



# ***RUSH COUNTY***

## ***“Disability Guidelines and Etiquette Handbook for Employees”***



RUSH COUNTY Disability Etiquette Handbook  
(updated December-2025)

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*The Disability Etiquette Handbook is the property of RUSH COUNTY. It may not be changed or modified without the written permission of the RUSH COUNTY ADA Coordinator.*

This handbook will offer important information on the etiquette that should be used by each of the company's employees to ensure the company's ongoing commitment to making *RUSH COUNTY* the best it can be. It is yet another step toward making *RUSH COUNTY* a facility that includes all of its citizens and a better place for all whom visit, live and work here.

### *Providing Equally Effective Communication*

Under Title III of the ADA, all entities operating places of Public Accommodation are required to take steps to ensure that their communications with people with disabilities are as effective as communications with others. This requirement is referred to as "effective communication".

Simply put "effective communication" means that whatever is written or spoken must be as clear and understandable to people with disabilities as it is for people who do not have disabilities.

Most individuals with disabilities communicate the same way that people without disabilities communicate. However, for people who have disabilities that affect hearing, seeing, speaking, reading, writing, or understanding may use to communicate in ways other than people who do not.

The Effective communication requirement applies to ALL members of the public with disabilities, including job applicants, program participants, an even people who simply want to contact a place of public accommodation seeking information about programs, services or activities.

## *Auxiliary Aids and Services*

Because of the ADA Effective Communication requirements, *RUSH COUNTY* must provide appropriate auxiliary aids and services for people with disabilities upon request. One thing to remember **is not all ways work for all people with disabilities or even for people with one type of disability. You must consult with the individual to determine what is effective for him or her.**

Auxiliary Aids and services are devices or services that make effective communication possible for people with a disability.

### **Examples of auxiliary aids and services**

#### **For individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing include**

- qualified interpreters
- note takers
- computer-aided transcription services
- written materials
- telephone handset amplifiers
- assistive listening systems
- telephones compatible with hearing aids
- closed caption decoders
- open and closed captioning
- telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDD's)
- videotext displays
- exchange of written notes

#### **For individuals with vision impairments include**

- qualified readers
- taped texts
- audio recordings
- Braille materials
- large print materials
- assistance in locating items

#### **For individuals with speech impairments include**

- TDD's
- computer terminals
- speech synthesizers
- communication boards

For individuals with Manual Impairments include

- Staff will assist those who have difficulty in manipulation print materials by holding the materials and turning pages.
- Note-takers
- Computer-aided transcription services(CART)
- Speaker phones

## Appropriate Language and Etiquette

### *Distinction between Disability and Handicap*

A **Disability** is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease, which may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function. Some people with disabilities have one or more disabilities.

A **Handicap** is a physical or attitudinal constraint that is imposed upon a person, regardless of whether that person has a disability. Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary defines handicap as to put at a disadvantage.

Most people grew up in a time when it was perfectly acceptable to refer to a person with a disability as "handicapped". We also thought of people as "wheelchair bound", "a victim of", or "suffering from". These terms are outdated and no longer acceptable. They should not be used by *RUSH COUNTY* staff while transacting business. The origin of the word handicapped is believed by many to come from a person with a Disability using their cap in hand to beg for food or money. Thus, the use of the term today conjures up a negative or demeaning connotation. "Wheelchair bound" and "suffering from" are both terms found to be objectionable as they call attention in a rather dramatic fashion to a person's disability

Today, we use a concept known as "person first language". The thinking behind person first language is that a disability is merely a single characteristic of the individual's personhood. We all have characteristics, race, gender, ethnic, etc. A person with a disability has a characteristic of a disability. It is inappropriate to label them by that characteristic, thus calling undue attention to the disability. It is more appropriate to see the person first, thus the language talks about "a person with a disability".

Below please find a list of outdated terms and terms which are acceptable for use in today's business/social world.

#### **Do not Use**

Handicapped  
Victim of  
Challenged  
Wheelchair bound  
Epileptic  
Mentally Retarded  
Suffering from  
Special  
Hearing Impaired

#### **Preferable Terms**

Person with a disability  
Person with a disability  
Person with a disability  
Person with mobility impairment  
Person with a seizure disorder  
Person with an intellectual disability  
Person with a disability  
Person with a disability  
Person who is deaf or hard of hearing

***Please refer to the glossary of Acceptable Terms for additional preferable terms to be used by RUSH COUNTY employees.***

## Conversation Etiquette

When talking to a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person, rather than through a companion who may be along.

Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use accepted common expressions such as "See you later" or "Got to be running along" that seem to relate to the person's disability.

To get the attention of a person with a hearing impairment, tap the person on the shoulder or wave your hand. Look directly at the person and speak clearly, naturally and slowly to establish if the person can read lips. Not all people with hearing impairments can lip-read. Those who can, will rely on facial expression and other body language to help in understanding. Show consideration by placing yourself facing the light source and keeping your hands, cigarettes and food away from your mouth when speaking. Keep mustaches well-trimmed. Shouting won't help. Written notes may.

When talking with a person in a wheelchair for more than a few minutes, use a chair, whenever possible, in order to place yourself at the person's eye level to facilitate conversation.

When greeting a person with a severe loss of vision, always identify yourself and others who may be with you.

**EXAMPLE:** *On my right is Penelope Potts.*

When conversing in a group, give a vocal cue by announcing the name of the person to whom you are speaking. Speak in a normal tone of voice, indicate in advance when you will be moving from one place to another and let it be known when the conversation is at an end.

Listen attentively when you're talking to a person who has speech impairment. Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting. Exercise patience rather than attempting to speak for a person with speech difficulty. When necessary, ask short questions that require short answers or a nod or a shake of the head. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. If you have difficulty communicating, be willing to repeat or rephrase a question. Open-ended questions are more appropriate than closed-ended questions.

**EXAMPLE:**

**Closed-Ended Question:** "You were a tax accountant in XYZ Company in the corporate planning department for seven years. What did you do there?"

**Open-Ended Question:** "Tell me about your recent position as a tax accountant."

Do not shout at a hearing impaired person. Shouting distorts sounds accepted through hearing aids and inhibits lip reading. Do not shout at a person who is blind or visually impaired -- he or she can hear you!

To facilitate conversation, be prepared to offer a visual cue to a hearing impaired person or an audible cue to a vision impaired person, especially when more than one person is speaking.

### ***Sign Language Interpreter's:***

When using the services of a sign language interpreter, it is important to remember to speak directly to the person who is deaf or hard of hearing. The sign language interpreter is functioning only as a conduit of the communication and is not a part of the conversation. The code of ethics that sign language interpreters adhere to mandates strict confidentiality of communications.

### ***Blind or Low Vision:***

When giving directions to a person who is blind or has low vision, it is very important to provide very concise information. For example, rather than saying "the restroom is over here", one would say "the women's rest room is 30 feet down the corridor on the right hand side". When initiating a conversation with a person who is blind it is advisable to identify yourself and anyone with you so that they know who they are talking with. It is also important to let the blind person know when you are leaving. This avoids the situation where the blind person will continue to talking to you after you have departed. It is perfectly acceptable when speaking to a person who is blind to use words such as "see" or "show". It is also acceptable to suggest to a wheel chair user that you walk to the corner deli with them to have lunch. Or in another instance, to ask a person who is deaf if they have heard from a friend lately. Attempting to avoid terms normally used in conversation will only draw attention to the persons disability and make the communication with them seem awkward or artificial.

It is permissible to ask a person with a disability if they need your assistance. They may say no, as many persons with disabilities prefer to function independently. If they say yes to your offer, your next question should be, "how may I assist you"? Taking guidance from the person with the disability will help make your efforts more effective.

### ***Person with Mobility Impairment:***

When interacting with a person with a wheel chair do not lean on or touch their space. When possible, it is helpful to sit next to them, thus adjusting your eye level to theirs, and therefore, avoiding the difficulty inherent to them in continually looking up. In customer service situations, speak directly to the person with the disability; never make inquiries to their companion regarding what service the person with the disability is requesting. When dining with a companion who is blind it is appropriate to orient them to their meal upon the delivery. This is done by saying, "you have an open faced sandwich on the left side of your plate with French fries on the right and your coffee is at 10:00". This simple statement typically assists the person in creating a more comfortable dining experience.



## *Reception Etiquette*

Know where accessible restrooms, drinking fountains and telephones are located. If such facilities are not available, be ready to offer alternatives, such as the private or employee restroom, a glass of water or your desk phone.

Use a normal tone of voice when extending a verbal welcome. Do not raise your voice unless requested.

When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands.

Shaking hands with the left hand is acceptable.

