

VA BLIND REHABILITATION SERVICE HUMAN GUIDE TECHNIQUE

HUMAN GUIDE TECHNIQUE is a way to assist a person with a visual impairment to navigate and move around safely and efficiently.

INITIATING CONTACT

After confirming the person needs human guide assistance, extend your arm to touch the visually impaired person's hand and allow him/her to hold your arm, just above your elbow (the person should hold your arm like a can of soda).

BODY POSITION & PACE

Once the person is holding your arm at the elbow, step to the side and walk one step ahead of the person at a comfortable pace. Walk at a rate comfortable for both of you and appropriate for the situation and place. The person you are guiding will follow your body movements (as you will be the first to encounter obstacles) and any verbal cues you give.

NARROW SPACES

Verbally alert the visually impaired person that you are approaching a narrow space. Move your guiding arm behind your back with a 90-degree bend at elbow, so the two of you can walk in a single file. The person being guided should have their arm extended to allow walking without stepping on your heels.

ELEVATORS

Use free hand to press elevator buttons. Switch into the "narrow spaces" position when entering and exiting the elevator. Hold the door open with your free hand.



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NEGOTIATING DOORS

Describe to the person how the door opens: "Door opens towards/away from us and to the right/left." Move your arm into "narrow spaces" position so you can both fit through the door. Open the door and hold it until the person you are guiding is able to hold it.

SEATING

Bring the person into contact with the chair/seat while describing the part of the chair being touched (back, arm). Allow the person to seat themselves.

TURNING AROUND

Turn around maintaining the same arm/body position. The person you are guiding will follow your movement while maintaining the same grasp.

ADDITIONAL THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Remember to monitor the side that the person is walking on and be aware of potential obstacles.

As a guide, always let the person who has a visual impairment know that you're leaving, even if briefly.

Avoid leaving person you are guiding alone in unfamiliar open spaces as it can be disorienting. Be as descriptive as possible while traveling, especially in unfamiliar environments.

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