

Human Guide and Dog Guides

Objectives:

- Define and demonstrate human guide technique
- Illustrate difference between human guide and dog guide travel
- Understand the characteristics of a dog guide candidate.

Presenters:

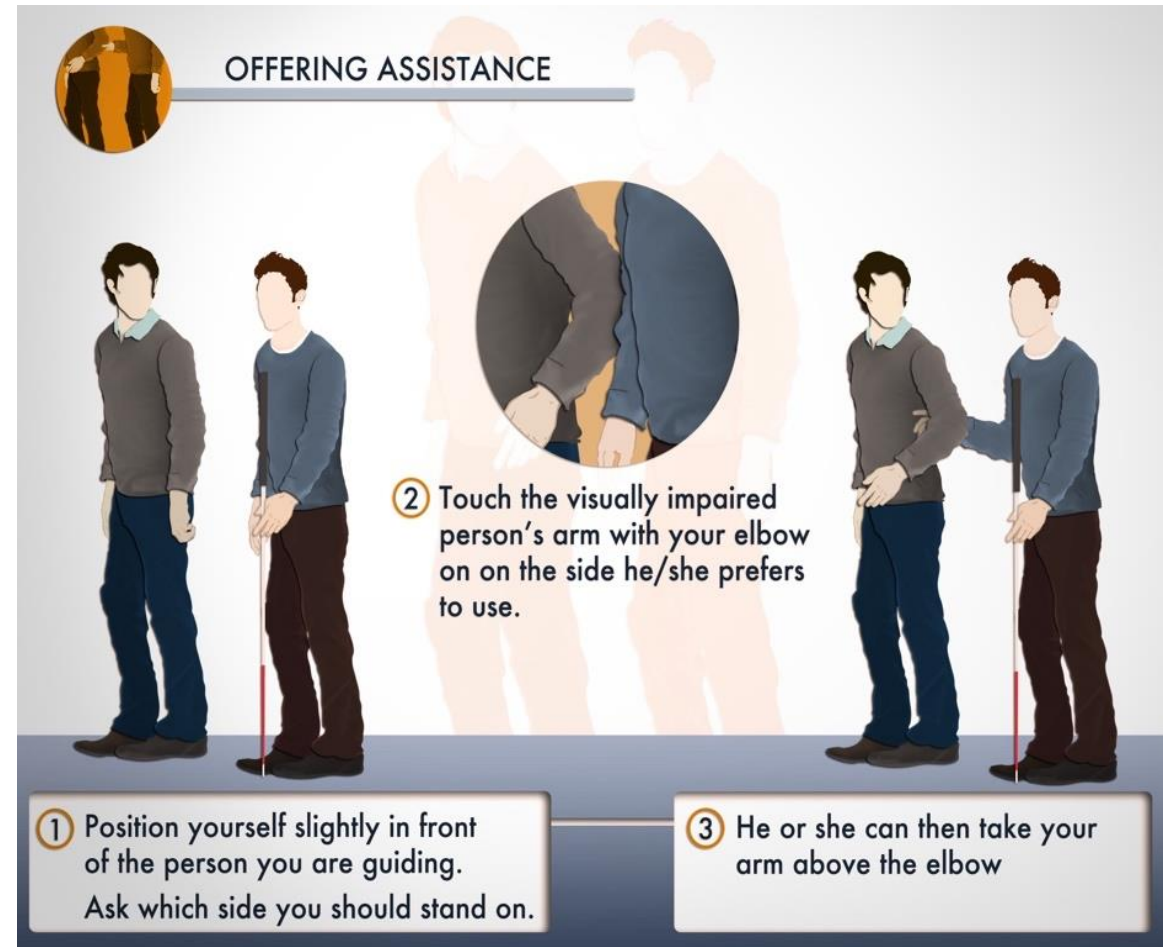
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Basic Human Guide Technique

The Guiding Technique is used when an individual who is blind or visually impaired would like to walk to a destination and be guided by another person.



Procedure

APPROACH: The guide will approach the individual from the front, identify who they are and ask if assistance is needed. If yes, ask which side is preferred for the guide to be on. The guide should let the Individual know where the guiding arm is by brushing slightly his/her arm and/or hand, against the Individual's arm.

HAND GRASP: The Individual should take the guide's arm, just above the elbow. The grasp should be firm enough to maintain contact, but not tight enough to cause discomfort to the guide.

STANCE: The guide should walk one step ahead of the individual with his/her shoulder in front of the individual's opposite shoulder. The guide's arm should be close to his/her side, not swinging.

