

## Assisting People with Visual Impairments

The need for assistance varies considerably with individuals and with each situation. Following these guidelines will enable you to provide assistance in a way that is safe, comfortable and rewarding for you and those you may be assisting.

When greeting a person, address him/her by name and then introduce yourself.

Speak in a normal tone. It is not necessary to talk loud unless you know the person has a hearing impairment.

Speak directly to the individual not to his/her sighted companion.

Your mood is conveyed through your words and tone of voice, as your facial expressions and/or visual gestures may not be seen.

Feel free to use everyday words and phrases such as "look", "see", and "watching TV/movies."

Let the person know when you are entering and leaving the area. Do not move personal belongings without first letting the person know.

Be sure to ask when and if help is required.

When escorting people, allow them to take your arm. Do not pull or push them ahead of you. Pause at changes in terrain such as stairs, curbs, broken pavement, etc., to allow them to locate it before continuing.



When traveling through a narrow space, put your arm behind you. This will help those you are guiding stay directly behind you. Return your arm to its original position when you are no longer in the narrow area.

When approaching a door, tell the person if it opens from the left or the right side and if it opens toward you or away from you. Pass through the doorway first followed by the person who also supports the door.

When escorting people to a chair or door place their hand on the back of the chair or on the door knob for easier orientation.

Give left-right directions according to the way the person is facing. Phrases such as "over there" and pointing generally do not give enough information.

If you must leave a person alone in an unfamiliar area, make sure he/she is near something to touch to maintain physical contact with the environment.

If you see a person about to encounter a dangerous situation, calmly tell him/her to stop and give a clear concise description of the situation.

People who travel with canes often use landmarks such as walls, curbs, doorways, etc. to help them reach their destination.

Do not interact with dog guides without the owner's consent.

People who travel with canes and/or dog guides use traffic patterns to help them make safe street crossings. Telling them when to cross, from somewhere in the intersection, is confusing and potentially life threatening.

Avoid parking in crosswalks as this may impede a person's ability to safely cross the street during their cycle of the light.

