

# **Disability Awareness, Culture & Etiquette for Full Inclusion and Empowerment**

Developing a professional understanding of disability language, and etiquette skills to further student inclusion and empowerment

**[www.ability360.org](http://www.ability360.org)**



ABILITY360®

# Ability360's Mission

ADVOCACY. INDEPENDENCE. EQUALITY.



# *Ability360: Advocacy and Programs By and For People with Disabilities*

- Advocacy / 1:1 & Systems Change
- ADA TA
- Independent Living Skills Instruction
- Early Intervention to People Newly Disabled
- Employment Assistance for Social Security Beneficiaries
  - Ticket to Work
  - Work Incentive Consulting
- Empowering Youth in Transition
- Home Modification
- Information & Referral
- Theatre360 Company
- Peer Support
- Home Care Services
- Reintegration from Nursing Homes
- Socialization Through Recreation
- Sports and Fitness Center

# Learning Objectives for Today:

1. Discuss best practices
2. Define People First Language and Identity First Language
3. Identify various disabilities and understand basic etiquette for a variety of disability constituencies.

# Definition of Disability

- A “**disability**” is a **difference** that may be physical, cognitive/intellectual, mental/psychiatric, sensory, developmental, or some combination of these. A disability may be present from birth or be acquired during a person's lifetime.
- An individual with a **disability** is defined by the **ADA** (1990) as a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.
- “Disability” used to be correlated with the inability to work. Focus now is more on functional limitations.



# Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

**Following are the six major principles of the IDEA, focusing on students' rights and the responsibilities of public schools to children with disabilities.**

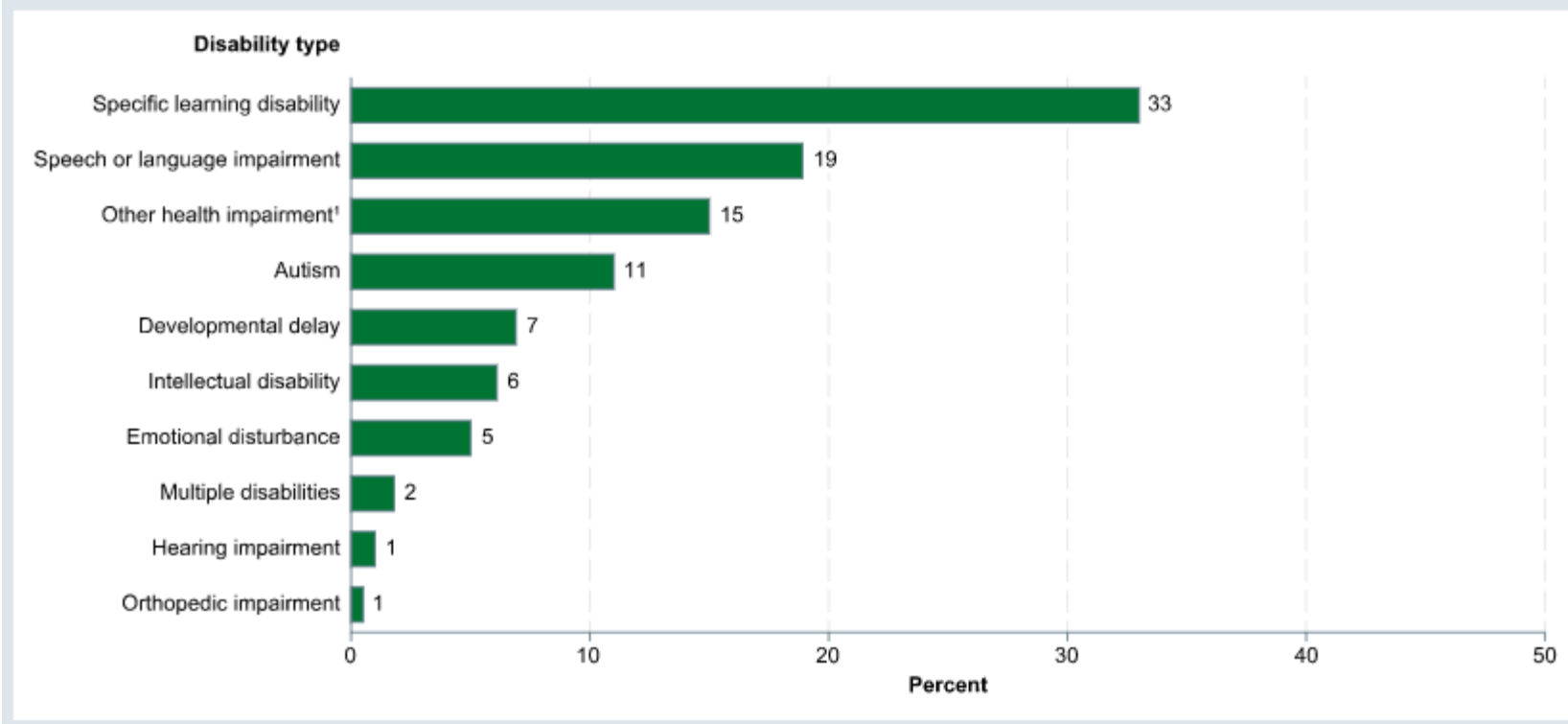
- Free Appropriate Public Education. ...
- Appropriate Evaluation. ...
- Individualized Education Plan. ...
- Least Restrictive Environment. ...
- Parent Participation. ...
- Procedural Safeguards.

