Overview

When referring to people with multiple disabilities, we generally refer to children, youth, and adults with the following issues:

- Limited speech or communication
- Limited physical mobility
- Sensory loss, including visual and hearing loss
- Cognitive, socialization, or behavior issues (see other tips sheets for more information)
- Information-processing or sensory-processing challenges

The library can be a welcoming place for people with multiple disabilities. A beneficial library environment will include technology that provides access to communication and information, with materials that can be accessed easily. Even something as simple as Microsoft’s text-enlargement feature or an easily gripped pen can be assistive. The most important is to create a welcoming and positive experience through friendly personal interactions.

Tips

- Speak directly to all patrons in a normal voice and tone.
- Offer to shake hands.
- Identify yourself, and use the patron’s name when appropriate.
- When offering assistance, ask how the patron would like you to assist.
- Allow the patron time to respond. Count to seven before expecting a response to ensure adequate time for processing.
- Listen attentively, and briefly paraphrase after a question.
- Try to maintain eye level when comfortable and appropriate.
- Use normal language. For example, “see you later” will not offend visually impaired persons.

Resources

- [National Rehabilitation Resource Center](#) website includes resources for educators, persons who work with persons with disabilities and researchers wishing to learn more about disabilities.
- [TASH](#) International membership organization that advocates for people with disabilities to attain involvement in all aspects of life.