

What is a disability?



There are many definitions for disability. Disability generally refers to a medical condition that impacts how an individual can function. A disability may substantially limit life activities and impact the person's ability to obtain and retain employment.



The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) legislation is written to protect persons with disabilities from discrimination. The ADA defines disability as any physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, or working.



Disability can become a fact of life for anyone at any time.

According to the 2013 U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, today, 36 million people in the United States are living with a disability. **That's one person in every eight people or 12% of the population.** Some people are born with a disability; some people become ill or have an accident that results in a disability; and some people develop a disability as they age. Some have college degrees; some dropped out of school. **The reality is that just about everyone—women, men and children of all ages, races and ethnicities—will experience a disability at some time during his or her lifetime.** As we age, the likelihood of having a disability of some kind increases. For example, 11% of 21 to 64-year-olds; 26% of those ages 65 to 74; and 51% of those 75 years and older have some form of disability.



Disability is neither inability nor infirmity.

Most persons with disabilities are, in general, just as healthy as people who don't have disabilities; however, for a variety of reasons, persons with disabilities can be at greater risk for illness. **Most people with disabilities can and do, work, play, learn, and enjoy full lives in their communities.**



Orthopedic impairments and hearing and vision challenges are some examples of obvious disabilities. In other cases, a disability may not be readily apparent. People with some kinds of invisible disabilities, such as chronic pain or a sleep disorder, are often accused of faking or imagining their disabilities. These symptoms can occur due to chronic illness, chronic pain, injury, birth disorders, etc. and are not always obvious to the onlooker. Some examples of hidden disabilities are listed below.



Cognitive Impairments
Diabetes
Cardiac Problems
Asthma
Carpel Tunnel
Seizure Disorder

Crohn's Disease
Arthritis
HIV/AIDS
Kidney Disease
Cancer
Emotional or Psychiatric Disorders

Brain Injuries
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
PTSD
Learning Disabilities
Chronic Pain

Many individuals with disabilities make good employees due to previous work history, training and education, attitude, and the abilities they bring to the job. Most often people with disabilities do not require any accommodations at work.