



Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW)

Volunteer Helper Information Handbook

2020 edition

Contents

WELCOME.....	1
ACTIVITIES YOU CAN HELP WITH.....	2
WHAT IS RDA(NSW).....	2
RDA(NSW) AIMS TO.....	2
WHY HORSES AND HORSE RIDING?	2
THE ROLE OF THE COACH.....	3
HOW TO BE AN EFFICIENT LEADER.....	3
HOW TO BE AN EFFICIENT SIDEWALKER.....	3
DUTIES OF THE SIDEWALKER AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN A LESSON.....	4
MOUNTING.....	4
VOLUNTEERS NEED.....	4
HORSES NEED TO BE.....	4
TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS.....	5
NEVER, NEVER, NEVER!!!.....	5
THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A VOLUNTEER.....	6
RDA(NSW) COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERS.....	6
RDA(NSW) VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT.....	7
RDA(NSW) PRIVACY STATEMENT.....	7
SOCIAL MEDIA.....	7
RDA(NSW) AND NATIONAL DISABILITY STANDARDS.....	7
WORK, HEALTH AND SAFETY.....	8
SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES.....	8
GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC DISABILITIES.....	9 & 10

WELCOME

Many thanks for volunteering to help your local RDA Centre.

This booklet has been created to give you some information on what happens at RDA and how you can help us to help each other and more importantly, our riders (the term "rider" includes all those who participate in our programmes, either riding, carriage driving or EFMH&L and unmounted programmes).

We hope to promote understanding of the:

- duties and responsibilities of volunteers
- aims and Policies and Procedures of RDA (NSW), and
- important role of the volunteer in ensuring the riders' safety, enjoyment and learning.

This booklet contains information on the aims of RDA, the benefits of therapeutic programmes, Volunteers' Code of Conduct, and the importance of volunteering and helping in the different areas of RDA all to assist you in providing assistance to our riders, sensibly and with sensitivity. We want to ensure that the maximum enjoyment and benefits result from the riding lesson for both rider and volunteer helper alike.

ACTIVITIES YOU CAN HELP WITH

- Care of horses
- Training horses and ponies
- Leading horses or assisting riders in the programme
- Helping with activities for unmounted riders
- Assisting the Coach to handle the day's paperwork
- Refreshment host/hostess
- Fundraising
- Committee work
- Organising outings and camps
- Gardening, lawn maintenance, paddock management



*The Coach is totally responsible for the conduct of every RDA session.
The role of the volunteer helper is to assist the RDA Coach implement the riding programme and rider's goals.*

WHAT IS RDA (NSW)?

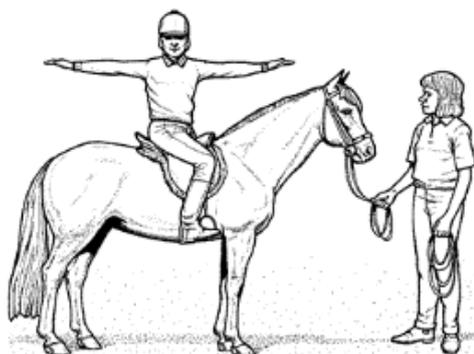
Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW) is an international voluntary organisation which provides riding instruction and other activities associated with riding and driving for people with disabilities. RDA (NSW) is affiliated with the international body of RDA – FHETI – Federation of Horses in Education and Therapy International. There are presently 38 active Centres in NSW, catering for over 1,600 riders with disabilities. RDA (NSW) is administered by the State Network Committee which is comprised of the Board of Directors and Regional Representatives. There are nine Regional Representatives who are responsible for the Centres in their region. Coach development and training is administered by the Coaching and Safety Panel (CASP).

The website for the Association is www.rdansw.org.au and additional information regarding RDA can be found on this site.

RDA (NSW) AIMS TO:

...encourage, promote, support and provide therapy, sport, recreation, training and safety programmes for persons with disabilities
...use riding, driving and other horse related activities...

- in the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities
- as a form of therapy, using the stimulus provided by the horse
- to teach persons with disabilities, control of body and mind by riding, and controlling a horse as far as possible without braces and/or supports
- to foster and support the integration of people with disabilities into community activities and into the administration of the Centre and the Association
- to provide and maintain such facilities and equipment as may be required in order to achieve the objects of the Centre
- in the training of Coaches and helpers to comply with appropriate safety standards in relation to conduct and contact with people with disabilities, horse management and other related riding activities
- to provide a safe work environment through the implementation of Risk Management Procedures and compliance with Work, Health and Safety standards
- to liaise with other bodies having an interest in the treatment and well-being of persons with disabilities



WHY HORSES AND HORSE RIDING?