Choosing a Side for Guiding

- Ability: The individual with vision loss may only have use of, or better use of one hand/arm.
- Safety: It may be safer for the guide to walk on the side closest to traffic or another hazard.
- Support: The individual with vision loss may need to hold the available handrail with one hand and the guide with the other.
- Functional Vision: If an individual has reduced or no vision from one eye compared to the other, it may be preferred to be guided from the side with no/reduced vision.

Variation: Switching Sides

Fatigue

- The individual may become tired holding with one hand for an extended time and prefer to switch and use the other hand.

Environmental Factors

- The individual may switch sides to use an available handrail.
- The guide may request to switch sides when approaching a doorway to easily open the door and walk through safely together.
- The guide may request to switch sides to walk on the side with a curb, traffic, and/ or another potential hazard.

Variations: Narrow Passageway

- Guide informs the individual that a narrow passageway is approaching.
- Guide positions arm behind and diagonally across the back.
- Individual responds by extending arm and moving directly behind the guide.
- After traversing the narrow passageway, the guide returns their arm to the basic position.

Variations: Negotiating Doors

- The guide will tell the individual if the door needs to be pushed or pulled, and what side the hinges are on. The individual will step behind the guide in narrow passage position and the guide will begin opening the door.
- If the door hinges are on the same side as the individual, they will maintain grasp while supporting the door for themselves.
- If the hinges are on the guide's side, the individual will place their free hand above the original grasp and begin to change side. Hold the door with their (newly) freed hand. When you have passed through the door, resume basic human guide technique.

Variations: Steps, Stairs, Uneven Surfaces

Ascending Stairs:

- The guide indicates an elevation change, approaches the edge of the step(s) and pauses.
 - Switching sides may be necessary if the individual requires a handrail.
- The individual aligns evenly beside the guide.
- The guide initiates the first step, the individual follows one step behind guide.
- The guide pauses at the completion of stairs and the team resumes basic human guide technique.

Descending Stairs:

- The guide indicates a descending step, approaches the edge of the step(s) and pauses.
 - Switching sides may be necessary if the individual requires a handrail.
- The guide ensures the individual is aligned properly and begins descent.
- The guide remains one step ahead of the individual and provides feedback when the team has reached the landing.

Variations: Seating

Back of Chair:

- Guide the individual to the back of the empty chair. Place the individual's guiding hand at the top of the back of the chair.

The individual will slide their hand down the guide's arm to locate the chair. The individual will sit down.

Front of Chair:

- Tell the individual they are being guided to a chair/seat that is facing them. Walk to front of chair and have individual walk until they feel the front of the chair with both shins. The individual will turn around and feel the chair/seat with the back of their legs and sit straight down.



Human Guide and a Cane

Mobility canes can include a long cane, a support cane, or an Adapted Mobility Device (AMD).

- If the cane is foldable, the individual can hold the folded cane in their free hand while holding the guide's arm with their other hand.
- Individual can give it to the guide or someone else to hold (folded or unfolded).
- In some situations, the individual may be able to leave the cane behind and then the guide can go back to get it (after safely guiding the individual to a different location).





Human Guide and Guide Dog Handler

The dog guide user (handler) will drop the harness, maintain hold of the leash, command the dog to heel, and take the guide's arm. The guide and the handler follow the human guides technique.

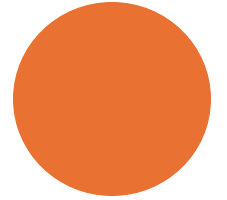
Alternatively, the handler will ask the guide to travel slightly ahead of the handler and will commands the dog to follow.

Human Guide: Walker/Rollator Travel

Walkers are used to assist balance and sometimes these devices can put the individual who is visually impaired in the lead or a half step ahead of the guide. Individuals with vision loss who use walkers present unique challenges to the guide who is no longer in the lead.

Considerations:

- The Guide can direct the walker from the front paying close attention to the individual's pace and balance, being sure not to pull the walker.
- The guide can contact the individual's arm at the elbow and direct movement with gentle pressure.



Human Guide: Wheelchair Travel

Consider Human Guide techniques while traveling with a wheelchair user:

- Greet the individual and ask them if they would like assistance and/or tell them that you can help with pushing/navigating the wheelchair.
- Warn the individual of upcoming bumps or changes in terrain or direction (backward, up/down ramps, etc.)
- Travel at a pace comfortable for the individual.

