

DOs & DON'Ts

A Guide for Interacting with People who are Blind or Visually Impaired



DO tell me if you have just approached or are leaving my presence. I also like to know who else is in the room with me. Please introduce them; including children and any pets I should be aware of.

DO use very specific words for communicating direction. Use language like: "The telephone is on the right side of the desk." or "The restroom is the first door on your left down the hallway straight ahead."

DO tell me if we are about to go up or down a flight of stairs. You can let me know where the banister is either verbally or by placing my hand on it. When I need a seat, please place my hand on the back of the chair. I can handle it from there.

DO offer to read the menu or directions if Braille or large print is unavailable.

**For
More
Information
Call
Toll Free
877-685-8878**

DON'T be nervous. I'm an ordinary person who happens to be blind. You don't have to use a politically correct term, like "sight challenged" or avoid using the word blind. Keep it simple and honest.

DON'T feel sorry for me and don't talk about

"sensory compensation." My sense of smell, taste, touch and hearing did not improve when I lost my eyesight. I just rely on them more than you do.

DON'T worry about using language like "see" and "look." I use those words all the time. I'm always glad to "see" a friend.

DON'T raise your voice when you are speaking to me. Unless I tell you otherwise, my eyesight has not affected my ability to hear.

DON'T grab my arm if you want to help me. I may

use a white cane or guide dog to walk independently. If I need help, I may ask to take your arm so that you can assist me as a navigator. I'll hold onto your arm just above the elbow and keep a half step behind you to anticipate curbs and steps. This is called "sighted guide."

DON'T distract my guide dog while he is working. If he is wearing a harness, that means he's "on duty." If he is not working, please ask me first before you talk to or pet him.

DON'T leave doors to rooms and cabinets open

or leave obstacles in walkways. They are a hazard for me.

DON'T respond to someone if they ask you what I want; let them ask me, directly. I do not have trouble with ordinary table skills, especially if you tell me where the items on the table are or how the food on my plate is positioned. Use clock references, such as: "Your potatoes are at 4:00; your string beans are at 8:00."

**Provided
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www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi