

## **Tips for Interacting Effectively with People with a Cognitive Disability**

Many people with a cognitive disability have average or superior abilities in some respects. While it is true that some people with cognitive disabilities may not be able to think, reason or remember as well as others, they, like others, have their own strengths and weaknesses. The effect of the disability can be lessened, and skills and abilities increased, through rehabilitation, education, and experience on the job.

People with cognitive disabilities, like others, want to be independent and responsible for their own support. Success on the job often depends upon the willingness of others to devote reasonable time and interest to helping the individual adjust initially and meet new challenges as they arise. The object should be to reduce the need to learn details, exercise judgment, or find new solutions to problems. One of the greatest obstacles to equal employment opportunity for these individuals is persistent lack of employer confidence in, and lowered expectations of, their capabilities.

Consider the following suggestions when interacting with people with cognitive disabilities.

- For the most part, you should talk to the individual in the same manner as anyone else, but be more specific.
- Ask questions and occasionally repeat responses to ensure effective communication.
- Provide specific information as to where things are located, such as the time clock, lockers, restroom, cafeteria, drinking fountain, supply room, etc.
- Provide explanations about work issues such as working hours, proper dress for the job, work station location, rate of pay, and transportation options.