



# Helping Customers with Chronic Conditions and Disabilities

*Tips for practical use*

## KNOW YOUR CUSTOMERS

- **Customers are unique individuals.** *Learn from customers about their health conditions and disabilities.*
- **Customers have their own experiences and stories to share.** *Encourage customers to share their experiences and tell their stories.*
- **Customers can have an active role in planning.** *Engage customers in problem-solving and planning.*

## SEEK TO UNDERSTAND

- **Become familiar with the experiences of the customer.** *Use active listening to understand their experiences.*
- **Use empathic skills to gain perspective.** *Show interest in learning about their unique perspectives.*
- **Use empathic skills to show compassion.** *Use skills and techniques such as restating feelings and facts to develop understanding.*
- **Refrain from judging and recognize the customer's feelings.** *Do not paint "silver linings" or show bias through expressing opinions.*
- **Eliminate distractions, be present, and listen.** *Use therapeutic silence, listen, and allow customers to share.*

## TAKE ACTION

- **Make** customers feel comfortable when meeting with them in their home or in the office.
- **Engage** and empower customers in problem solving using person-centered planning.
- **Work** with customers to create a follow-up strategy and emphasize that they determine their plan.
- **Emphasize** to customers that they are not alone.

### WHAT IS EMPATHY?

- Engaging and listening
- Motivating us to act and help
- Perspective-taking and compassion
- Allowing others to share with us
- Talking and engaging in problem-solving
- Helping others express their experience
- Yielding understanding and planning

For more information go to [FindMyADRC.org](http://FindMyADRC.org)

