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## In the March issue.

As this is our first Newsletter for 2010, we say Happy New Year and Happy first term break!

Hopefully the year has begun well for you. In this issue we will look at Enrolment and Disability with a focus on how to get the information about a learner disability in a positive manner. This can be a tricky process so we provide you with information and tips to help with this. We also have our usual handy tip sheet! This issue is on Communication and Disability.



## Disability Awareness Training for all.

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*Challenge Multimedia is a Yooralla enterprise that supports people with disabilities...*



We have been busy undertaking Disability Awareness Training for a mixed group of ACE providers, Community agencies and interested others, sponsored by the City of Casey and the Communities in Partnership Project (C.I.P). This has been a great experience for all concerned and produced a 'win' 'win' outcome with new partnerships, networks and a new level of understanding and competence around Disability in that region.

The training delivered was tailored to suit the mixed group of participants and covered a range of issues and matters relating to Disability that the participants chose.

ACE providers are expected to run services that have good practice in all areas, including disability. We can help ACE providers and others to achieve this through training and a range of other supports- no matter where you are within Victoria.

Please call (03) 9916 5821 or email to [olympia.tzanoudakis@yooralla.com.au](mailto:olympia.tzanoudakis@yooralla.com.au) to learn more about our services.

[www.acedisability.com.au](http://www.acedisability.com.au)

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**A comprehensive website on Disability and Adult Education**

# ENROLMENT AND PARTICIPATION AND LEARNERS WITH A DISABILITY

Providers lament that they can have a tricky time obtaining the information they need to give all learners and tutors the best outcome and to balance the information needs of funding providers. But this need not be a difficult task!

- ***Why it makes sense to know about Disabilities or conditions of learners?***

This gives you an understanding of the learner's needs and can help you and your tutor to plan ways to ensure that the learner can undertake the class/program in the same way as others in that class.

The learner has the right to expect that their needs will be catered for and this is echoed in the Disability Discrimination Act (1992) the Equal Opportunity Act and the Education Standards for Disability (2005). ( See our website for more about your obligations)

- ***How could we obtain information about a person's Disability/conditions in a sensitive manner?***

The most appropriate way is using the **enrolment form**. The questions do not need to be so direct as to ask: "Do you have a Disability/condition? If so, what type? Explain all medical details and so on and so forth. Another approach can be used, as below.

## **Enrolment form questions that aim to obtain information around Disability/conditions.**

### **You could try the following:**

Any information gained via this form will only be used to assist us to plan and conduct our classes and to comply with funding body statistical requirements. Your privacy and confidentiality will be strictly maintained in this process.

#### **Q1. "Is there anything we need to do to help you to fully participate in this class?"**

(Their response might be)

*I need the handouts to be in at least 14 font as I have a vision impairment. Ideally, the class outline and any notes before the start of the course would be great.*

#### **Q.2 "What would help you to make the most of this class/group?"**

*A seat near the front and centre of that class would help me and if the tutor was able to speak clearly and in front of me.*

*Also, a computer with a large print setting or program. I have one on my Computer at home called "BIG SHOT" but there are others that are free. I can help you to find/access one such program.*

*Any messages given to the class I will need to have verbally or by phone as I don't use email or text on my mobile.*

You could also ask.

### **Q.3 “Would you like to talk to us about any needs/conditions privately?”**

If they say yes, then they are showing trust and you would need to ensure that this is not broken and their wishes for privacy and confidentiality are strictly maintained in that meeting or any other discussions. At a meeting they are much more likely to give you more information which will help you to make the necessary “reasonable adjustments” for them.

- ***Does a person have to disclose their disability?***

In short no, there is no law that says that they must and it makes sense. For many people with a Disability this is a very sensitive matter which they may not disclose as they may have/are being discriminated as a result of disclosing their disability. Therefore, the advice is to tread carefully and do not attempt to push the person to disclose a disability/condition even when the disability may seem obvious.

- ***How far do we go with adjustments to assist the person?***

You need to make an effort to ensure that the person can learn and participate like everybody else. This is the goal and what is expected under the Education Standards. You simply cannot say that a person cannot do a class or activity without genuine effort being made to include them first. If the adjustments needed to include them in a class/activity cost your organisation a great deal financially you can then claim unjustifiable hardship. We suggest you take all steps to avoid this scenario as it can cause a person to make a complaint of they do not feel that enough effort has been made to include them and they feel that they have been discriminated. (If you are unsure of what to do please contact us for advice).

**Welcome to our latest member of the Network  
Co-ordinating Committee.**

Hi, I am Ros Hunter, the newest member of the Coordinating Committee. I have been a staff member of Japara Neighbourhood House in Montrose for 13 years. We are a small, non RTO, ACFE provider but have been working to include people with disabilities since the early 1990's. My background before joining the community sector was in office administration, but I have always had a keen interest in education and a belief that every individual has the right to learn in the way that suits them best, so they can reach their potential.

I enjoy the challenge of working with our great tutors, often in partnership with other organisations, to develop innovative flexible programs suitable for people with a wide range of abilities.

During my time on the committee I am looking forward to meeting people from lots of different providers and agencies and hope to be able to work with the network to develop solutions to issues that are identified and look at new ways to support learners of all abilities.

**Ros Hunter  
Japara Neighbourhood House.**

# Tips for Communicating with a person with a disability

- Remember that a person with a disability is a person- like everyone else.
- If the person is accompanied, don't address the person through their companion. Speak directly to them.
- Don't shout or raise your voice. Even if the person has a hearing impairment, shouting will not help. Speak to them just as you would speak to anyone else.
- People with impaired speech know they can be difficult to understand. This gives you an opportunity to try to find a new approach. Be willing to communicate in different ways and to learn how to use new tools for communication.
- If you don't know what to do or say, relax and allow the person with a disability to speak/communicate.
- Take time to listen to their response- this is very important. If need be, tell them your having trouble understanding them and they will try again. Be honest, don't pretend that you have understood them ask the person to try again using a different word or ask someone else who knows the person to help out.
- Try to get to know the person by exploring mutual interests in a friendly way; don't expect the reply to come back in the same way/speed-give the person time to reply.
- Remember as in any conversation; maintain eye contact as you normally would.
- Remember the person is not sick, so the person should be viewed as healthy.
- Offer assistance when it's asked for or if the need seems obvious, don't overdo or insist on it. Respect the person's right to indicate the type of help they need.
- Always talk to the person directly, not through someone else.
- Always talk to the person in an age appropriate manner and especially not as a child.
- Find out the person's abilities and the things they like to do as a way of getting to know the person better.