<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>

- Nationally
  - Ninety-five percent of students ages 6–21 served under IDEA in fall 2019 were enrolled in regular schools.
  - In Fall 2019, among all students ages 6–21 served under IDEA, 69 percent spend most of the school day (i.e., 80 percent or more of their time) in general classes in regular schools.
- In Arizona
  - 85% of the 102,000+ students 6-21 with disabilities spent at least 40 percent of the day in regular classrooms alongside peers without disabilities. (ADE 2019)

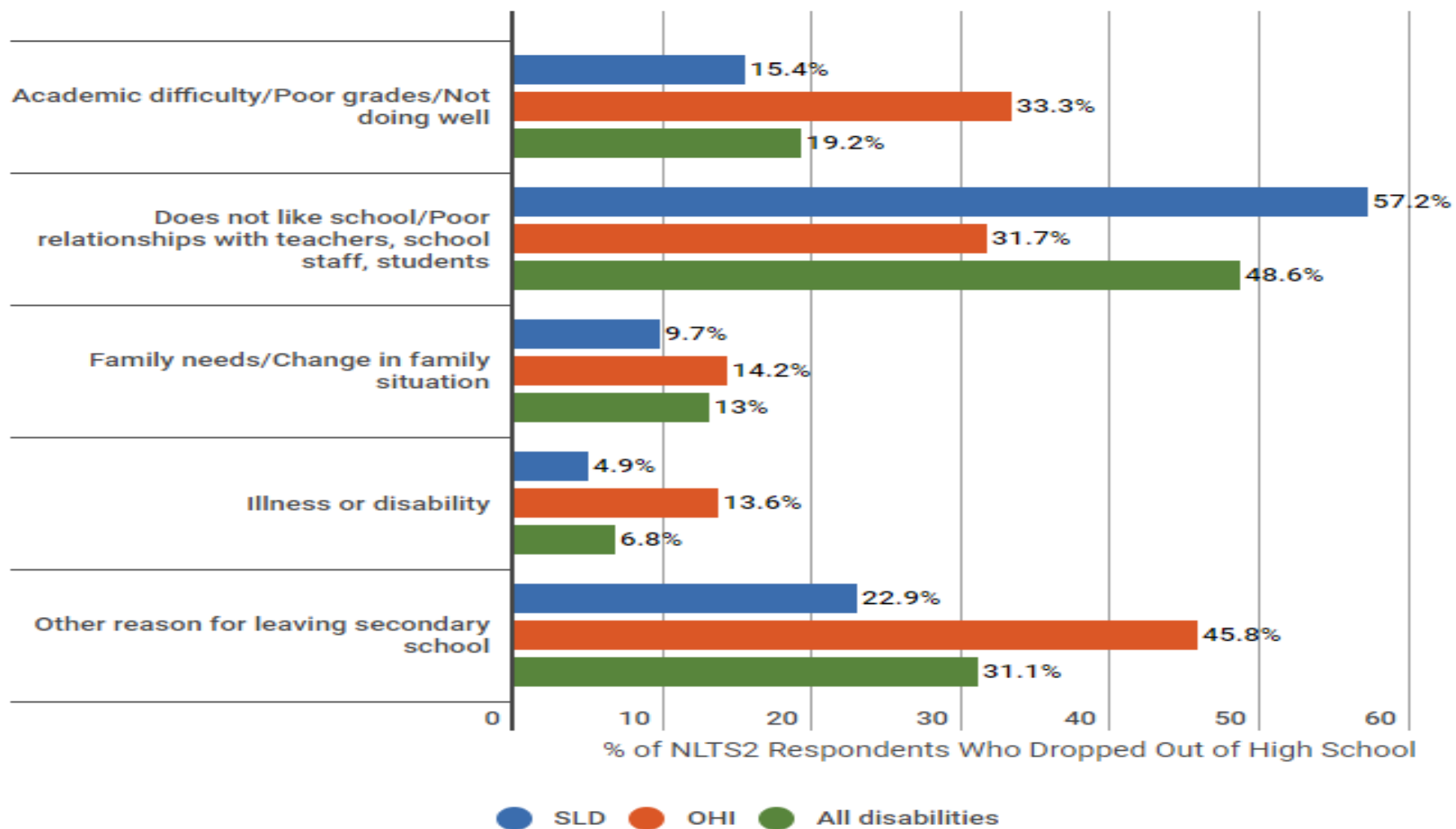
# Reality Today

**Figure 1. Percentage distribution of students ages 3–21 served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), by disability type: School year 2019–20**



National Center For Education Statistics  
<https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgg>

# Reasons Students With IEPs Gave for Dropping Out of High School



<https://www.ncld.org/research/state-of-learning-disabilities/social-emotional-and-behavioral-challenges/>

As education leaders with a duty to serve all students, including students with disabilities, we need to create environments that are empowering, respectful, and promotes their independence.



## What are best practices for working with students with disabilities?

- Belief that disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to live independently
- Belief that students with disabilities should be able to fully participate in the academic and social aspects of their education as a basic human right
- View disability as a social justice model rather than a medical model
- Acknowledge that it is often lack of access & accommodation that limits functioning, thus “disabling” a person further.
- Use a strength-based perspective and person-centered approach



## Unfortunately...

- People hold emotions, fears, and biases that we carry about differences.
- People are hesitant to recognize those in ourselves and/or society.

## Labels: By Theatre360



# Creative Responses



# “People First” Language

- “People First” language reflects good manners, not “political correctness,” and it was started by individuals who did not want to be labeled or have their disability define them.
- It helps us describe what a person has, not who a person is.
- A person’s self image is tied to the words used about him or her.



# Examples of “People First” Language

- Children/adults with disabilities
- **NOT** Handicapped/ the disabled/ special needs
- He has a cognitive or intellectual disability