Human Guide: Wheelchair Travel Self Propelling or Power Wheelchair

When assisting an individual with vision loss who can self-propel wheelchair:

- If the individual is learning or knows all or part of a route to a destination, the guide should walk behind the individual. The guide should be ready to provide verbal or physical assistance as necessary for safety.
- If the individual doesn't know the route the guide can assume a human guide position by walking a step ahead and to one side of the wheelchair and offer Voice Guide assistance.
- If the individual is using a power wheelchair the guide may need to stand to the side with the controls in case assistance is needed with operation.

Entering/Exiting Vehicles



Figure 1: Video: [Let's Walk Together: Safe Guiding Techniques for Individuals with Intellectual Disability and Vision Loss](#)

Human guide and dog guides, October 2024

Special Considerations

Physical, cognitive, and/or sensory challenges may affect someone's ability to use a basic human guide technique. It is important to remember that with any variation in technique some element of safety or information exchange is compromised. As a result, the guide must slow the walking pace and respond to individual needs.

Share your experiences with working with an individual where:

- An individual who is not able to demonstrate typical human guide grasp.
- An individual does not maintain the grasp.
- An individual who is unsafe using physical contact.



The Ramble Tag is a lightweight harness, designed to be worn on the upper arm, or wrist of a guide, for assisted walking or running

Voice Guide

- The guide should walk facing the individual while intermittently turning forward to ensure safety.
- The guide continues to talk to the individual so they can continue to move toward the guide's voice.
- Encourage the individual to use protective techniques when walking through open space. The individual should keep hand/arm up and across body at waist level and head level or use their cane or adaptive cane.
- The guide must always ensure the safety of the individual with vision loss with voice guidance/cues so that the individual can move safely around objects, furniture, etc. State the action first then description when providing a safety directive.

GUIDE DOG MOBILITY

- Definition: What is a Guide Dog and Service Dog
- Requirements for Obtaining Guide Dog
- Application Process
- Legal Rights and Responsibilities

Service Dog and Emotional Support Animals

A **service animal** is a dog, or in rare cases a miniature horse, that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. The tasks or work the animal does must be directly related to a disability.

An **emotional support animal (ESA)** is an animal that is providing emotional support to a person with a disability, just by its presence.

Service animals and emotional support animals are not pets. They are assistance animals needed by a person with a disability.

A guide dog is a service animal.

Massachusetts State Law

[MGL c. 272, § 98A](#) Physically handicapped persons with dog guides; public places or conveyances, penalties for denying accommodation

Under Massachusetts's disability rights law and the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), people with disabilities can bring their service dogs to all "public accommodations," such as:

- Stores
- Motels
- Theaters
- Businesses
- Restaurants
- Schools

The ADA and Massachusetts's disability rights law don't apply to any of the following:

- emotional support animals (ESAs)
- therapy dogs, or
- pets.

Guide to Guide Dog Etiquette





Ride Share Policy

From Lyft:

- Service Animal Policy State and federal law prohibit drivers providing transportation services arranged through the Lyft App from denying service to riders with service animals because of the service animals, and from otherwise discriminating against riders with service animals. Drivers who engage in discriminatory conduct in violation of this legal obligation will lose access to the Lyft platform.
- **3 Minute How to: Service Animals training video**

