

Volunteer State Community College

Working With Students with Disabilities

A Faculty Handbook



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OUR MISSION

The Access Center (AC) at Volunteer State Community College (VSCC) helps students with disabilities participate more fully in educational programming, benefit from an accessible environment and achieve greater academic success by facilitating educational, programmatic and environmental access.

The promotion of student independence and self-advocacy is instrumental to our mission and remains a major tenet of our philosophy for working with all students.

WE'RE ALL ABOUT ACCESS!

For Students...

...We provide a variety of resources and advocacy services to assist students in obtaining full access and greater success as they work toward earning a college degree.

For Faculty and Staff...

...We provide training, guidance and support to faculty for creating a more accessible learning environment for all students.

For the VSCC Community...

...We provide consultant services, educate the campus community, interpret disability law, and recommend campus improvements that lead to greater physical access

We recognize disability as one aspect of diversity and believe all students have the right to full access, as well as the opportunity to enjoy a successful and inclusive college experience. As such, we seek to provide all programming and activities from a social justice perspective using a core philosophy of equal access and nondiscrimination for all.

Students are encouraged to become actively involved in academic and social organizations, sports and wellness programs, student government activities, and other extracurricular activities which enhance both personal and professional development.

Volunteer State Community College, a Tennessee Board of Regents institution, is an AA/EEO employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies: Director of Human Resources, Affirmative Action Officer, Title IX Coordinator, 1480 Nashville Pike, Gallatin, TN 37066, 615-230-3592

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

All currently-enrolled VSCC students with disabilities are invited to register with the AC in order to receive the most appropriate accommodations in their classes. The goal of the AC is to help students overcome or compensate for obstacles related to a physical, emotional or learning disability, and all services are available at no cost to students.

Interested students are asked to complete registration in the AC as soon as possible, ideally when they are accepted to VSCC, which includes providing professional documentation/evidence of a disability and the need for specific accommodations.

Generally, AC staff evaluates disability documentation and endorses those accommodations that help to reduce the effects of a student's specific symptoms or functional limitations. Once that evaluation has been completed, the AC provides students with online resources to independently and effectively manage the accommodation process.

The AC also assists in acquisition of the following accommodations:

1. Alternative format textbooks, including Braille, electronic text (e-text), and audio format books.
2. Sign language interpreter and CART (remote captioning) services, including locating, scheduling and payment of services.
3. Adaptive equipment and assistive technology, including facilitating the purchase of equipment and software to improve informational access in the classroom.
4. Tutoring referral to available academic resources on campus and in the community, when available.

Information and other supportive services, including referral to community agencies for diagnostic testing, and financial and academic resources.

RESOURCES FOR FACULTY

All members of the VSCC community share in the College's responsibility of accommodating students with disabilities and should prepare for the possibility of being approached by students with accommodation requests. In anticipation of this occurrence, faculty members should include the official VSCC disability statement on their syllabi directing students to notify them of all accommodation requests in a timely manner. Please refer to the section titled "Syllabus Statement" under "Other Issues."

To best provide the most appropriate accommodations to students who self-identify and request accommodations due to a disability in classroom situations, faculty should direct students to the Access Center. While students with disabilities cannot be required to register in the AC in order to receive the accommodations they are afforded under the law, the services and resources provided increase the likelihood students will receive the most appropriate and

timely accommodations, and greatly enhance the faculty's ability to provide an accessible classroom experience. When a student with a disability completes registration in DS and chooses to request classroom accommodations, faculty will receive an email with guidance for providing the student's approved accommodations.

If a faculty member suspects a struggling student has a disability but the student has not self-identified, it's best not to directly ask the student about having a disability. Instead, AC staff suggest addressing concerns about specific behaviors with the student, and encouraging the student to access all available resources for assistance, such as the Learning Commons, the Library, the Advising Center and the Access Center.