For those who cannot shake hands, touch the person on the shoulder or arm to welcome and acknowledge their presence.

Treat adults in a manner befitting adults:

Call a person by his or her first name only when extending that familiarity to all others present.

Never patronize people using wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.

When addressing a person who uses a wheelchair, never lean on the person's wheelchair. The chair is part of the space that belongs to the person who uses it.

When talking with a person with a disability, look at and speak directly to that person rather than through a companion who may be along.

If an interpreter is present, speak to the person who has scheduled the appointment, not to the interpreter. Always maintain eye contact with the applicant, not the interpreter.

Offer assistance in a dignified manner with sensitivity and respect. Be prepared to have the offer declined. Do not proceed to assist if your offer to assist is declined. If the offer is accepted, listen to or accept instructions.

Allow a person with a visual impairment to take your arm (at or about the elbow.) This will enable you to guide rather than propel or lead the person.

Offer to hold or carry packages in a welcoming manner. Example: "May I help you with your package?"

When offering to hand a coat or umbrella, do not offer to hand a cane or crutches unless the individual requests otherwise.

## ***Service Animals***

### **Background**

Over 12,000 people with disabilities use the aid of service animals. Although the most familiar types of service animals are guide dogs used by people who are blind, service animals are assisting persons who have other disabilities as well. Many disabling conditions are invisible. Therefore, every person who is accompanied by a service animal may or may not "look" disabled. A service animal is NOT required to have any special certification.

### **What is a Service Animal?**

A service animal is **NOT** a pet!

### **According to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)**

A service animal is any animal that has been individually trained to provide assistance or perform tasks for the benefit of a person with a physical or mental disability which substantially limits one or more major life functions.

### **Service Animal Access**

The civil rights of persons with disabilities to be accompanied by their service animals in all places of public and housing accommodations is protected by the following Federal laws:

- Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA (1990)
- Air Carrier Access Act (1986)
- Fair Housing Amendments Act (1988)
- Rehabilitation Act (1973)

### **Service Dog Etiquette**

- Do not touch the Service Animal, or the person it assists, without permission.
- Do not make noises at the Service Animal; it may distract the animal from doing its job.
- Do not feed the Service Animal; it may disrupt his/her schedule.
- Do not be offended if the person does not feel like discussing his/her disability or the assistance the Service Animal provides. Not everyone wants to be a walking-talking "show and tell" exhibit.

**Limited inquires or questions that a person with an animal, in your facility, may be asked to ensure it is a service animal**

1. Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability? Yes or No answer with no other explanation is appropriate.
2. What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?

## ***Mobility Devices***

The Department of Justice has issued revised ADA Title III regulations which took effect March 15, 2011. These regulations provide a definition of a wheelchair and other power-driven mobility devices and add additional provisions identifying where they can be used.

### **Wheelchair**

A wheelchair is a manually operated or power-driven device designed primarily for use by an individual with a mobility disability for the main purpose of indoor, or of both indoor and outdoor, locomotion. Individuals with mobility disabilities must be permitted to use wheelchairs and manually powered mobility aids, i.e., walkers, crutches, canes, braces, or other similar devices designed for use by individuals with mobility disabilities, in any areas open to pedestrian traffic.

### **Other Power-Driven Mobility Device (OPDMD)**

An OPDMD is any mobility device powered by batteries, fuel, or other engines that is used by individuals with mobility disabilities for the purpose of locomotion, whether or not it was designed primarily for use by individuals with mobility disabilities.

OPDMDs may include

- golf cars
- electronic personal assistance mobility devices, such as the Segway ® Personal Transporter (PT)
- any mobility device that is not a wheelchair, which is designed to operate in areas without defined pedestrian routes.

*Rush County* has reasonable modifications in their policies, practices, or procedures to permit individuals with mobility disabilities to use OPDMDs unless the management can demonstrate that the class of OPDMDs cannot be operated in accordance with legitimate safety requirements adopted by the entity.

*Rush County* must assess the following factors to determine whether a particular OPDMD can be allowed in a specific facility as a reasonable modification:

- The type, size, weight, dimensions, and speed of the device.
- The facility's volume of pedestrian traffic (which may vary at different times of the day, week, month, or year).

