

## Slide 1

### The Implications of Vision Loss in a Sighted World

Marybeth Cleveland, Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist

## Slide 2

Let's talk about:

- Some common misconceptions about blindness
- How to provide good support and service to individuals with vision loss
- The implications of different types of vision loss
- How someone navigates in a sighted world with vision loss

## Slide 3

### Common Misconception

People who are blind cannot be independent or have a job.

## Slide 4

### Implications

- People with vision loss or their families sometimes feel they cannot live on their own or do a certain job if they are blind
- People sometimes quit their jobs or move in with a family member because they feel they cannot be successful

What can you do?

- Fight stereotypes about occupation
- Share examples of others who are successful but also have a vision disability

## Slide 5

Some examples of famous people (besides famous singers such as Andrea Bocelli and Stevie Wonder) include:

- Christine Hà-a successful chef who won Master Chef
- Bradford and Bryan Manning formed their own apparel business: Two Blind Brothers  
<https://twoblindbrothers.com/>
- Bill Irwin-Mr. Irwin became the first blind man to traverse the Appalachian Trail, which stretches more than 2,100 miles, from Georgia to Maine. He became a marriage and family counselor after losing sight
- Erik Weihenmayer climbed Mount Everest and is a writer and speaker
  - No Barriers: A Blind Man's Journey.
  - Also in the movie Blindsight helping blind Tibetan children who were also trekking in the Himalayas.
- Chris Downey-architect featured on 60 minutes

## Slide 6

### Common Misconception

People who are blind hear better than the people who are sighted

## Slide 7

### Implications

- Misunderstandings about the fact that hearing is a learned skill - how to use it, how to rely on it, how to sound localize in a world where other people are getting the same information in a visual manner.

What can you do?

- Don't assume your friend or family member can identify your voice, especially in a crowded situation: It is helpful if you always introduce yourself
- DO use the person's name when addressing them. This lets them know you are speaking to them, and not someone else in the room.
- DO have important discussions in a quiet room with minimal sound distractions (telephones, printers, other conversations) Information can be missed if there are sound distractions.
- DO provide sound clues that can help with orientation; Provide a specific sound as an orientation clue "My office is just past the bathroom"
- DO give a clear word picture when describing things to an individual with vision loss. Include details such as color, texture, shape and landmarks.

## Slide 8

### Common Misconception

All people who are blind use a white cane and read Braille

## Slide 9

- According to NFB, fewer than 10% of people that are blind read Braille.
- According to Perkins School for the Blind, Only an estimated 2 to 8 percent use a cane. The rest rely on their useable vision, a guide dog or a sighted guide."

What can you do?

- Ask the person the best way to receive communication (email, braille, large print, audio format)
- Learn the various tools and proper terms in mobility (human guide, white cane/long cane, dog guide)
- Know how to Be a good human guide

## Slide 10

Show and Tell

## Slide 11

Of course, DORS offers training in all of these areas.

Other resources include:

- American Council of the Blind: <https://www.acb.org/blind-low-vision-resources>
- Hadley school for the Blind <https://hadley.edu/>
- National Federation of the Blind: <https://nfb.org>

## Slide 12

Graphic: street sign that says detour

## Slide 13

How to be a good human guide

1. Ask first
2. Make contact
3. Guide around obstacles
4. Anchor when done
5. State you are leaving

Graphic: A picture of a woman guiding another woman and her guide dog

## Slide 14

If you see a person who is blind and who seems to be in need of assistance:

- DO introduce yourself or say hello and ask the person if he needs assistance.
- DO provide assistance if it is requested.

- DO respect the wishes of the person who is blind.
- DON'T insist upon trying to help if your offer of assistance is declined.

## Slide 15

### Additional tips on being a good human guide.

If you are asked to guide a person who is blind:

- DO allow the person to hold your arm and follow as you walk.
- DO move your guiding arm behind your back when approaching a narrow space so the person you are guiding can step behind you and follow single-file.
- DO hesitate briefly at a curb or at the beginning of a flight of stairs.
- DO tell the person whether the steps go up or down.
- DO allow the person to find the handrail and locate the edge of the first step before proceeding.
- DO provide relevant verbal information while walking (We will need to pass the crowd of people standing in the hallway)
- DON'T grab the person you are guiding by the hand, arm, shoulder and try to steer him/her.
- DON'T grab the person's cane or the handle of a dog guide's harness.

## Slide 16

### Providing directions, instead of being a guide:

If a person who is blind asks you for directions:

- DO use specifics such as "turn left," or "on your right." Measurements are also helpful such as walk forward five feet.
- DON'T point and say, "Go that way," or, "It's over there."

## Slide 17

Graphic: a street sign depicting a u turn; an arrow shaped in an upside down print letter U

## Slide 18

### Common Misconception

The way a person sees remains the same throughout the day

## Slide 19

### The Implications.

Misunderstanding that certain factors can change how well a person sees:

- The time of day
- Different Lighting
- Fatigue or eye strain

What can you do?

- Ask about best type of lighting and try to accommodate
- Allow and encourage accommodations such as a visor, task lighting
- Offer to be a guide if needed

## Slide 20

### Common Misconception

All people who are blind see blackness

## Slide 21

### Different Types of Vision Loss.

Approximately 85% of those considered legally blind have some vision.

What is Legal blindness?

- Visual acuity is 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction, or
- Visual field is restricted to 20° or less

Aira vision sim app simulates various types of visual disabilities while using the phone's camera.