The AC provides the following supportive and consultant services to faculty:

1. Recommendations for the most appropriate accommodations for students based on student documentation.
2. Identification of alternative or modified accommodations, when approved accommodations will not work within the unique structure of a class.
3. Arrangements for sign language interpreters or CART (remote captioning) in the classroom.
4. Assistance in creating alternative format classroom materials, such as syllabi and handouts.
5. The purchase of adaptive classroom equipment and assistive technology, such as accessible software.
6. Guidance for working with social or behavioral issues in the classroom.
7. Mediation of disputes or disagreements, with the ultimate goal of achieving a positive resolution for all involved parties.
8. Consultation and research for the creation of "universally designed" courses to help eliminate the need for accommodations.

OTHER ISSUES

Confidentiality Issues and Documentation of Disability

All accommodations for students with disabilities are required by law to be handled with confidentiality; therefore, accommodations and disability-related information should be discussed with students in a private location without other students, faculty or staff present. However, it is acceptable to share information on a limited basis with others involved in accommodating the student. Even so, it's always a good idea for faculty members to ask the student's permission before discussing accommodation needs with another person.

In addition to disability-related conversations, documentation of disability is subject to strict confidentiality laws. Faculty members are generally not entitled to view a student's original, professional documentation. However, they are entitled to verification that a student has a documented disability and a need for accommodations. If a student with a disability registers in the AC and eligibility for specific accommodations is endorsed by AC staff, the student's

respective faculty will be provided with an ADA Notification for accommodations, if the student requests faculty notification be sent.

Service Animals in the Classroom

Under the ADA, a service animal is defined as a dog (or miniature horse) that is specifically trained to work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a physical, sensory, psychiatric/mental, or intellectual disability. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability, such that animals that only provide crime deterrent effects, emotional support, well-being, comfort, or companionship do not fall under the ADA definition of a service animal. Pursuant to TBR policy # 1:03:02:55 regarding *Animals on Tennessee Board of Regents Campuses*, service animals are permitted in all areas of TBR campuses where its owner, the person being assisted by the service animal and/or the public are permitted to enter or occupy. Comfort and Emotional Support Animals are not permitted on TBR campuses, unless they have received approval as an accommodation under the ADA through DS or the VSCC HR department.

Also pursuant to TBR policy, faculty are not permitted to challenge the presence of a service animal by inquiring about the owner/user's disability; requiring medical documentation, a special identification card or training documentation for the animal; or ask that the animal demonstrate its ability to perform a work or task. If faculty/staff/students believe an animal is not a service animal, direct action MAY NOT be taken to prohibit the animal's presence. All concerns should be communicated to the VSCC HR department, the AC manager, or to the VSCC Chief of Police.

Attendance Flexibility

VSCC has an attendance policy and students are expected to attend all classes and keep faculty members informed regarding absences from class. However, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights has determined that under certain circumstances with regard to students with disabilities, it is appropriate to modify course attendance policies as an accommodation for a disability as long as the essential components of the course are not compromised. Attendance flexibility is a modification of attendance policies; it is not a waiver of those policies. Generally, attendance flexibility simply means that a faculty member may not penalize a student or lower the student's coursework grade based on attendance alone, but must grade according to the quality and quantity of work produced by the student.

If during the evaluation of documentation a student's request for attendance flexibility appears justified by the impact of a disability, attendance flexibility may be approved as an appropriate accommodation. Faculty members should contact the AC at 615.230.3472 if attendance flexibility will alter the fundamental nature or jeopardize the learning objectives of a particular class, and staff will assist in documentation of the concern. If the faculty member's concern is validated, students will be offered a variety of options, including: remaining in the class without the accommodation of attendance flexibility, withdrawing from the class without penalty,

transferring to a different course or the same class with a different professor, or taking the class as an online course (if available.)

All students who qualify for attendance flexibility are asked to personally contact their faculty members by email each time a disability-related absence occurs, and to complete of material covered during disability-related absences.

IF AT ANY TIME during the semester the student's situation in class changes, for example excessive absences begin to threaten the accomplishment of learning objectives for the class, the faculty member should contact the AC to determine an appropriate course of action.

