

Communicating with Employees

Advocate, Communicate, Educate: ACE It!

The *ACE It!* series is designed to help you “ACE” any conversations you may have with potential employers by knowing how best to **Advocate** for your students, inform the employer how to effectively **Communicate** with employees with disabilities, and **Educate** the employer about workplace accommodations.

C: Communicate

When a student comes to you for a job referral, you may find yourself having to discuss disability-related topics about which the employer has questions.

Communication is one of the top concerns employers raise when hiring an individual with a disability. Let them know that communicating with an employee with a disability need not be awkward,

uncomfortable, or intimidating, because it’s really not that different from communicating with anyone else. These simple tips have proven successful in helping to ensure clear and effective communication:



- If you’re unsure what to say to the employer about the student’s preferences, consult with the student in advance.
- Encourage the employer to not make assumptions about communicating with the student. Instead, if they feel unsure, advise them to simply ask the student.
- Explain to the employer how you have effectively communicated with the student.
- Be prepared to offer information regarding communication-related accommodations, such as an interpreter.

In addition, share these specific communication strategies with the employer:

- Approach the student as you would anyone else.
- Speak directly to the student.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Listen attentively.
- Do not rush the student while they speak, try to finish their sentence for them, or talk over them.
- Be patient and respectful.

Remind the employer that, by and large, communicating with an employee with disabilities is the same as communicating with any employee. They are likely already used to utilizing multiple strategies to make workplace communication more effective with their employees without disabilities, and many of those same strategies will also work for an employee with a disability.

Additional Resources

- ADA Effective Communication - <https://www.ada.gov/effective-comm.htm>
- Office of Disability Employment Policy: Effective Interaction
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/publications/fact-sheets/effective-interaction-communicating-with-and-about-people-with-disabilities-in-the-workplace>
(<https://tinyurl.com/aaeffectiveinteraction>)
- Working Together: Deaf & Hearing People - <http://workingtogether.deaftec.org>
- Disability Etiquette: A Starting Guide
<https://disabilityin.org/resource/disability-etiquette>
- Job Accommodation Network (JAN) - <https://askjan.org>
- Getting to Equal: The Disability Inclusion Advantage
https://www.accenture.com/_acnmedia/PDF-89/Accenture-Disability-Inclusion-Research-Report.pdf (<https://tinyurl.com/aagettingequal>)



Developed in conjunction with DeafTEC, part of the Rochester Institute of Technology: <http://deaftec.org>



For more accessibility resources like this, please visit the AccessATE web site at <http://accessate.net>

AccessATE is funded by the National Science Foundation under DUE#1836721. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.