportunities.

Types of Attitudinal Barriers cont'd

Denial - Many disabilities are "hidden," such as learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities, epilepsy, cancer, arthritis and heart conditions. People tend to believe these are not bona fide disabilities needing accommodation. The ADA defines "disability" as an impairment that "substantially limits one or more of the major life activities." Accommodating "hidden" disabilities which meet the above definition can keep valued employees on the job and open doors for new employees.

Fear - Many people are afraid that they will "do or say the wrong thing" around someone with a disability. They therefore avert their own discomfort by avoiding the individual with a disability. As with meeting a person from a different culture, frequent encounters can raise the comfort level.

Values Continuum Activity

A values continuum is a means of physically expressing the values of a number of people toward a specific issue.

We will read questions/statements.

- Move to one side if you: “Strongly Agree” or “True”
- Move to the other side if you: “Strongly Disagree” or “False”

Move to indicate how strongly you feel and where you “stand” on the issue.

Values Continuum Statement #1



There are special requirements and skills involved in interviewing people with disabilities for a job.

Values Continuum Response #1



The interview would be conducted the same way for every applicant. If you want to know about the disability and how it might affect job performance, just ask.

Values Continuum Statement #2



People with mental illnesses cannot tolerate the stress of holding down a job.

Values Continuum Response #2



All jobs can be stressful to some extent. Productivity is maximized when there is a good match between the employee's needs and working conditions, whether or not the individual has mental health needs.

Values Continuum Statement #3



It will be difficult to supervise employees with disabilities.

Values Continuum Response #3



A Harris poll found that 82% of managers said employees with disabilities were no harder to supervise than employees without disabilities. Employees with disabilities should be held accountable to the same job standards as any other employee. Managers should be confident that their supervisory skills will work equally well with employees with disabilities.

Values Continuum Statement #4



People with disabilities always need help.

Values Continuum Response #4

- ✓ Many people with disabilities are independent and capable of giving help and support as well as receiving it.
- ✓ AT Helps!

AT Helps!

Assistive Technology strategies and solutions can help support individuals with a variety of disabilities in the workplace. AT helps to bridge the gap and provide solutions to problems with:

- ✓ speaking
- ✓ hearing
- ✓ seeing
- ✓ moving around
- ✓ getting places
- ✓ memory
- ✓ cognition (thought processes and understanding)
- ✓ daily living activities, such as dressing and preparing meals
- ✓ socializing

The Power of Language

Value Laden

People First Language

Helpful Tips

The Power of Language



- **Language is continually evolving**, and that includes language related to people with disabilities.
- Staying current is important, not to show that you are "politically correct" but to communicate effectively and with respect.

Putting It into Perspective

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

Mark Twain

What is Value-Laden Language?

What you say and write may enhance the dignity of people with disabilities or inadvertently reflect stereotypes and negative attitudes.

Some words and phrases don't recognize the broad range of capabilities of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities don't need or want to be pitied, nor should they be deemed "courageous" or "special" as they accomplish daily activities or work.

“She won’t and can’t be successful.”



My Parents were advised to put me in a school for individuals with developmental disabilities. They took me out the next day...they realized that “system” was not designed for me. There were many times they were told I wouldn’t “go far” in life.



Value-Laden Language

Promotes

- Distance
- Stereotypes
- Pigeon-holes

Reduces sense of:

- Self-worth
- Power
- Self-direction

Value-Laden Language: Creates Categories



We vs. They

Good vs. Bad

Strong vs. Weak

High vs. Low (expectation)

Sick vs. Well

Superior vs. Inferior

Value-Laden Language: Promotes Distance

- × Abnormal
- × Afflicted
- × Burdened
- × Defect
- × Deformity
- × Mute (Deaf and Mute)
- × Palsied
- × Spastic
- × Stricken with
- × Sufferer
- × Victim
- × Invalid

What does the word
"handicapped" mean?

Understand

"Handicapped" is an archaic term (it's no longer used in any federal legislation) that evokes negative images of pity, fear, and more.

A legendary origin of the "H-word" refers to a person with a disability begging with his "cap in his hand."



