

Personal Assistants in the Workplace: What Is the Etiquette?

An increase in people with disabilities who are employed means an increase in personal assistants providing support in the workplace.

If the personal assistant is also an employee of the company, the roles may be fairly clear. If, however, the personal assistant works **for the individual with a disability** and **not the company**, etiquette questions may arise.

Individuals who use personal assistants in the workplace can be prepared by considering:

- how to introduce the personal assistant to staff and clients;
- how to develop a comfort level for co-workers to interact with the personal assistant without co-workers crossing the fine line of talking to the personal assistant instead of talking to the employee with a disability;
- which company policies the personal assistant will be expected to follow (i.e., dress code), and which do not apply to the personal assistant (i.e., contributing to the Sunshine Fund);
- how far to include the personal assistant in the social network of the workplace, such as recognition of birthdays or participating in the holiday cookie swap; and
- how the work relationship may differ if a personal assistant is just filling in for one day.

There is no right or wrong approach to these issues.

Every personal assistant has a unique personality, as does every employer with a disability. Every relationship between employer and personal assistant is different; and every workplace has a different culture.

Thinking about workplace expectations and etiquette ahead of time should make the experience easier for everyone.

Should questions arise, good communication between company representatives, the employee with a disability, and the personal assistant should give you the answers you need.