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Sighted Guiding:

Guiding a person

who is blind or

vision impaired

Introduction

The advice provided in this sighted guide brochure will help you feel more confident in guiding a person who is blind or vision impaired.

Your offer of assistance will usually be welcomed, however some people with a vision impairment may not require assistance, so do not be offended if your offer is declined.



What is sighted guiding?

Sometimes people who are blind or vision impaired find it useful to be guided in order to move from one place to another.

This guidebook provides basic information that aims to be helpful, but it is always important to ask the person you are guiding what they feel most comfortable with. Communicate verbally with the person you are guiding, describing the conditions and surroundings around them, to help them get a better feel for the environment.



About Blind Sports & Recreation Victoria

Blind Sports and Recreation Victoria (BSRV) endeavours to enhance the lives of people throughout Victoria who are blind or vision impaired through sport and recreation.

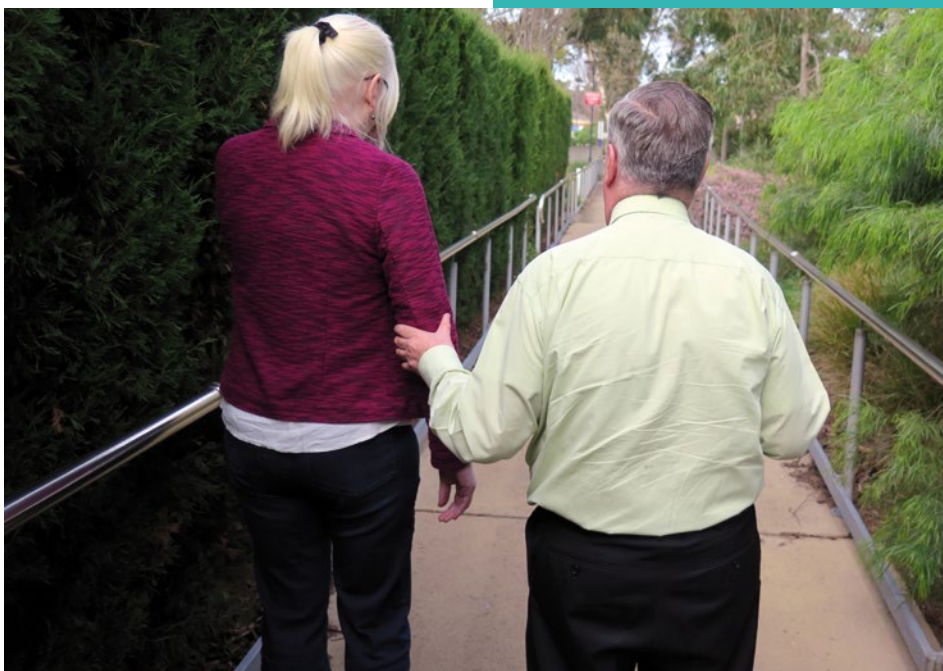
BSRV conducts programs and training to assist sport and recreation clubs and other organisations as well as individual people with vision loss to engage effectively in all aspects of sport and recreation.



Making contact

If you know someone with vision loss, it's important to introduce yourself by name. If you don't already know the person, ask them if they would like your assistance.

You may ask if someone likes to be guided, and their preferences, for example: which side they would like you to stand, and make contact by touching the back of your hand against theirs. Let them take your elbow or shoulder.



Usual Guiding Position

- The person you are guiding usually takes hold of your arm just above the elbow or rests their hand on your shoulder. You should keep your arm relaxed and close to your body.
- When you commence walking, the person should be half a step behind you and slightly to the side. Walk at a pace that is comfortable for both of you. Look ahead for hazards at foot level, head height and to the side.
- If you have to leave the person you are guiding at any time, let them know where you are going and how long you will be. If possible, ensure they are in contact with a solid object, for example, within contact of a wall, a pole or post.