Value-Laden Language: Example #1

disability-Negative

- the disabled, the blind, the deaf
- crippled, suffers from, afflicted with, stricken with, victim of, invalid
- impaired, impairment
- normal person, healthy, whole, wheelchair bound

disability-Neutral

- people with disabilities, the disability community ("disabled" is an adjective, so must be accompanied by a noun.), the blind community, the Deaf community
- has a disability, is a person with a disability, happens to be physically disabled, walks with a cane, uses leg braces
- has a disability
- non-disabled, person without disabilities, uses a wheelchair

Value-Laden Language : Example #2

disability-Negative

- The disabled
- The handicapped
- Disabled parking
- Handicapped entrance
- Confined to a wheelchair
- Wheelchair bound

disability-Neutral

- People with disAbilities
- Accessible parking
- Accessible entrance
- Person who uses a wheelchair
- Wheelchair user

Value-Laden Language : Example #3

disability-Negative

- hearing impaired, hearing impairment
- visually impaired, visual impairment
- dumb, mute
- stutterer, tongue-tied
- CP victim, spastic
- epileptic
- fit, attack

disability-Neutral

- deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind
- low vision, blind
- person who has a speech or communication disability
- person with cerebral palsy
- person with epilepsy, person with seizure disorder
- seizure, epileptic episode

Value-Laden Language : Example #4

disability-Negative

- crazy, lunatic, insane, nuts, deranged, psycho
- retard, mentally defective, moron, idiot, imbecile, Down's person, mongoloid
- slow learner, retarded
- dwarf, midget

disability-Neutral

- people with mental health issues, mental illness, mental disability, psychiatric disability
- Has a developmental disability, person with Down syndrome
- has a learning disability, person with specific learning disability
- person of small stature, short stature; little person

Value-Laden Language : Example #5

disability-Negative

- paraplegic, quadriplegic
- birth defect
- post-polio, suffered from polio
- homebound

disability-Neutral

- man with paraplegia, woman who is paralyzed, person with spinal cord injury
- congenital disability, person with a disability from birth
- person who had polio
- stay-at-home, hard for the person to get out

Using People First Language is Crucial

People First Language puts the person before the disability, and it describes who a person is not what a person has.



Person First Language

Designed to stress personhood

“person with _____” or “person who _____”

More common approach, frequently preferred by most schools, parents, and relatively neutral organizations and groups



Identity First Language

- Disability is part of a person's identity.
- Modeled after how we talk about other traits of people.
- Frequently preferred by people actively involved in disability culture, pride and advocacy.



Language Do's

- If a person says they prefer a certain type of language, use that when talking to or about them, regardless of your own preference
- Speak directly to the person to whom you are referring, never their parent, friend, caretaker, interpreter or other person they are with.



Individual Pledge

I pledge to respect all people. I will do this by using respectful language and refrain from disrespectful, mean, discriminatory, or unjust language or actions. I will try to form meaningful, respectful relationships with people who are different from me. I will make an effort to speak out against language, actions, and situations that I see which may discriminate against or unjustly exclude certain people. I will do my best to be a force for positive change, respect, and inclusion in my community.



Alter the Attitude



“The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.”

William James

Communication Tips

Physical Disabilities

Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Cognitive

Blind and Low Vision

Communication / AAC

General Communication Tips



- Don't be afraid to make a mistake.
- Always BE RESPECTFUL.
- Don't make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do. Ask before giving assistance. If you offer help and the person says "no," don't insist. If the answer is "yes," ask how you can best help, and follow directions.
- If someone with a disability is accompanied by another individual, address the person with a disability directly rather than speaking through the other person.
- Treat adults as adults.
- Expect diversity of preferences and opinions.

Communication Tips: Physical Disabilities



- Do not make assumptions about what a person can and cannot do.
- Respect the individual's personal space: personal space includes a person's wheelchair, crutches, or other mobility aid. Never move someone's crutches, walker, cane, or other mobility aid without permission
- Do not push a person's wheelchair or grab the arm of someone walking with difficulty without first asking if you can help.
- When speaking for more than a few minutes to a person using a wheelchair, try to find a seat for yourself so that the two of you are at eye level.

Communication Tips: Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- Ask the person how he or she prefers to communicate.
- Before you start to speak, make sure you have the person's attention. A wave, a light touch on the shoulder, or other visual or tactile signals are appropriate ways to get their attention.
- Speak in a clear, expressive manner. Do not over enunciate or exaggerate words.
- Unless asked, do not raise your voice. Speak in a normal tone.
- Talk directly to the person who is Deaf or hard of hearing, not to the interpreter.
- If you are speaking through an interpreter, remember that the interpreter may lag a few words behind. Pause occasionally.