The following are some of the ways *Riding Develops Abilities*:

- Improvement of balance and posture
- Promotion of spatial awareness (where their body is in space)
- Promotion of decision making and thinking ahead
- Development of gross and fine motor skills
- Encourages reading and speech through games
- Development of eye-hand co-ordination
- Sensory stimulation through activity and surroundings
- Exercises executed in different and pleasant surroundings
- Overcoming phobias such as heights and animals
- Riding is a natural reflex-inhibiting position which reduces likelihood of spasms
- Building of self-confidence and self esteem
- Improvement of memory and concentration Ease of mobility and freedom
- Social integration
- Development of language and communication skills
- Learning the value of rules, e.g., safety and discipline
- Personal challenge leading to achievement
- Learning a skill that many able-bodied people do not have
- Contact with animals and learning about the need for their welfare
- Participation and opportunity for competition
- Opportunity to take controlled risks
- Promotion of a general feeling of well being
- Having FUN

Research has shown the movement of the horse to have a positive effect on the symmetry and tone of the muscles. Riding involves all of the muscles in the body and in addition, stimulates body systems.

The horse is a social creature which will readily bond with humans. The horse will accept a rider with no pre-judgment. He immediately returns kindness and affection and will respond to the rider's commands. Bonding has been found to be basic to the development of communication.

THE ROLE OF THE COACH

The Coach on duty is the person responsible for everyone during a session. Some Centres may have an Assistant Coach and then it is the duty of the Coach to exercise indirect supervision. Indirect supervision is defined as being on the grounds of the RDA Centre and in hearing distance of the session that the Assistant Coach is conducting. The role of the qualified Coach is to conduct the initial assessment of the potential riders, determine the horse and tack that will be used for the rider and also the mounting method. The mounting method will be decided in consultation with the rider/carer. The Coach will develop lesson plans and set goals for the riders. The Assistant Coach may wish to be involved in this and should be encouraged to do so.

HOW TO BE AN EFFICIENT LEADER

Leaders, at all times, have the responsibility of the horse and rider they are leading. A leader must remain with the horse they are leading and must not leave to attend another horse or rider with a problem. The leader is fully responsible to their rider and must be aware of their position in the saddle and be prepared to stop if the rider has a concern or becomes unbalanced.

Leaders may have to draw the Coach's attention if a problem is unnoticed by the Coach

The Leader should be walking at the horse's shoulder unless there is a sidewalker on that side in which case the leader will need to be further forward.



Leaders must observe correct leading and safety techniques. Training will be given in correct RDA leading procedures

HOW TO BE AN EFFICIENT SIDEWALKER

Sidewalking is an important role for a volunteer and the simplest instruction is a practical demonstration.

- For the sidewalkers to be of any benefit to the rider they must be in the correct position - i.e. level with the rider's body. Too far forward and the sidewalker may not be aware of the position of the rider in the saddle; too far back and they are not in a position to assist the rider should there be a problem and they may also annoy the horse and cause the horse to display their annoyance by kicking.
- If there is only one sidewalker they should be on the side opposite the leader.
- Sometimes it is necessary to support a rider due to a physical disability. Some riders may be nervous and require the assurance of contact by a volunteer. If the rider is new to RDA and just unsure of riding, then the volunteer may hold the rider at the ankle. The volunteer is able to feel that the rider is sitting squarely in the saddle but still gives that little support often required by a nervous rider.
- If the rider has a physical disability and is in the early stages of learning to balance it may be necessary to give more support.
- The Coach should make the volunteer aware of the importance of not holding the rider's leg all the time in the same position as this may cause pressure sores for some riders. There are many support holds and these may change as the rider progresses.
- An effective way to allow the riders to feel secure without actually holding them is for the volunteer to hold the front of the saddle flap, the knee roll and placing their forearm across the rider's thigh. This keeps the rider in position without really holding them. Indeed, it is not always a good idea to hold some riders on the thigh, as young men are easily aroused when held this way. In this instance the choice of volunteer is important.

