

## Healthcare Equity Glossary – Ableism

### UW Medicine Healthcare Equity

**Ableism:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on differences in physical, mental and/or emotional ability; usually that of able-bodied/minded persons against people with illness, disabilities or less developed skills.

**Accessible:** In the case of a facility, readily usable by a particular individual; in the case of a program or activity, presented or provided in such a way that a particular individual can participate, with or without auxiliary aid(s); in the case of electronic resources, accessible with or without assistive computer technology.

**Access barriers:** Any obstruction that prevents people with disabilities from using standard facilities, equipment and resources.

**Accessible web design:** Creating web pages according to universal design principles to eliminate or reduce barriers, including those that affect people with disabilities.

**Accommodation:** An adjustment to make a program, facility, or resource accessible to a person with a disability.

**Activities of Daily Living (ADLs):** Activities of daily living are activities related to personal care. They include bathing or showering, dressing, getting in and out of bed or a chair, walking, using the toilet, and eating. If a sample person has difficulty performing an activity by himself/herself and without special equipment, or does not perform the activity at all because of health problems, the person is deemed to have a limitation in that activity. The limitation may be temporary or chronic.

**Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS):** The final and most serious state of HIV disease, which causes severe damage to the immune system. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has defined AIDS as beginning when a person with HIV infection has a CD4 cell or t-cell count below 200. AIDS is also defined by numerous opportunistic infections and cancers that occur in the presence of HIV infection. Persons with HIV or AIDS, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, have physical impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities and are, therefore, protected by the [Americans with Disability Act \(ADA\)](#).

**Adaptive technology:** Hardware or software products that provide access to a computer that is otherwise inaccessible to an individual with a disability.

**Alternative keyboard:** A keyboard that is different from a standard computer keyboard in its size or layout of keys.

**Alzheimer Disease:** A degenerative disease of the brain, causing mental degeneration

**American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD):** The nation's oldest and most respected professional association run by and for professionals who support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. [Click here](#) to learn more.

**American Sign Language (ASL):** A visually perceived language based on articulated hand gestures and their placement relative to the body. Non-manual markers such as facial expressions and movements of the body are also used. ASL is the dominant signed language in North America. ASL is not a universal language;

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many other countries have their own forms of sign language. See also [Augmentative or Alternative Communication](#), [Deaf](#), and [Sign Language](#).

**Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA):** A comprehensive federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in employment, public services, public accommodations and services operated by private entities, and telecommunications.

**Amplifying Telephone Receivers:** Telephone receivers with a volume control built into the handgrip. They allow a person who is hearing impaired to amplify the incoming conversation.

**Anemia:** A condition in which a person does not have enough healthy red blood cells to carry adequate oxygen to the body's tissues. Having anemia may cause a person to feel tired and weak. See also [Sickle Cell Anemia](#). To learn more about anemia from the Mayo Clinic, [click here](#).

**Apraxia:** Inability or difficulty in initiating or performing purposeful movements.

**Asperger Syndrome or Disorder:** A developmental disorder characterized by a lack of social skills, impaired social relationships, poor coordination and poor concentration. Children with Asperger Disorder have average to above average intelligence and adequate language skills in the areas of vocabulary and grammar, but they may not understand the subtleties used in conversation such as irony and humor. It is believed that Asperger Disorder has a later onset than [Autistic Disorder](#) or at least is generally recognized later.

**Assistance Animals:** Enhances the lives of people with disabilities by providing highly trained assistance dogs or simian monkeys to enhance their independence or quality of life. See also [Dog Guide](#).

**Assistance Device:** Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

**Assistive technology:** Technology used to assist a person with a disability, e.g., wheelchair, hand splints, computer-based equipment.

**Assistive Technology Services:** Including but are not limited to the evaluation of a person's need for assistive technology; helping to select and obtain appropriate devices; designing, fitting and customizing those devices; purchasing, repairing or replacing those devices; and training the individual to use the devices effectively.

