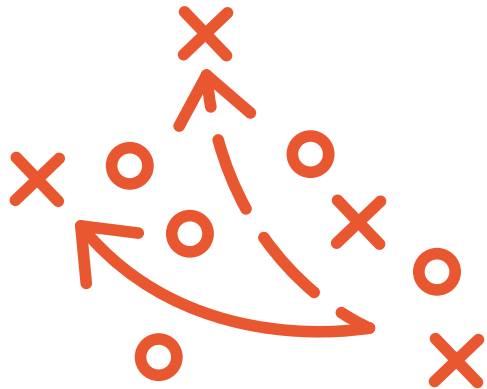




**CENTRALINA**  
Area Agency on Aging

## How to be a Disability Ally



**Samantha Nevins, MPH**  
**Disability Rights & Resources**



# How to Be a Disability Ally

**Disability Rights & Resources**

Samantha Nevins, Executive Director

- Cabarrus
- Gaston
- Mecklenburg
- Union

## **Disability Rights & Resources**

*Fighting for Justice  
Advancing Independence*



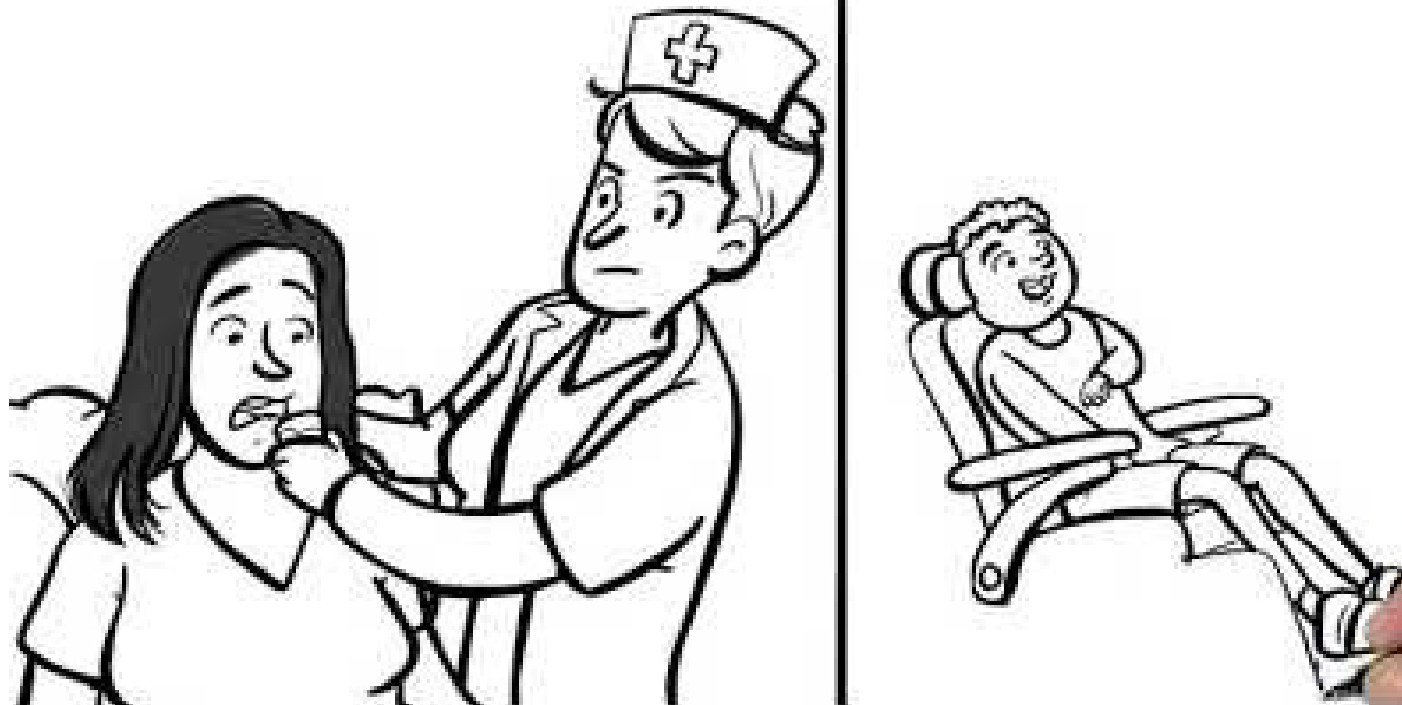
# Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