- Some riders may feel more confident if they wear a waist belt which the volunteer holds. The belt is not to make the volunteer feel more comfortable. It may even be necessary for the volunteer to have the other hand on the rider's leg. The volunteer must be careful not to lean or pull on the belt causing discomfort to the rider or pulling the rider off balance.
- The coach will decide the level and type of support.

DUTIES OF THE SIDEWALKER AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN A LESSON...

- Give both physical and/or moral support to relay information and instructions from the Coach and to assist when necessary during exercises or games.
- Volunteers are encouraged to allow the riders to have as much independence as possible. During the briefing session the Coach should give instructions as to how much assistance each rider should require.
- Leaders and sidewalkers should not talk amongst themselves during the lesson and should never assume that a rider does not hear or understand.
- Some riders require two sidewalkers. When this is necessary the Coach should discuss with the volunteers who is responsible should it be necessary for an emergency dismount. Also, when there are two sidewalkers it should be decided which person is the one to relay instructions from the Coach. It is very confusing to a rider to have two people trying to talk to them and issuing instructions. Riders should not be encouraged to engage in "small talk" with their sidewalker as this leads to distraction and the rider will not be paying attention to the Coach during the lesson.
- Volunteers will be trained not to lean on the horse, particularly an arm behind the saddle or an elbow in the kidneys often causes the horse to react. Similarly, leaning an arm over the horse's neck may annoy the horse and restrict the rider's ability to give direction to the horse.

MOUNTING

The rider may be mounted from the:

- Block,
- Ramp or
- Hoist.

When assisting riders, it is important that any physical contact is appropriate to the rider's needs.

Independence should be encouraged but it is the Coach's responsibility to ensure that safety standards are in place for all involved, including the welfare of the horse.

Riders may be mounted from either side according to their disability. The horse must be trained to accept both methods.

Always remember that safety must come first, and the mounting should be carried out in an organised and dignified way. Mounting is the time when riders are most vulnerable, and volunteers must be well trained in mounting safety and procedure.

Pre-riding safety checks will be carried out on riders, volunteers and horses by the Coach.

VOLUNTEERS NEED:

- To wear enclosed footwear
- To avoid wearing flapping clothes that could annoy/frighten the horses
- Sun protection in the form of sunscreen or protective clothing
- Hats fitted so that they will not blow off in the wind, and
- To have mobile phones turned off.

HORSES NEED TO BE:

- Warmed up prior to being mounted.
- Tacked up with a well-fitting saddle appropriate for the rider. Before mounting, the girth must be rechecked and, if possible, the stirrups adjusted for that particular rider.
- Calm, balanced and standing square at the block or ramp prior and during the mounting, and
- Protected by making sure that the rider eases gently into the saddle and does not flop down, causing discomfort to the horse.

Horses are individuals, with some standing calmly when held lightly by the cheek pieces of the bridle with the helper standing in front of them.

Other horses stand better when the helper stands at their head but slightly to the offside, holding the lead rope. The Coach will specify how the horse is to be held.

TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- RDA (NSW) recommends that all volunteers adhere to the "Sunsmart" policy. Please wear protective, well-fitting head wear, long sleeves, trousers and sunscreen whilst at the RDA Centre.
- Wear suitable clothing, particularly footwear. Thongs, high heeled shoes, sandals, flowing scarves or hats that will blow off and frighten a horse or rider should not be worn.
- Volunteers are asked not to talk between themselves during riding sessions, as your rider will 'switch off' if ignored. Pay attention to instructions from the Coach and repeat the instructions to the rider if necessary. Always pay attention to your rider.
- Never assume that a rider cannot hear or understand you.
- Talk to your rider, even if they cannot speak. Listen and try to understand their form of communication when they speak to you. Never pretend you understand if you do not, they will not mind repeating themselves. Give the person time to respond.
- Do not give food to riders without permission. Riders may be on special diets or have allergies.
- Do not give food to ponies without permission. Ponies can learn to nip.
- Do not discuss any rider's personal details, other than in a situation or meeting officially set up for this purpose.
- When dealing with riders, consult both the Coach and the rider about the way they prefer to perform a task.
- Talk to and treat each rider in an age appropriate manner.
- Please give consideration to appropriate greetings. Riders must not be encouraged to cuddle or embrace. These behaviours whilst perfectly innocent can place people with disabilities at risk in other situations. Riders can be greeted very positively in a verbal sense.
- Explain your actions to the rider. Tell the rider what you're doing and why. Check with riders to establish whether they are able to tell you how to help most effectively.
- When assisting riders with physical disabilities, allow time for them to attempt the task before assisting to avoid frustration and allow time for them to adapt to a change of position. Do not move the rider suddenly or attempt to force a limb or joint which is stiff. The Coach or Therapist will demonstrate how to lift, but remember, never bend from the waist. Bend knees and hips during lift, keep weight close to your body and lift towards you.
- If the volunteer or rider becomes ill or injured during a session the Coach must be informed.
- While all possible care must be taken to prevent accidents, do not be overprotective. Allow every rider the opportunity to be as independent as possible.
- Volunteers should note any significant changes or developments in a rider's ability or behaviour, and these should be discussed with the Coach at the end of the session.
- Riders work hard both emotionally and physically. Try to make the riding sessions fun for everyone. Use encouragement where appropriate.
- For your own protection never lift or attempt to lift an immobile rider on your own. Assist a Coach or another RDA helper, but ensure you are never in a situation whereby you could be deemed responsible for his or her injury. Also be mindful that with some riders there are specific lifting techniques and procedures, of which Coaches are aware and employ. By doing so, the risk of injury is minimised.
- Never assist a rider with any aspect of undressing or toileting unless you are with another person (not a rider).

