



## Glossary of Terms

*The terminology used when discussing disability-related issues and national service programs may unfamiliar or confusing. The following list, while by no means comprehensive, is provided to assist you in understanding new terms and ideas.*

### A

**Acquired Brain Injury:** Sometimes called a head injury, is an injury to the brain that has occurred after birth—not a congenital injury or an injury at the time of birth. Causes could include a car accident, a gunshot wound, or a fall. An acquired brain injury may result in cognitive, speech-language, memory, physical, or behavioral disabilities.

**Acute:** Severe and of short duration; used to describe a condition that is brief, severe, and quickly comes to a crisis. The opposite of chronic.

**ADA Information Line:** The Department of Justice's toll-free hotline. Call to obtain answers to general and technical questions about the ADA and to order technical assistance materials: 800-514-0301 (voice) 800-514-0383 (TTY)

**Adaptive Behavior:** An individual's ability to act appropriately in social situations and to take care of their personal needs.

**ADL:** Activities of daily living such as dressing, eating, cooking, etc.

**Advocate:** Someone who takes action to help someone else; also, to take action on someone's behalf (see also self-advocacy).

**Alternative Formats:** Having alternative formats available to people with disabilities ensures that information is accessible. Examples include text files on a computer disk, large print, written materials recorded on audiotape, and Braille.

**Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA):** Provides civil rights protection to people with disabilities and guarantees those covered by the law equal opportunity in employment, state and local government services, transportation, places of public accommodation, and telecommunications services.

**AmeriCorps:** National service program that engages thousands of Americans, age 17 and over, in community service and provides education awards and a small living allowance in exchange for that service. AmeriCorps website: [www.americorps.gov](http://www.americorps.gov)

**Anoxia:** A lack of oxygen to tissues, which, if prolonged, can cause cell damage or death.

**Anxiety:** Apprehension, tension, or uneasiness from anticipation of danger, the source of which is largely unknown or unrecognized (in distinction to fear, which is the emotional response to a consciously recognized and usually external threat or danger). May be regarded



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as pathologic when it interferes with effectiveness in living, achievement of desired goals or satisfaction, or reasonable emotional comfort.

**Appropriate Heights:** Refers to legal requirements to install water fountains, bathroom amenities, telephones at heights that enable their use by people who use wheelchairs.

**Articulation Problem:** A person has an articulation problem when he or she produces sounds, syllables, or words incorrectly so that listeners do not understand what is being said or pay more attention to the way the words sound than to what they mean.

**Assistive Technology Device:** Any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capacities of individuals with disabilities.

**Assistive Technology Service:** Any service that directly assists an individual with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. Services include evaluation of need, selection, purchase, coordination of related services, and training.

**Asthma:** A chronic lung disease that causes breathing problems called attacks or episodes of asthma. Usually symptoms get started or “triggered” by something that irritates the lungs. These things are called asthma triggers; triggers can range from viruses (such as colds) to allergies, to gases and particles in the air.

**Astigmatism:** Blurred vision caused by uneven curvature of lens or cornea.

**Ataxic:** A lack of coordination while performing voluntary movements. Movements are not smooth and may appear disjointed or jerky. Ataxia may affect any part of the body.

**Attention Deficit Disorder & Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder:** Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), or Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), is a neurobiological condition characterized by a lack of concentration, impulsiveness, and sometimes hyperactivity. The symptoms vary in intensity depending on the individual. Children with ADD often have problems at school because they are required to sit still and pay attention for long periods of time—two activities with which they may have difficulty. Many adults have learned special strategies to cope with ADD.

**Attitudinal Barriers:** Attitudes, fears and assumptions that prevent people with and without disabilities from meaningfully interacting with one another.

**Audiogram:** The written results in a graph form of a hearing test.

**Audiologist:** A specialist that tests and remediates hearing problems.

**Auditory Discrimination:** The ability to detect differences in sounds.

**Augmentative Communication:** Special devices that provide an alternative for spoken language.



## B

**Barrier-Free Design:** An approach to design that aims for buildings, transportation systems, and outdoor environments that people with disabilities can access and use independently and safely. (See universal design)

**Barriers:** Obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society:

- **Attitudinal Barriers:** Attitudes, fears and assumptions that prevent people with and without disabilities from meaningfully interacting with one another.
- **Physical Barriers:** Physical obstacles that hinder people with physical disabilities from gaining access.

