

## Tips for Successful Communication & Collaboration When Supporting People Who Experience Disabilities

- **Successful Communication**

- Talk to the person directly and acknowledge them even if they have someone supporting them.
- Direct the question to the person even if a support person is providing the answer on their behalf.
- If you recognize a communication barrier- ask the person what **type** of support, they may need.
  - Do you have someone who helps you communicate?
  - Can you show me vs. telling me?
  - Would it help if I printed a communication tool?
  - Change of environment? Can we move to a more quiet, less distracting place?
  - Check to see if they have their hearing and visual aids to support the communication.
- Respect the person is listening and hearing what you are saying about them even if it appears they are not. If the person does not understand the words that are being said they can have understanding of your tone of voice, body language, and facial expressions.
- Explain each step (be predictable) and wait for consent before touching the person.
- Listen differently: what is the person's body language/actions communicating to you?

# Toolkit- Communication

- **Overnight or extended medical stays: Learn basic Activities of Daily Living Skills**
  - Get information on how to best support the person with their basic needs:
    - Food/meal preferences
    - Important routines
    - Bathroom/Toileting
    - Dressing
    - Hygiene Tasks
- **Building Trust and Positive Rapport**
  - Take time to get to know the person by asking or observing what the person likes/doesn't like, what are their interests, goals
  - Easing anxiety, share what you are doing before you do it. Even if it appears they do not understand or are not responding to you. By letting them know you can help the person remain calm.
  - Touch as you would any other patient unless you have been told they do not like touch.
  - Check in on the person, do you need anything, are you thirsty, can I turn TV on for you?
- **Respect Their Experience**
  - People with disabilities live full lives with hopes and dreams. People who don't know or have a personal relationship with someone who experiences disability can have personal bias around their views of what a quality of life can look like for a person with a disability.
  - Remember to leave your biases at the door and acknowledge the person is your best teacher to understand what medical care they may need.
  - Listen to the people supporting the person. They also know what works and what does not work for the person.