**Association for Persons in Supported Employment (ASPE):** National membership organization committed to expanding and improving integrated employment opportunities and outcomes for persons with disabilities. [Click here](#) to learn more.

**Atlantoaxial Instability:** A greater than normal mobility of the two upper vertebrae at the top of the neck, usually found in person with [Down Syndrome](#).

**Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD):** A disorder that shows up in the areas of inattention and impulsiveness. It is evidenced by having difficulty organizing and completing tasks correctly, frequent shifting from one activity to another, failure to follow rules. ADD without hyperactivity refers to the disorder without a high degree of atypical motor activity. Also see [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder \(ADHD\)](#).

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**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** Similar to Attention Deficit Disorder and includes gross motor over activity, such as excessive running, talking, or manipulation of objects and excessive fidgeting and restlessness. Also see [Attention Deficit Disorder \(ADD\)](#).

**Auditory Processing Disorder (APD):** A [learning disability](#) adversely affecting how sound passing without being impeded through the ear is processed or interpreted by the brain. People with APD do not recognize subtle differences between sounds in words, even when the sounds are loud and clear enough to be heard. They can also find it difficult to tell where sounds are coming from, to make sense of the order of sounds, or to block out competing background noises. APD is also known as *Central Auditory Processing Disorder*. [Click here](#) to learn more about APD.

**Augmentative or Alternative Communication:** Non-verbal communication such as sign language, symbol systems (communication boards) or electronic voice output devices. See also [American Sign Language, Deaf](#), and [Sign Language](#).

**Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** a range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication, as well as by unique strengths and differences. Also see [Asperger’s Syndrome or Disorder](#).

**Autonomy:** An ethical principle that proposes that all adults are competent until a court decides that incompetence exists. It embodies the concept of self-determination and supports the ability of a person to make decisions for him or herself consistent with the person’s beliefs and values. To act autonomously a person, therefore, must have an established set of values by which to measure his or her own interests.

**Barriers (Architectural):** Some common building standards under both the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) and the Americans with Disabilities Act Architectural Guidelines (ADAAG) that eliminate common physical and architectural barriers. Examples of some architectural barriers may include:

**Walkways:** 4 feet minimum width

**Doorways:** 32 inches minimum clear opening

**Telephones:** highest operable part not more than 48 inches from floor

**Bathroom Stalls:** not less than 60 inches clear floor space to accommodate a wheelchair turning radius

**Slopes and inclines:** for every one-inch drop between level surfaces, a one foot ramped incline

**Braille:** System of embossed characters formed by using a Braille cell, a combination of six dots consisting of two vertical columns of three dots each. Each simple Braille character is formed by one or more of these dots and occupies a full cell or space. Some Braille may use eight dots.

**Brailed Books:** Books with brailled text, rather than printed text. Most of the legally blind population does not read braille (about 7-12% of the population use braille as their primary reading mode). Braille requires a great deal of storage space

**Browser:** Software designed to access and display information available on the web. Browsers may be graphical or text-based. Text-only browsers cannot display images, sound clips, video and plug-in features

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that graphical browsers can. Talking browsers are also available for use by people who have difficulty reading text due to a learning disability or visual impairment.

**Captioned film or videos:** Transcription of the verbal portion of films or videos displayed to make them accessible to people who are deaf.

**Captioning:** Text that is included with video presentations or broadcasts that enables people with hearing impairments to have access to the audio portion of the material.

**Cardiac Conditions:** See [heart disease](#).

**Central Auditory Processing Disorder:** see [Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\)](#).

**Cerebral Palsy:** A disorder of movement, muscle tone or posture that is caused by damage occurring to the immature, developing brain, most often before birth. See also [neurological disorders](#).

**Child Find:** A process of identifying children with disabilities who would benefit from public services.

**Chronic Conditions:** Chronic conditions consist of heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, arthritis, osteoporosis, broken hip, pulmonary disease, stroke, Parkinson's disease, and urinary incontinence that occurs once a week or more often.

**Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD):** Chronic inflammatory lung disease that causes obstructed airflow from the lungs. Symptoms include breathing difficulty, cough, mucus (sputum) production and wheezing. It's caused by long-term exposure to irritating gases or particulate matter, most often from cigarette smoke. People with COPD are at increased risk of developing heart disease, lung cancer and a variety of other conditions.

**Closed Circuit TV Magnifier (CCTV):** Camera used to magnify books or other materials to a monitor or television.

**Communication device:** Hardware that allows a person who has difficulty using their voice clearly to use words or symbols for communication. May range in complexity from a simple picture board to complex electronic devices that allow personalized, unique construction of ideas.

**Compensatory tools:** Assistive computing systems that allow people with disabilities to use computers to complete tasks that they would have difficulty doing without a computer, e.g., reading, writing, communicating, accessing information.

**Conductive Hearing Loss:** The intensity of sound vibrations reaching the auditory nerve in the middle ear is reduced.

**Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS):** Standards intended to advance health equity, improve quality, and help eliminate healthcare disparities by establishing a blueprint for healthcare organization. To learn more about CLAS [click here](#).

**Curb Cut:** Also called a curb ramp, it is a depression built into the curb of a sidewalk to permit passage by a wheelchair. The incline should not exceed a gradient of 1:12 and the flat surface width should be no less than 4 feet wide.

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**Disability:** Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; a record of such an impairment; or being regarded as having such an impairment ([Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)). Discrimination: Act of making a difference in treatment or favor on a basis other than individual merit.

**Deaf/deaf:** Uppercase “Deaf” refers to a group of people who share a language (American Sign Language) and a culture. Lowercase “deaf” is used to refer to the audiological condition of not hearing. See also [American Sign Language](#), Augmentative or Alternative Communication, and [Sign Language](#).

**Deaf Culture:** A set of values, behaviors, and traditions belonging to the deaf and close allies. American Deaf culture centers on the use of ASL and identification and unity with other people who are deaf.

**Detectable Warnings:** A standardized surface feature built in or applied to walking surfaces or other elements to warn visually impaired people of hazards on a circulation path. Detectable warnings consist of raised truncated domes and contrast visually with adjoining surfaces, either light-on-dark or dark-on-light.

**Developmental Delay:** Being behind other children of the same age in achieving cognitive, adaptive, physical, and social skills. See also [intellectual disability](#).

**Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act):** A federal law empowering individuals with developmental disabilities and their families to help shape policies that impact them. State and territory programs authorized by the DD Act conduct important research and test innovative new service delivery models. They work to bring the latest knowledge and resources to those who can put it to the best use, including self-advocates, families, service providers, and policymakers. DD Act programs also investigate cases of abuse and serve as advocates for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

**Developmental Disability:** Disability occurring before the person reaches 22 years of age, substantially impacting his or her life. Such a disability is caused by an intellectual disability or related conditions (e.g. [cerebral palsy](#), [autism](#), [epilepsy](#), [Down syndrome](#), or other [neurological disorders](#)) which significantly impairs the person’s general intellectual and/or adaptive functioning.

**Disability:** Any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for a person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation) and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions). To learn more about how disability is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [click here](#).

According to the [World Health Organization](#), disability has three dimensions:

1. **Impairment** in a person’s body structure or function, or mental functioning. Examples: loss of a limb, loss of vision, or memory loss.
2. **Activity limitation**, such as difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, or problem solving.
3. **Participation restrictions** in normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities, and obtaining healthcare and preventive services.

**Disease Management:** A system of coordinated health care interventions and communications for populations with conditions (e.g., patients with asthma or diabetes) in which patient self-care efforts are

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significant. Disease management could include team-based care where physicians and/or other health professionals participate in the delivery and management of care. It also includes the appropriate use of pharmaceuticals.