THERE MUST BE TWO PEOPLE PRESENT

This must be strictly observed and is for your own protection.

- Always encourage the rider to tackle a task independently.
- Sometimes minimal help is required in order to achieve success and this should be given as required. Even when they must struggle, it is often more beneficial to a rider, if they are allowed to try to accomplish a task on their own.
- Allow the rider time to achieve a degree of success rather than performing the task for them.
- If you notice any irregularities or potential dangers, notify a Coach or committee member. RDA can cover a large area and we rely on your observations and help with Risk Management, in order to maintain our excellent safety record.
- RDA (NSW) policy is that Guide dogs and therapy dogs are the only dogs allowed on site.

NEVER, NEVER, NEVER!!!!

NEVER mount a rider when the horse is tied up.

NEVER leave your rider unattended to attend to another.

NEVER tie a rider onto a horse.

NEVER walk behind a horse without speaking to it.

NEVER approach a horse from behind or chase it to make it walk or trot.

NEVER rest an arm behind the saddle or hit the horse on the rump or flank.

NEVER tie up a horse in the riding area while riders are mounted.

NEVER tie the horse up with a long rope in which it can become entangled.

NEVER tie up below the level of the horse's mouth or above eye level.

NEVER tie a horse to a movable object, e.g., garden seat, car door, rubbish bin, jump wings, taps, water pipes, wires or veranda railings.



THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A VOLUNTEER

As an RDA volunteer you have the right to...

- be assigned a suitable job and to say NO to any task you are unable or would prefer not to do.
- express your opinions, be listened to, and have your opinion respected.
- receive adequate information of what is expected of you.
- ask questions about anything you may not understand.
- receive support and training.
- must have your personal details kept in a confidential manner.
- work in a safe and healthy environment.
- be reimbursed for agreed out-of-pocket expenses.
- be advised of insurance cover.
- be treated fairly and without harassment or discrimination, and
- access the Complaints Procedures.

As an RDA volunteer you are responsible for...

- providing a "Working with Children Check" as required by law before working in programmes.
- arriving at agreed times.
- signing and noting your time in "Attendance Book" when you arrive and leave.
- notifying the Coach or committee if you are unable to attend a planned activity.
- respecting the rider's confidentiality.
- always adhering to the safety requirements and regulations of RDA (NSW).
- following the directions of the Coach when in a riding programme,
- providing feedback where appropriate.
- asking for support when needed.
- informing the Centre of any medical condition or special needs you have, which may affect your ability to do certain tasks.
- reporting hazards, injuries or risk management issues,
- attending ongoing training, and
- advising your Centre of any change of address, phone number etc.

