



Basic Disability Awareness and Etiquette Working with Employees/Colleagues that are Visually Impaired

1. Blind doesn't mean blind--having a vision disability does not necessarily mean that a person lives in total darkness.
2. Saying Hello & Good-bye
 - Don't assume that people with vision disabilities will remember your voice.
 - It is considered rude to ask a person with a visual disability, Do you remember my voice?
 - Identify yourself by name when you approach a person with a vision disability and tell them when you are leaving the conversation or area.
3. Communication
 - Use a normal tone of voice (for some reason, people with vision disabilities are often shouted at).
 - It is okay to use vision references such as see or look.
4. Orientation
 - It is considered polite to indicate your position with a light tap on the shoulder or hand.
 - However, keep your physical contact reserved.
5. Give a person with visual impairment a brief description of the surroundings. For example:
 - There is a table in the middle of the room, about six feet in front of you, or
 - There is a coffee table on the left side of the door as you enter.
6. Use descriptive phrases that relate to sound, smell, and distance when guiding a visually impaired person.

7. Mobility Assistance

- Offer the use of your arm.
- If your assistance is accepted, the best practice is to offer your elbow and allow the person with the vision disability to direct you.
- Don't grab, propel, or attempt to lead the person.
- Do not clutch the person's arm or steer the individual.
- Walk as you normally would.

8. Do not be offended if your offer to assist a visually impaired person is declined.

9. Service Animals

- Guide dogs are working animals and should not be treated as pets.
- Do not give the dog instructions, play with, or touch it without the permission of its owner.

10. Avoid clichéd phrases such as "the blind leading the blind," "What are you blind?" "I'm not blind, you know."

11. Do not grab or try to steer the cane of a person with visual impairments.

- Always determine the format in which a person with visual impairments wants information.
- The usual formats are Braille, large print, audiotape, or computer disk/electronic text.
- Do not assume what format an individual uses or prefers.

12. Direct your comments, questions or concerns to the person with a visual impairment, not to his or her companion.

13. If you are reading for a person with a visual impairment:

- First describe the information to be read.
- Use a normal speaking voice.
- Do not skip information unless requested to do so.

Also Important



It is very important to never talk with a blind or visually impaired individual about their other senses. Most people who are blind compensate and their other senses take over; however, individuals can get very insulted by making comments about their "good" hearing etc.