**Dog Guide:** The dog guide (“seeing eye” and “guide dog” are brand names) undergoes extensive specialized training to assist and alert persons who are blind, deaf and hard of hearing. It must learn basic obedience, to lead rather than “heel,” to avoid obstacles (including overhead objects), and to “work” in stores and elevators, on various forms of public transportation, and when crossing streets, etc. Dog guides are legally permitted to accompany their owners into buildings including all Federal and State buildings, hotels, motels, restaurants, grocery stores, airplanes, trains and buses. To refuse to allow a dog guide entry to any of these places is a violation of the law.

**Down Syndrome:** A genetic disorder caused when abnormal cell division results in an extra full or partial copy of chromosome 21. This extra genetic material causes the developmental changes and physical features of Down syndrome.

**Dysarthria:** Inability to speak or difficulty speaking which results from muscle weakness and/or lack of coordination in the chest, neck or mouth.

**Dyscalculia:** A [learning disability](#) affecting a person’s ability to understand numbers and learn math facts. People with this condition may also have poor comprehension of math symbols, may struggle with memorizing and organizing numbers, have difficulty telling time, or have trouble with counting.

**Dysgraphia:** A [learning disability](#) affecting a person’s handwriting ability and fine motor skills. Problems may include illegible handwriting, inconsistent spacing, poor spatial planning on paper, poor spelling, and difficulty composing writing as well as thinking and writing at the same time. See also [Visual Perceptual or Visual Motor Deficit](#).

**Dyslexia:** A [learning disability](#) affecting reading and related language-based processing skills. The severity of this condition can differ in each individual yet can affect reading fluency, decoding, reading comprehension, recall, writing, spelling, and at times speech. Dyslexia can exist along with other related disorders. Dyslexia is also known as Language-Based Learning Disability.

**Dyspraxia:** A disorder characterized by difficulty in muscle control, causing problems with movement and coordination, language and speech, and can affect learning. Although not considered a [learning disability](#) by the [Learning Disability Association of America](#) as of August 2018, dyspraxia often exists along with [dyslexia](#), [dyscalculia](#), or [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder](#). To learn more about dyspraxia, [click here](#).

**Echolalia:** Repetitive, parrot-like speech using words spoken by others.

**End-Stage Renal Disease (ESRD):** End-Stage Renal Disease is a state of kidney impairment that is irreversible, cannot be controlled by conservative management alone, and requires dialysis or kidney transplantation to maintain life.

**Epilepsy:** A central nervous system disorder in which brain activity becomes abnormal, causing seizures or periods of unusual behavior, sensations, and sometimes loss of awareness. See also [neurological disorders](#).

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**Executive Functioning:** Affects planning, organization, strategizing, attention to detail, and managing time and space. An inefficiency in cognitive management systems of the brain affects various neuropsychological processes (e.g. planning, remembering details). Although not a learning disability, different patterns of weakness in executive function are almost always seen in learning profiles of people with specific [learning disabilities](#) or [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder](#).

**Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA):** A 1993 federal law requiring employers with more than 50 employees to provide eligible workers up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for birth, adoptions, foster care placement, and illnesses of employees and their families.

**Finger Spelling:** When no sign exists for a thought or concept, the word can be spelled out using the American manual alphabet. It is also used for titles, proper name, and convenience. See also [American Sign Language](#) and [sign language](#).

**FM Sound Amplification System:** Electronic amplification system consisting of three components: a microphone/transmitter, monaural FM receiver and a combination charger/carrying case. It provides wireless FM broadcast from a speaker to a listener who has a hearing impairment.

