

# Accessible Customer Service for Emergency Responders

## An Emergency Management Ontario E-Learning Utility

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### Tips for Interacting with a Person with Vision Loss

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#### Approach and Introduction

- Announce your presence and identify yourself. The person may not immediately know you are a first responder.

#### Communication

- Describe the actions to be taken.
- Provide advance warning of upcoming stairs, curbs, major obstacles, or changes in direction.
- Use words such as left, right or forward when providing orientation to a space rather than saying “over there” or pointing to a place.
- You may need to communicate written information orally.
- If you must leave a person with vision loss, let them know where they are, how long you’ll be gone for and if you or someone else will be returning. Orient the person to their surroundings.

#### Physical contact

- To guide the person, offer them your arm instead of taking theirs and walk at their pace. Keep half a step ahead of them.
- Do not grab or attempt to guide a person without asking first.
- The person may have a preference as to whether s/he holds your left or right arm; either way is fine -- usually s/he will take the lead and indicate which side s/he prefers.

#### Environment/Surroundings

- Watch for overhangs or protrusions the person could walk into.
- Remember that the person and his or her service animal should always be transported together.