

People who are Blind or are Visually Impaired

When approaching a person who is blind or visually impaired DO-NOT repeat DO-NOT ask, "Do you know who this is?" or "Bet you don't know who this is?"

This is a little game that sighted people like to play that is often not meant as abusive or a real challenge. It is often meant to be funny, but it is not.

When done in a group setting it puts the person on the spot which can be embarrassing. It draws attention to the disability and comes across as some kind of dog trick that the person is supposed to perform.

PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND know how to orient themselves and get around on the street.

They are competent to travel unassisted, though they may use a White cane or a guide dog.

Like with everyone else some are better than others at mobility.

A person may have a visual impairment that is not obvious.

Be prepared to offer assistance for example, identify yourself before you make physical contact with a person who is blind.

Tell them your name and your role if it is appropriate, such as security guard, usher,

receptionist or fellow student. And be sure to introduce them to others who are in the group, so that they are not excluded.

If a new customer is blind or visually impaired, offer them a tour of your business.

People who are blind need their arms for balance, so offer your arm do not take theirs if they need to be guided.

However, it is appropriate to guide a blind person's hand to a banister or the back of a chair to help direct them to a stairway or a seat.

If the person has a guide dog, walk on the side opposite the dog.

As you are walking, describe the setting, noting any obstacles, such as stairs "up" or "down" or a big crack in the sidewalk.

Other hazards include:

- * revolving doors
- * half-opened filing cabinets or doors, and
- * objects protruding from the wall at head level such as hanging plants or lamps.

If you are going to give a warning, be specific.

Hollering "Look out!" does not tell the person if they should stop, run, duck or jump.

If you are giving directions, give specific, non-visual information.

Rather than say, "Go to your right when you reach the office supplies," which assumes the person knows where the office supplies are, say, "Walk forward to the end of this aisle and make a full right."

If you need to leave a person who is blind, let them know. And leave them near a wall, table, or some other landmark.

The middle of a room will seem like the middle of nowhere to them.

Leaving them in a busy aisle where people may expect them to move out of the way can be an issue.

Do not touch the person's cane or guide dog.

The dog is working and needs to concentrate.

The cane is part of the individual's personal space.

If the person puts the cane down, do not move it. Let them know if it is in the way.

Offer to read written information-such as the menu, merchandise labels or bank statements- to customers who are blind.

Count out change so that they know which bills are which.

If you serve food to a person who is blind, let him know where everything is on the plate according to a clock orientation twelve o'clock is furthest from them, six o'clock is nearest.

Some patrons may ask you to chop their salad or cut their food; this can be done in the restaurant's kitchen before the meal is served.

A person who is visually impaired may need written material in large print.

Clear print with appropriate spacing is just as important as the type size.

Labels and signs should be clearly lettered in contrasting colors.

It is easiest for most people with vision impairments to read bold white letters on black background.

Good lighting is important, but it should not be too bright.

In fact, very shiny paper or walls can produce a glare which disturbs people's eyes.

If people who are blind or are visually impaired regularly use your facility as customers or employees, inform them about any physical changes, such as rearranged furniture, equipment or other items that have been moved.

Keep walkways clear of obstructions.