



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Working with Older Adults with Vision Loss

Vision loss is not a typical part of aging. However, aging can increase the risk of developing conditions that cause vision loss, including glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy.

If your organization works with older adults, it's likely you may interact with an older adult experiencing vision loss. The following are general tips and best practices to follow when helping an older adult who may have vision loss.

General Etiquette

- Introduce yourself when you enter or leave a room and be sure to mention your title, position, function, etc. They may not be able to see your face or recognize your voice.
- Always speak directly to the person with vision loss, even if they have a friend or family member with them.
- If you are giving something to the person, tell them what it is and ask where you should place it. They may want you to leave it in a specific spot.

Safety

- Never leave a door partially open. It should be either fully open or closed. Drawers and cabinet doors should always be closed.
- Do not move objects or furniture without telling the person what you are doing. They may have preferences about the appropriate placement of their belongings.
- If you are accompanying the person somewhere, describe the surroundings and any obstacles in their path. Be sure to mention steps and curbs, along with whether they go up or down.
- If you are going to guide a person, ask them if they want to take your arm. It may be easier and safer.

Stop at the edge of steps
before moving forward.
Always have them use
handrails if available.





Guidance

- When describing the location of something, do not point or say “over there.” Be specific. For example, say “to your left,” “to your right” or “in front of you.”
- If you are going to help a person seat themselves, place one of their hands on the back or arm of the chair. They should be able to seat themselves from there.

Other Support

- If you need to check their temperature, blood pressure, glucose level or conduct any other procedure, explain it clearly. Ask if they have any questions before you begin.
- If you need the person to complete a form or other paperwork, describe it, offer to read it aloud and fill it out for them. If you are gathering personal information, offer to move to a private area. If needed, show them where to sign.

Resources

There are several state programs that provide services to older adults with vision loss.

- **Older Individuals who are Blind Program** serves people age 55 and older with significant visual impairment. The program provides assistance with independent living skills, technology and support services.
- **Area agencies on aging (AAAs)** are regional organizations across the state serving people age 60 and older and their family caregivers. They can help with benefits counseling and assistance, care coordination, caregiver support services, nutrition assistance, and in-home support services. AAAs can also help connect older adults and caregivers with other services in their community.
- **Aging and disability resource centers**, often co-located with AAAs, provide information and referral assistance to older adults, people with disabilities and family caregivers.
- **The Blind Education, Screening and Treatment (BEST) Program** helps people age 18 and over without vision insurance access prevention resources and medically urgent treatment for eye medical conditions.
- **The Talking Book Program** provides a free library service with access to thousands of books and other materials in digital audio, braille and large print for people who have a qualifying visual, physical or reading disability. The program also offers information about disabilities and disability related services through the Disability Information and Referral Center.