

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES: INTERACTING WITH PERSONS WHO ARE DEAFBLIND

Individuals who are deafblind employ different kinds of communication techniques and apply unique strategies/technology to accommodate individual communication preferences for different situations. There is no one way to establish effective communication with an individual who is deafblind. The following information provides considerations for culturally-affirmative interactions.

General Considerations

- ✓ Preferred methods for communication are individually determined.
- ✓ It is not necessary to physically support a deafblind person who is entering a car or train or staircase. Generally, the individual would prefer guiding their hand to the door-knob or stair rail for self-guidance. A person who is deafblind does not need help to be seated; but generally prefers guiding one of their hands to the back of the chair so they can judge their position to the chair.
- ✓ Appropriately modeled behavior toward a person who is deafblind will not only affect their feeling of well-being, but may be important in educating and sensitizing family, friends or anyone else who is in their presence.
- ✓ Treat a person who is deafblind as you would treat anyone else. Always be natural – never patronizing in your words and your actions.
- ✓ A person who is deafblind may prefer to use his or her smartphone to communicate in a written language; this is generally due to accessibility features programmed by the user.

Things to Do and Avoid

- ✓ Gently touching the top of the person's arm is a common way of attracting their attention without startling them; make sure you have the person's attention before trying to communicate with them.
- ✓ Address a person who is deafblind directly, even when communicating through an interpreter. Begin by identifying who is communicating. Speak or sign clearly, and a little slower. If there is a need to clarify, repeat phrases or re-phrase the sentence in a way that may be more readily understood.
- ✓ Let the person who is deafblind know who you are when you enter or leave the room.
- ✓ Offer your arm when walking with a person who is deafblind. Do not push him or her ahead of you; let them hold your arm, just below the elbow. Some may prefer to place their hand on your shoulder; this alternate method is often used by tall persons.
- ✓ Describe things that are happening – or are about to happen - around you when you are with a person who is deafblind.
- ✓ Check that you are in the best position to communicate; adapt the conditions to suit the person. Avoid noisy places or brightly lit backgrounds including attire that makes it difficult to view the communicator.

Basic Information Regarding Etiquette for Interaction Retrieved from

<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/cbvi/faq/etiquette/deafblind/> on 11/14/2017

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