*The RDA (NSW) complete Volunteer Management Policy is found in the RDA (NSW) Administration Manual (RAM) –
Volunteers' Section on the website*

RDA (NSW) COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEERS

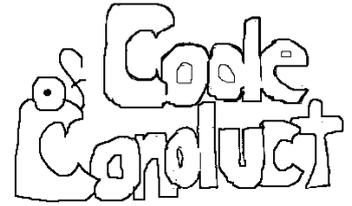
To ensure the volunteer's experience is satisfying and rewarding and complies with Federal and State legislation and our duty of care, RDA (NSW) commits to the following:

- State and acknowledge the contribution of volunteers in RDA (NSW) documentation.
- Recognise the achievements of volunteers.
- Provide insurance cover.
- Make volunteers aware of, and provide them with, a copy of the RDA (NSW) Volunteers Helpers booklet and other documents relating to RDA (NSW) Volunteer Policies.
- Offer volunteers the choice to work in their preferred areas.
- Provide orientation, training and information to promote skill development in all aspects of RDA (NSW).
- Acknowledge the rights of volunteers.
- Provide access to Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedures.
- Provide a safe and healthy volunteering environment.
- Provide appropriate levels of support and management for volunteers.
- Treat all volunteers equally.
- Reimburse volunteers for agreed out-of-pocket expenses.
- Ensure confidentiality of personal details by complying with the *Australian Privacy Principles* as outlined in the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012* and the *National Privacy Act 2001* (the full Australian Privacy Principles policy is available on the website).
- Implement Equal Opportunity and Anti-Discrimination Legislation.
- Attempt to keep volunteers informed on changes to the organisation, and
- Promote the Sunsmart policy.

RDA (NSW) CODE OF CONDUCT



RDA (NSW) provides a quality duty of care while implementing all RDA activities. The conduct of all participants must be of a standard that will be a positive influence on riders' behaviour. This Code of Conduct shall apply to all members, officials, office bearers, volunteers, riders, parents and carers participating in or in attendance at all activities conducted under the control of, or when representing an RDA (NSW) Centre.



Persons subject to this Code shall...

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion.
- Respect riders' confidentiality.
- Use age appropriate behaviour and language with the riders,
- Refrain from using profane, insulting, harassing or otherwise offensive language, hand signals or other gestures.
- Understand that coaches/volunteers' intentions and riders' interpretation of "touching" will be influenced by cultural differences and religious implications.
- Avoid unaccompanied and unobserved activities with riders, especially undressing and personal hygiene.
- Not drink, be affected by, or in possession of alcohol or non-prescription drugs while responsible for implementing any RDA (NSW) horse programme.
- Not engage in any other conduct, either on or in the vicinity of the RDA Centre activities, considered prejudicial to the best interests of RDA (NSW) or in contravention of the Constitution, policies and procedures of the Association.

RDA (NSW) PRIVACY STATEMENT

RDA (NSW) collects and administers a range of personal and health information required for the primary activities of the organisation.

RDA (NSW) is committed to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the information it collects, holds and administers. RDA (NSW) complies with the *Privacy Act 1988 including the 13 Australian Privacy Principles (APPs)* as outlined in the *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012*.

We recognise the rights of individuals to have their information administered in ways they would reasonably expect – protected on the one hand and made accessible to them on the other. These privacy values are reflected in and supported by our core values and philosophies.

RDA (NSW)'s Australian Privacy Principles Policy is available on the website and in the RDA (NSW) Administration Manual (RAM) – NSW section

SOCIAL MEDIA

RDA (NSW) recognises that many people involved and associated with our organisation use social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Whilst personal use and access of these sites are not under the jurisdiction of RDA (NSW), the organisation is mindful that the prevalence of social media could cause harm to our organisation and the members if it:

- breaches our Code of Conduct.
- interferes with employees, members or volunteers work on behalf of RDA (NSW).
- is used to harass or discriminate against anyone in the organisation or its members/riders.
- creates a hostile environment at our Centres, State Office or within any Centre or management committee.
- divulges confidential information about RDA (NSW), our members, clients or volunteers, or
- damages or has the potential to damage, the reputation of RDA (NSW).

RDA (NSW) and NATIONAL DISABILITY STANDARDS

RDA (NSW) in all activities abides by and implements the 6 (six) National Disability Standards:

1. Rights – focus on people with a disability receiving services that promote and respect their legal and human rights and which enable them to exercise choice and participation like everyone in the community.

2. Participation and inclusion – focus on people with a disability being valued members of their communities through active and meaningful participation.
3. Individual outcomes – shift to person-centred approaches, providing information and support that reflects a person's individual and cultural needs.
4. Feedback and complaints – each person can expect a complaint to be dealt with in a manner that reflects their individual and cultural needs and have support and the opportunity to participate fully in the process of complaints' resolution, without retribution.
5. Service access – focus on the importance of readily available information that is adapted to individual need and outlines the features and capacity of services so that each person knows how to access a service and is treated fairly by service providers.
6. Service Management – each person receives quality services that are well managed and delivered by staff with the right values, attitudes, goals and experience.

