# Every voice matters: Promoting inclusion of people with disabilities in qualitative research methods

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**Methodological brief**

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## People with disabilities might face barriers to inclusion in these areas …

- **Attitudinal barriers and reliance on proxies**
- **Communication and physical access barriers**
- **Lack of awareness of reasonable accommodations**

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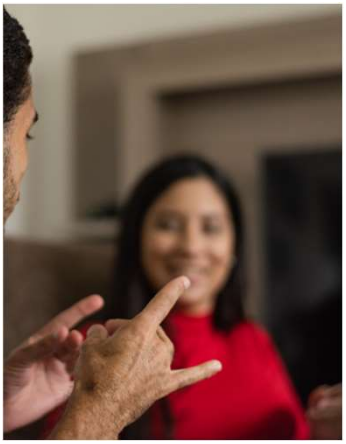
# Facilitators to inclusion at all phases

- **Use of inclusive language**
- **Study design**
- **Design of moderator or interview guides**
- **Data collection**



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# Facilitating inclusion: Language matters!

- **Person-first language**
  - Person with a disability
  - Wheelchair user
  - Person with a mobility or vision impairment
- **Sets the tone across all aspects of the work**
  - Proposal or research plan
  - Intuitional review board application
  - Participant screener form and consent form
  - Interview guide
  - Study findings, description of group participants

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# Facilitating inclusion: Recruitment and screening

## / Set the stage for all potential participants to make informed decisions about participation

- Purpose and topics planned
- When and where group takes place
- What participation entails (group setting and verbal participation)

## / Include questions to inform

- Understanding of expectations for the group
- Whether and what kinds of accommodations might be needed

## / Use of proxies versus self reporting

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# Facilitating inclusion: Design of interview guide

## / Minimize cognitive burden in questions, probes

- Use plain language
- Keep sentence structures simple

## / Duration and size of groups

- Insert intentional break
- Smaller group sizes where needed

## / Co-creation and use of advisory panels

- Direct input from people with disabilities

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# Facilitating inclusion during data collection - 1

## / Value of setting expectations at outset of group

- Agreement to respecting all group members
- Logistics of speaking in the group

## / Providing reasonable accommodations

- For people who are deaf or have hearing impairments
- Completion of consent forms

## / Physical space considerations

- Space at the table for wheelchair users
- Presence of personal care attendants in the room (or not)

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# Facilitating inclusion during data collection - 2

## / Moderators demonstrating respect for all participants

- Pacing, tone, and volume of moderator speech
- Always ask - never assume support is needed
- Respectful listening for people with speech impairments

## / Co-facilitation of group with person who has lived experience

- Advantages
- Challenges

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# Final thoughts

- **Diversity of voices at the table promotes equity**
  - Inclusive practices and design facilitate opportunities to capture diverse experiences
  - Our data are richer for it
- **We all have a role in making inclusion of people with disabilities the norm**

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# Contact information

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Mathematica
Progress Together

https://mathematica.org/focus-areas/health/disability

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# Additional resources


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- Markesich, J., S. Feldman, and W. Rafferty. "2021 Compendium of Disability Data Collection Methods." Princeton, NJ: Mathematica, 2021. Available at https://www.mathematica.org/publications/2021-compendium-of-disability-data-collection-methods


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