



Transcript for the video: MCC - offering and asking for assistance: Blind and visually impaired

How would you introduce a participant who is blind or visually impaired to an activity?

You need to create an environment, in which the participant is aware that others are reading or writing and provide accessible labels for example chairs, table etc – in the preferred format of the participant. Determine what medium is best for an individual participant (braille, print, dual media, auditory strategies, objects, symbols etc.), and make sure that you provide literacy tools in the format that is accessible to them.

How to offer assistance to a blind or visually impaired person?

Blind and visually impaired people can be perfectly capable of walking by themselves. However, there are times when a sighted guide is required.

If you need to guide a blind person somewhere, in addition to guiding a blind person carefully there must be respect.

Always ask first before offering assistance. Approach, ask, and then assist. Many well-intentioned people see a blind person on the street and just assume they need help so that's why it is important that we ask first.

Example of the dialogue:

Person A: “Hi”

Person B: "Hello"

Person A: "Would you need any help?"

Person B: "Could you offer me your elbow maybe?"

Person A "Yes sure."

Person B: "Thank you."

Have the blind / visually impaired person hold your arm just above the elbow. To start walking with a blind person, place the back of your hand on the back of the blind person's hand. This will let them figure out where your arm is. Then, the blind person can hold your arm just above the elbow.

Don't grab onto the blind / visually impaired person. He/ She should always have the control to let go if need be.

The blind / visually impaired person may have a cane or guide dog.

Guide dogs are typically held in the left hand unless there is a reason why not. Canes are typically held in their dominant hand. Let them use the hand without their cane or guide dog.

Make sure the blind person is a half step to a step behind you.

Keep up a pace you are both comfortable with. Periodically ask the blind person if they want to switch sides or go faster or go slower.

A few short tips for the end:

- Do not be overprotective.
- Describe the passing scene
- Give directions verbally

If the person needs help, they will usually let you know. Not all visually impaired people need assistance, so do not be offended if your offer is declined. Simply wish the person a good day and move on.

Resources:

NCBI – Assisting the Blind and Visually Impaired: Guidelines for Eye Health

Workers and Other Helpers

(n.d.). <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1705868/>

