Module 4

Part 1: Understanding communication barriers
Why is disability-inclusive communication important in health care?

People with disability have less access to information about health, health services, and their right to health than people without disability.

Communication barriers can reduce demand for health care.

Removing communication barriers is key to improving access to health and health outcomes.

Enables people with disability to increase control over, and improve, their health.
Communication in the patient’s health-care journey
Why do communication barriers occur?

Negative attitudes and lack of awareness by health workers – e.g. making assumptions about what people with disability need to know

People with disabilities that affect their hearing, seeing, speaking, reading, writing, memory, or understanding may use different ways to communicate – these are often not accommodated
Why do communication barriers occur?

People with disability may have had **less access to education** – many health promotion activities occur in schools.

**Low health literacy** among family members or carers – impacts the information shared with people with disability.
Common communication barriers at health facilities

- **Inadequate explanations** of health conditions or procedures
- **Written information** not provided in accessible formats
- **Verbal information** not provided in accessible formats
Common communication barriers at health facilities

- **Being talked down to** or patronized by staff and health workers
- **Being ignored** or spoken to indirectly through a family member or support person
- **Not enough time** provided to use alternative communication methods
Communication barriers in health promotion

Information provided in one or limited formats

Use of messages that are complex or difficult to understand

Messaging that does not include information specifically relevant to people with disability

Not including people with disability in messaging and images

Failing to specifically target people with disability to ensure they receive health promotion information
Step 3: Activity: The impact of communication barriers on equal access to health care