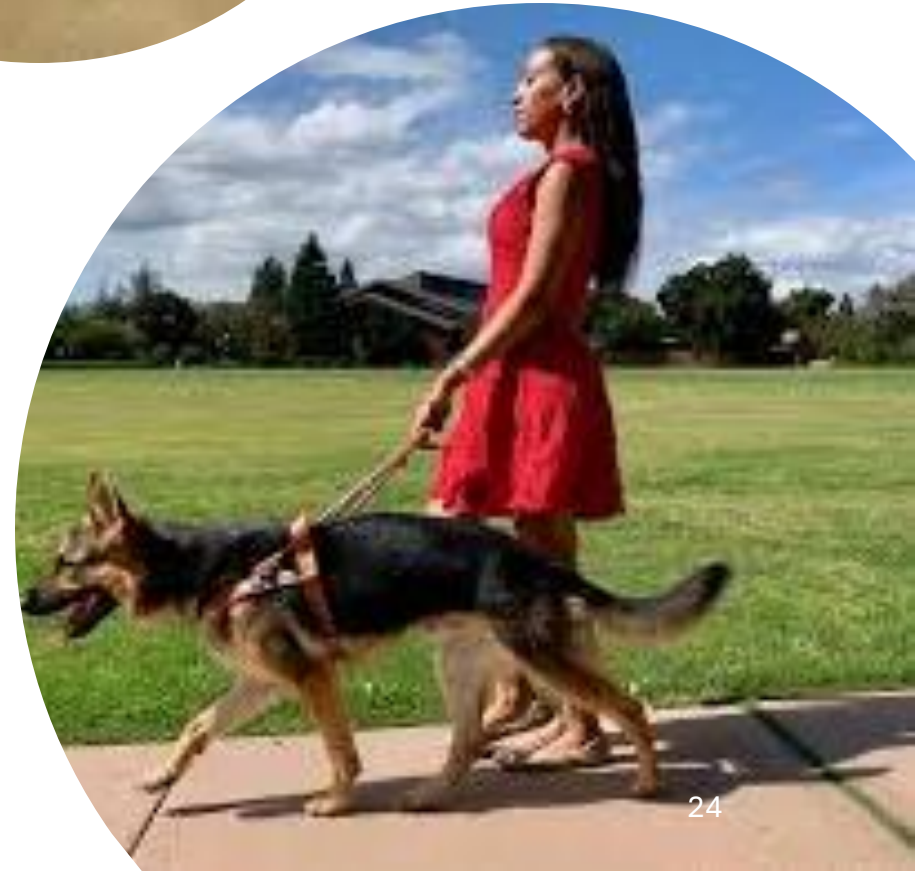
Discrimination is a problem and should be reported.

Assessing the right candidate for a guide dog



BACKGROUND

- Guide dog handlers receive their guide dogs from accredited schools.
- Guide dog handlers must master cane skills, travel independently in their community, undergo a screening process and participate in extensive training with the dog.
- Breeds vary based on school.
- Pets cannot be trained as guide dogs.
- COMS should guide the consumer through the research process to determine the best fit for them.



READINESS SKILLS FOR DOG GUIDES

O&M Readiness

- Strong Cane Skills
- Understanding of the principles and practices of orientation both indoors and outdoors
- Independently plan and execute routes
- Ability to demonstrate good judgment for street crossing and problem solving
- Demonstrate a minimum of 2-3 routes in their community



Physical Readiness

- Walk 20-30 minutes per day or a total of 1-2 miles per day (this varies by school)
- Demonstrate the strength necessary to manage a trained dog on harness
- Balance requirements for negotiating curbs, steps, uneven terrain (special circumstances are considered with some schools)

Sensory/Cognitive Considerations

- Does the person have any psychological challenges that will impose limitations on developing and maintaining the leadership role with a guide dog?
- Will the person be able to comprehend and remember the skills and knowledge needed to be successful with a guide dog and apply them independently over the long term?
- Will the person be able to process sensory input and make decisions quickly enough while multi-tasking?



