25 Ways to Support People with Varying Abilities

1. Ask what people need and make accommodations as comfortable as possible.
2. Remember that communities maybe small so confidentiality is very important.
3. Acknowledge that people with disabilities or varying abilities are capable people.
4. If your facilities are ADA accessible, promote accessibility on program materials.
5. Create programs, shelters, and organizations that are fully accessible.
6. Know that trauma may manifest differently for people with disabilities.
7. Know that a person’s disability or varying ability does not define them.
8. Affirm that people with disabilities or varying abilities are diverse.
9. Become more familiar with entitlements and disability benefits.
10. Hire & promote people who have disabilities or varying abilities.
11. Learn basic American Sign Language (ASL).
12. Learn how to assess & discuss traumatic brain injury.
13. Be aware & maintain respectful personal space when communicating.
14. Have your facilities evaluated for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.
15. Avoid outdated terms like “handicapped” & brush up on appropriate terminology.
16. Do cross training between domestic violence programs and disability organizations.
17. Develop positive working relationships with Deaf organizations in your area.
18. Acknowledge & learn about hidden disabilities like epilepsy or HIV/AIDS.
19. Look for ways to make cost efficient changes & updates for accessible facilities.
20. Remember that people with disabilities are capable people, don’t make decisions for them.
21. Remember that people with disabilities or varying abilities are experts in their own lives.
22. Know that people with disabilities or varying abilities may be less likely to report abuse.
23. Know that people with mental health issues may not identify with having a disability.
24. Maintain a current list of ASL and other sign language interpreters for your community.
25. Increase your etiquette, knowledge of & interactions with people with disabilities.

For more information, contact the Ohio Domestic Violence Network at 614-781-9651 and at www.odvn.org. Published as part of the 25 for 25 years of ODVN Celebration!