- The facility's design and operational characteristics (e.g., whether its service, program, or activity is conducted indoors, its square footage, the density and placement of stationary devices, and the availability of storage for the device, if requested by the user).
- Whether legitimate safety requirements can be established to permit the safe operation of the OPDMD in the specific facility.
- Whether the use of the OPDMD creates a substantial risk of serious harm to the immediate environment or natural or cultural resources, or poses a conflict with Federal land management laws and regulations.

## **Inquiries**

*Rush County* employees shall not ask an individual using a wheelchair or OPDMD questions about the nature and extent of the individual's disability.

*RUSH COUNTY* employees may ask a person using an OPDMD to provide a credible assurance that the mobility device is required because of the person's mobility disability. If the management permits the use of a class of OPDMDs by individuals with mobility disabilities, employees shall accept the following as credible assurance:

- Presentation of a valid, State-issued, disability parking placard or card, or other State-issued proof of disability. A valid disability placard or card is one that is presented by the individual to whom it was issued and is otherwise in compliance with the State of Issuance's requirements.
- A verbal statement, not contradicted by observable fact, that the OPDMD is being used by a person with a mobility disability.

## Television, Videos, & Telephones

The effective communication requirement also covers public television programs; videos produced by *Rush County*, and telephone communications. These communications must be accessible to people with disabilities.

### Public Television and Videos

When *Rush County* produces public television programs or videos, they must be accessible. A common way of making them accessible to people who are unable to hear the audio portion of these productions is closed captioning. For persons who are blind or have low vision, detailed audio description may be added to describe important visual images.

### Telephone Communications

Since *Rush County* use telephones, the management must provide equally effective communication to individuals with disabilities. There are two common ways that people who are deaf or hard of hearing and those with speech impairments use telecommunication. One way is through the use of teletypewriters (TTYs) or computer equipment with TTY capability to place telephone calls. A TTY is a device on which you can type and receive text messages. For a TTY to be used, both parties to the conversation must have a TTY or a computer with TTY capability. If TTYs are provided for employees who handle incoming calls, be sure that these employees are trained and receive periodic refreshers on how to communicate using this equipment.

A second way is by utilizing telephone relay services or video relay services. *RUSH COUNTY* utilizes Relay Indiana. Relay Indiana is a telephone relay service that provides telephone accessibility for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired. It also enables standard telephone users to communicate with the hearing and speech impaired without the use of a teletypewriter (TTY).

You can reach the local relay service for any state by dialing 711, or call 800-743-3333 to reach Relay Indiana from anywhere in the US. Local calls are free of charge. Long distance calls are billed to the caller's long distance provider. Relay Indiana also provides Video relay services for the *RUSH COUNTY* and involve a relay operator who uses both a standard telephone and a computer video terminal to communicate voice messages in sign language to the computer video terminal user and to voice the sign language messages to the standard telephone user.

The company employees must be instructed to accept and handle relayed calls in the normal course of business. Untrained individuals frequently mistake relay calls for telemarketing or collect calls and refuse to accept them. They also may mistakenly assume that deaf people must come into a physical office to handle a matter in person even though other people are allowed to handle the same matter over the telephone.

## CALLING RELAY INDIANA

Dial 711 — You can easily call 711 from anywhere in the nation and connect with any relay service. While in Indiana, if you dial 711, you will connect with Relay Indiana.

Dial 800-743-3333 and you can still be connected with Relay Indiana from anywhere in the nation.



### Relay Call Process:

- Please have the telephone number and the name of the person you want to call ready for a quicker dial out.
- If there are extension numbers or prompts to follow and you already are aware of these, please have them ready to give to the Agent before they place the call.
- Say or type Go Ahead (GA) when you have finished your part of the conversation. When you hear or read this, please remember it is your turn to continue the conversation. They must read everything typed to the hearing person, even the things you type in parentheses.
- The Agents must type everything they hear including background noises. The Agent is not permitted to make judgment calls on how a customer feels during a relay call; however, you can ask how “loud” the voice sounds.

