



Commit to Inclusion of Individuals with Disabilities in Public Health Practice

DAWN Center for Independent Living (DAWNcil), a non-profit organization serving Morris, Sussex, and Warren Counties, NJ, is one of 12 Centers for Independent Living (CIL's) in the state of NJ chosen by the Administration on Community Living to participate in the "Expanding the Public Health Workforce within the Aging and Disability Networks" initiative.

DAWNcil has enacted activities with human services and public health professionals to prevent, prepare for, and respond to future health challenges of individuals with disabilities. These activities provide a framework for public health to develop cultural competency skills to protect and promote the health of people with disabilities.

Please use this link <https://dawncil.org/expanding-the-public-health-workforce-initiative/public-health-workers/> to access Public Health Workforce training slides and recorded webinar, a resource list for county, state and national resources and a Community Health Guide for Morris, Sussex and Warren Counties, NJ.

There are many resources available to provide insight into ways to be inclusive of the disability community. One resource is Respectability.org. <https://www.respectability.org/resources>

Some practical tips they offer to be inclusive and other ways to support involvement of the disability community are:

- Language matters. Use terminology that is inclusive.
- Treat adults with disabilities as adults. Baby talk is not appropriate.
- Speak directly to people with disabilities, not to their aide or sign language interpreter. Talk at eye level; if necessary, sit in a chair to be on the same level as a person who uses a wheelchair.
- Listen patiently and attentively to a person who has difficulty speaking; do not try to finish their thoughts for them.
- Remember that a person's mobility equipment is part of their personal space. Don't move a wheelchair, cane, or scooter without their permission.
- Not all disabilities are visible or apparent, but this does not make them any less real.
- Be mindful that people with cognitive or psychological disabilities have varying ways of coping with their conditions.
- Please note it is considered offensive to pretend to have a disability, and disability simulation experiences should be done for design/navigational purposes only.
- If you are unsure how to interact with a person with disabilities, ask them!
- Make sure people with disabilities are part of the solution, included in planning and hiring processes.
- Ensure your space is physically and programmatically accessible.
- Ensure all program registration and sign-up forms are accessible and include questions about accommodations so people can fully participate.
- Utilize a standard message on all websites and written materials stating that yours is an inclusive agency that provides accommodations for individuals with disabilities as needed.

For more information, please visit <https://dawncil.org/> or contact Executive Director, Carmela Slivinski cslivinski@dawncil.org