Tips: Deaf/Hard of Hearing

- To facilitate speech reading: face into the light, and keep your hands and other objects away from your mouth. Face the person directly and maintain eye contact. Don't turn your back or walk around while talking. If you look away, the person might assume the conversation is over.
- While you are writing a message for someone who is Deaf or hard of hearing, don't talk, since the person cannot read your note and your lips at the same time.
- If you don't understand something, ask the person to repeat it or write it down. The goal is communication; don't pretend to understand if you did not.

Communication Tips: Cognitive Disabilities

- Treat adults with cognitive disabilities as adults.
- When speaking to someone who has a cognitive disability, try to be alert to his or her responses so that you can adjust your method of communication if necessary.
- For example, some people may benefit from simple, direct sentences or from supplementary visual forms of communication, such as gestures, diagrams, or demonstrations.
- Use language that is concrete rather than abstract.
- People with brain injuries may have short-term memory deficits and may repeat themselves or require information to be repeated.

Tips: Cognitive Disabilities

- People with auditory perceptual problems may need to have direction repeated and may take notes to help them remember direction or the sequence of tasks. They may benefit from watching a task demonstrated.
- People with perceptual or “sensory overload” problems may become disoriented or confused if there is too much to absorb at once. Provide information gradually and clearly. Reduce background noise if possible.
- Don’t pretend to understand if you do not. Ask the person to repeat what was said.
- In conversation, people with cognitive disabilities may respond slowly, so give them time.

Communication Tips: Blind, Low Vision



- It is appropriate to touch the person's arm lightly when you speak so that he or she knows you are speaking to him or her.
- Speak directly to the person with the visual disability, not through a companion or third party. Visually impaired people can hear and respond for themselves.
- Identify yourself when you approach a person who is blind. If a new person approaches, introduce him or her. Not everyone recognizes voices or remembers them.
- Don't shout. Most people who happen to be blind have normal hearing. Speak clearly and strongly if you know that an older blind person also has a hearing problem.
- Identify yourself when entering a room and let the blind person know when you are leaving. Don't leave a blind person talking to an empty room, or standing alone in empty space.

Tips: Blind, Low Vision

- Face the person and speak directly to him or her. Use a normal tone of voice.
- Don't assume that help is needed. Always ask before providing assistance.
- Never push, pull, or grab a blind person. This can be frightening and it's often embarrassing
- If you are offering direction, be as specific as possible, and point out obstacles in the path of travel.
- Alert people who are blind or visually impaired to posted information.
- Never pet, talk to or otherwise distract a service dog unless the owner has given you permission.
- Don't hesitate to use words like "see" and "look."
- Don't use hand signals or gestures.

Communication Tips: Communication Disabilities



- If you are having trouble understanding what is being said, **ask the person to repeat** rather than pretend you understand. The former is respectful and leads to accurate communication; the latter is belittling and leads to embarrassment.
- In conversation, people may respond slowly, so give them time.
- Don't try to finish sentences or guess what the person is saying.

Communication Tips: AAC Specific



- Acknowledge values and multiple modes of communication
- Attend to person and not to AAC system of another task
- Ask/determine the individual's preferences in communication interactions.

For example: Some people may prefer that you read along as they type or read the completed message. Depending on the device it can be more convenient, especially in crowds and noisy settings.

Communication Rights

- ✓ Be spoken to with respect and courtesy
- ✓ Be spoken to directly and not be spoken for or talked about in the third person while present
- ✓ Have clear, meaningful and culturally and linguistically appropriate communications

More Communication Tips



- Shake hands or hand over business cards. If the person cannot shake your hand or grasp your card, they will tell you. Do not be ashamed of your attempt, however.
- It is okay to feel nervous or uncomfortable around people with disabilities, and it's okay to admit that. It is human to feel that way at first. When you encounter these situations, **think "person" first instead of disability; you will eventually relax.**

Making the Connection

A change in Language and Attitude can change everything!



Ask it Basket - Here is your opportunity!



What are your questions?

Action Steps

Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come.

Anne Lamott

The Tools for Life Team



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Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program

Ten cartoon avatars of diverse people are arranged in a circle around the central text. Starting from the top and moving clockwise, they include: a woman with dark skin and curly black hair; a woman with light skin and long blonde hair; a woman with light skin and blonde wavy hair; a woman with light skin and long brown hair; a woman with light skin and grey hair and glasses; a man with dark skin, a beard, and glasses; a man with light skin, glasses, and a bald head; a woman with dark skin and long black hair; a woman with light skin and short pink hair; and a woman with light skin and short brown hair.

thank
you

Contact Us



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