Accommodations Not Provided

Accommodations are only considered appropriate if they do not compromise or fundamentally alter the essential, academic requirements of a course or field of study. The Department of Education has determined that accommodations need not be provided if they are for the purpose of "personal use or study." These types of accommodations include wheelchairs and other individualized services needed for independent living, mental health stability, rehabilitation, individual remediation instruction, and private tutoring. However, a student cannot be prevented from using any VSCC service that is available to all students. Finally, accommodations that create an undue financial or administrative burden for the College may not be provided, including those for which VSCC does not have enough advance notice or those that are impossible or infeasible to provide. Please keep in mind, undue financial burden applies to the College as a whole; therefore, decisions determining such a burden can only be made by the President or an appropriate designee and cannot be made by a faculty member, department or division.

While a student may occasionally request an accommodation that is not required to be provided, this does not relieve VSCC from its obligation to provide the student with a more appropriate accommodation. Since denial of accommodations may create institutional liability, as well as personal liability for the person issuing the denial, faculty members and staff are encouraged to always consult with AC staff before refusing to provide a specific accommodation. Often, consultation can help determine alternative accommodations.

Dealing with Bad Behavior

VSCC students are considered citizens of their civic communities and of the VSCC academic community and are, therefore, expected to conduct themselves as law-abiding members of each community at all times. Admission to VSCC carries with it special privileges and imposes special responsibilities apart from those rights and duties enjoyed by non-students. A student with a disability is not excused from responsibilities under the VSCC Student Disciplinary Policy and is expected to follow all the same standards of behavior as any other student of VSCC. Violations of the VSCC Student Disciplinary Policy or "bad behavior" should be consistently handled for all students and reported to the Office of the Vice President for Student Services. Faculty members and staff are encouraged to consult with the Assistant Vice President for Student Services should questions arise.

There may be times when faculty members and staff are faced with a student whose behavior causes concern or discomfort, or which interferes with the teaching or learning of other students but is not a violation of the VSCC Student Disciplinary Policy. However without an intervention of some kind, this behavior may result in a persistent, recurring problem situation. At such times, AC staff recommends the following approach:

1. Remain as calm as possible.
2. Address behavior in a simple and direct manner.
3. Set clear limits and be firm with the student.
4. Contact the VSCC police at **615.230.3595** if the student presents a direct or immediate danger to self or others.
5. Refer the student to the VSCC Advising Center, if you feel it is appropriate.
6. Refer the student to the VSCC office of Student Engagement and Support, if you feel it is appropriate.
7. Consult with AC staff as needed.
8. Develop and communicate a departmental safety

Educational Integrity

Accommodations are not implemented to give students with disabilities an advantage over other students, but instead are provided to give students the chance to participate in and benefit from the educational environment. This is where the concept of “Equivalent versus Equal Treatment” is important. Treating all students the same way (equal treatment) is considered discriminatory since disabilities take away the opportunity for students with disabilities to learn or demonstrate what they have learned in the same way as other students. The accommodation becomes the “equalizer” (or the equivalent treatment factor). Students with disabilities are still required to demonstrate their ability to meet the essential requirements of a class, without compromising the educational integrity or lowering the academic standards of the class, as long as reasonable and appropriate accommodations are provided.

Syllabus Statement

The following official VSCC disability statement should appear on every syllabus to alert students with disabilities to the process of registering in the AC for accommodations.

For Students with Disabilities:

“Students who have learning, psychological, physical and/or other disabilities may be eligible for accommodations that provide equal access to educational programs and activities. It is the student’s responsibility to self-identify with the VSCC Access Center to receive accommodations and services in accordance with Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADA/AA). Students who provide appropriate documentation and who are registered in the Access Center will receive appropriate accommodations. For further information, contact the Access Center at (615) 230-3472, or visit the office which is located in Ramer room 143.”