### Types of Relay Calls:

- **Voice user:** For a call from a standard telephone to someone who uses special equipment to communicate
- **TTY:** For hearing impaired individuals who do not use a standard telephone
- **Voice Carry Over (VCO):** For people who have difficulty hearing, but have no problem speaking distinctly. Using a specially equipped phone, the VCO user speaks directly to the second party. As the second party replies, a communications assistant types the reply, which is then displayed on the VCO user's text screen.
- **Hearing Carry Over (HCO):** For people who can hear clearly, but have speech impairments. Using a TTY, the HCO user types a communication to the second party. A communications assistant reads the communication to the second party, who then can reply by speaking directly to the HCO user.
- **Computer ASCII:** Allows a person to contact Relay Indiana via a computer connected to the Internet
- **Speech to speech:** For people who can hear, but have difficulties with unclear speech
- **Spanish to Spanish:** For people who wish to converse in Spanish
- **Video Relay Service (VRS):** For people who wish to use American Sign Language (ASL) to converse. The interpreter/operator will appear on the screen and will place the call in the same way as a standard relay call.
- **Internet Relay (SRO):** Allows for a more real-time conversation than standard TTY relay service, as users can see what they are typing and what the relay operator is typing at the same time.
- **CapTel (Captioned Telephone):** An enhanced VCO service using voice to text recognition; the relay operator "re-voices" the words of the other party simultaneously, and the operator's computer sends the text to the CapTel user. Allows for direct dialing for the CapTel user.
- **D-Link (Video Telephone):** Allows users with a high-speed Internet connection to use ASL, which is interpreted by the relay operator.

In most types of relay calls described above, to make communication between both parties as easy as possible, both parties say, "Go ahead", or type GA, to signal the communications assistant to begin relaying the communication. With newer technologies like the Internet Relay service, parties are able to have a more natural conversation. If you receive a phone call from a Relay Indiana user, the communications assistant first will explain the service to you and ask if you have ever



taken a relay call before. After a brief introduction, the call will begin. Address the other party directly rather than saying "tell him" or "tell her".

### ***Glossary of Acceptable Terms***

<b>Acceptable Terms</b>	<b>Unacceptable Terms</b>
Person with a disability	Cripple, cripples, gimp/gimpy - the image conveyed is of a twisted, deformed, useless body.
Disability, a general term used for functional limitation that interferes with a person's ability, for example, to walk, hear or lift. It may refer to a physical, mental sensory condition.	Handicap, handicapped person or handicapped.
People with cerebral palsy, people with spinal cord injury, polio, a stroke, etc., or a person who has multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, arthritis, etc.	Victim. People with disabilities do not like to be perceived as victims for the rest of their lives, long after any victimization has occurred.
Has a disability, has a condition of (spina bifida, etc.), or born without legs, etc.	Defective, defect, deformed, vegetable. These words are offensive, dehumanizing, degrading and stigmatizing.
Deafness/hearing impairment. Deafness refers to a person who has a total loss of hearing. Hearing impairment refers to a person who has a partial loss of hearing. Hearing impairment refers to a person who has a partial loss of hearing within a range from slight to severe. Hard of hearing describes a hearing-impaired person who communicates through speaking and speech-reading, and who usually has listening and hearing abilities adequate for ordinary telephone communication. Many hard of hearing individuals use a hearing aid.	Deaf and dumb is as bad as it sounds. The inability to hear or speak does not indicate intelligence.
Intellectually disabled	Mentally Retarded, moron, imbecile, and idiot, These are offensive to people who bear the label.
Use a wheelchair or crutches; a wheelchair user; walks with crutches.	Confined/restricted to a wheelchair; wheelchair bound. Most people who use a wheelchair or mobility devices do not regard them as confining. They are viewed as liberating; a

	means of getting around.
Able-bodied; able to walk, see, hear, etc.; people who are not disabled.	Healthy, when used to contrast with "disabled". Healthy implies that the person with a disability is unhealthy. Many people with disabilities have excellent health.
People who do not have a disability.	Normal, When used as the opposite of disabled, this implies that the person is abnormal. No one wants to be labeled as abnormal.
A person who has (name of disability.) Example: A person who has multiple sclerosis.	Afflicted with, suffers from. Most people with disabilities do not regard themselves as afflicted or suffering continually. Afflicted: a disability is not an affliction.

## *RUSH COUNTY* Reference Guide:

### **Written materials:**

Provided by each department according to subject content.

### **Note Takers:**

Contact *RUSH COUNTY* Managers Office if assistance is needed.

### **Braille / Large Print Materials:**

gh,LLC, 700 Farabee Court Lafayette, In 47905

(p)765-269-4202

### **Interpreter's for the Deaf:**

Deaf Services Unlimited

Des Moines, IA

(Ph.) 888-685-6954

### **Telecommunication TTY**

Relay Indiana – dial 711 if within the state of Indiana.

800-743-3333 to connect to Relay Indiana from anywhere.