

Using Human Guide Technique

There are times when it can be safer or simply more efficient to walk with a guide. This can be true when walking in unfamiliar areas, crowded restaurants or dark theaters.

Orientation and Mobility Specialists developed the Human Guide Technique for these situations.

It is best for you and your guide to learn this technique from a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist or a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist. Eleni Gaves, COMS or Cody Froeter, CVRT at Second Sense can both provide this training.

If that is not possible, here are some tips you can use to help you and your guide travel safely and more efficiently.

- 1. Grasp your guide's arm just above the elbow, with your thumb on the outside of the arm and your fingers on the inside, nearer to the guide's body. Your grip should be similar to one you use to hold a glass of water. It should be firm, but not uncomfortable for your guide. This grip will give you the greatest amount of feedback from your guide's movements.**
- 2. If you use a cane or guide dog, you should take the guide's arm with your free hand.**
- 3. Position yourself to guide's side and a half step behind. This position, rather than walking side-by-side, will give you time to react to any obstacles. Keeping your elbow close to your body will help to maintain this position.**

- 4. If your guide's pace is too fast, let them know. You should set a pace as a team, one that is comfortable for both of you.**

- 5. If any curbs or steps are in your route, make sure you approach them head-on. This will ensure you know where to expect the edge of the curb or steps.**

Ask your guide to let you know if any stairs have a handrail. If you wish to use the handrail, tell your guide and ask them to position you next to the handrail.

Instruct your guide to stop when the front of their foot is close to the curb or step. Then, they should let you know whether the curb or stairs go up or down. When you are both ready, your guide

should step forward just enough to let you find the edge of the curb or stair with their toes.

Be ready to take it slowly. It takes practice for the guide and guided to work smoothly as a team.

- 6. When you are going from a large room to a hallway or coming up to any narrow space, your guide should move the arm you are holding behind their back. You then slide your hand down their arm so you are grasping their wrist. With this movement, you will naturally move slightly more behind your guide to adjust to the narrow space. Once you both leave the narrow space, your guide should return their arm to the original position, and you can slide your hand back up behind their arm and above their elbow.**

7. If you are going through doors, you need to be aware of which side the door opens on and if the door opens toward you or away from you. You want to make sure you are on the same side that the door opens on. This may require you to change sides before going through the door. This position will allow your guide to control the door and block it from hitting you when it closes again. Your guide should announce which side the door is on and whether it opens in or out before going through the doorway.

You will want to use the same hand positions as for narrow spaces when walking through doorways.

8. Once you reach your destination, ask your guide to leave you next to a chair, wall or other anchor

point. They should never leave you alone in an open space. When you arrive at the anchor, your guide should place the hand of the arm you are grasping on the back of the chair, top of the table or on the wall. You can then slide your hand down their arm until you come into contact with the anchor.