So students will understand the importance of meeting with faculty, the AC also recommends including a personal statement on the syllabus, such as: *"If you have accommodation needs for this class, please meet with me during regular office hours to discuss the arrangement of your accommodations."*

TYPES OF DISABILITIES

Learning Disability

A learning disability is a permanent disorder which affects how people with normal or above-normal intelligence take in, retain and express information. The way a learning disability affects an individual is often compared to interference on the radio, since incoming and/or outgoing information may become scrambled as it travels between the eye, ear or skin and the brain. Symptoms of learning disabilities include perceptual problems and deficits in the reading, written and oral language, mathematical, organizational, study, and social skill areas. Symptoms may also be inconsistent: detrimental on some days and inconsequential on other days.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities defines learning disabilities as "a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities, but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other (disabling) conditions (e.g. sensory impairment, intellectual impairment, serious emotional disturbance,) or extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction,) they are not the direct result of those conditions or influences."

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD)

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders (AD/HD) comprise the least understood and most controversial category of disability represented at the post-secondary educational level. Once believed to disappear after adolescence, researchers and practitioners are finding significant numbers of adults who continue to manifest symptoms of these "childhood" disorders. Also, due to the use of more sophisticated assessment methods than were once used, many people with AD/HD are being diagnosed with these disorders for the first time well into adulthood.

AD/HD symptoms vary widely in type and severity and include many of the same symptoms as learning disabilities, such as deficits in the skill areas of reading, writing, speaking, and mathematical reasoning; as well as organizing, studying, and socializing. In addition, adults with AD/HD are often restless and easily distracted; and have trouble focusing, concentrating, and sustaining attention; they are impulsive, impatient, and fail to plan ahead and follow-through on tasks. They may have frequent mood swings and short tempers; have inconsistent work performances; and often have histories of depression, substance abuse, and poor self-esteem.

Difficulties with executive functioning skills, such as time management and organization, are frequently a serious issue for individuals with AD/HD.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorders are disorders for which the individual experiences major difficulties with social interaction and often displays unusual or repetitive patterns of behavior. These conditions significantly interfere with the development of interpersonal relationships and can affect the performance of major life activities such as learning, communicating and interacting with others. Students on the autism spectrum often have high intellectual and verbal abilities but appear to be socially awkward. They typically exhibit difficulties with social awareness and in understanding nonverbal communication, often misread social cues, and may feel very uncomfortable in unfamiliar situations. Students with autism spectrum disorders often dominate conversations because of their “single-focused” special interests.

Additional symptoms often include poor eye contact, social isolation or rejection, rigid adherence to structured routines or schedules, difficulty making decisions or asking for help, excessive anxiety or stress in reaction to change, low self-confidence, avoidance of situations that cause distress, and difficulty working in group situations. Students with autism spectrum disorders often speak out of turn or seem ambivalent to people around them. In some cases, these students experience a concurrent learning disability, attention deficit disorder, or psychiatric/psychological impairment.

Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The use of orally presented materials for learning and the reliance on oral communication for class participation are two obstacles students with hearing impairments, including deafness, encounter in the post-secondary educational environment. Since a great deal of emphasis is placed on spoken language to expedite learning, hearing-impaired students are at a clear disadvantage during lectures and class discussions. They must rely heavily on visual modes of communication and supplemental visual materials to participate in class and to comprehend, retain and incorporate the same information as hearing students. Lectures should always be presented in a loud, clear voice in a distortion-free, distraction-free room for students who have partial hearing ability, read lips or use sign language interpreters or CART services.

Another obstacle occurs when students who rely on lip-reading encounter lecturers who write on the board, such as a white board, while speaking. Any information which is spoken while turned away from students is lost. Further, whenever students who use sign language present ideas in a written format, they must overcome many of the same problems in writing as students from foreign countries. American Sign Language (ASL) and “variant” sign languages are not the same as spoken English and should be considered foreign languages. Therefore, students who speak sign language as their first language are, in fact, ESL students.

