

## The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities

- I Speak directly to the person rather than through a companion or sign language interpreter.
- II Always offer to shake hands when introduced.
- III Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone who is blind.
- IV If you offer assistance wait until the offer is accepted; then listen, wait, or ask for instructions.
- V Treat adults as adults.
- VI Do not lean against or hang on to someone's wheelchair or cart. Bear in mind that people with disabilities treat their chairs as extensions of their bodies.
- VII Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking and wait for them to finish.
- VIII Place yourself at eye level when speaking with someone in a wheelchair or on crutches.
- IX Tap a person who is deaf on the shoulder or wave your hand to get his or her attention.
- X Relax. Don't be embarrassed if you happen to use common expressions that seem to relate to a person's disability.

Adapted from *Program Development Associates, Cicero, NY*