Disability Glossary

The following disability related terms and definitions are often associated with and provide a common, working language for ADL’s educational anti-bias programs and resources.

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**Ability:** Having the mental and/or physical condition to engage in one or more major life activities (e.g., seeing, hearing, speaking, walking, breathing, performing manual tasks, learning or caring for oneself).

**Ableism:** Prejudice and/or discrimination against people with mental and/or physical disabilities.

**American Sign Language:** A means of communication that uses hand gestures to represent letters and words, and the primary sign language used
by people with hearing disability in the United States and Canada (devised in part by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet on the basis of sign language in France).

**Assistive Technology:** A device or piece of equipment used to maintain or improve the functional facility of people with disabilities (e.g., brace, crutches, descriptive video, hearing aid, prosthetic device, walker, wheelchair).

**Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder:** Attention-deficit (hyperactivity) disorder is a condition affecting children and adults that is characterized by problems with attention, impulsivity, and overactivity. Science recognizes three subtypes of ADD or ADHD: inattentive, hyperactive-impulsive, and combined. A diagnosis of one type or another depends on the specific symptoms that person has.

**Blindness:** Partial or “legal” visual impairment based on standard vision being defined as 20/20 visual acuity and an average range of 180 degrees in peripheral vision; thus, people are defined as being legally blind if after methods of correction, such as glasses or contact lenses, they have a visual acuity of 20/200 or higher, or a range of peripheral vision under 20 degrees.

**Cerebral Palsy:** A functional disorder caused by damage to a child’s brain during pregnancy, delivery, or shortly after birth. Cerebral Palsy is characterized by one or more movement disorders, such as spasticity (tight limb muscles), purposeless movements, rigidity (severe form of spasticity), or a lack of balance. People with cerebral palsy may also experience seizures, speech, hearing and/or visual impairments, and/or mental retardation.
**Closed Captioning:** An on-screen system that allows people with a hearing disability to view television with spoken words written across the bottom of the screen.

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**Sources**


Center for Disability Information and Referral, [www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir/](http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/cedir/)

Employ ABILITY Network, [www.employ-ability.org](http://www.employ-ability.org)