- **NOT** He's a retard/ mentally retarded
- He receives special education services
- **NOT** He's in “special ed/ a SpEd kid”
- She has a brain injury
- **NOT** She's “brain damaged”
- She uses a wheelchair
- **NOT** She's in a wheelchair or a “wheelchair” person
- Congenital/birth disability
- **NOT** Birth defect
- “Accessible” parking, hotel room
- **NOT** “Handicapped” parking, hotel room, etc.
- Stroke survivor/Cancer survivor
- **NOT** Stroke/Cancer Victim

# General Disability Etiquette



**Remember: Many students with disabilities can and do work, learn and play**

- **Don't make assumptions** based on experiences you have had with others with the same diagnosis or what you see in the media!
- Do appreciate and emphasize what the person can do.
- Do follow their lead/instructions. They are an expert on themselves.

# General Disability Etiquette, cont'd.

- Allow children to ask questions about disabilities. Children have a natural curiosity that needs to be satisfied so they do not develop fearful or misleading attitudes.
- Create space for both students with or without disabilities talk about fears or concerns.
- Offer your help if you think it is needed, but don't be surprised or offended if the person would rather do it themselves. If you are uncertain how to assist, ask! **ALWAYS ASK FIRST!**

# Invisible or Hidden Disabilities

- Disabilities that affect learning, mobility, balance, thinking, memory, strength, energy, sleep, chronic pain, environmental sensitivities but may not be seen
- Often experience disability oppression as much as people with visible disabilities
- Must cope with disbelief/ distrust/ lack of respect or consideration even among their closest friends and relatives
- **When it comes to accommodations:** Listen to them, believe them, follow their lead for accommodation needs as best you can.

## Persons Using Wheelchairs

- Wheelchair use provides freedom. Don't assume that using a wheelchair is in itself a tragedy.
- Some chair users can walk short distances; the chair helps them conserve energy.
- Wheelchair users are not necessarily "sick".

## Persons using Mobility Devices

### *Etiquette – Wheelchair/Scooter/Cane*

- Speak directly to the person, and if the conversation lasts more than a few minutes, sit down or kneel to get yourself on the same level as the person.
- Keep the device within reaching distance when a person transfers out to a chair, toilet, car or other object.
- Don't hang or lean on the device unless you have the person's permission.

