

Helpful Hints for Assisting those with Visual Impairment

When speaking with a person who has a Visual Impairment:

- ✓ DO identify yourself, especially when entering a room. Don't say, "Do you know who this is?"

- ✓ DO speak directly to the individual. Do not speak through a companion. Unless they are hard of hearing, they can speak for themselves.

- ✓ DO give specific directions like, "The desk is to your right," as opposed to saying, "The desk is over there."

- ✓ DO give a clear word picture when describing things to an individual with vision loss. Include details such as colour, texture, shape and landmarks.

- ✓ DO touch them on the arm or use their name when addressing them. This lets them know you are speaking to them, and not someone else in the room.

- ❖ DON'T shout when you speak. They can't see but often have fine hearing.

- ❖ DON'T be afraid to use words like "blind" or "see." Their eyes may not work, but it is still, "Nice to see you."

If you see a Severely Sight Impaired person who seems to be in need of assistance:

- ✓ DO introduce yourself and ask the person if he needs assistance.

- ✓ DO provide assistance if it is requested.

- ✓ DO respect the wishes of the person who is Severely Sight Impaired.

- ❖ DON'T insist upon trying to help if your offer of assistance is declined.

If a Severely Sight Impaired person asks you for directions:

- ✓ DO use words such as "straight ahead," "turn left," "on your right."
- ❖ DON'T point and say, "Go that way," or "It's over there."

If you are asked to guide a Severely Sight Impaired person:

- ✓ DO allow the person you are guiding to hold your arm and follow as you walk.
- ✓ DO move your guiding arm behind your back when approaching a narrow space so the person you are guiding can step behind you and follow single-file.
- ✓ DO hesitate briefly at a curb or at the beginning of a flight of stairs.
- ✓ DO tell the person you are guiding whether the steps go up or down.
- ✓ DO allow the person you are guiding to find the handrail and locate the edge of the first step before proceeding.
- ❖ DON'T grab the person you are guiding by the hand, arm, or shoulder and try to steer him.
- ❖ DON'T grab the person's cane or the handle of a dog guide's harness.
- ✓ DO refer to Sighted Guide Techniques for more information.

General guidelines:

- ❖ DON'T pet, feed, or distract a guide dog. They are not pets; they are working companions on whom a Severely Sight Impaired person depends.
- ✓ DO treat Severely Sight Impaired people as individuals. People with visual disabilities come in all shapes, sizes, and colours. They each have their own strengths and weaknesses, just like everyone else.