**Fragile X Syndrome (FXS):** A genetic disorder caused by changes in the fragile X mental retardation 1 (FMR1) gene: which makes a protein called fragile X mental retardation protein (FMRP). FMRP is needed for normal brain development. People with FXS do not make this protein any may exhibit signs and symptoms such as [developmental delay](#), learning disabilities, and/or social and behavior problems. [Click here](#) to learn more about FXS from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

**Functional Limitations:** Sample persons who report no limitations in any of the activities of daily living (ADLs) or instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs)

**Handicap: Handicapped:** As defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activity, has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment.

Those individuals diagnosed as having a handicapping condition in accordance with the following definitions: mentally retarded; seriously emotionally disturbed; specific learning disability; hearing, speech, or sight impaired; physical or health handicapped. Persons should not be counted as handicapped unless they have been clinically diagnosed as having these conditions. Use one primary diagnosis for multiply handicapped children.

See also [disability](#).

**Hard of Hearing:** A person with mild to moderate hearing loss. A person who is hard of hearing may or may not consider themselves part of the Deaf community. **Hearing Aid:** A hearing aid consists of a receiver and amplifier of sound. All sounds in the environment are amplified with the same intensity. A hearing aid does not sort, process, or discriminate among sounds. Because someone is wearing a hearing aid it does not mean that the person can hear normally. Aids do not correct hearing, but they improve hearing in some people.

**Hearing impairments:** Complete or partial loss of ability to hear caused by a variety of injuries or diseases including congenital defects.

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**Heart Disease:** The category heart disease includes Myocardial Infarction (heart attack), Angina Pectoris or Coronary Heart Disease, Congestive Heart Failure, problems with valves in the heart, or problems with rhythm of the heartbeat.

**Helper:** An external program that can be called up by a web browser to display specially formatted material, such as word processed documents, spreadsheet documents or video/sound pieces. The Helper program is launched by the web browser as a separate application to view or play the file.

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV):** A virus spread through certain bodily fluids that attacks the body's immune system, specifically CD4 cells often called T cells. Over time, HIV can destroy so many of these cell that the body cannot fight off infections and disease. Once the number of T cells drop below 200, the virus can lead to [AIDS](#). Persons with HIV or AIDS, both symptomatic and asymptomatic, have physical impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities and are, therefore, protected by the [Americans with Disability Act \(ADA\)](#).

**Hydrocephalus:** An abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid in the brain, which causes the ventricles to enlarge as well as the pressure inside the head to increase. There is no cure: the only treatment option requires brain surgery. [Click here](#) to learn more about this condition from the Hydrocephalus Association.

**Impairment:** An absence of or significant difference in a person's body structure or function or mental functioning. For example, problems in the structure of the brain can result in difficulty with mental functions, or problems with the structure of the eyes or ears can result in difficulty with the functions of vision and hearing respectively. See also [disability](#).

**Structural impairments:** Significant problems with an internal or external component of the body. Examples: Type of nerve damage that can result in multiple sclerosis; a complete loss of a body component as when a limb has been amputated.

**Functional impairments:** Complete or partial loss of function of a body part. Examples: Pain that does not go away; joints that no longer move easily.

**Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs):** Activities related to independent living. They include preparing meals, managing money, shopping for groceries or personal items, performing light or heavy housework, and using a telephone. If a sample person has any difficulty performing an activity by himself/herself, or does not perform the activity at all, because of health problems, the person is deemed to have a limitation in that activity. The limitation may be temporary or chronic.

**Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDDs):** Disorders usually present at birth that negatively affect the trajectory of an individual's physical intellectual, and/or emotional development. Many IDD affect multiple body parts or systems.

IDDs start any time before a child turns 18 and is characterized by problems with:

1. **Intellectual functioning or intelligence**, which include the ability to learn, reason, problem solve, and other skills.
2. **Adaptive behavior**, which includes everyday social and life skills.



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See also [intellectual disability](#) and [developmental delay](#). For more information on IDDS from the National Institutes of Health, [click here](#).

**Intellectual disability:** Limits to a person's ability to learn at an expected level and function in daily life, which varies greatly in children from a very slight problem to a severe problem. [Click here](#) to learn more. See also [developmental delay](#).