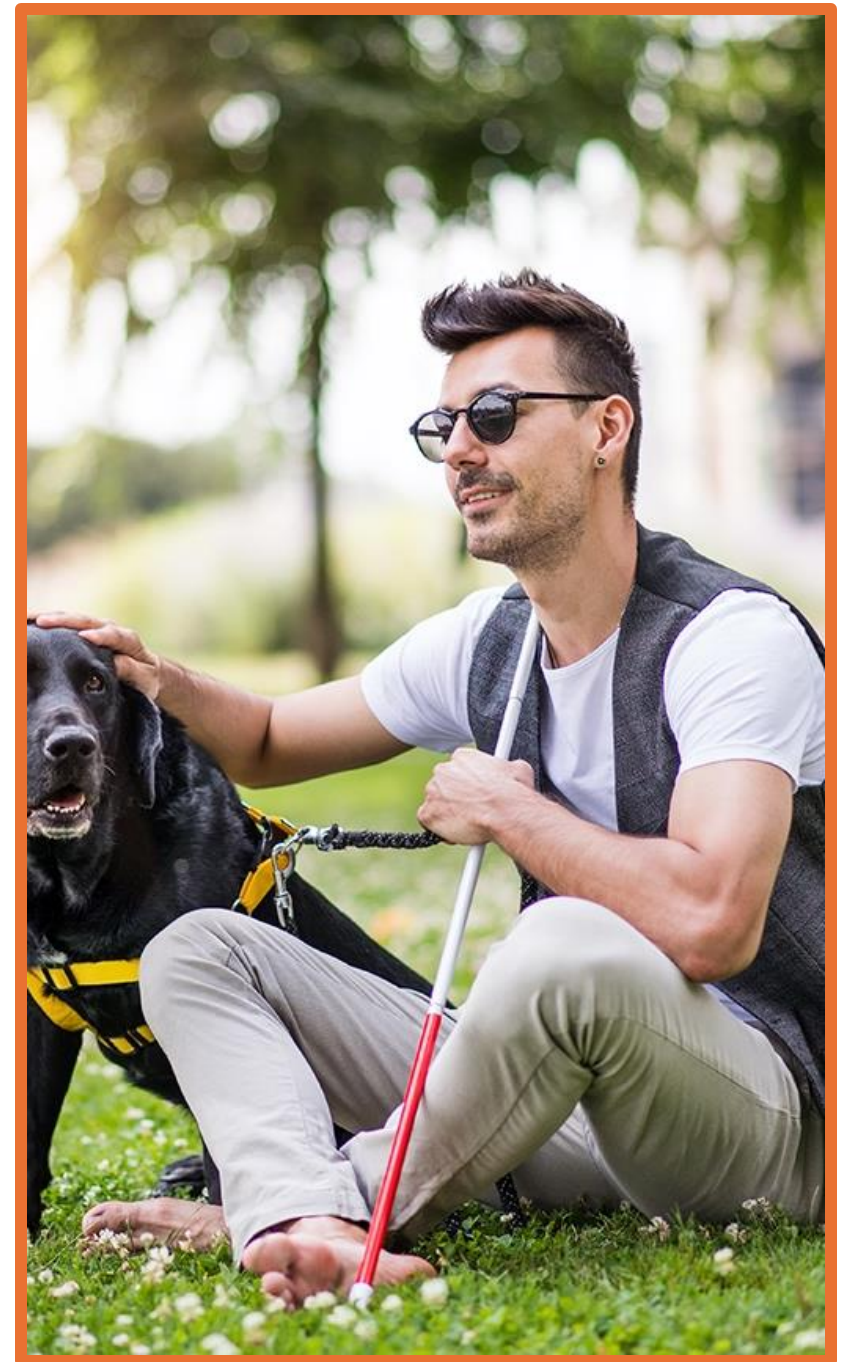
Psychological Considerations

Many schools require a medical release and will contact physicians regarding the candidate's medical and psychological diagnoses.

Does the candidate have any psychological conditions that may cause them to withdraw or become unable to care for themselves or the dog appropriately?

Does the candidate have the necessary level of maturity to be successful with a guide dog as well as be the sole caretaker of the dog (younger clients)?

How does the candidate respond to high stress situations?



SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Many schools require a CORI background check and consider past criminal offenses/convictions when determining acceptance.

- Can the candidate provide a guide dog with safe and hygienic accommodation at home and at work?
- Are there other people or pets in the person's environment that could pose a safety risk to a guide dog either physically and/or emotionally?
- Does the candidate plan to remain living at their current address for a minimum of six months following their guide dog training?
- Is the candidate aware and have they considered the increase in public attention, admiration, and scrutiny that will result from being accompanied by a guide dog and are they overall positive about this prospect?
- Does the candidate have the financial means to support a guide dog
 - afford veterinary care
 - provide high quality, veterinary recommended dog food

Application Process

- Guide dog schools will ask candidates to complete a lengthy application and provide references.
- A reference from a COMS is required.
- Many schools will send out a guide dog trainer for a site visit/route travel observation.
- Turnaround time from acceptance to training dates may vary based on organization. It is safe to assume a 6 month wait, potentially longer for individuals who require a dog with specialized skills.



QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS?



Thank you!

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Focus on Vision and Vision Loss, [About - "Focus" \(focusonvisionandvisionloss.org\)](https://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org)

A resource of the MCB/DDS Partnership Project for Orientation & Mobility/Low Vision Services, a cooperative effort between the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) and the Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

- **[Let's Walk Together: Safe Guiding Techniques for Individuals with Intellectual Disability and Vision Loss](#) Human Guide Video**
- **[Train the Trainer: Human Guide and Vision Loss Sensitivity](#)
Now offered virtually by application, HGVLS is a collaborative program presented by DDS, MCB, MAB Community Services and The Carroll Center for the Blind. Successful completion of this training enables agency workers to provide training for new staff and/or refresher training for existing supervisors and staff.**
- **[Guide Dog Resources.doc](#)**
- **[MGL c. 272, § 98A](#) Physically handicapped persons with dog guides; public places or conveyances, penalties for denying accommodation.**