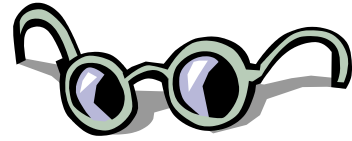


MCB/DDS Partnership

Orientation & Mobility/Low Vision Services
www.mass.gov/dds/visionloss



Let's Walk Together: Standard Human Guide Technique, Variations of Human Guide Technique, Grip Variations, and Equipment Use

The complete "Let's Walk Together: Safe Guiding Techniques for Individuals with Intellectual Disability and Vision Loss" video can be viewed at:
<http://www.focusonvisionandvisionloss.org/lets-walk-together.html>
or
<http://carroll.org/video-tutorials/lets-walk-together>
Additional resources available at: <http://www.mass.gov/dds/visionloss>

Human Guide: (Sighted Guide) is a technique whereby a person with vision loss holds onto the arm of, and safely walks with, another person.

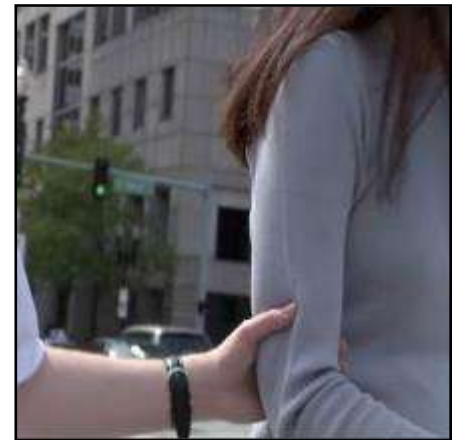
Standard Human Guide Technique

The individual with vision loss should:

- Hold just above the guide's elbow with four fingers on one side and the thumb on the other.
- Maintain a comfortable bend at his/her elbow.
- Walk ½-step behind and to the side of the guide.

The guide should:

- Greet the individual by name, communicate who he/she is, where his/her arm is, where they are going together.
- Keep arm bent at the elbow or straight by his/her side.
- Continue to describe the environment while traveling.



The Human Guide technique is helpful to people with vision loss because it provides:

- Safety
- Control
- Non-Verbal Communication
- Information

Let's Walk Together (continued)

Variations of Human Guide Technique

Physical, cognitive, and/or sensory challenges may affect someone's ability to use a standard human guide technique. Variations are influenced by:

- Individual needs
- Travel environments
- The height of the guide/individual
- Use of equipment for balance support

Grip Variations

Sometimes it can be too challenging to grasp the arm of the guide.

- An individual may rest his/her hand, wrist, or forearm on the bend of the guide's arm.
- The guide must slow the walking pace and reposition the individual's hand for contact and safety.



It may be too challenging to maintain thumb and finger separation to hold the guide's arm.

- An individual is able to hold with fingers and thumb together.
- The guide must slow the walking pace to maintain safety.



Height Differences



When the guide is much taller:

- An individual can grasp the guide's wrist so he/she maintains a comfortable bend at the elbow.
- The guide's lower arm, wrist, and hand must remain close to the body.



If the guide is much shorter:

- An individual can grip at the top of the guide's upper arm to maintain a comfortable bend at the elbow.
- The guide's lower arm, wrist, and hand remains close to the body.

Let's Walk Together (continued)

Inconsistent Grips

When guiding an individual who has an inconsistent grip:

- Be prepared to stop and make sure that individual stays safe.
- Reposition the person's hand or arm as necessary while encouraging him/her to continue walking.



Equipment Use

Gait belts or walkers are used to assist balance and sometimes these devices can put the person in the lead or a half step ahead of the guide.



Incorporating use of the human guide grasp, whenever possible, when using equipment is helpful and facilitates person-to-person contact.



The guide assumes responsibility for the individual's safety while being mindful that his/her body is not in the lead and does not offer forward protection.

Specialized Training and Instruction

To find a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist* who can provide training on additional safety and travel techniques, please contact your local or state agency that offers services to individuals with vision impairment or blindness.

* **Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS):** provides instruction to individuals with visual impairment in the use of their remaining senses to determine their position within the environment and in techniques for safe movement from one place to another.

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The video was made possible through collaboration of Shriver Clinical Services, The Carroll Center for the Blind, Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, and Emerson College

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