

*The relationship between a person with a disability and his or her personal assistant is unique. Due to the personal nature of the work it is not uncommon to develop a friendship with your employer. While you may become friends with your employer, it is still necessary to set boundaries.*



### What are Boundaries?

- Mutually agreed upon rules regarding what the employee and employer are comfortable with (e.g. personal space)
- Established behaviors that are acceptable in the employer-employee relationship (e.g. appropriate conversations)

### How Do You Maintain Successful Boundaries?

- Make sure you understand what behaviors are unacceptable
- Ask your employer if you are not sure what is acceptable
- Understand the consequences if you go beyond the set boundaries
- Maintain a professional work environment

### How Do You Develop a Positive Relationship?

- Respect the boundaries put in place by your employer
- Keep an open dialogue
- Give positive feedback
- Develop a relationship based on trust and mutual respect
- **Communicate** your thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a direct manner

Disability etiquette means respecting people for who they are. It means focusing on what people can do rather than what they cannot do. It means focusing on what you have in common with a person rather than what differences you may have.



## What Are the Basic Points of Etiquette?

- Understand that it might take someone extra time to do or say something
- Anticipate that accommodations may be needed - ask what works best
- Ask before providing assistance

## What Should You Say?

- Use People First Language
- Avoid the following terms because they have negative meanings: invalid, wheelchair-bound, defect, handicapped
- Refer to a person's disability only when necessary and appropriate
- Ask if you are not sure what to say

## How Do You Maintain Personal Space?

- Ask permission before going into the employer's personal belongings
- Respect your employer's wishes to be left alone
- Do not lean on your employer's wheelchair since it is his or her personal space
- Do not pet service animals when their cape is on or when they are working

### Resources:

1. *How to Interact with People with Disabilities:*  
<http://www.accessmaine.rog/TipSheets/InteractwithPWDTs.htm>
2. *People First Language:*  
<http://www.disabilityisnatural.com/peoplefirstlanguage.htm>