- **Consumer-Controlled**
- **Community-Based**
- **Cross-Disability**
- **Non-Residential**

<https://acl.gov/programs/aging-and-disability-networks/centers-independent-living>

# CIL Core Services

- Advocacy - Individual & Systems
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Information & Referral
- Peer Mentoring
- Institutional Transition & Diversion
- Youth Transition



people with disabilities have been  
treated unfairly, marginalized,

# Defining Disability

- **Under the Americans with Disabilities Act:**  
**“substantial limitation to one or more major life activity”**
  - Also includes protection for:
    - Someone with a history of disability
    - Someone associated with a person with a disability
    - Someone perceived as having a disability

# Demographics of Disability

- 61 million adults in the US have a disability
- 26% of US population (1 in 4)
- Breakdown by functional disability type:
  - 13.7% - mobility
  - 10.8% - cognition
  - 6.8% - independent living
  - 5.9% - hearing
  - 4.6% - vision
  - 3.7% - self-care



# Demographics of Disability

- Disability can become more prevalent as we age
  - 2 in 5 adults over the age of 65 have a disability
- The only subset of the population that anyone can become a member of at any time
- Important to remember that though some disabilities are readily apparent, MOST are not visible

# Hidden or Invisible Disabilities

- Psychiatric Disabilities
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Epilepsy
- HIV/AIDS
- Diabetes
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Learning Disabilities



# Interacting



- Introduce yourself
- Speak directly to the person  
NOT their companion or  
assistant or interpreter
- If you want to provide  
assistance, ask first!

# Interacting - Don't make it awkward!

- DON'T draw unnecessary attention to the person's disability OR the fact that you are assisting them.
- DON'T be overly helpful— extend the offer of help by asking and accept when someone declines. Trying to do things for the person or insisting on trying to help can come across as patronizing.

# Interacting - Don't make it awkward!

- DON'T use a “special” voice as if you are speaking to a child.
- DON'T repeat yourself in a louder voice if the person doesn't understand. Speak up if appropriate, but try rephrasing your statement/question or use more simple language.
- DON'T overthink words like walk, run, see, etc. Just speak normally as you would to any other customer.

# Interacting with Someone Using a Wheelchair

- Respect the wheelchair as part of someone's physical space
- Don't lean on the wheelchair or touch it or move it
- Get on eye-level
- Be conscious of architectural barriers



# Interacting with someone who is Deaf or HOH

- Stand in front of the person
- Be sure you have their attention
- Talk normally, but be direct
- Repeat or rephrase if necessary or if asked
- Be mindful of level of communication (ALWAYS hire an ASL interpreter when appropriate)

# Language - Terms to Avoid

- Handicapped
- Euphemisms
  - Handicapable
  - Visually Challenged
  - Hearing Challenged
- Special



- Wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair
- Victim of...
- Retarded
- Mental Illness vs. Mental Health Issues



# Dealing with Our Ableist Vocabulary

## **Instead of using these words:**

- Idiotic, Moronic, Dumb
- Crazy, Insane, Psycho
- Spaz, Spastic
- OCD
- Lame
- Bipolar
- Manic

