



Video: Visual Disability Disparate Treatment 2024

# Visual Disability Disparate Treatment: Facilitation Guide



## Overview

This facilitation guide and accompanying video have been developed to assist equal opportunity (EO) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) professionals and practitioners in discussing *accessibility*.

Additional information on how to conduct a facilitation can be found in *The Leader's Conversation* guide (available at [deomi.mil](https://deomi.mil)).

This guided discussion is focused on the *Visual Disability Disparate Treatment* video. The video portrays a conversation that can happen at any time in the workplace. The facilitator can use the video and guide to discuss the demonstrated problematic behaviors and how the unit members and leaders can prevent, mitigate, or address them. Adherence to this facilitation guide is encouraged to ensure consistency in training delivery.

However, this guide is not all-inclusive and may be expanded based on the facilitator's experience. Throughout this guide, questions are framed to stimulate the facilitator's thoughts on areas to explore and consider in this process and on the specific topic. Users should provide a controlled, safe, and non-attributorial environment where individuals will be willing to share their perspectives. EO and EEO professionals, practitioners, and leaders can use this event to review and educate their members on policy and acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.



## Purpose

The objectives for this discussion:

- Define *accessibility* and *visual impairment*.
- Discuss the video and the behaviors seen within it.
- Grasp how a lack of accessibility can affect the individual and the organization.
- Understand the impacts of a lack of understanding of accessibility as it relates to visual impairment if it is not properly addressed.
- Discuss strategies to promote and improve accessibility.

## Preparation

This guide has been developed assuming that users have some basic facilitation skills and understand the facilitation process. Users should also review *The Leader's Conversation* guide for additional parameters, techniques, and information on facilitation (available at [deomi.mil](https://deomi.mil)). *The Leader's Conversation* guide provides areas to consider, including the following:

- Site selection
- Ground rules the facilitation may use
- Question development
- How to conduct the discussion

## Definitions

- Accessibility, as defined by the DoD, encompasses the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services to enable all people, including those with disabilities, to fully and independently use them. This includes providing accommodations, reducing physical and attitudinal barriers, and adhering to best practices like universal design (Exec. Order No. 14035, 2021).
- Disparate treatment involves treating those in a protected class less favorably than the general workforce. These actions may not be deliberate or malicious but could comprise perception of ability and impose inhibited access to opportunity. (EEOC, 1988).
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) states that an individual with a disability is one who “has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a person who has a history or record of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having such an impairment.”
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires Federal Agencies to make reasonable accommodations for qualified Federal employees with disabilities unless doing so would result in undue hardship.
- Disability— An individual with a disability is someone who has or has had a history of a physical or mental impairment that limits one or more life activities in a substantial way, or an individual with a perceived impairment due to a physical difference (ADA, n.d.).
- Impairment— A significant difference or absence in a person’s body functioning, form, or mental cognition (CDC, n.d.).



## What is Accessibility?

Accessibility is the development of practices, products, programs, and services designed so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. Accessibility includes accommodations, or reasonable modifications to ensure equal access to employment and participation in activities for people with disabilities. It also includes the reduction or elimination of physical and attitudinal barriers to equitable opportunities and a commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities can independently function and access all parts of a product, service, or activity. Barriers to accessibility can take many forms, with attitude being one of the most impactful in social or workplace interactions. Negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities that act as barriers include:

| Individual Attitudes    | What is it?  |
|-------------------------|--|
| Hostile ableism         | Verbal abuse, discrimination, or harassing behaviors                 |
| Benevolent prejudice    | Demonstrating inflated admiration or praise for doing everyday tasks |
| Paternalistic prejudice | Offering or giving unwanted or unsolicited help                      |

## What are Some Examples of Disparate Treatment?

Disparate treatment can come in many forms, such as assuming differences in ability based on demographic, genetic, or disability factors. In the workplace this could look like:

- Disproportionate work loads
- Denial of opportunities to show performance capability
- Undermining comments in relation to ability

## Strategies to Mitigate Prejudiced Attitudes

One perspective for mitigating the prejudice that can inhibit or limit accessibility in terms of social acceptance for individuals with disabilities is to focus on efforts that interrupt the path between bias and discriminatory outcomes. Organizations and leaders can aim to accomplish this by:

- Aiming to identify areas of disparity before they become an issue;
- Conduct evaluations based on objective factors (e.g., skills and met goals), without regard to individually identifying factors;
- Evaluate if your organization or unit practices account for methods to identify disparities in access or treatment of individuals with disabilities

Notes:



## Process

Before the participants' arrival, determine and prepare the setting for the guided discussion. Ensure the video is prepared to view (direct from [https://digitalcommons.deomi.mil/sc\\_videos/61/](https://digitalcommons.deomi.mil/sc_videos/61/) or may be predownloaded).