**Birth Defect:** See congenital disability (birth defect is not the preferred term).

**Blindness:** A disability that affects a person's eyesight. Eighty percent of blind people have some vision. See also: legally blind and low vision.

**Braille:** Braille is a series of raised dots that can be read with the fingers by people who are blind or whose eyesight is not sufficient for reading printed material. Teachers, parents, and others who are not visually impaired ordinarily read Braille with their eyes. Braille is not a language but a code by which languages such as English or Spanish may be written and read.

## C

**Cataract:** A clouding of all or part of the normally clear lens within your eye, which results in blurred or distorted vision.

**Centers for Independent Living (CILS):** Community based, consumer controlled, not-for-profit centers governed by a board of directors of whom at least 51% are people with disabilities. Services provided include: peer counseling, information and referral, independent living skills training, and advocacy.

**Central Nervous System:** The nerves that travel along the spinal cord to and from the brain.

**Cerebral Palsy:** A variety of conditions resulting from damage to the brain before or during birth or in the first few years of life. Extent of motor involvement varies greatly, from a slight limp or as profound as paralysis, spasticity, or speech problems.

***There are four main types:***

**Ataxic:** Voluntary movements are jerky; balance is lost.

**Athetoid:** Continual muscle movements prevent or severely interfere with voluntary movements.

**Hypotonic:** Muscles are limp, cannot contract.

**Spastic:** Muscles are stiff; some body parts are paralyzed.



**Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS):** An emerging condition characterized by debilitating fatigue (experienced as exhaustion and extremely poor stamina), neurological problems, and a variety of flu-like symptoms. It is also known as chronic fatigue immune dysfunction syndrome and myalgic encephalomyelitis. The core symptoms include excessive fatigue that is not relieved by rest, general pain, mental fogging, and often gastrointestinal problems. Many other symptoms may also be present but will typically be different among individuals. These include: fatigue following stressful activities, headaches, sore throat, sleep disorders, and abnormal temperature. The degree of severity can differ widely among individuals, and will also vary over time for the same person. This variation, in addition to the fact that its cause is not yet known, makes this syndrome difficult to diagnose.

**Chronic:** A chronic condition is continuous or persistent over an extended period of time, not easily or quickly resolved. The opposite of acute.

**Cleft Palate:** A gap in the roof of the mouth; a congenital split along the midline of the roof of the mouth. It is caused by a failure of the two sides of the hard palate to meet and fuse during fetal development and is often associated with a cleft lip.

**Cognitive Disability:** Also called intellectual disability, indicates below-typical cognitive abilities. Signs of intellectual disability are failure to meet developmental milestones, decreased learning ability, persistent infantile behavior, lack of curiosity, and difficulty performing at school. There are all kinds of potential causes, such as infection (meningitis, congenital rubella), trauma (brain injury), chromosomal abnormalities (Down syndrome, Fragile X syndrome), inherited conditions (Tay-Sachs, Rett syndrome), toxins (lead poisoning), metabolic disease (Reye's syndrome), even malnutrition or poor social environment. However, a cause is identified in only a quarter of people with intellectual disability. This disability is sometimes referred to as mental retardation (not a preferred term), mental disability, or developmental disability.

**Cognitive:** Refers to the mental processes of comprehension, judgment, memory, and reasoning.

**Compulsion:** Repetitive ritualistic behavior such as hand washing, organizing and reorganizing, or repeating words silently that aims to prevent or reduce distress or prevent some dreaded event or situation. The person feels driven to perform such actions in response to an obsession, even though the behaviors are recognized to be excessive or unreasonable.

**Conductive Hearing Loss:** A temporary or permanent hearing loss that occurs when something interferes with the passage of sound to the inner ear.

**Congenital Disability:** A condition that is present at birth.

**Consumer:** A term sometimes used for people with disabilities instead of patient or client to suggest their entitlement to an active role and quality service.

