



Job Accommodation Network

Practical Solutions • Workplace Success

# Effective Accommodation Practices (EAP) Series

## Communication Tips for Working with Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities

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## **JAN'S EAP SERIES**

### **COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR WORKING WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES**

Many individuals with intellectual disabilities will learn and process information more slowly, so communication with them may take a little more time and effort. However, becoming familiar with the following strategies will be helpful in assuring that the information being exchanged has a better chance of being understood.

1. Consider the environment and what is going on around you. There may be many background noises and voices that can be a distraction to the person with whom you are talking.
2. Speak slowly and pause while talking to allow more time for the information to be absorbed.
3. Speak directly to the individual and make eye contact. Make sure that you have his attention.
4. Speak in clear short sentences, avoiding words or terms that are complicated, technical, and difficult to understand.
5. Don't raise your voice. Sometimes when people are making a special effort to ensure that the other person in a conversation understands what they are saying, they tend to speak louder.
6. Ask the individual you are speaking to if he has any questions. Questioning is an effective way to monitor comprehension.
7. Ask the individual to repeat back the information you have given him.
8. Allow the individual plenty of time to formulate a question in his mind before verbalizing it. You may need for him to repeat the question or ask him to clarify what he is asking.
9. If questioning the individual, ask only one question at a time and allow plenty of time for a response. Expressive language skills are often limited.
10. Be patient. You want to make sure that the person understands you, and that you understand him in return.
11. Allow plenty of time for the conversation to take place and for the individual to hear and process what you are saying and then to respond.

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