Neurological Impairment

Neurotransmitters play a major role in controlling consciousness, memory, emotions, and behavior. Even slight changes in the body’s nervous systems (including the brain, spinal cord,

autonomic, etcetera) can contribute to the development of brain disorders and affect the flow of information in the brain and the learning process. Neurological impairments may include a traumatic injury to the brain (due to accident, stroke, disease or illness), seizure disorders/epilepsy, congenital disorders of the brain (Turner's Syndrome and Tourette's Syndrome), migraines, and sleep disorders.

Observable symptoms are greatly varied depending on the area of the brain affected and can include headaches, nausea, seizures, confusion, impaired memory and concentration, changes in personality, depression, irritability and anger, fatigue, anxiety, hypersensitivity to light and sound, problems in speech, movement, and visual functioning, as well as other emotional and behavioral problems. The individual with a neurological impairment may also experience side effects due to medication for the treatment or control of the disorder, which in turn may affect learning and memory.

Psychiatric or Psychological Impairment

Psychiatric or psychological impairments are comprised of a broad range of conditions characterized by emotional, cognitive and/or behavioral dysfunctions. These disabling conditions significantly interfere with the performance of major life activities, such as learning, thinking, communicating, and sleeping and may include side effects from the multitude of medications prescribed in their treatment. The type, intensity, and duration of symptoms can vary greatly from person to person, may come and go, and may not always follow a regular pattern. This makes it difficult to predict when symptoms or functioning may worsen even when treatment recommendations are followed.

Symptoms may include social isolation or withdrawal, loss of motivation, changes in mood or thought, avoidance of situations that cause distress, and difficulty processing information. The most common forms of these disabilities are Anxiety Disorders (panic disorder, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder), Mood or Affective Disorders (depression, bipolar disorder and seasonal affective disorder), and Schizophrenia. Students with psychiatric or psychological impairments often miss classes due to the irregular, unpredictable nature of the disorder; due to the stress and anxiety associated with hiding the illness; or due to the side effects of the medications they take.

Blindness and Visual Impairment

Students with visual impairments, including blindness, are faced with many challenges in the post-secondary educational environment. Orientation and mobility present special problems to students who cannot rely on sight to locate, remember and traverse the numerous offices and classrooms frequented each semester. "Selective" scheduling must be employed by advisors and students with visual impairments to accommodate some of these problems. Classes and appointments must be scheduled along accessible routes so students can navigate campus more easily and must also be scheduled to allow extra time for movement from location to location. These students often require orientation and mobility training with much practice, before each new semester begins. It is extremely problematic for students with visual

impairments to have a class and/or location change after they've already been oriented and practiced routes to classes. If a class or location change is necessary after the student has been oriented, then the student and DS should be notified immediately.

Students at the college level are expected to read a tremendous amount of printed material, which presents a major obstacle to students with visual impairments. Any visually presented materials must be adapted in some way to accommodate students who cannot read standard print. This includes all course syllabi, class handouts and study sheets, textbooks, library readings, overhead and video presentations, tests and quizzes, computer screens, information written on a board, etc.

Physical Impairment

The physical impairment category covers a broad range of neuromuscular and orthopedic disorders and conditions, and is not easily described by a single definition or term. However, the most salient characteristic shared by people with physical impairments is the loss or lack of mobility and physical dexterity. These disabilities may involve a loss of control over voluntary muscles in the arms, legs, tongue or eyes, which in turn results in awkward movements, irregular gait, facial grimacing or drooling. Some individuals may also lose voluntary bowel and bladder control or have difficulty with breathing, and may miss classes unexpectedly due to medical problems needing immediate care. This category of disability includes people with spina bifida, amputation, paralysis, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, cystic fibrosis, muscular dystrophy, congenital anomalies, arthritis, and spinal cord injury, to name a few.