**Interpreter:** Professional person who assists a deaf person in communicating with hearing people

**Joystick:** A device consisting of a lever that allows a pointer to move up, right, left, or down and serves as an alternative to a mouse. It usually includes buttons to enable mouse clicks.

**Keyboard emulation:** A method of having an alternative device and/or software, such as a switch-based system, serve the role of a keyboard.

**Key Guard:** A plastic or metal shield that covers a keyboard with holes over the keys. It allows use of a keyboard without undesired activation of surrounding keys

**Language-Based Learning Disability:** see [Dyslexia](#).

**Language Processing Disorder (LPD):** A specific type of [Auditory Processing Disorder \(APD\)](#) in which there is difficulty in attaching meaning to sound groups that form words, sentences, and stories. While an APD affects the interpretation of all sounds coming into the brain, an LPD relates only to the processing of language. LPD can affect expressive language and/or receptive language. [Click here](#) to learn more about LPD.

**Large print books:** Most ordinary print is six to ten points in height (about 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch). Large type is fourteen to eighteen points (about 1/8 to 1/4 of an inch) and sometimes larger. The format of large print books is also proportionately larger (usually 8 1/2 x 11 inches).

**Learning disability:** Neurologically based processing problem that can interfere with learning basic skills such as reading, writing and/or math. These process problems may also interfere with higher level skills such as organization, time planning, abstract reasoning, long or short term memory and attention. Learning disabilities can affect a person's life beyond academics, impacting relationships with family, friends, and colleagues. To learn more about this condition from the Learning Disabilities Association of America, [click here](#).

**Long-Term Care Facility:** A facility with three or more long-term care beds, providing either personal care services to residents, continuous supervision of residents, or long-term care services throughout the facility or in a separately identifiable unit. Types of long-term care facilities include licensed nursing homes, skilled nursing homes, and intermediate care facilities, retirement homes, domiciliary of personal care facilities, distinct long-term care units in a hospital complex, mental health facilities and centers, assisted and foster care homes, and institutions for the mentally and physically developmentally disabled.

**Mainstreaming, inclusion:** The inclusion of people with disabilities, with or without special accommodations, in programs, activities, and facilities with their non-disabled peers

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**Major life activities:** Functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, working, and participating in community activities ([Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)).

**Memory:** Three types of memory are important to learning: 1) working memory, 2) short-term memory, and 3) long-term memory. They are used in processing verbal and non-verbal information. Any deficits in one of the types of memory impairs the ability to store and retrieve information required to carry out tasks. [Click here](#) to learn more about the three types of memory.

**Mobility impairment:** Disability that affects movement ranging from gross motor skills such as walking to fine motor movement involving manipulation of objects by hand.

**Mobility Limitation:** A person with little, some, a lot of difficulty, or cannot not walk a quarter of a mile or otherwise has trouble walking, rather than temporary difficulty: such as from a short-term injury.

**Mouse emulation:** A method of having an alternative device and/or software, such a switch based system, serve the role of a mouse.

**Neurological disorders:** Diseases of the brain, spine, and the nerves that connect them. There are more than 600 diseases of the nervous system such as brain tumors, epilepsy, Parkinson’s disease, and stroke as well as less familiar one such as frontotemporal dementia. To learn more, [visit UW Medicine Neurology](#).

**Neurotypical (NT):** A term used to describe someone not on the [Autism Spectrum](#)

**Non-verbal Learning Disability (NLD or NVLD):** A disorder usually characterized by a significant discrepancy between higher verbal skills and weaker motor, visual-spatial, and social skills. Typically, a person with NLD (or NVLD) has trouble interpreting nonverbal cues like facial expressions or body language and may have poor coordination. See also [Visual Perceptual or Visual Motor Deficit](#). [Click here](#) to learn more about NLD (NVLD).

