

Patients with sensory, mental health, cognitive or intellectual disabilities that affect their ability to function independently without assistance including language barriers, and religious, cultural, or ethnic customs.

Patient care goal: To meet and maintain the additional support required for patients with functional needs during the delivery of prehospital care.

## PATIENT MANAGEMENT

### Assessment and Treatment

1. Identify the functional need by means of information from the patient, the patient's family, bystanders, medic alert bracelets or documents, or the patients' adjunct assistance devices.
2. Avoid intentionally abbreviating the physical examination or medical care during triage, treatment, and transport of patients, although the way the exam is performed may need to be modified to accommodate the specific needs of the patient.

### Patient Safety Considerations

For patient with communication barriers (language or sensory), it may be desirable to obtain secondary confirmation of pertinent data (e.g. allergies) from the patients' family, interpreters or written or electronic medical records. The family members can be an excellent source of information and the presence of a family member can have a calming influence on some of these patients.

Barriers may include:

- Communications – fluency in language different from EMS professional, expressive and/or receptive aphasia (can't get words out and/or cannot understand what is said), non-verbal.
- Sensory – visual, auditory or tactile impairment.
- Physical – ambulatory (e.g. limb amputation, bariatric) or neuromuscular impairment.
- Cognitive – mental illness, developmental challenge or delay.

Service Animals – As defined by the American Disabilities Act, “any guide dog, signal dog or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including, but not limited to guiding individuals with impaired vision, alerting individuals with impaired hearing to intruders or sounds providing minimal protection or rescue work, pulling a wheelchair, or fetching dropped items.”

1. Service animals are not classified as a pet and should, by law, always be permitted to accompany the patient unless:
  - a. The animal is out of control
  - b. The animal is not housebroken
2. Service animals are NOT required to wear a vest or leash.
3. EMS providers may only ask the patient if the service animal is required because of a disability and the form of assistance the animal has been trained to perform.
4. EMS providers are not responsible for the care of the service animal.
5. Animals that solely provide emotional support, comfort, or companionship do not qualify as service animals.