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**Corporation for National Service:** Established in 1993 under the National and Community Service Act. It gives more than a million United States citizens opportunities to improve communities through service. The Corporation supports service at the national, state, and local levels, overseeing three main initiatives: AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, and National Senior Service Corps. CNS website: [www.cns.gov](http://www.cns.gov).

**Criterion Referenced Test:** When a criterion references test is used, the person being tested is evaluated according to their own performance, not in comparison to others.

### D

**Deaf/Blindness:** The combination of vision and hearing disabilities (i.e. some mix of blindness, deafness, low vision and/or hearing loss). It is sometimes called dual sensory impairment. Most people who are deaf/blind have some useful vision and/or hearing.

**Deafness and Hearing Loss:** A condition that affects a person's ability to hear. Deafness is a severe to profound hearing disability, with little or no residual hearing. Many deaf people communicate using sign language. People with hearing loss, often called hard of hearing, generally use their residual hearing and speech to communicate. Many people with hearing loss can understand some speech sounds with or without a hearing aid. Deafness can be the result of genetics, an accident, environmental factors, or an illness. Many people who are deaf do not consider themselves to be disabled.

**Department of Justice:** Federal agency offers technical assistance on the ADA Standards for Accessible Design and other ADA provisions applying to businesses, non-profit service agencies, and state and local government programs; also provides information on how to file ADA complaints (see ADA Information line).

\*Department of Justice website: [www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm](http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm).

**Depression:** A mental health condition that may be characterized by sadness, fatigue, anorexia, lack of emotional expression, indifferent attitude, and social withdrawal. Common types of depression are major depression, dysthymia, and bipolar disorder.

**Developmental Disability:** Defined in law as a "severe and chronic disability" which is attributed to a mental or physical impairment or combination; is manifested before age 22; and results in substantial functional limitation in at least three major life activities.

**Developmentally Delayed:** A child who acquires skills after the expected age.

**Developmentally Disabled:** Defined in law as a "severe and chronic disability" which is attributed to a mental or physical impairment or combination; is manifested before age 22; and results in substantial functional limitation in at least three major life activities. *Is sometimes used to refer to people who are diagnosed with mental retardation.*

**Diabetes:** A disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life.





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- **Type 1:** Also known as juvenile diabetes, type 1 diabetes is a condition in which a person's pancreas produces little or no insulin. People with type 1 diabetes must take insulin injections daily and test their blood sugar several times each day.
- **Type 2:** The most common form of diabetes, type 2 diabetes results from insulin resistance (a condition in which the body fails to make enough or properly use insulin), combined with relative insulin deficiency. Type 2 diabetes is generally controlled through diet, exercise, and weight-loss.

**Disability Benefits:** The Social Security Administration pays disability benefits under two programs: SSDI, and SSI. People who receive either of these benefits may risk losing them due to their participation in national service. The Work Incentives Program is one way that a participant may continue to receive benefits while serving.

**Disability Organizations:** Organizations of and/or for people with disabilities/disability issues.

**Disability Rights Movement:** The collective efforts of advocates to secure equal rights, equal opportunities, and a barrier-free environment for people with disabilities

**Disability:** Legally defined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 as “ a person who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities (including, but not limited to walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, working, and caring for oneself), a record of such impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment. But be aware that there is no list of physical or mental conditions that “qualify” a person as being disabled under the law.

**Down's Syndrome:** A person born with chromosomal differences that often results in developmental disabilities.

**Dwarfism:** Having short stature means being significantly below average in height (i.e. in the fifth percentile) compared to others of the same age and gender. It can be caused by a range of conditions such as achondroplasia (also known as dwarfism, although this is not a preferred term), osteogenesis imperfecta (OI), Noonan syndrome, and congenital hypothyroidism. However, short stature is not always caused by a medical condition—sometimes it is simply a person's inherited height. People of short stature may benefit from adaptations to their home and workplace, such as lowered light switches and strategically placed stools.

**Dynabox:** assistive technology device used for communication. The user presses buttons and the device "speaks".

**Dyscalculia:** A learning disability in which a child is unable to do math problems.

**Dysfluency:** A break in the smooth flow of speech.

**Dysgraphia:** A learning disability that impairs a person's ability to write.

**Dyslexia:** Inability or difficulty in reading, including word-blindness and a tendency to reverse letters and words in reading and writing.