Each person receives quality services which are effectively and efficiently governed.

*The National Disability Standards can be found on the Department of Social Services website
www.dss.gov.au*

WORK, HEALTH AND SAFETY and MEMBER PROTECTION

RDA (NSW) abides by The Work, Health and Safety and Equal Opportunity Guidelines of this State, and the Australian Sports Commission Policy on Harassment included in the Member protection Policy NSW-42.- copies of which are available from State Office.

Email: stateoffice@rdansw.org.au

Health and Safety is of prime importance for all at an RDA Centre. Volunteers should familiarise themselves with the basic rules of safety, for both horse, rider and themselves by consultation with the Coaches, attending training days and reading the available literature. In line with current WH&S recommendations, practise good hygiene on the assumption that everyone is infectious (they may not know themselves).

RDA (NSW) strongly recommends all volunteers make sure their immunisation against tetanus is up to date, also immunisation against hepatitis is recommended.

All people at RDA are to be treated equally and fairly in compliance with Equal Opportunity Guidelines

RDA(NSW) is a Child Safe Organisation, so *subject to those workers/volunteers who are exempt, all Volunteers are required to have a cleared WWCC before they can attend a centre on a regular basis.*

(An initial orientation visit by a prospective Volunteer can be arranged but must be escorted by a Volunteer with a cleared WWCC.)

To obtain a WWCC:

This is done by Completing VOL-02 (new volunteers only). © RDA (NSW) ESR-06 Feb 2016 Page 6 of 7

Go online to <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/working-with-children/workingwith-children-check> (copy and paste this address into your web browser).

- If you need assistance with completing this form or do not have access to the internet or a computer please call (02) 9286 7219.
- Click on the "Start here" link on the righthand side of the page.
- Click "apply for a check".

- Follow all instructions to complete and submit the application.
- The applicant will receive an email saying the application has been successfully lodged. Print this as evidence of the application.
- Go to the Motor Registry providing the lodgement confirmation and also 100 points of ID. They will then process this.
- The applicant will receive clearance/notification of the outcome either by email or post (according to your nominated method of delivery). The clearance letter will have a number on it, this is the number to provide to the Secretary of your Centre.



SAFE LIFTING PRACTICES

To protect your back and avoid injury when lifting, always consider some of these basic principles:

- Remember to assess the weight and size of the load before attempting to lift it. If it is too heavy or awkward look for other alternatives, ask someone to assist or use equipment such as a hoist,
- Bend at the knees and hips keeping the spine as straight as possible,
- Let your legs do the work. Keep your feet apart as it gives a more stable base to work from,
- Move your feet to turn your body - avoid twisting the spine.
- Get as close to the load or person as possible, thus minimizing the distance to transfer,
- Tighten your tummy and lower back muscles just before the lift to help protect your back,
- Organize the environment to remove all possible obstacles. For instance, with wheelchair transfers footplates up, armrests off, brakes on,
- If lifting a person, inform them of lift or transfer and plan the activity so they can help as much as possible,
- Use trolleys/wheelbarrows to transport loads if possible,
- When carrying loads keep the load as close to your body as possible,
- When lifting loads overhead height put one foot forward and transfer weight onto forward foot to place the load on shelf,
- Heavy loads are best carried at hip height.



For further information on safe lifting and handling practices refer to www.carersnsw.asn.au or www.health.qld.gov.au/spot.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIFIC DISABILITIES

We all need to respect each other's individual rights, dignity, independence and need for self-determination.

The following is designed to assist you when meeting a rider (sometimes for the first time), who is perhaps practised in coping with frustration, and adept at innovating when the need arises.

The points listed below need to be kept in mind as you read the following pages related to specific disabilities.

