



# National Center on Disability & Journalism

Educating to increase accuracy, fairness and diversity in news reporting.

## Tips for interviewing people with disabilities

**The Best Tip: Ask the *expert* – the person you are interviewing – about how best to provide their accommodation.**

### Before the Interview

- Ask the interviewee if they require any specific accommodation. (Wheelchair access, quiet place, interpreter, etc.) If unsure about how to provide the accommodation, ask the interviewee.
- Allow plenty of time for the interview. Some accommodations require additional time (for example: interpreters, speech boards, etc.)

### Setting up the Interview

- Place yourself and the camera (if applicable) at interviewee's eye level.
- If the interview will take place on a platform, and the interviewee has a physical disability, be sure there is proper physical access to the interviewing area.

### During the interview

- When interviewing a person with disability, speak directly to that person and maintain eye contact rather than interacting directly with an interpreter or companion.
- Use the same interviewing techniques and manner as you usually do. Speak in relaxed, everyday tones.
- When talking with a person with a hearing loss, be sure to face them and do not cover your mouth when you speak. Place yourself so that you face the light source and are not backlit. Make sure you talk when the person is looking at you.
- When meeting an interviewee who has a visual impairment, identify yourself and others who may be with you. When conversing in a group, remember to identify the person to whom you are speaking.
- Listen attentively when you are talking with a person who has difficulty speaking. Be patient and wait for the person to finish, rather than correcting or speaking for them. Never pretend to understand if you are having difficulty doing so. Instead, repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.
- When covering an event where a sign or oral interpreter is present, be aware of the communication between an interpreter or real time captioner and the person using their services. Avoid walking between them or blocking their communication while taking a photograph. Often people who use interpreters are located near the front in a designated section. Remember, blocking this communication is like pulling the plug on the public address system.

### Other suggestions

- Focus on the *person* you are interviewing, not the disability.
- Shake hands when greeting a person with a disability. People with prosthetics or limited hand motion usually shake hands.
- If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted. Then listen or ask for instructions.
- A wheelchair or other assistive device is part of the person's body space. Do not lean or hang on a person's wheelchair.
- Service animals and guide dogs are working. Do not make eye contact, praise, talk or pet the animal. It is distracting for the animal and owner.