## E

**Echolalia:** The immediate and sometimes pathological repetition of the words of others, often found in autistic children. In delayed echolalia, this inappropriate echoing takes place hours or weeks later.

**Educational Award:** Upon completion of a term of service AmeriCorps members receive this award which can be used to pay for higher education; some vocational programs; and to pay off existing or future student loans.

**Electroencephalogram (EEG):** A graphic recording of electrical activity of the brain, recorded from electrodes placed on the surface of the scalp.

**Environmental Sensitivity:** Also called environmental illness or multiple chemical sensitivity, is a chronic condition aggravated by exposure to chemicals in the environment, even at low levels that do not bother most people. These chemicals can include auto exhaust, perfumes, tobacco, detergents, and other cleaning products. The chemicals might be in the air, water or food, and can be breathed, ingested, or touched. Reactions range from mildly annoying to life-threatening. Common symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, mental confusion, short-term memory loss, breathing problems, persistent flu-like symptoms, joint pains, muscle aches, depression, and fatigue.

**Epilepsy:** See seizure disorder.

**Equal Opportunity Employment:** a legal term and federal requirement that employer's not discriminate because of factors unrelated to job qualifications including race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability.

**Equilibrium:** Balance.

**Essential Service Functions/Duties:** Functions like a job description, communicates the specific requirements of the participant in national service over the course of a service year. This information is essential for effectively determining the qualifications of an applicant as well as the reasonable accommodations that may be required.

**Etiology:** The cause of a condition or the study of the causes.

## F

**Facial Difference:** Facial difference is any facial feature that varies significantly from the "norm." It can be present at birth (cleft lip/palate) or the result of illness or trauma that affects the face (third-degree burns). Support networks can be of great benefit to people with facial differences, who may struggle with self-esteem issues in a society that places great value on how we look.



**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS):** FAS consists of a set of physical, mental, and neurobehavioral birth defects associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Individuals with FAS have a distinct pattern of facial differences, growth deficiency, and evidence of central nervous system dysfunction. In addition to mental retardation, individuals with FAS may have other neurological deficits such as poor motor skills and hand-eye coordination. They may also have a complex pattern of behavioral and learning problems, including difficulties with memory, attention, and judgment.

**Fine Motor Skills:** Hand and finger small muscle movement.

**Foster Grandparent Program:** One of the National Senior Corps programs; serves with youth and children with “exceptional needs”. Foster grandparents are at least 60 years old; low-income; and receive a stipend in exchange for their service.

## G

**Grand Mal Seizure:** A seizure involving the entire body, usually characterized by muscle rigidity, violent rhythmic muscle contractions, and loss of consciousness, caused by abnormal electrical activity in the nerve cells of the brain.

**Gross Motor:** Coordinated movements of all body parts.

## H

**Handicap:** The loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the life of the community on an equal level with others. It describes the encounter between the person with a disability and the environment. The purpose of this term is to emphasize the focus on the shortcomings in the environment and in many organized activities in society, for example, information, communication and education, which prevent persons with disabilities from participating on equal terms. See also disability.

**Head Injury:** See acquired brain injury.

**Hearing Loss:** People with hearing loss, often called hard of hearing, have some residual hearing as opposed to being severely or profoundly deaf. People with hearing loss can understand some speech sounds with or without a hearing aid, use their residual hearing and speech to communicate. Their hearing loss can be the result of genetics, an accident, environmental factors, or illness.

**Hemiparesis:** Weakness on one side of the body.

**Hemiplegia:** Full or partial paralysis on one side of the body caused by damage to the brain due to disease, trauma, or stroke.

**Hidden Disability:** Most disabilities are not visible. Hidden disabilities include mental and cognitive disabilities; some hearing and visual impairments; alcoholism and addiction; epilepsy;





diabetes; and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Also referred to as an “invisible disability.”

**Host Site:** where national service participant performs their service, for example, school, community center, or a non-profit organization.

