

ABOUT PHYSICAL AND MOBILITY DISABILITIES

A physical or mobility disability means that a person has limited fine or gross motor ability function of a limb that necessitates the use of adaptive equipment such as a cane, crutches, walker, wheelchair, scooter or other assistive device. Mobility impairments may result from a number of different medical conditions, such as multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, spina bifida, diabetes, muscular dystrophy, and paraplegia¹³ or from injuries sustained in motor vehicle crashes or falls. Mobility limitations can be temporary or permanent and vary greatly in their extent. It is important to assess each individual's abilities on a case-by-case basis.

According to the 2008 American Community Survey, approximately 19.2 million individuals in the U.S., or 6.9% of the U.S. population, have an ambulatory disability, meaning they have difficulty walking or climbing stairs.¹⁴ In Delaware, approximately 53,000 individuals (6.7% of all Delawareans) have an ambulatory disability.

Caring for people with physical or mobility disabilities

The following are some suggestions to improve interaction with individuals with physical/mobility impairment.

- Ensure that spaces, entrance ways, walkways and restrooms are accessible and free of potential barriers (e.g. boxes, equipment, chairs in the hallway, etc.).
- Attempt to provide accessible exam tables (e.g. exam tables that are height-adjustable) and medical equipment (e.g. accessible scales, mammography equipment).
- Always ask permission to move a person's assistive device.
- Always ask how the device should be moved.
- When speaking with a person using a wheelchair, kneel or attempt to speak at the person's eye level.
- Offer assistance, but wait for acceptance before assisting.
- Do not lean on any part of a wheelchair when speaking. The chair is considered part of the individual's personal space.
- Before transferring, always ask the individual the best way to transfer. If the individual uses a wheelchair, make sure the wheels are locked prior to the transfer.



Resources

Delaware Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities
 1901 North DuPont Highway
 Main Building, First Floor Annex
 New Castle, DE 19720
 800-223-9074 Toll Free
 302-255-9390 Phone
 302-255-4445 Fax
<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dsaapd/index.html>

Delaware Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC)
 800-223-9074 Toll Free
 302-391-3505 or 302-424-7141 TDD
<http://dhss.delaware.gov/dsaapd/adrc.html>

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
 Locations in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties
 800-870-3284 Toll Free (Delaware only)
 302-651-6790 Phone
 302-651-6794 TDD
 302-651-6793 Fax
<http://www.dati.org>

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section
 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 Access to Medical Care for Individuals with Mobility Disabilities (July 2010)
http://www.ada.gov/medcare_mobility_ta/medcare_ta.pdf

¹³ Adapted from Those of Us DisLabeled: A Guide to Awareness and Understanding. University of Kentucky Human Development Institute, Cooperative Extension Service. Retrieved from http://ada.ky.gov/mobility_imp_def.htm

¹⁴ Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2010, March 17). Disability Statistics from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC). Retrieved from www.disabilitystatistics.org