

## Sunflower Lanyard Cheat Sheet: What Airport Staff + Volunteers Should Know

As a member of the Airport staff and volunteer community, you encounter people with invisible disabilities every day. Invisible disabilities, or hidden disabilities, is a term used for people who do not have any physical signs of a disability. Examples include dementia, autism, hearing loss, brain injury, Parkinson's disease, speech difficulties, visual limitations, general aging-related decline, asthma, COPD, chronic illnesses such as renal failure, diabetes, Multiple Sclerosis, and more.

According to the [CDC](#), 26% of American adults have some type of disability. Many, of them not visually apparent. An increasing number of people with invisible disabilities and their care partners will be wearing [Sunflower Lanyards](#) or related items while travelling.

### ***Sunflower Lanyards Basics – What to Look For?***

First started at Gatwick Airport in Great Britain, the green lanyard with sunflowers discreetly signals that the wearer, or member in the group, has an invisible disability. And they may need additional support, patience, and flexibility. A growing number of US airports are now also participating in the program. In your role, you may encounter people wearing the lanyard or other sunflower designed lapel pins and bracelets.

A card attached to the lanyard has the option to list the wearer's first name, family or guardian name and contact number, and a list of any special assistance needs. Some people may have customized cards attached to their Sunflower Lanyard. The cards may include their photo, name, details about the type of help they need, icons indicating information about their invisible disability, and emergency contact information.

### ***Sunflower Lanyards – What Does it Offer + What Do I Do?***

Wearing a Sunflower Lanyard, is a way to discreetly self-identify as someone who might require extra time, assistance, patience, and flexibility. In a busy airport setting, this can be particularly helpful for staff to then tailor their customer service approach. In general wearing a Sunflower Lanyard does not entitle anyone to special privileges. Though, some US airports are allowing Sunflower Lanyard wearers to use expedited checkpoints.

When you encounter someone wearing a Sunflower Lanyard, ask if they need any assistance, and be patient if they take extra time to respond and/or do not respond. If it is offered, read the information on the card attached to their lanyard. The individual wearing the Sunflower Lanyard and/or their travel companion or care partner may be able to provide additional information that can help you tailor your customer service approach.



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You may encounter situations in which individuals wearing a Sunflower Lanyard have difficulty following instructions relating to security procedures and navigating the security area. Individuals may:

- Have difficulty waiting in line at security checkpoints.
- Have difficulty maintaining social distancing.
- Be unable to quickly respond to your questions.
- Have trouble showing you travel documents.
- Have problems with balance and agility.
- Have difficulty removing shoes, raising their hands, or managing their belongings.
- Become anxious or agitated because of the noise and activity around them.
- Be physically unable to safely comply with your requests and unable to explain why they cannot do what is being asked of them.

General best management practices for these situations include:

- Do not separate individuals wearing a Sunflower Lanyard from their care partner / travel companion / someone with a gate pass during security screening.
- Face the individual while giving instructions and speak clearly using simple words and a calm tone.
- Maintain eye contact and speak directly to the individual wearing the Sunflower. Do not talk about them to their caregiver or companion as if they aren't there. Treat them with respect and dignity.
- If possible, have chairs available in the security area to offer to someone who is having to stand longer than expected or is having a difficult time.

### ***Where Can Travelers Get a Sunflower Lanyard?***

At participating airports, Sunflower Lanyards are often available upon request at passenger information desks, airline ticketing counters, or mailed in advance upon request. Nationally, 25+ airports are currently participating in the program. Additionally, some airports have partnered with local disability community organizations for their assistance distributing lanyards to disability community members prior to travel.

Full list of participating airports available [here](#).

*This cheat sheet is provided by the Dementia-Friendly Airports Working Group (DFAWG) which promotes dementia-friendly airport protocols and the Airport Sunflower Lanyard Working Group which is composed of 20+ airports.*

*Photographs are provided by the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme Ltd.*