

Communicating and Providing Information Tip Sheet

With the National Disability Insurance Scheme, now known as DisabilityCare Australia, services will be provided to people with disability from a range of organisations. These organisations will need to have a good understanding about communication and how information can be provided to people with disability.

Different people will have different communication needs. Good communication allows people with disability to make choices and be in control of their lives. This tip sheet provides general advice to organisations about communicating with, and providing information to people with disability.

General Tips for Communicating with People with Disability:

- Tailor your communication to the needs of the person. If possible, try to learn how the person prefers to communicate before you meet with them;
- When unsure of the person's ability, assume that he/she understands and then adjust your communication style accordingly;
- Be patient and allow enough time for the person to respond;
- Use age-appropriate and respectful language;
- Use person first language, for example, person with disability (not disabled person) and person who uses a wheelchair (not wheelchair user or wheelchair bound);
- Always acknowledge and speak to the person with disability, even if they are with a carer;
- Do not shout;
- If you have not understood something, ask the person to repeat himself/herself rather than pretend to understand;
- Check that the person has understood what has been said. If the person has not understood, try rephrasing or paraphrasing;
- Depending on the person, you may need to simplify your language; and
- If necessary, use aids when communicating and providing information (see below).

General Tips for Providing Information to People with Disability:

We all prefer to receive information in different ways. Providing information about your service in different formats (and with varying degrees of detail) might help you better meet the communication needs of people. Different formats include print (e.g., pamphlets, handouts) and digital media (e.g., film clips with transcripts, podcasts). In developing print materials, consider using Plain and/or Easy English (visit <http://www.scopevic.org.au/index.php/site/whatweoffer/communicationresourcecentre> for assistance). Websites should adhere to Web Accessibility Guidelines.

