

People with disabilities *can* and *do* live meaningful and independent lives.

Did you know?

- 1 in every 5 Mississippians have a disability and as the population ages that number will increase.
- People with disabilities travel, shop and do their business in Mississippi communities with friends and families, just like everyone else.
- Treating all of your customers with individual respect and courtesy is the first and easiest way to create good customer service.
- You can broaden your customer base by welcoming everyone to your place of business, including customers with disabilities. By learning how to serve people with disabilities, you can attract more customers and improve your customer service for all.



ACCESS IS GOOD BUSINESS



OUR COMMITMENT

The MSCCD is committed to moving towards a State in which people with disabilities will not face any new barriers, and barriers that exist now are identified and removed.

This brochure will provide you with an overview of good practices that can be shared with your staff, and employees to provide **Accessibility for All.**

**2 Old River Place, Suite A
Jackson, MS 39202
1-601-969-0601 1-800-721-7255
Relay 711
Fax 601-709-0250
www.msccd.org**



**Customer Service
Sensitivity & Awareness
Business Hints and Tips**

What is a Barrier to Accessibility?

Anything that prevents a person from fully participating in all aspects of society

including, but not limited to:

- Physical
- Architecture
- Information
- Communication
- Attitude
- Technology
- Policy
- Practice

Why Change?

There are over 600,000 people in Mississippi with disabilities. This number is expected to increase as the population ages because the incidence of disability increases with age.

More people are choosing home and community based services so they can stay in their homes and age in place rather than nursing facility placement or institutional long term care.

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the 1999 U.S. Supreme Court Olmstead decision implementation & enforcement standards relating to accessibility have made access to the community possible for this population and their families.

The ADA is designed to ensure that cities, towns, hospitals, schools, colleges, public transportation providers, government agencies, the private sector, and people with disabilities can take part in an **Accessible Mississippi**.

Choose Different Words

The blind or visually impaired.

~ *A person who is blind or person with a visual impairment* ~

Wheelchair bound or confined to wheelchair

~ *Person who uses a wheelchair* ~

Epileptic

~ *Person who has epilepsy* ~

Handicapped / Invalid

~ *Person with a disability* ~

Insane, lunatic, mental patient, psycho, crazy, idiot, etc.

~ *Person with a mental health disability* ~

Mentally retarded, feeble-minded, mongoloid, etc.

~ *Person with an intellectual disability* ~

Handicapped parking, washroom

~ *Accessible parking, Accessible washrooms* ~

Fit, attack, spell

~ *Seizure* ~

Images that isolate a person with disabilities

~ *Images of person with disabilities Participating in society* ~

Good Business

- Treat people with disabilities with the same respect and consideration as anyone else.
- Speak directly to a person with a disability, not to their attendant or companion.
- Patience, optimism, and willingness are your best communication tools.
- Relax, people with disabilities are just people.
- Don't make assumptions about a disability a person has.
- Take the time to get to know your customers as some disabilities are not visible
- Some kinds of disabilities may cause customers to take longer to understand and respond.
- If you're not sure what to do, ask your customer, "How may I help you?"
- If you can't understand what someone is saying, just politely ask again or try another means of communication like writing notes or reading body language.
- Ask before you offer to help. Customers with disabilities know if they need help and how you can provide it.
- Look at your customer, but don't stare.
- Use plain language and speak with short basic sentences.
- Ask permission before touching an assistive device such as a wheelchair, walker or service animal.

ABILITY NOT DISABILITY