General Disability Etiquette

• Remember he/she is a PERSON not a disability.

• Maintain eye contact.

• Talk directly to the person with the disability, even if he/she is using an interpreter. Even if parents or friends are present, encourage the person with the disability to express his/her own opinions.

• Don’t assume assistance is needed. Ask if assistance is needed and/or wanted.

• Use a normal tone of voice.

• When talking to a person with a mental disability, speak simply, not loudly.

• Don’t assume that because a person has one disability, he/she has others. For example, don’t assume that a person who is blind cannot hear.

• When planning public events, make sure to consider the needs of persons with disabilities.

• When introduced to a person, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. If the person cannot shake hands, they will let you know.

• Do not put people with a disability on a pedestal or talk to them in patronizing terms as if their performing normal, everyday activities were exceptional.

• Do not make assumptions about what a person can or cannot do based on their disability. All people are different and have a wide variety of skills and personalities, including persons with disabilities or special needs.

• RELAX. We all make mistakes. If you believe you have done or said something inappropriate, offer an apology. Keep a sense of humor and a keep a willingness to communicate.