**Peripheral neuropathy:** A condition caused by damage to the nerves in the peripheral nervous system which includes nerves that run from the brain and spinal cord to the rest of the body.

**Physical or mental impairment:** Any physiological disorder or condition, cosmetic disfigurement, or anatomical loss affecting one or more of the following body systems: neurological; musculoskeletal; special sense organs; respiratory, including speech organs; cardiovascular; reproductive; digestive; genito-urinary; hemic and lymphatic; skin; and endocrine; or any mental or psychological disorder, such as mental retardation, organic brain syndrome, emotional or mental illness, and specific learning disabilities ([Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)).

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** A condition that is triggered by experiencing or witnessing a 4 Disability-Related Terms Glossary terrifying event. Symptoms may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety and uncontrollable thoughts about the event. Sometimes people with PTSD have difficulty adjusting and coping and can get better with good self-care and therapeutic intervention.

**Qualified individual with a disability:** An individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modification to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility

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requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity ([Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#)).

**Reader:** Volunteer or employee of an individual with a disability (e.g., visual impairment, learning disability) who reads printed material in person or records to audiotape.

**Reading system:** Hardware and software designed to provide access to printed text for people with visual impairments, mobility impairments, or learning disabilities. Character recognition software controls a scanner that takes an image of a printed page, converts it to computer text using recognition software and then reads the text using a synthesized voice.

**Recorded Books:** Recordings for the blind (RFB), a national non-profit voluntary organization which is supported primarily by contributions from the public, provides taped educational books, free on loan, to print impaired elementary, high school, college and graduate students, as well as to non-students who require specialized reading material in their professions or vocations

**Refreshable Braille Display:** Hardware connected to a computer that echoes screen text on a box that has cells consisting of pins that move up and down to create Braille characters.

**Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf:** The Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Inc., a national corporation with over 50 chapters, was organized in 1964 for the purpose of providing interpreting services to the deaf of America and its trust territories. In addition, the RID has members from other nations. The RID provides certification of interpreters and a grievance process for the clients to file a complaint about a certified interpreter who does not comply with the RID Code of Ethics.

**Repetitive Stress Injury (RSI):** A disability that may be chronic or acute and usually is described as pain caused by overuse of extremities, usually hands and wrists.

**Screen enlargement:** Hardware and/or software that increases the size of characters and text on a computer screen.

**Screen reader:** Software used to echo text on a computer screen to audio output, often used by people who are blind, with visual impairments, or with learning disabilities.

**Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act:** Legislation that requires federal agencies to develop, procure, and use accessible electronic and information technology.

**Sensory impairment:** A disability that affects touch, sight and/or hearing.

**Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD):** A condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that comes in through the senses. Some people with sensory processing disorder are very sensitive to things in their environment such as sounds or bright lights

**Sickle Cell Anemia:** An inherited form of anemia where normally flexible and round red blood cells become rigid and sticky. Sickled red blood cells are shaped like crescent moons increasing the probability they can get stuck in small blood vessels; slowing or blocking blood flow and oxygen to parts of the body. There is no cure for most people with sickle cell anemia. Treatments can relieve pain and help prevent problems associated with the disease. [Click here](#) to learn more about sickle cell anemia from the Mayo Clinic.

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**Sighted Guide:** A sighted guide is a person who physically assists an individual who is blind, only when that person accepts assistance. When serving as a sighted guide for an individual who is blind, let the person take your arm (right or left depending on the person's preference), walk about one half-step ahead. S/he will follow the motion of your body. When showing a person who is blind to a chair, place his/her hand on the back of the chair. At times, it may also be helpful to provide a physical description of the physical environment surrounding them and the route being taken.

**Sign Language:** Manual communication commonly used by deaf individuals. The gestures or symbols in sign language are organized in a linguistic way. Each individual gesture is called a sign. Each sign has three distinct parts; the handshape, the position of the hands, and the movement of the hands. American Sign Language (ASL) is the most commonly used sign language in the United States. Deaf people from different countries speak different sign languages. See also [Deaf](#) and [American Sign Language](#).