## Slide 22

So what are some different types of vision loss?

## Slide 23

What do you see? Let's describe this photo.

Picture: a photo of a courtyard; people stand around canopies.

## Slide 24

If someone had an overall reduced visual acuity such as myopia or cataracts, how would this scene look?

The image might be blurry or faded.

## Slide 25

Overall Acuity Loss.

Image: A faded unfocused photo. The bottom part of the frame shows a white sand color and a large reddish rectangle. A smaller black rectangle is found to the left of the reddish rectangle. Dark vertical lines are found scattered throughout the photo, some short and some tall. A blurry white triangle is located on the left and one on the right. (Source: FHWA)

## Slide 26

What are the implications of someone with overall acuity loss?

- Steps/curbs are more difficult to see because they blend in.
- It might be difficult to locate a friend in a crowd, because faces are unclear and details are missing.
- If this person were asked to read a sign, it might be difficult, unless it was big and had bold lettering or they were close enough.

## Slide 27

Navigating in a sighted world.

Using all senses, visual, auditory and tactile information:

- Visual contrast to maximize vision: Yellow tape for steps at home
- Detectable warning strips at the edge of a street or driveway provide visual and tactile information
- In a crowd, sighted family/friends can wear bright color shirt, give verbal info
- a human guide, a white cane or guide dog
- Use technology:
  - orcam can identify familiar faces and read a sign. Picture of an orcam sitting on an open book
  - take a picture of the sign and enlarge it on the phone

## Slide 28

What would someone with peripheral vision loss see?

If the peripheral vision is affected, the lower, upper and side fields of view are decreased

## Slide 29

### Peripheral Vision Loss.

Image: a dark grey opaque rectangle with an abstract shape opening in the middle. Through the opening are people gathering in the distance. A small white and blue tent canopy is in the distance. (Source: FHWA)

## Slide 30

### What are the implications of someone with “tunnel vision” such as glaucoma?

- Steps/curbs are more difficult to see and are a safety hazard
- This person might walk with their head down looking for curbs
- It can be difficult to locate someone in a crowd, because the “big picture” is not available
- Locating a sign to read might be difficult
- Or fill out a form-they may leave blanks because they cannot see the whole form at one time
- It can feel like individual puzzle pieces
- This type of vision loss often goes hand in hand with someone who cannot see well at night because of the part of the eye that is affected.

## Slide 31

### Navigating a sighted world

- Using a human guide, white cane or guide dog
- Use Technology:
  - Aira and Be My Eyes are apps that can provide a sighted person to help fill out a form, locate and read a sign, help with shopping
- Accessible Pedestrian Signals are helpful to let the person know in an audible/tactile way it is time to cross the street

## Slide 32

Picture: an accessible pedestrian signal crosswalk button

## Slide 33

### What are the implications of someone with central field loss, such as Macular Degeneration?

Because the macula (center and sharpest part of vision) is affected, the image might be lost or blurry.

## Slide 34

### Central Vision Loss.

Image: A blur of colors including white, reddish brown, black, and a sand color. The photo has a dark circular obstruction in the center. (Source: FHWA)

## Slide 35

### What are the implications of someone with “central vision loss” such as macular degeneration?

- Steps/curbs are more difficult because depth perception can be compromised.
- It can be difficult to identify friends or family because faces cannot be easily distinguished.
- It is difficult to read print because the “sharpness” part of the vision is affected. They use peripheral vision which is no better than 20/200.
- This type of vision loss often goes hand in hand with someone who has problems with glare.

## Slide 36

### Navigating a sighted world.

- Use a human guide, white cane or guide dog

- Use an electronic aid such as a CCTV or Ruby.
- Use eccentric viewing, using peripheral vision
- “Read books” by using audio books
- Use “smart” technology such as Siri and Alexa to search the web, get the time, even turn on the lights or unlock the door

Photo: Woman using a CCTV to read enlarged text.

## Slide 37

Night Blindness.

Image: A dark blur with bright orange colored out of focus circles.

## Slide 38

What are the implications of someone with “night blindness?”

- Vision when navigating during the day might feel safe, but if someone stays out too long after sunset, their safety is compromised.
- Family and friends do not realize the person’s vision is diminished at night or in dim light.
- People who date or work in dim settings feel uncomfortable and limit their activities.

## Slide 39

Navigating a sighted world:

- Use a human guide, white cane or guide dog
- Tell friends and family about the varied vision
- Learn to use tactile, auditory, and olfactory clues in the environment
  - A floor mat found near an exit
  - The bathroom in a restaurant can be found near the noisy kitchen
  - A CVS and grocery store often have an automatic door which makes a sound or makes the sound change
  - one can always find a French fry smelling McDonalds or coffee smelling Starbucks

## Slide 40

Consider:

- Pay attention to the accommodations people use
- Learn how you can provide good support
- Advocate for improvements in accessibility in the sighted world
  - Advocate to your own eye specialist about services DORS provides. Make sure they know that there are services for people who have vision loss.
- Include your audience, if you are doing a presentation:
  - Offer it ahead, so anyone using a screen reader or CCTV can preview the information ahead of the presentation
  - Read your slides and describe photos
  - Use alt text to provide description to photos
- Know: Being blind doesn’t have to be a mystery, a person who is blind simply relies on non-visual information to gain the same information a sighted person does.

## Slide 41

Even without sight there is still vision

Picture: Even without sight there is still vision, written in print and Braille.

## Slide 42

Picture: A sign with “Thank You” written in print