

Approaching and Communicating with Patients and Clients

- A Visually Impaired Person

Visual Impairment - Some definitions

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disability as:

“a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

Partially-sighted: indicates some type of visual problem which has resulted in a need for additional support.

Low vision: generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of glasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes, Braille.

Legally blind: indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point). Totally blind individuals learn through Braille or other non-visual media.

A Visually Impaired or Blind Person

- When you enter the room, speak to the person and tell them who you are.
- Speak in a normal voice and never shout.
- Do not grab them to attract their attention.
- It is helpful to describe your PAT Dog or PAT Cat during the visit: what he or she looks like, their personality traits and body expressions.
- Be sure to encourage the person to touch your PAT Dog or PAT Cat, as tactile stimulation is an extremely important means of gathering information for someone who is visually impaired.
- Always tell the person when you are leaving and give them the opportunity to say goodbye to your PAT Dog or PAT Cat.
- If you can, have a look at the website www.guidedogs.org.uk for further guidance.

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