

A PEATC

Do You Know....



Fact Sheet for Virginia's Youth How to Be a Friend to a Classmate with a Disability

All of Us Need Friends!

Relationships with friends are very important to having a full and complete life. **People with disabilities need and want friends just like you do.** They want people to like them and want to spend time with them. People with disabilities may have trouble walking, talking, seeing, or hearing. Some disabilities, that you might not be able to see, may lead to a delay in processing what is said to them or to follow instructions. They may have a harder time learning, understanding things, or writing.

Chances are **you know someone with a disability.** You may have a brother or sister or another relative with a disability. You have probably seen people with disabilities in your school, church, synagogue, or mosque; maybe you have interacted with someone with a disability at your local shopping center and in recreational activities.

Sometimes when we don't know about something or don't understand it, we get scared or we feel uncomfortable. We may not want to be around a person who is different from us. But **we are all different,** and that is a good thing. Some of us have blonde hair and some of us have red hair. Some of us have blue eyes and some of us brown. Some of us are short and some of us are tall. Some of us are good in science and some of us are good in art. You get the idea!

We are also very much the same! We have hopes and dreams for the future. We like to play; we have our favorite foods and songs. **People with disabilities just want to be treated like you and me.** They want to have friends to talk to, to play with, and to share things with. Just because a person can't walk, doesn't mean they don't like to talk about football or play miniature golf. Someone who can't talk using their voice may communicate with the help of another person or an iPad.

Some people with disabilities may have a hard time learning how to be a friend, but that doesn't mean they don't want friends.

You can make a big difference in someone's life by being a real friend. People with disabilities don't want other people to feel sorry for them and they don't want friends who only talk to them sometimes. They want friends who like them for who they are!

Special thanks to the members of PEATC's Youth Advisory Board for their expertise and contributions!



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Here are tips on being a friend from other young folks like you!

Tips on Being a Friend?

- ✚ Be patient! A lot of times, someone with a disability may not understand what's going on; they just need a little more time to process it. So, when you're playing a game with someone with a disability, give them time to understand the rules.
- ✚ Some people with intellectual disabilities find it hard to understand concepts- for example, friendship. Your friend with special needs might tell you that you're her best friend, but the next day, she tells another girl that she's her best friend. It's not that she doesn't want to be your best friend- she just might not understand the idea of it. Don't take it personally- just try to understand that her brain works a little differently.
- ✚ Just be nice! At the end of the day, everyone just wants to be treated nicely. When your friend with a disability can't run as fast or read at the same level as you, don't make fun of them. Be happy for them when they achieve something, just like they'd be happy for you. Treat them like you would want to be treated!



REMEMBER,

A person with a disability is still a person first. Their disability is a part of them, just like your hair or eye color is a part of you. But it is not all of who they are.

Your classmates enjoy the same things you do. They may just need a little extra help or support to participate in those activities.

You can be a leader by including your peers with disabilities in school and social activities. You can show your friends without disabilities how to be a friend to someone who does have a disability.

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PEATC's mission focuses on building positive futures for Virginia's children by working collaboratively with families, schools and communities to improve opportunities for excellence in education and success in school and community life.

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