

NapervilleWorks

Tips for Communicating with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Each of our candidates for employment is unique, with different strengths and weaknesses. Our vocational coordinators and job coaches will help you and your other employees learn the best methods for communicating effectively with your new employee. The following suggestions work well for most of the students in our Transition Programs:

If you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet or private location.

Be prepared to repeat what you say, orally or in writing.

Use single words or very short functional phrases.

Allow extra time for the individual to process information and to respond.
Allow extra time for decision-making.

Support verbal instructions with visual communication, including gestures, written instructions, and pictures.

Provide written schedules and/or use “first____, then ____” terminology so that the individual knows what will happen next.

Offer assistance but do not insist or be offended if your offer is not accepted. Do not “over-assist.”

Respect the student’s personal space.

Do not insist on eye contact when you are speaking with him or her.

Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.