**Hyperactivity:** Excessive motor activity or restlessness.

**Hyperopia:** Farsightedness—difficulty seeing near objects.

## I

**Inclusion:** The practice of acting on the belief that every person has an inherent right to participate fully in society. The goal of inclusion is for all people to lead productive lives as full, participating members of their communities. The presence of people with disabilities does not constitute inclusion unless people with disabilities are valued, contributing members with a sense of belonging.

**Independent Living Center Movement:** Advocacy movement which views the person with a disability as an active “consumer” of services and advocates for personal independence, barrier removal, equal rights and opportunities, and consumer choice and control. Website: <http://www.ilusa.com/links/ilcenters.htm>.

**Institutional Segregation/ Institutionalization:** Until very recently many people with disabilities were removed from communities and put into institutions where they were denied self-determination and access to the opportunities of independent living, education, and livelihood.

**Intellectual Disability:** See cognitive disability.

**Invisible Disability:** See hidden disability.

## J

**Juvenile diabetes:** See diabetes.

## K

## L

**Language Disorders:** Language and speech disorders refer to problems in communication and related areas such as oral-motor function. These delays and conditions range from simple sound substitutions to the inability to understand or use language or use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech and feeding. Some causes of speech and language disorders include hearing loss, conditions affecting neurological function, brain injury,



developmental disabilities, drug abuse, physical impairments such as cleft lip or palate, and vocal abuse or misuse. Frequently, however, the cause is unknown.

**Learn and Serve America:** Helps support more than one million students from kindergarten through college who are meeting community needs while improving their academic skills and learning the habits of good citizenship. <http://www.learnandserve.org/>

**Learning Disability:** Central nervous system dysfunction that interferes with the brain's capacity to process information in the conventional manner. People with learning disabilities have a disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. They may have difficulties in listening, thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. The primary cause of the disorder is not due to visual, hearing, intellectual or physical disabilities, emotional disturbance, or environmental disadvantages. People with learning disabilities have average or above-average intelligence.

**Legally Blind:** A visual field which is not greater than 20 degrees or visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye after correction.

**Light Perception:** Ability to detect presence or absence of light.

**Light Projection:** Ability to tell where light is coming from.

**Living Allowance:** AmeriCorps members receive a modest allowance for living expenses during their term of service.

**Low Vision:** People who have some useful vision, but who cannot achieve clear vision by wearing glasses or contact lenses, are considered to have low vision. Low vision generally means a person's vision does not meet their needs.

## M

**Marginal Functions:** Are tasks that are not essential to the position. These may be adjusted or reassigned.

**Medicaid:** Medicaid is a jointly-funded, Federal-State health insurance program for certain low-income and needy people. It covers approximately 36 million individuals including children, the aged, blind, and/or disabled, and people who are eligible to receive federally assisted income maintenance payments. <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/home/medicaid.asp>

**Medicare:** Health insurance that covers some people with disabilities based on their work experience or the work experience of spouse or parent. <http://www.medicare.gov/>

**Member:** Term used to refer to participants in AmeriCorps programs.

**Mental Health Disability:** See psychiatric disability.

**Mental Retardation:** See cognitive disability (mental retardation is not a preferred term).



**Migraines and Chronic Headaches:** Vascular headaches are a group of headaches thought to involve abnormal sensitivity of the blood vessels in the brain to various triggers, resulting in rapid changes in the artery size due to spasm. Other arteries in the brain and scalp then dilate and throbbing pain is perceived in the head. Migraines, which are thought to be inherited, are the most common type of vascular headache. Migraines can be accompanied by other sensory phenomena that indicate a brain dysfunction, such as flashing lights, blurred/double vision, balance problems, numbness, weakness, hearing problems, or difficulty speaking. Severe migraine headaches can be totally disabling, but once they pass they may have no impact on a person's normal state of health. They can last from a few hours to several days.

**Mobility Issues:** When people have to negotiate physical barriers to get around within a place or between places. Usually people with mobility issues have physical disabilities.

**Multiple Chemical Sensitivity:** An allergic sensitivity to particular chemicals in air, food, clothing, water, etc.

**Multiple Sclerosis:** Degeneration of the central nervous system due to a progressive deterioration of the protective sheath surrounding the nerves; may be chronic or acute.

**Muscular Dystrophy:** Genetic condition that causes a gradual weakening through degeneration of muscle tissue.

**Myopia:** Nearsightedness—blurred vision with distant objects harder to see than near objects.

## N

**National Service Fellowship Program:** Launched by the Corporation for National Service in 1997, involves a team of individual researchers who develop and promote models of quality service responsive to the needs of communities. The Goal of the program is to strengthen national service through continuous learning, new models, strong networks, and professional growth. Website: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/home/site\\_map/index.asp](http://www.nationalservice.gov/home/site_map/index.asp).

**National Service Participant:** Individual who serves communities through one of the national service programs. Includes: AmeriCorps members, Senior Corps participants, Senior Companions, and RSVP volunteers.

**National Service:** The term used for programs and services delivered as part of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, and the Domestic Service Act of 1973. Corporation for National Service programs that help meet the nation's needs in the areas of education, public safety, the environment, and other human needs.

**Neonatal:** Period between onset of labor and several months after birth.

**Non-apparent Disability** - Most disabilities are not visible. Non-apparent disabilities include mental and cognitive disabilities, some hearing and visual disabilities, alcoholism and addiction, Epilepsy, Diabetes, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.



**Non-Disabled:** A person without a disability (preferred to “normal”).

**Nystagmus:** Involuntary jerking of the eyes.

## O

**Obsessions:** Uncontrollable, intrusive, and recurring thoughts, images, ideas, or impulses that an individual feels intrude upon his or her consciousness, and that cause significant anxiety or distress because of the irrational nature of the obsessions.

**Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** A neurobiological disability, classified as an anxiety disorder. It causes recurrent, intrusive thoughts (obsessions) that provoke anxiety or discomfort. The person may perform ritualistic behaviors (compulsions) to neutralize the discomfort, although the relief is only temporary. The person realizes that the obsessions are a product of his or her own mind and that the compulsions are unreasonable. Until OCD becomes moderate to severe, the compulsions are often done secretly or are well disguised. Generally, the person feels that he or she is going crazy and fears telling others about it. OCD can be associated with other disabilities such as Tourettes syndrome, Attention Deficit disorder, panic disorder, learning disabilities, and schizophrenia.

**Occupational Injury or Disease:** Occupational injury and occupational disease are health problems brought on by conditions in the workplace. There are a wide variety of injuries and diseases experienced by workers from many different occupational fields. Examples include: traumatic injuries such as an accident with heavy or motorized equipment that results in amputation, spinal cord injury; or back pain; hearing loss caused by working with noisy machinery; and asthma brought on by exposure to airborne pollutants such as grain dust or animal proteins.

**Occupational Therapy:** A type of therapy that uses goal-directed activities—appropriate to each person's age and social role—to restore, develop, or maintain the ability for independent, satisfying living. An occupational therapist helps an individual with learning or re-learning developmental or physical skills that will aid in daily living; it focuses on sensory integration, coordination of movement, fine motor, and self-help skills.

**Ophthalmologist:** A medical doctor that deals with diseases and conditions of the eye.

**Optometrist:** Examines eyes and prescribes corrective lenses.

**Orientation and Mobility Specialist:** A certified instructor specializing in teaching the visually impaired to travel safely and efficiently.

**Otolaryngologist:** An ear, nose and throat doctor.

**Outreach:** Proactive method of making connections and getting information to people.

## P



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**Panic Attack:** Short, intense periods during which an individual experiences physiological and cognitive symptoms of anxiety, characterized by intense fear or discomfort.

**Paralysis:** Complete or partial loss of feeling or movement.

**Paraplegia:** Paralysis of the lower half of the body involving the partial or total loss of function of both legs.

**Paratransit:** Paratransit is the “comparable service for people with disabilities who cannot use the regular service” that public entities that operate fixed-route services are required to provide. Whether or not the services provided are comparable determines whether paratransit is considered an effective accommodation or another barrier (“separate but unequal,” see *No Pity* by Joseph P. Shapiro)

**Participants:** National service participants who have disabilities and who were interviewed the service and inclusion project.