## Video Description

### Visual Disability Disparate Treatment

**FOR FACILITATOR USE ONLY:** In the first part of the video, Muhammad, who is visually impaired, begins to get up from the table. Archie, who is sitting next to him, turns and offers to help him navigate his way out of the room. Muhammad clearly states that he does not need help, but Archie continues to insist. In the next scene, Archie approaches Muhammad as he is leaning forward to read something on his computer. When Archie asks what he is doing, Muhammad explains that sometimes his computer does not magnify text like it is supposed to. Archie responds by explaining to Muhammad that he shouldn't spend so much energy "trying so hard" and could just collect disability instead. Muhammad rejects this, stating that he is not really struggling to work, but Archie continues to emphasize how it is unnecessary for him to work so hard when there are other options available. In the final scene, the two coworkers are sitting at a table with a male supervisor. The supervisor begins by assigning some tasks to the Muhammad. The supervisor then moves on to assign substantially more tasks to Archie, despite his expressed concerns that the workload was unmanageable. Muhammad interjects to insist that he is capable of also taking on more tasks so that the workload is better distributed. The supervisor responds by dismissing the concerns of both coworkers, expressing that his word on the matter was final.

### Video Participants

- **Target:** Male coworker (Muahmmad)
- **Perpetrator:** One male coworkew (Archie) and one male supervisor
- **Bystanders:** None



## Directions

1. Introduce yourself.
2. Validate: explain the purpose or objective of the discussion/training.
3. Set expectations and establish ground rules.
4. Introduce the topic (using the notes you created based on the topic).
5. Explain what accessibility entails.
6. Provide the handout (if used) to the participants.
7. **Read instructions:** You are about to watch a video that is made for awareness purposes only.
8. **Read instructions:** Answer the questions in your handout individually after watching the video. Then later, we will share your answers with the group.
9. Show the video.
10. Have participants answer the handout questions (5–10 minutes). Please encourage them to use critical thinking as they view the questions.
11. Lead a discussion based on the questions used.

## Facilitator Notes

*Suggestions:* Display the questions on a bulletin board, butcher paper, or PowerPoint, or prepare them in a handout. Explain to the participants that they will need a pen and paper (or handout) to answer the questions you will use during the guided discussion. **The anticipated responses (ARs) after each question can assist the EO professional in identifying potential discussion points.**

*\*Facilitator Note:* The facilitator should be prepared to discuss the questions (or similar questions) with the participants.

*\*Give students ample time to answer the questions.*

## Reflection Questions

*Think about questions you may wish to ask the participants.*

Question and AR:

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## Facilitator- Develop Questions

Below are potential questions and ARs for use in guiding the discussion. Before the session, the facilitator should review them and may develop their own. The provided handout matches the questions provided below. If you modify or add additional questions, modify the handout accordingly.

*\*Facilitator Note:* The facilitator should be prepared to discuss the questions (or similar questions) with the participants.

- What did you observe in the video and how could it be related to disparate treatment?

**AR:** The coworker with a visual impairment (Muhammad) was being treated differently based on his perceived abilities. These differences in treatment seemed to be unrecognized by the others. His coworker, Archie, was practicing benevolent prejudice by overextending help and “helpful suggestions” to Muhammad. Additionally, the supervisor was acting similarly by distributing an unfair workload between the two coworkers, expecting Archie to juggle far more tasks, and assigning fewer to Muhammad. These actions could undermine Muhammad’s performance, abilities, and sense of personal worth. These types of disparate treatment could also be interpreted as, or lead to, unlawful discrimination.

- Based on the scenario, what are the concerning behaviors related to accessibility and visual impairment?

**AR:** Both the supervisor and Archie treated Muhammad with exceptional regard, which was unnecessary and likely undermining, or infringing on his dignity and worth. In addition, Archie’s recurring actions of offering to help Muhammad and telling him that he does not need to work, could be interpreted as demeaning. These actions might also give others the impression that Muhammad is unable to be independent or is not as capable as those who are not visually impaired. The supervisor’s actions could also reinforce these perceptions and invoke similar reactions emotional responses from Muhammad. This could instill frustration in other coworkers who end up taking on more work and can lead to feelings of hostility towards the impaired coworker.

- If you were a bystander in this scenario, how would you approach the situation?

**AR:** You could support Muhammad by validating his feelings in this situation, acknowledging that Archie’s and supervisor’s actions were disparate. Another response could be to take Archie aside and explain that, though he might mean well, overextending help to someone with an impairment or disability could be considered offensive and hurtful. Regarding the supervisor, you could possibly explain that the disparate treatment in assigning tasks and an unfair workload could be damaging to both Muhammad as well as the rest of the team. And these actions could be the basis for an official complaint. Reporting the concern to an EO/EEO is also an intervention option if the supervisor is not approachable.

- What are some of the risk factors related to disparate treatment in this scenario?