- We all have basically similar needs; we all want acceptance, understanding, mobility, access to buildings and facilities, employment, entertainment, recreation, family life and a home.
- If you offer help to a person with a disability, remember, they may prefer to attempt tasks themselves.
- Accept the fact that disability exists, and respect the right of all people to privacy, by waiting until you are better acquainted before asking personal questions.
- A disability in one area does not mean that a person cannot excel in others. Condescension shows a lack of sensitivity on your part.
- It is common courtesy to talk directly to the person with a disability, not to someone accompanying them.
- Consideration is appreciated; a little observation goes a long way. Small things can make a difference, such as a door held open, a supportive arm offered, or furniture placed in a convenient position.
- Lack of response from the person with a disability does not necessarily indicate rudeness. The person spoken to may be hard of hearing or unable to respond quickly - they may take a while to fully understand what you have said.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WHO IS DEAF OR HEARING IMPAIRED

- Hold your head still while speaking with a person who is deaf or hearing impaired.
- Keep your face in a good light to assist their lip-reading. If our back is to a strong source of light (e.g. a window) then your head will be no more than a silhouette.
- If necessary, gain their attention before you start to speak to them (e.g. touch them gently).
- Face them while speaking to them, don't look down or away.
- Speak clearly and unhurriedly. Keep your hands away from your mouth when speaking.
- Shouting distorts your voice'
- Try to reword your remark if it has not been understood,
- Don't repeat the same sentence over and over again,
- Don't speak to them from another room or from behind,
- Turn off your radio or T.V. when speaking,

- People who have lost the power to select the sounds they want to hear cannot hear or understand you above the sound of these other voices.
- Don't refuse to repeat what you say, nor say "It doesn't matter" and change the subject. This is discourteous to the point of rudeness. It is particularly hurtful where humour is involved. Be ready to repeat a joke.
- Play music if that is appropriate. People who are deaf can 'hear' the beat through the vibrations. Young deaf people love music and dancing at discos – the louder the music the better.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WHO IS INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED

- Acknowledge their presence with a smile and a word.
- Talk directly to them, not to the person they are with. Keep sentences simple and take time to explain your meaning if necessary.
- Be prepared to wait for a response to your remarks. Silence does not mean you are being ignored – it may indicate difficulty in understanding what you have said, or just slow speech.
- Don't take advantage of them. An 'eager-to-please' attitude and friendliness can lead intellectually disabled persons into being asked to do jobs that others would not be asked to do.
- Comment, where appropriate, on smart appearance, or a job well done,
- Use your friendship skills, such as consideration, a smile, interest in what they have to say and appreciation.
- Don't be overprotective. Taking a risk can sometimes mean the acquisition of a new skill or the development of confidence.
- They may need help with unexpected things, e.g. waiting their turn, putting on their boots and so on. Your own patient instructions, voice or behaviour will be their best opportunity to learn a new social skill.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WITH SPEECH DIFFICULTIES

- Prepare to spend time with the person, don't give them the impression that you are in a hurry, even if you are.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere; tension makes it harder for them to talk and therefore to be understood.
- If you don't understand them very well during the first encounter, don't feel guilty. It takes time to get to know individual speech patterns.
- If you can't understand them after the first repetition, ask them to say the same thing another way.
- The person with a speech difficulty is used to having to repeat themselves, and generally has developed considerable patience.
- If necessary, and the speaker is physically able and agrees to it, try writing the letter of the alphabet and asking them to spell their comments to you.



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON USING CRUTCHES, CALLIPERS OR A WALKING STICK

- Don't rush to open the door, especially if the person is about to open it themselves. They may be leaning against it and a sudden movement will send them off balance,
- Ensure that floors are dry.
- Sweep away fallen leaves from pathways; they are a potential hazard.
- Some people may have special seating needs because of their physical disability – straight-backed kitchen chairs are often most comfortable.

RDA should be disability friendly.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON IN A WHEELCHAIR

People in wheelchairs are often very active and capable, running their own home and working lives with complete or partial independence. Their reliance on a wheelchair often becomes a disability when they encounter buildings without wheelchair access, too few kerb ramps, steps, lack of heights due to their seated position, etc. They often need a helping hand in reaching high shelves in supermarkets, getting up and down stairs on a route otherwise accessible, making their way through crowds, etc.

When you meet a person in a wheelchair:

- Do not ignore them and speak over their head to a carer.
- Use normal volume when speaking.
- Remember, a wheelchair is part of the occupant's personal space. Don't hold on to the wheelchair unless you know them well or are asked to do so. They cannot retreat a step or two.
- When pushing the chair keep your speed down. Gauge the slope of ramps before entering so that you don't move too quickly downhill. Watch that where you are going can accommodate the wheelchair and its occupant. A leg or arm is painful if banged against furniture or a car door.
- Make sure that they can hear you when talking, as you are both facing the same direction.
- Consider other pedestrians; they can stop or change direction suddenly and a bang with a footplate can be agonising.

