

### Speaking with a person who is blind or visually impaired:

- Start a conversation by identifying yourself using your name.
- Use verbal clues to let the individual know your intentions: i.e. “Let me shake your hand.”
- Speak directly to the individual, not to a companion.
- Use the name of the blind person to get the person’s attention.
- Speak in a normal tone of voice and do not raise your voice.
- Using phrases such as “good to see you” is perfectly acceptable.
- Tell the blind person who is in a group and tell him when you or someone else leaves.
- Support facial expressions or visual cues with verbal cues: i.e. Say yes when you nod your head.



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## **Engaging With a Person Who is Blind or Visually Impaired**



***This summary is intended as guidelines for interactions with people who are blind or are visually impaired.***

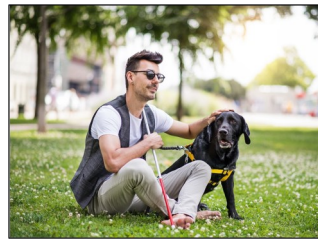
### **Offering Assistance:**

- Ask if the individual needs assistance and how you can best help.
- When location directions are needed, be specific: i.e. "The desk is about five feet to your right."

### **How to be a sighted guide:**

- Ask if the person needs assistance.
- Gently touch the person's arm with your elbow; the individual will grasp your arm just above your elbow.
- Move your guiding arm behind your back when approaching a narrow space so the person you are guiding can step behind you and follow in a single file.
- Hesitate briefly at a curb or at the beginning of a flight of stairs; tell the person you are guiding whether the steps go up or down.
- Allow the person you are guiding to find the handrail and locate the edge of the first step before proceeding.

- Never grab the person you are guiding by the hand, arm, or shoulder and try to "steer" him
- You should not grab the person's cane or the handle of a dog guide's harness.
- To show an individual to his seat, put his hand on the back of the chair.



### **About the white cane:**

- Use of a white cane when walking is a common aid for people who are blind.
- Speaking will help orient the individual to your location.
- The white cane alerts the individual to changes in the elevation of the walking path, and helps locate the edges of pavement, walls and corners.
- The person using a white cane may need your help in identifying things in a new or changing environment.

### **About the guide dog:**

- The individual who is blind and the guide dog work together as a team.
- The guide dog is trained to help the individual find objects such as chairs, steps, elevators, etc.
- Speak directly to the person using the guide dog, not to the dog.
- When guiding a person using a guide dog, the person may have the guide dog follow you, or he may drop the dog harness, and you can then serve as a "sighted guide" as described above.
- Give any needed instructions to the person, not to the guide dog.
- Don't do anything that would distract the dog's attention, such as calling the dog, touching the dog's harness, petting or feeding the dog.
- If you don't know something, it is always appropriate to ask questions.

