Etiquette with the blind: Ways to assist persons with visual impairment

For more information, phone or email:
Vision Rehabilitation Centres
LV Prasad Eye Institute
LV Prasad Marg, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034
Phone: 91 40 3061 2841, 42
Fax: 91 40 2345 8339
E-mail: rehabhelpline@lvpei.org
Website: www.lvpei.org/helplinenew

Dr P R K Prasad Centre for Rehabilitation of Blind & Visually Impaired

World Health Organization
Collaborating Centre for Prevention of Blindness

LV Prasad Eye Institute
Hyderabad, India
• Ask for help. Offer assistance but let the person decide if your help is needed. By asking, you give the person a chance to say “yes please” or “no thank you”

• If your help is accepted, allow him/her to grasp your arm just above the elbow. Walk ahead of the person you are guiding. Never grab or push him/her forward.

• Be sure to mention stairs, doorways, narrow passages, ramps, etc.

• Be specific in directions. Use words such as "straight ahead," "turn left," "on your right." Don’t point and say "go that way" or “look here”

• Never leave the person in an "open space." If you have to be separated briefly, be sure the person is in contact with a wall, railing, or some other stable object until you return

• Inform your entry and exit. Do not just disappear. Help her/him avoid the embarrassment of continuing to talk to someone who has already left.

• Do not shout. Speak naturally and directly to the individual. Persons with visual impairment can have normal hearing.

• Identify yourself when approaching. Even if the person has met you before, he/she may not recognize you by your voice. In a group setting, address the person by name so they know when you’re talking to them.

• Feel free to use vision-oriented words such as look, see, and watch TV etc., as they are a part of everyday verbal communication. The words blind and visually impaired are also acceptable in conversation.

• Use “people first” language. It’s kinder, and more accurate, to say "a person who is blind" rather than "a blind person."