**People-First Language:** Most disability organizations advocate putting the person first when speaking of people with disabilities. For example: “person with a disability” instead of “disabled person”; “people with disabilities” instead of “the disabled”; “she is a wheelchair user” instead of “she is wheel chair bound” or “she is in a wheelchair”.

**Personal Assistance Services (PAS):** Consumer-directed basic ancillary services which enable with a physical; mental or sensory disability to live in his/her home and community and carry out functions of daily living, self-care and mobility.

**Petit mal Seizures:** A type of seizure involving a momentary alteration in consciousness, more frequent in children than adults.

**Phobia:** An unrealistic but very severe fear of any object or environment; for example, claustrophobia (a fear of enclosed spaces).

**Physical Barriers:** Physical obstacles that hinder people with physical disabilities from gaining access.

**physical Therapy:** Treatment of physical injuries or disabilities given by a trained physical therapist (under doctor's orders) that includes the use of massage, exercise, etc. to help the person improve the use of bones, muscles, joints, and nerves.

**Program Accessibility:** Central requirement/standard under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which requires that recipients of federal funds or contracts and /or state and local government entities operate programs and activities so that “when viewed in its entirety” such a program/activity is readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.”

**Prosthesis:** Artificial device that replaces a missing body part.



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**Psychiatric Disability:** Mental health disability, also called psychiatric disability or mental illness, covers a broad range of disorders. It is generally considered a disability when it interferes with someone’s ability to cope or function on a day-to-day basis, or causes behavior that becomes a concern for others. However, many people find ways of managing their mental health disabilities and are able to lead fulfilling and active lives. A mental health disability can be organic (resulting directly from an identifiable brain malfunction) or functional (not explained by a simple structural abnormality of the brain). It can be a neurosis (e.g. one of various forms of anxiety and depression that can be regarded as severe forms of normal experiences), a psychosis (involving distortion of a person’s perception of reality, often accompanied by delusions and/or hallucinations), or a personality disorder, or there can be some overlap across these types (e.g. post-traumatic stress disorder).

### Q

**Quadriplegia:** Paralysis of the body involving partial or total loss of function in both arms and both legs.

**Qualified Person with a Disability:** A legal term defined under ADA and Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as “an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of the employment position that such individual holds or desires.”

### R

**Range of Motion:** The structure of a joint allows it to make certain movements. These movements are called the range of motion and are limited by the structure of the joint. These movements do not include overextending or stressing the joint.

**Reasonable Accommodation:** Legal term defined by ADA and Rehabilitation Acts as “any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to perform essential job functions.” Example include: restructuring a job; modifying work schedules; acquiring or modifying work equipment; and, providing qualified readers for persons who are blind or American Sign Language(ASL) interpreters for individuals who are deaf.

**Receptive Language:** The understanding of spoken and written communication, as well as gestures.

**RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Program):** One of the National Senior Corps programs. This program has neither an income level nor number of service hour’s requirement.

### S

**Scleroderma:** A chronic, autoimmune disease of the connective tissue generally classified as one of the rheumatic diseases; also known as systemic sclerosis. Scleroderma is a condition in which the symptoms may either be visible, as when the skin is affected, or invisible, as when





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only internal organs are involved. It is a highly individualized disease; involvement may range from mild symptoms to life threatening.

*\*See environmental sensitivity*

**Seizure Disorder:** A chronic medical condition produced by temporary changes in the electrical function of the brain, causing seizures which affect awareness, movement, or sensation. Also known as epilepsy.

**Self-Advocacy:** The movement within the disability community that emphasizes the right and responsibility of a person with a disability to speak up for themselves and others. By letting individuals tell others how they feel about issues that affect their lives, they can educate the public about persons with disabilities and how they can be included in all aspects of community life.

**Self-Determination:** While there is no national consensus on an exact definition of the term, the idea of self-determination generally rests on four core principles: 1) the freedom to develop a personal life plan, 2) the authority to control a targeted sum of resources, 3) the support to achieve personal goals, and 4) the responsibility for contributing to one's community and using public dollars wisely.