Health Impairment

The category of health impairments describes chronic conditions resulting from medical diagnoses that have a significant impact on a student's academic performance. Common diagnoses include AIDS, asthma, cancer, Crohn's Disease, diabetes, heart disease, hemophilia, lupus, Lyme's Disease, nephritis, and sickle cell anemia. The effects of the illness and the side effects of medication can have a significant impact on memory, attention, strength, endurance, ability to sit or walk for prolonged periods, and energy levels. Students with chronic health impairments often miss classes due to unexpected hospitalizations or medical treatments and may be challenged to meet the physical requirements of a class such as writing, measuring, graphing, drawing, or manipulating small objects. Some students may need to avoid specific activities that trigger their conditions, as in the case of a student with asthma who may need to avoid specific inhalants in a lab class.

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Many teaching strategies that assist students with disabilities also benefit students without disabilities. Instruction utilizing an array of approaches will reach more students effectively than instruction using one method. The following are some strategies that may be helpful in meeting the growing diversity of student needs in the classroom, particularly those with disabilities.

1. Begin class with a review of the previous lecture and an overview of the topics to be covered that day. Give questions the students should be able to answer by the end of the lecture. At the conclusion of the lecture, summarize key points.
2. Highlight major concepts and terminology both orally and visually. Be alert for opportunities to provide information in more than one sensory mode.
3. Emphasize main ideas, key concepts, and new or technical vocabulary during the lecture and highlight them on the whiteboard or overhead.
4. Speak directly to the students; use gestures and natural expressions to convey further meaning.
5. Diminish or eliminate auditory and visual distractions.
6. Use visual aids such as diagrams, charts, and graphs; use color to enhance the message.
7. Give assignments both orally and in written form; be available for clarification.
8. Provide adequate opportunities for participation, questions, and/or discussion.
9. Provide timelines for long range assignments.
10. Use sequential steps for long range assignments. For example, on a lengthy paper steps may include 1) select a topic, 2) develop an outline, 3) submit a rough draft, etc.
11. Give feedback on early drafts of papers so there is adequate time for clarification, rewrites, and refinements.
12. When possible, use a textbook with an accompanying study guide.
13. Provide study questions and review sessions to aid in mastering material and preparing for exams.
14. Give sample test questions. Explain what constitutes a good answer and why.
15. To test knowledge of material rather than test taking savvy, phrase test items clearly and succinctly.
16. Facilitate the formation of study groups for students who wish to participate.
17. Encourage your students to seek assistance during your office hours and utilize campus support services.

GENERAL TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING

Etiquette considered appropriate when interacting with people with disabilities is based primarily on respect and courtesy. Outlined below are tips to help you in communicating with persons with disabilities.

Communicating with People with Disabilities

1. When introduced to a person with a disability, it is appropriate to offer to shake hands. People with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb can usually shake hands. (Shaking with the left hand is also an acceptable greeting.)
2. If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Listen to or ask for further instruction.

3. Treat adults as adults. Address people who have disabilities by their first name only when extending the same familiarity with others.
4. Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions such as "See you later," or "Did you hear about that?" that seem to relate to a person's disability.
5. Don't be afraid to ask questions when you are unsure about proper etiquette.
6. Treat the individual with dignity, respect and courtesy. Listen.
7. Offer assistance but do not insist or be offended if your offer is not accepted.

Communicating with Individuals who are blind or visually impaired

1. Speak to the individual when you approach him or her.
2. State clearly who you are and speak in a normal tone of voice.
3. When conversing in a group, remember to identify yourself and the person to whom you are speaking.
4. Never touch or distract a service animal without first asking the owner.
5. Tell the individual when you are leaving.
6. Do not attempt to lead the individual without first asking; allow the person to hold your arm and control his or her own movements.
7. Be descriptive when giving directions; verbally give the person information that is visually obvious to individuals who can see. For example, if you are approaching steps, mention how many steps.
8. If you are offering a seat, gently place the individual's hand on the back or arm of the seat so that the person can locate the seat.

Communicating with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing

1. Gain the person's attention before starting a conversation (i.e., tap the person gently on the shoulder or arm).
2. Look directly at the individual, face the light, speak clearly, in a normal tone of voice, and keep your hands away from your face. Use short, simple sentences. Avoid smoking or chewing gum.
3. If the individual uses a sign language interpreter, speak directly to the person, not the interpreter.
4. If you telephone an individual who is hard of hearing, let the phone ring longer than usual. Speak clearly and be prepared to repeat the reason for the call and who you are.

