

PASSENGER ASSISTANCE PROCEDURES

VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR ASSISTING CUSTOMERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

- Before they board, visually impaired passengers should be told, and/or reassured of the route and destination of the bus.
- When a visually impaired customer hands you a ticket, cash, or other item, place the ticket stub, brochure, transfer, change, etc. directly into her/his hand.
- When assisting an individual with a visual impairment to a seat, remember that the seat next to the front door is preferable to the one behind the driver. It will be easier to remember to provide that extra service when announcing stops and providing passenger information. It is important to remember, however, that visually impaired customers may choose to sit in any seat they wish and still expect such assistance.
- Remember to call out all stops. It is the law. It is very disorienting to de-board at the wrong stop.
- Be sure to inform a relief driver that a passenger with a visual impairment is on the bus and what their final destination is.
- When giving verbal directions to a passenger with a visual impairment be very simple and very specific. Say "turn right," "turn left," or "turn toward the front/back of the bus" rather than "over there" or "that way."

SERVICE GUIDELINES FOR CUSTOMERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

1. Never make assumptions about individuals with visual impairments. When you interact, ask them if they would like your assistance.
2. Never act annoyed if you are asked to repeat what you have said to individuals with vision impairments. Background noise can distort the sound of your voice.
3. When you talk to individuals with visual impairments, talk directly to them and not to someone who may be traveling with them.

4. Good service to one is good service to all. Adjustments you make in service delivery to customers with disabilities often result in better service to all passengers, (e.g., speaking clearly and giving precise directions).
5. Individuals with visual impairments often appreciate your providing them with a "sighted guide" to destinations (e.g., to and from the restroom, making a transfer to the proper bus, etc.) within your work environment. It can make getting around more efficient for them.
6. Stay alert to clues which indicate someone who does not use a white cane or a guide animal may have a visual impairment.
7. It is acceptable to offer to guide persons with visual impairments, but never grab them by the arm. It will throw them off balance.
8. When offering service to individuals with vision impairments, it is best to greet them by saying, "Hello" and identifying who you are.
9. Offer the same service options to individuals with visual impairments as you would to other customers.
10. When providing written information to individuals with visual impairments offer it in alternate formats, (e.g., audio cassette, large print, Braille).
11. Don't pet guide dogs or other service animals...they are working.

SUGGESTIONS FOR GUIDING VISUALLY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS

When a sighted person guides a visually impaired or blind person, he or she is providing a personal service. Sometimes a guide feels awkward, because one doesn't really know how to guide in the most efficient way. If you follow the following tips, you will find that guiding can be easy and comfortable for you and the blind person.

1. Always remember that a blind person cannot see. This may sound silly, but when someone has been around a blind person who is graceful and effective, the blindness becomes less noticeable. There are still things that can be learned only with vision, or that can be learned by touch but only with a certain amount of embarrassment--like the fact that that's a finger bowl, not a soup bowl across from the coffee cup. Be open, direct and as inconspicuous as possible when telling the blind person about the surroundings.

2. Give the blind person your arm. DO NOT GRAB THE BLIND PERSON'S ARM and start pushing or pulling. Let your partner know where your arm is by touching his or her wrist with the back of your elbow. It doesn't have to be a big problem.
3. Usually you walk a half pace ahead of the blind person. The distance should be increased to a full pace when going up or down stairs. With practice, the blind person can tell when you come to steps just by the way your arm moves.
4. If you are guiding someone that you have not guided before, always tell that person when you are coming to steps and whether they are ascending or descending.
5. Always go ahead of the blind person when entering doors or narrow passages. Blind people are more likely to run into door frames or tables when they go first. DON'T take a blind person by the upper arms and push him or her into narrow places.
6. Tell the blind person when you are coming to something that might trip him or her up, like the wheel blocks in a parking lot.
7. Always keep in mind that the blind person is about a body-width to the side of you. Be careful not to let him or her hit door frames or other obstacles with the shoulder or shin that is away from you.
8. If it is necessary for the blind person to move to the left or right in order to avoid something, say so quietly. Once again, DON'T shove.
9. Take the time to approach curbs and steps head on, so that they are at right angles to the line of travel. Diagonal approaches are awkward because the blind person is not warned by your body movement at the time.
10. When someone speaks to the blind person through the guide, the guide should direct the conversation to the blind person. A nod in that direction will usually do it.
- 11 Always keep in mind what the next move of the blind person is going to be. It may help if you anticipate, so that you can give good directions. Be careful about mixing right and left, especially when you face him or her.
12. Give as true and as full an account of what you are seeing as the blind person wants or needs.
13. Try not to use expressions like 'over here', 'over there', 'down there', or 'right here', when referring to objects near the blind person. It is better to say 'Let me show you' while contact is being made with what the blind person needs to find. You may help by telling the blind person very carefully just precisely where an object is. You may also tap it while saying "This is it". Asking 'May I take your hand?' and then placing it on the object will also work.