**Self-Identify:** To identify oneself as a person with a disability.

**Sensorineural Hearing Loss:** A hearing impairment that is usually permanent results when the inner ear or nerves that carry the sound waves to the brain are damaged.

**Service Provider Agency:** Agencies that provide services to people with disabilities.

**Service:** A form of community-based volunteerism that is encouraged and supported by the federal government through national service programs.

**Service-Learning:** a method by which individuals improve academic learning and develop personal skills through structured service projects that meet community needs. The Corporation for National Service supports service-learning initiatives in grades K-12 and in higher education through the Learn and Serve America program.

**Sign Language:** Sign languages are highly-developed visual-gestural-spatial communication methods. Examples include American Sign Language (ASL) and Signed English.

**Simulation:** A form of disability awareness training that is opposed by some people with disabilities and used by others. Trainers use props like blindfolds, earplugs and wheelchairs to give participants the experience of a disability.

**Social Security Disability Income (SSDI):** Available to individuals have a work history (or are the child or widow of insured) and are no longer able to work due to disability.

**Social Security:** Refers to federal assistance administered by the Social Security Administration. Phone: 800-772-1213 (voice); 800-325-0778 (TTY). Website: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS NATIONAL SERVICE INCLUSION RESOURCE GUIDE

**Spasticity:** Having sudden, involuntary muscle spasms or tense, contracted muscles. Muscles are spastic, people are not.

**Speech Disorders:** See language disorders.

**Speech/Language Pathologist:** A person qualified to diagnose and treat speech and language disorders.

**Spina Bifida:** Genetic condition in which a portion of an infant's spinal cord fails to develop completely or develops incorrectly.

**Spinal Cord Injury (SCI):** Damage to the spinal cord that results in a loss of function such as mobility or feeling. Causes of damage include trauma (car accident, gunshot, falls, etc.), disease (polio), or genetic condition (spina bifida). The spinal cord does not have to be severed in order for a loss of functioning to occur. In fact, in most people with SCI, the spinal cord is intact but the damage to it results in loss of functioning.

**SSDI:** Social Security Disability Income: Available to individuals have a work history (or are the child or widow of insured) and due to disability are no longer able to work.

**SSI:** The supplementary Security Income program is a nationwide federal assistance program administered by the Social Security Administration that guarantees a minimum level of income for adults and children with a disability who have no work history since childhood.

**Stereotype:** A simplified conventional idea or image.

**Stipend:** A small amount of money offered to participants in AmeriCorps\*VISTA and Foster Grandparent programs in exchange for service.

**Strabismus:** More commonly known as crossed-eyes, strabismus is a vision condition in which a person can not align both eyes simultaneously under normal conditions. One or both of the eyes may turn in, out, up, or down.

**Stuttering:** Speech characterized by hesitations, prolongations, and repetitions which are developmentally inappropriate for the age or mental ability of the speaker.

**Supplementary Security Income (SSI):** A nationwide federal assistance program administered by the Social Security Administration that guarantees a minimum level of income for adults and children with a disability who have no work history since childhood.

## T

**Total communication:** Communication method that uses a combination of speech and sign language.

**Transportation Barriers:** The absence of accessible dependable affordable transportation



**Tremor:** Consistent and uncontrolled movements.

## U

**Universal Design:** Extends the idea of barrier-free design to cover the needs of all members of society, including children and seniors.

## V

**Visual Discrimination:** Ability to detect differences in objects, forms, letters, or words.

**Visual Memory:** The ability to remember visual stimuli by significant features on a short- and long-term basis.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Program:** Each state has a program to assist people with disabilities in finding and keeping employment. A list of offices can be found at this website: <https://secure.ssa.gov/apps10/oesp/providers.nsf/bystate>

**Voice Recognition:** Assistive technology software that allows people to write and command equipment using their voice rather than their hands. This technology has been used to accommodate people with a variety of disabilities. Many oral historians who do not qualify for reasonable accommodation are avidly awaiting the further development and improvement of this technology.

## W

**Work Incentives Program:** Options for people who are receiving disability benefits and want to enter the work or service force without immediately losing all their financial security. For more information contact Social Security Administration. Website: [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov).

## X

## Y

## Z