# Speech Disabilities

- Examples:
  - Stuttering
  - Aphasia – word confusion
  - Delayed speech



# Speech Disabilities

## *Etiquette/ Accommodations*

- Be patient. Do not try to finish the person's sentences. Wait for the information.
- If you don't understand, don't pretend you do.
- Ask person to say it again if you cannot understand what they are saying.
- Paraphrase to make sure you understood.
- Ask the person what is the best way to communicate. (i.e. write or type their message, point to pictures or the alphabet)

## Cognitive and Learning Disabilities

Examples:

- Challenges with memory or processing information
- Fixed thinking
- Social awareness
- Trouble with organization

# Cognitive and Learning Disabilities

Challenges:

- Thinking in literal or concrete ways.

  - Humor, metaphors, concept of time

- People pleasing behaviors

  - Won't say if they don't understand and are embarrassed to say they don't understand and try to hide their level of confusion.

- Often individuals encounter stigma and labels.

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## Cognitive and Learning Disabilities *Etiquette/Accommodations*

- Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.
- May be sensitive to tone of voice.
- Don't rush, trust is built slowly.
- You should treat adults as adults.
- Encourage self-advocacy and opportunities for autonomy.

# Deafness

## *Etiquette/Accommodations*

Deafness means an extreme inability to discriminate conversational speech through the ear. Majority of population is currently late-deafened

- Speak clearly and slowly, but without exaggerating your lip movements or shouting. If difficulty persists, write down what you are saying.
- Place yourself facing the light source and keep hands, cigarettes, and food away from your mouth when talking.
- When an interpreter accompanies a person, direct your remarks to the person rather than to the interpreter.
- Get the person's attention with a wave of the hand, or a tap on the shoulder.
- Ask if they read lips.

# Hearing Loss *Etiquette*

Those with a lesser degree of hearing loss are called ***hard of hearing*** (*not hearing impaired*).

- Most people who have hearing loss do not read lips.
- Hearing aids increase volume, not necessarily clarity.
- Change the words around or say it another way.
- Get the person's attention with a wave of the hand, or tap on the shoulder.
- Speak clearly and slowly, but without exaggerating your lip movements or shouting. If difficulty persists, write down what you are saying

# Blindness & Vision Loss

**Everyone is unique. You may or may not recognize a person who has vision loss**

- May have some vision or complete loss of sight
- Blind from birth or late-blind
- Deaf Blind – more common later in life
- Most late sight loss is due to illness, accidents, or injury to head

# Blind and Vision Loss ABILITY360<sup>®</sup>

## *Etiquette*

- Do not grab a person's cane or arm. If you are walking with a person who is blind.
- Offer your arm for them to hold. Describe where you're going.
- Ask the person what alternative format they prefer. Not all visually-impaired people read Braille.
- When meeting or speaking with someone who is sight-impaired, always identify yourself before speaking. Call them by name.
- It is OK to use accepted common phrases such as "see you later," "look," or "see."
- When a guide dog is working, don't pet or distract

# Mental Health Disabilities

- Mental and Behavioral health covers a wide range of conditions, ranging from anxiety and depression to schizophrenia and severe mental illness.
- It may be an emotional condition that the person is dealing with, or a progressively debilitating disease
- Individuals living with serious mental illness face an increased risk of having chronic medical conditions.
- Adults living with serious mental illness die on average 25 years earlier than other Americans, largely due to treatable medical conditions.

Source: National Alliance for the Mentally Ill [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

# Mental Health

## Disabilities *Etiquette*

- Be careful about assumptions about their ability to have good judgment or to cope with stress
- Do not assume “bad” behavior is being done “on purpose” or to manipulate
- Empower the individual - encourage them to think about their personal strengths, their individual gifts/talents.
- Avoid giving advice
- If someone with a psychiatric disability gets upset, ask calmly if there is anything you can do to help and then respect their wishes
- Know district personnel and protocols for supporting students with mental health disabilities

## In Conclusion

- **Disability is a natural part of living.** People with disabilities are not stereotypes. They don't want to be "special" or "courageous," heroes or villains.
- **Using People First Language and Identity** helps us talk about a person and their disability in a way that empowers them and is the language they choose.
- **You have the power!** Simple awareness and etiquette can help us be effective and empowering in our interactions with people with disabilities.
- **If you are not sure how to help, just ask!**



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