Communicating with individuals with mobility impairments

1. If possible, put yourself at the wheelchair user's eye level.
2. Do not lean on a wheelchair or any other assistive device.
3. Never patronize people who use wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder.
4. Do not assume the individual wants to be pushed- ask first.
5. Offer assistance if the individual appears to be having difficulty opening a door.
6. If you telephone the individual, allow the phone to ring longer than usual to allow extra time for the person to reach the telephone.

Communicating with individuals with speech impairments

1. If you do not understand something the individual says, do not pretend that you do. Ask the individual to repeat what he or she said and then repeat it back.
2. Be patient. Take as much time as necessary.
3. Try to ask questions which require only short answers or a nod of the head.
4. Concentrate on what the individual is saying.
5. Do not speak for the individual or attempt to finish her or his sentences.
6. If you are having difficulty understanding the individual, consider writing as an alternative means of communicating, but first ask if this is acceptable.

Communicating with individuals with cognitive disabilities

1. If you are in a public area with many distractions, consider moving to a quiet or private location.
2. Be prepared to repeat what you say, orally or in writing.
3. Offer assistance completing forms or understanding written instructions and provide extra time for decision-making. Wait for the individual to accept the offer of assistance; do not "over-assist" or be patronizing.
4. Be patient, flexible and supportive. Take time to understand the individual and make sure the individual understands you.

Communicating with individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders

1. Always use the person's name at the beginning of the conversation to assist in engaging the individual.
2. Be clear and concise with the words/wording you use.
3. Set specific boundaries concerning acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.
4. Be prepared to gently guide the individual back to the subject of the conversation, when loss of focus occurs.
5. Keep questions short.
6. Avoid using irony, sarcasm, figurative language, rhetorical questions, idioms, or exaggeration.
7. Try to remain patient.

STEPS FOR CREATING BUILDING EVACUATION PLANS

1. Identify **USEABLE CIRCULATION PATHS** which either allow people to travel unassisted along the path to evacuate the building OR allow them to travel unassisted along the path to an area of refuge/rescue assistance.
2. Designate an **EVACUATION AREA** for each floor of a building that lacks a direct/unobstructed exit from the building.
3. Identify an appropriate **EVACUATION DEVICE** or stair descent device for placement in each evacuation area on upper floors, for use with individuals unable to evacuate independently.

4. Identify an appropriate **EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM** that includes audible, tactile and visual outputs.
5. Identify **METHODS FOR DISTRIBUTION** of information about and directions to/through useable circulation paths.
6. Always identify **KEY STAKEHOLDERS** by title/position instead of by name due to position turnover.
7. Identify and schedule periodic **TRAINING** for faculty, staff and students.

EMERGENCIES

Complications from medications can often cause adverse reactions such as seizures, insulin reactions, coronary attacks, or other serious episodes. Call campus police to report all emergencies, both medical emergencies and situations such as a crimes in progress, suspicious persons, or irate individuals. Please use the following phone numbers:

- **Gallatin Campus: extension 615.230.3595**— officers are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- **Highland Crest Campus: 615.433.7041**— officers are on duty during normal operating hours.
- **Livingston Campus: 931.823.5216**— officers are on duty during normal operating hours.
- **Cookeville Higher Education Campus (CHEC): 931.520.4616**- officers are on duty during normal operating hours.

Our Contact Information:

The Access Center is located in the Ramer Administration Building, Suite 143. Our phone number is 615.230.3472. Please visit our website at: www.volstate.edu/disability for more information.

Some of the information included in this publication was gathered from the following publications, websites, and organizations.

The VSCC Disciplinary Policy

« Confidentiality and Disability Issues in Higher Education » from the Association on Higher Education and Disability (AHEAD,) 1994.

The National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, LDOnline website

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights website.