- If they need help to get out of their chair, position the chair appropriately, put the brakes on, lift the footplates, see that their feet are firmly on the ground, and listen to their instructions about how to lift them if necessary.
- If you need to help them up steps, make sure they are holding on to the chair. With the help of another person, grasp the front and back frame of the chair, not the wheels, keeping it level. Lift and push (or pull) together. Don't hold the arm rests as they will probably come off in your hands.
- If their chair needs loading into a car, grasp the folded chair by some non-removable part, such as the struts, and tip it away from you until horizontal, resting its far side on the edge of the boot. Then slide it into the boot. Be careful when lifting not to strain your back.
- Be alert to the existence of architectural barriers, e.g. steps, if you want to invite a wheelchair user to your home, or to a theatre or restaurant; discuss these and try to arrange ways to overcome the problem.
- If you are talking for any length of time, it is helpful if you sit or squat so that you are both on the same eye-level. If, while pushing a wheelchair, you begin a conversation with a person walking up behind you, turn the wheelchair around so that the occupant is included in the conversation.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU MEET A PERSON WHO IS BLIND OR VISION IMPAIRED

Vision impaired people are often highly mobile, and capable of looking after themselves independently. The degree of sight loss varies; one person can see objects dimly, another may be aware of light and dark, and another may be totally blind. All of them may need help from sighted people at times.

- Don't be afraid to offer assistance to a blind person travelling alone. Respect their dignity as they may rightly resent unsolicited help.
- When you meet a blind person identify yourself by giving your name and context, e.g., "Hello, it's Anna. We met last week at Maria's home."
- Face a blind person when speaking to them. Your voice fades when you turn away and they may assume you are not speaking to them.
- There is no need to shout. Their hearing is usually good.
- When you walk away, tell them you are going, and have them in contact with a major object in the area, e.g. a chair, wall or footpath.
- Explain where a chair is and place their hand on the back of it, so that they can feel which way it is facing.
- When walking with them don't grab their arm but let them take your arm at the elbow so that they can follow your body movement while walking a pace behind you.
- Relax and walk at your normal pace, mentioning that you are approaching a step UP or a step DOWN, or a door opening INWARD or OUTWARD, as appropriate. When boarding public transport or climbing a flight of stairs, place their hand on the handrail.
- Ensure that the blind person can move safely within your house. Cupboards, doors and drawers, should be shut and the floor cleared.
- When you move their belongings, tell them you have done so.
- At mealtimes they can generally cut up their food by themselves. However, you could explain how it is arranged on the plate, where their drink is in relation to their place setting, which way the handle of the teacup is facing, etc.,
- If you notice a blind person is standing near you at traffic lights or a pedestrian crossing, take care to walk only at safe times. People who are blind or vision impaired, use the cues offered by others around them at these times, especially if traffic noise is excessive. As they are often slower to move, they are in increased danger at busy intersections.
- When giving directions, inform them of obstacles in their path, and be as clear and specific as possible.
- Don't pet or speak to the guide dog without the owner's permission. Guide dogs are working dogs and it is dangerous to distract it from doing its job.
- Before assuming that a person, who is vision impaired, cannot do, or participate in, an activity; always ask. They are the best judge of their own capabilities.



WHAT TO DO WHEN A PERSON HAS A TONIC CLONIC (GRAND MAL) EPISODE

Epilepsy is a disorder of the nervous system. Seizures may occur at any time. They are not indications of disease or mental instability. Despite these seizures many epileptics are able to lead normal lives.

If a person has a major seizure:

- Keep calm or at least, do not show your fear. Do not try to stop the seizure. If it lasts more than 5 (five) minutes, call a doctor or ambulance.
- Do not try to restrain their movements during the seizure. This can cause torn muscles and ligaments.
- Don't force anything hard between their teeth. Bitten tongues will heal; broken teeth do not.
- Leave them where they are unless they are in danger of self-injury through bumping their head or a limb. If they are in the street, be sure they are not in the path of traffic.
- If available, place a blanket or similar cover over them, to save embarrassment to them and those around (not over their head).
- If breathing seems difficult, roll them on their side and tilt their head back to keep the airway clear.
- Give them the opportunity to rest or sleep when the seizure is over. When they recover treat them as you would any other person who has been overcome with a bout of illness.