**AR:** One risk factor may be the supervisor and Archie’s lack of understanding of the issue or awareness of the impact of their actions. They may have a limited understanding of visual impairment and the level of independence of someone who is visually impaired can have. Also, Archie may not understand that offering unsolicited help and giving “helpful” advice could be demeaning and/or offensive to someone with a disability. The supervisor may also not understand the impact of his actions by limiting Muhammad’s responsibilities. Not only can this also lead to feelings of hurt and frustration on the part of the employee, but it can also lead to issues with social belonging and work cohesion. Additionally, carrying such a lighter workload compared to peers can have negative career impacts, such as getting passed over for promotions or other career elevating opportunities

- What are some of the protective factors could come into play in a similar scenario?



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**AR:** One protective factor shown in the scenario is that Muhammad feels confident in voicing his frustration with the behaviors of his coworker and supervisor. This could suggest that the overarching work climate does support accessibility.

- As a leader, how could you support accessibility and understanding of disparate treatment in this scenario?

**AR:** Leaders set the tone for the organizational climate. Leaders can support accessibility and an understanding of disparate treatment in many different ways. Leaders can:

- Seek to identify areas where accessibility is lacking.
  - Understand what the term disparate treatment means and how it may be represented.
  - Take stock of their own biases and lack of awareness about disabilities and policies around accessibility and accommodations.
  - Hold offenders who exhibit discriminatory or prejudiced behavior accountable.
  - Support diverse teams as much as possible, including individuals with disabilities.
- As a leader, what can you do to support team members who are in need of accommodations in the workplace?

**AR:** As a leader you can ask individuals what accommodations they need to be successful. Leaders should maintain an awareness that everyone's individual needs for accommodations may be different. This awareness also includes knowing where to point individuals in the right direction for resources (e.g., Computer/Electronics Accommodations Program (CAP)).

- What are some accommodations that can be provided to an individual with a visual impairment in the workplace?

**AR:** Some accommodations can include:

- Ensuring work spaces and equipment are accessible (acquiring screen readers or magnification software, braille keyboards, and other visual accessibility equipment)
- Provide escorts around the building until the individual is comfortable with the workspace
- Identifying items that may need to be updated (e.g., door signs in braille, ensuring notices and open published items meet 508c minimal requirements)

## Lead the Discussion

Open the discussion by asking volunteers to share their responses with the group based on the questions used. As you do so, keep in mind:

### General Considerations

- Ensure all participants have an opportunity to share their thoughts.
- Encourage open communication among participants.
- When applicable, ask clarifying questions.

- Use anticipated responses to help the group when needed.
- Avoid “why” and closed-ended questions.
- Remind participants of the ground rules when necessary.
- Remember to let participants know that you are listening.
- Take notes for your summary and conclusion.
- Paraphrase when participants are unclear with their answers/assist them in reaching the objectives.





- Let the discussion be fluid with little to no disruptions or corrections.

### Examples of Other Questions That Can Be Asked

- In your own words, how would you describe accessibility?
- What are some ways you can show support for accessibility without infringing or undermining the dignity of individuals with disabilities?
- What are reasonable accommodations?
- What are some ways your organization can do to support individuals who need accommodations?

### Close the Session

*\*Facilitator Note:* During the conclusion, paraphrase participant comments to show that they were heard. The provided conclusion is an example on how to close out the guided discussion.

### Potential Closing Comments

During this discussion we explored what *accessibility* and *visual impairment* are, the attitudes and behaviors that can act as a barrier to accessibility, and some of the ways organizations can be inclusive to individuals with visual impairment. As seen in this scenario, individuals who do not have a good understanding of what accessibility is and how it relates to visual impairment can inadvertently cause harm. It is important for leaders to be aware of their own behaviors and those of subordinates in order to actively promote accessibility and inclusivity of individuals with disabilities. Talking about accessibility and visual impairment brings more awareness into the workplace for appropriate behavior responses. Everyone wants to feel like they are appreciated and valued in their organization. Being inclusive to those who are visually impaired with reasonable accommodations but also respect for personal autonomy and ability can make these the involved individuals, team, and organization more successful.

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End your discussion by restating the objectives covered at the beginning and provide closing comments.

#### Summary:

Restate the initial objectives:

- Define *accessibility* and *visual impairment*.
- Discuss the video and the behaviors seen within it.
- Grasp how a lack of accessibility can affect the individual and the organization.
- Understand the impacts of a lack of understanding for accessibility as it relates to visual impairment can take if not addressed.
- Discuss strategies to promote and improve accessibility.





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## Handout

### Video: Visual Disability Disparate Treatment

1. What did you observe in the video and how could it be related to disparate treatment??
2. Based on the scenario, what are the concerning behaviors related to accessibility and visual impairment?
3. If you were a bystander in this scenario, how would you approach the situation?
4. What are some of the risk factors related to disparate treatment in this scenario?
5. What are some of the protective factors could come into play in a similar scenario?
6. As a leader, how could you support accessibility and understanding of disparate treatment in this scenario?
7. As a leader, what can you do to support team members who are in need of accommodations in the workplace?
8. What are some accommodations that can be provided to an individual with a visual impairment in the workplace?



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### References

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