## **Try using these words:**

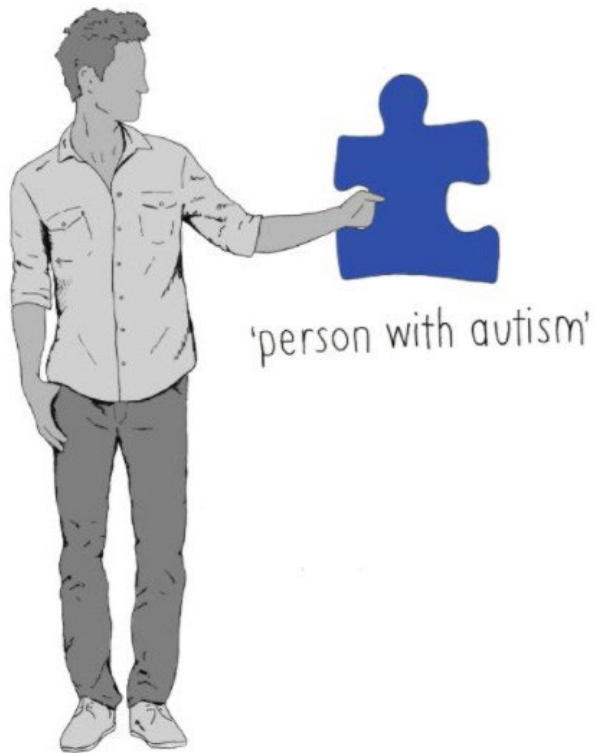
- Illogical, ridiculous, irrational
- Wild, unbelievable, BANANAS!
- Klutzy, clumsy
- Fastidious, meticulous, focused
- Pointless, boring, uncool
- Indecisive, unpredictable
- High energy, passionate, AMPED!

# A CAT MASSAGE?

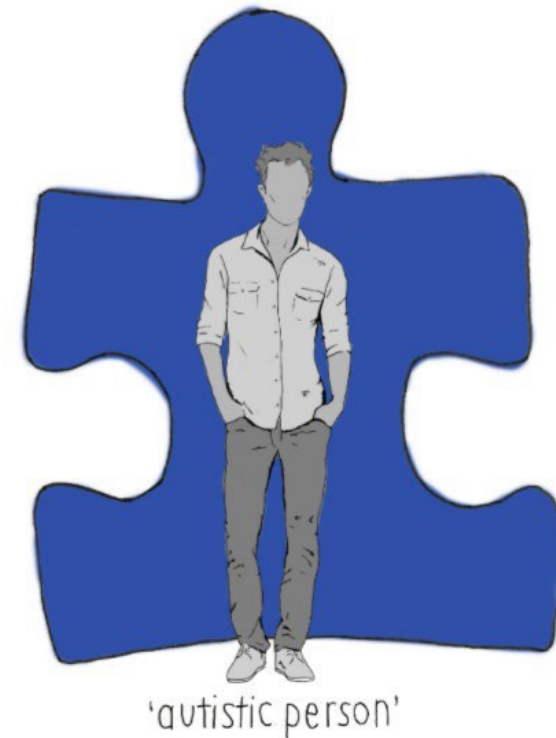


# Language

## Person-First



## Identity -First



Images: <https://news.northeastern.edu/2018/07/12/unpacking-community/>

-the-debate-over-person-first -vs-identity-first -language-in-the-autism -

# Service Animals

- Under the ADA, a service animal is a dog (or miniature horse) “that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability. The task(s) performed must be directly related to the person's disability.”
- Not appropriate to pet or distract a service animal – EVEN IF you ask politely (think of it like a piece of equipment)

[https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service\\_animal\\_qa.htm](https://www.ada.gov/regs2010/service_animal_qa.htm)

# Accommodation Statement

*“If you are in need of an accommodation, please call or email (contact) with your request (time) prior to the event.”*

# Creating an Accessible Meetings/Events

- Location
- Parking/drop off
- Entrance/exit
- Room set-up
- Restrooms
- Effective communication
- Train volunteers
- Dietary restrictions

# Virtual Meetings/Events

- Visual description of speakers
- Describe all images
- Enable captioning on embedded videos
- Pin ASL interpreters
- Allow for breaks/cameras off at times

# Resources to Learn More

- Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist by Judith Heumann
- Crip Camp: A Disability Revolution (Netflix)
- Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to be an Ally by EmilyLadau
- No Pity: People with Disabilities Forging a New Civil Rights Movement by Joseph P. Shapiro
- Disabled content creators





# Connect with DR&R

- \*Bi-monthly newsletter
- \*Instagram and Facebook
- \*Monthly virtual advocacy meeting (trainings)



# Questions?

704-537-0550

[samanthanevins@disability-rights.org](mailto:samanthanevins@disability-rights.org)

# THANK YOU

---

704-372-2416 | [info@centralina.org](mailto:info@centralina.org) | 10735 David Taylor Drive, Suite 250,  
Charlotte, NC 28262 | [www.centralina.org](http://www.centralina.org)

Scan the QR Code to  
take our conference  
survey!

