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

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World Health Organization
Collaborating Centre for Prevention of Blindness

LVPEI
So that all may see

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- 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."