

Chapter 6 : People of Determination in the UAE



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How are individuals with disabilities typically designated or identified in the UAE?

Individuals with special needs necessitate support and assistance owing to physical, mental, or psychological limitations.

Both the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) offer standardized clinical diagnostic

In contrast, in the UAE, individuals with special needs are commonly referred to as "**people of determination**," reflecting a commitment to showing respect and dignity towards them. This unique approach distinguishes the country, as few nations prioritize such deliberate efforts in addressing individuals with disabilities.

Which governmental bodies are responsible for providing assistance to individuals with disabilities?

Ajman
Rehabilitation
Center for the
Disabled

Sidra Center for
People with Special
Needs

Al Ghad Center for
the Rehabilitation
of People with
Disabilities

Al-Firdaws for
Rehabilitation of
People with Special
Needs

What initiatives have been implemented to provide support?

The President's Initiatives Follow-Up Committee has approved two projects, each valued at Dh80 million:

The establishment and enhancement of essential facilities for the Sharjah City for Humanitarian Services (SCHS)

The establishment of the Ajman Club for individuals with special needs.

What initiatives have been implemented to provide support?

Individuals with special needs are provided with specialized insurance through Ounak ((عونك)) program, and People of Determination (POD) receive expedited governmental services. Additionally, the UAE has enacted a disability act aimed at safeguarding the rights and interests of POD.

In 2008, the Ministry of Community Development initiated a program to integrate People of Determination into the government education system. This initiative, known as the 'School of All' and endorsed by the Ministry of Education, marked a significant advancement in the social inclusion of individuals with disabilities and their participation in the developmental endeavors of the nation.

The primary component of the initiative, as outlined by Wafa Hamad Bin Sulaiman, Director of the Welfare and Rehabilitation Department for People of Determination, is Program One. This program involves the provision of a "home psychological aid kit" to offer support to People of Determination during times of crisis.

The initiative is focused on raising awareness within the community regarding the consequences of crisis on children with disabilities, including those who are part of the determination category. Additionally, it aims to enhance comprehension of how crises uniquely affect children with diverse disabilities within the determination spectrum.

Services provided for people of determination (POD) in the UAE

Services available for individuals classified as People of Determination (POD) in the UAE include:

- Tactile floor paths implemented to assist visually impaired individuals in navigating within stations.
- Designated parking areas near station entrances reserved for people of determination.
- Eligible children may access a range of specialized education services, such as speech and language therapy, psychological support, physical and occupational therapy, and counseling services.
- Provision of online services tailored to meet their needs, along with safeguards against abuse.
- Development of a sign language dictionary to aid those requiring sign language interpretation.


- The UAE Federal Government introduced the UAE Disability Act to ensure the protection of the rights of individuals with disabilities and special needs. This law mandates that UAE nationals with special needs have equal access to employment opportunities and public positions, specialized facilities at airports and hotels, public transportation options, parking facilities, and equitable access to all new property development projects.

People of Determination in the UAE benefit from a variety of services, including transportation systems that are safe, cost-effective, accessible, and environmentally sustainable. In Abu Dhabi, these individuals receive amenities such as designated public parking spaces, sidewalks, pathways, pedestrian underpasses, overpasses, and accessible entrances to buildings and other public facilities.

Additional services available to People of Determination (POD) include:

- In January 2023, Abu Dhabi hosted a global IT challenge aimed at raising awareness of leveraging information technology for the benefit of youth and individuals with disabilities.
- During the COVID-19 lockdown, a special online platform called "Kheta" was provided to enable People of Determination to continue their education remotely.
- Expo 2020 showcased various technologies designed to assist POD, including devices for hearing-impaired individuals and monitoring tools for managing disabilities.
- In 2018, the UAE launched the first Emirati sign language dictionary, enhancing communication accessibility for individuals with hearing impairments.
- All schools in the UAE are required to accommodate students with special needs by providing facilities such as wheelchair ramps, elevators, and other accessibility features to ensure inclusivity.

- The UAE government has incorporated a feature on its website that offers text-to-sign language translation through animated videos.
- The Humaid Quran Center in Ajman organizes an annual Quran competition specifically for people of determination.
- Various malls and public venues across the UAE provide wheelchair accessibility to enhance mobility for individuals with disabilities.
- In 2016, Emirates NBD launched a disability-friendly branch specifically tailored to cater to the needs of people of determination.
- In 2018, the Federal Ministry of Community Development introduced a job recruitment platform aimed at facilitating employment opportunities for People of Determination upon completion of their academic training, enabling them to pursue rewarding and challenging careers.

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- In 2022, the Ministry of Community Development introduced a card for people of determination, offering them protection when necessary.
 - Some governmental schools in the UAE employ specially trained teachers to address the learning requirements of individuals with disabilities.
 - In 2022, the UAE hosted a Special Olympics event dedicated to individuals with special needs.
 - The Bee Café in the UAE is a coffee shop entirely staffed by individuals with special needs, promoting inclusivity and empowerment within the community.