**Social Activity Limitation:** A situation in which one's health restricts his or her social life in the past month some, most, or all of the time. This includes visiting with friends or close relatives, and reflect the sample person's experience over the preceding month, even if that experience is atypical

**Specific Learning Disability:** Disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in difficulties listening, thinking, speaking, reading, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations. Frequent limitations include hyperactivity, distractibility, emotional instability, visual and/or auditory perception difficulties and/or motor limitations, depending on the type(s) of learning disability.

**Speech impairment:** Problems in communication and related areas such as oral motor function, ranging from simple sound substitutions to the inability to understand or use language or use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech.

**Speech input or speech recognition:** A method of controlling a computer and creating text by dictation. Speech input software is combined with a microphone.

**Supported Living Services (SLS):** A broad range of services to adults with developmental disabilities who choose to live in homes they themselves own or lease in the community. Such services may include yet are not limited to assistance with selecting and moving into a home; choosing personal attendants and housemates; acquiring household furnishings; common daily living activities and emergencies; becoming a participating member in community life; and managing personal financial affairs, as well as other supports.

**Tactile Signage:** Signs or labels with Braille, raised letters or textured patterns that can be read tactilely by persons with visual impairments.

**Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) or Teletypewriter (TTY):** A device which enables somebody who has a speech or hearing impairment to use a telephone when communicating with someone else who has a TDD/TTY. TDD/TTYs can be used with any telephone, and one needs only a basic typing ability to use them

**Trackball:** A mouse alternative that is basically an upside-down mouse. Useful for some people with mobility impairments because it isolates pointer movement from button clicking.

## Healthcare Equity Glossary – Ableism

### UW Medicine Healthcare Equity

**Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** Open and closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, including cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior; physical functions; information processing; and speech. The term does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or induced by birth trauma.

**Undue Hardship:** The term “undue hardship” means significant difficulty or expense in, or resulting from, the provision of an accommodation.

**Universal design:** Designing programs, services, tools, and facilities so that they are useable, without modification, by the widest range of users possible, taking into account a variety of abilities and disabilities.

**Universal design of instruction:** The design of instructional materials and activities that make learning achievable by students with a wide variety of abilities and disabilities.

**Upper Extremity Limitation:** A situation in which a person has little, some, or a lot of difficulty with reaching or extending his or her arms above shoulder level and has difficulty writing or handling and grasping small objects.

**Visual Alarms:** A flashing light that is placed into a building or facility alarm system. If single station audible alarms are provided then single station visual alarm signals should also be provided.

**Urinary Incontinence:** A person has lost urine beyond his or her control at least once during the last 12 months

**Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973:** Act prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability which applies to any program that receives federal financial support. Section 504 of the Act is aimed at making educational programs and facilities accessible to all students. Section 508 of the Act requires that electronic office equipment purchased through federal procurement meets disability access guidelines.

**Vision impairments:** Complete or partial loss of ability to see, caused by a variety of injuries or diseases including congenital defects. Legal blindness is defined as visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses, or widest diameter of visual field subtending an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.

**Visual Perceptual or Visual Motor Deficit:** A disorder affecting the understanding of information that a person sees or the ability to draw or copy. A characteristic observed in people with [learning disabilities](#) such as [Dysgraphia](#) or [Non-Verbal Learning Disability \(NLD or NVLD\)](#), this condition can result in missing subtle differences in shapes or printed letters, losing place frequently, struggles with cutting, holding a pencil too tightly, or poor eye-hand coordination. [Click here](#) to learn more about Visual Perceptual or Visual Motor Deficit.

**Word Prediction:** Software that reduces the number of keystrokes needed to type words and sentences. As characters are entered on either a standard, alternative or virtual keyboard, suggested completions of the word that has been started are provided to the user