



The Norman Knight Nursing Center
for Clinical & Professional Development

PCAs Quick Reference: Providing Care to Patients with Disabilities

What are the different types of disabilities?

- Physical – affects ability to provide self-care and ability to live independently
- Cognitive- affects thinking, problem solving, executive (higher level thinking) functions, behavior
- Hearing
- Vision
- Many are non-apparent

What do you need to know?

- Avoid making assumptions
- Patients with disabilities (PWD) experience a lot of health disparities
- Watch for potential needs in every patient
- Ask the patient what works best for them
- Avoid misperceptions i.e. PWD:
 - Cannot find a partner
 - Cannot have children
 - Are angry and manipulative
 - Can't go to college
- How to communicate
 - Use person first language i.e. say the person who is blind, vs. the blind person
 - Speak to the person directly rather than through a family member
 - Be aware of policy for service animals
 - Know wheelchair etiquette, ask patient if it is alright to move the wheelchair out of his/her reach
- Be aware of universal approaches: Policies and practices that benefit *all* people
 - Curb cuts
 - Door openers
 - Signage
 - Close captioning
 - Handrails
 - Wheelchair scales
 - Auditory and visual fire alarms

What is the role of the PCA (under the direction of the RN)?

Be sure to receive a comprehensive report on the patient to understand their disability and possible approaches