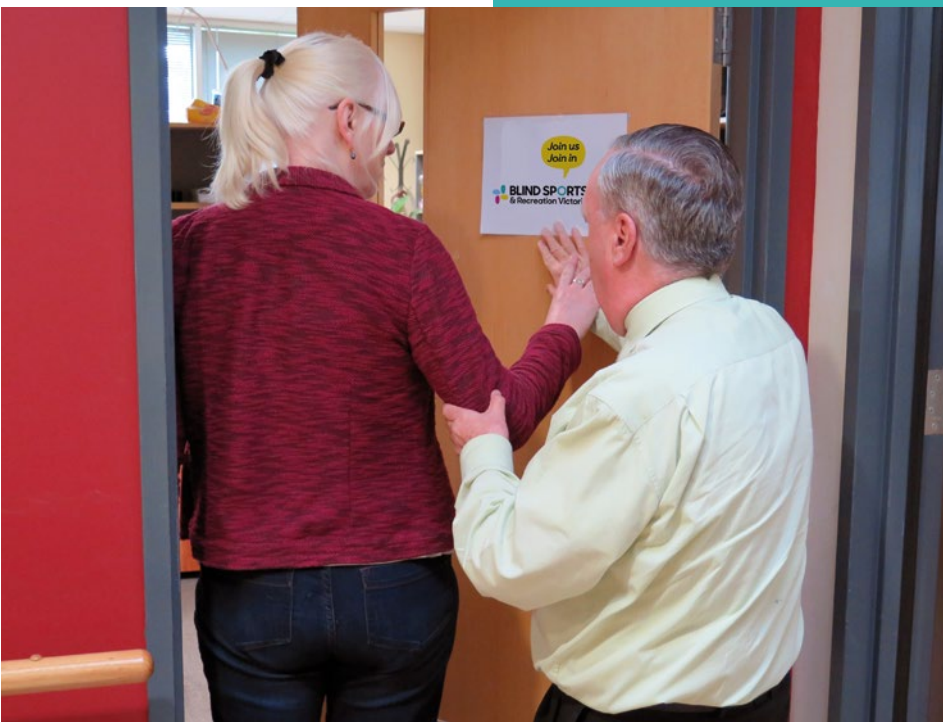
Narrow spaces

- Tell the person you are guiding that you are approaching a narrow space or crowded area.
- Move your guiding arm towards the centre of your back to indicate that they need to walk behind you. The person should step in behind you while still holding your arm.
- When you have passed through the narrow space or crowded area bring your arm back to its usual position by your side.
- Remember to use verbal communication to advise the person you are guiding of any hazards or changed conditions along the way.



Doorways

- As you get close to the door, explain which way it opens, including whether it is a sliding door, or opens to the right or left. When passing through a doorway, it can be useful to guide the person to the hinged side of the door.
- Open the door and walk through, allowing the person you are guiding to hold the door open and close it behind you, using their free hand.



Steps and staircases

- Always approach steps and staircases straight on, and not diagonally.
- Stop at the first step and tell the person you are guiding whether the stairs go up or down.
- Change your pace if necessary, for example, slow down if the person is hesitant and remember to use verbal communication too.
- Ask if they would like to use the stair rail and change sides if necessary.
- Start walking when the person is ready, remaining one step ahead of them. Tell them when they are approaching the last step or landing.
- Tell the person where the hand rail ends.



Seating

- On approaching a chair, it may be useful to place the person's hand on the back or arm of the chair and tell them if the chair is at a table.
- Let them know if the chair has wheels, is lower than usual or has no back.



Getting into a car

There are two common options to assist someone when entering a car:

1. Offer to open the door. If they accept, let them know you are opening the door and place one of their hands on the roof and the other hand on the top corner of the open door.
 2. If they prefer to open the door, place their hand on the door handle, allowing the person to open it themselves.
- Once the person is seated in the car, it is very important that you tell them if you are closing the door. Alternatively, you can ask if they prefer to close the door themselves.
 - If the person has a Guide Dog, be careful not to catch the dog's tail when closing the door.
 - When the person enters or exits the vehicle, please inform them of any potential hazards; for example, positioning of a kerb, a step up or down or other cars reversing next to you.



Remember that sighted guiding takes time to master. Don't forget to communicate with the person you are guiding and ask questions. Most importantly, enjoy the experience.

Vision loss awareness training videos

To learn more about sighted guiding and communicating with people who are blind or vision impaired, watch our Vision Loss Awareness Training videos by clicking [HERE](#).



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