

## **Considerations:**

- If a person uses a wheelchair, conversations at different eye levels are difficult. If a conversation continues for more than a few minutes and if it is possible to do so, sit down, kneel, or squat and share eye level.
- A wheelchair is part of the person's body space. Do not automatically hang or lean on the chair; it is similar to hanging or leaning on the person. It is fine if you are friends but inappropriate otherwise.
- Using words like "walking" or "running" are appropriate. Sensitivity to these words is not necessary. People who use wheelchairs use the same words.
- When it appears that a person needs assistance, ask if you can help. Most persons will ask for assistance if they need it. Accept a "no thank you" graciously.
- Accept the fact that a disability exists. By not acknowledging this fact is the same as not acknowledging the person.
- People with physical disabilities are not "confined" to wheelchairs. They often transfer over to automobiles and to furniture. Some who use wheelchairs can walk with the aid of canes, braces, crutches or walkers. Using a wheelchair some of the time does not mean an individual is "faking" a disability. It may be a means to conserve energy or move about more quickly.
- If a person's speech is difficult to understand, do not hesitate to ask him/her to repeat.

Provide assistance if you are asked. Never come up behind a person who uses a wheelchair and push them. Always ask first while facing the person. Never take the door out of a person's hand to assist them in opening it, they may be using the door for balance. Always ask if you can help first.