

How to support passengers who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision

Guide for transit operators



CNIB

Understanding blindness

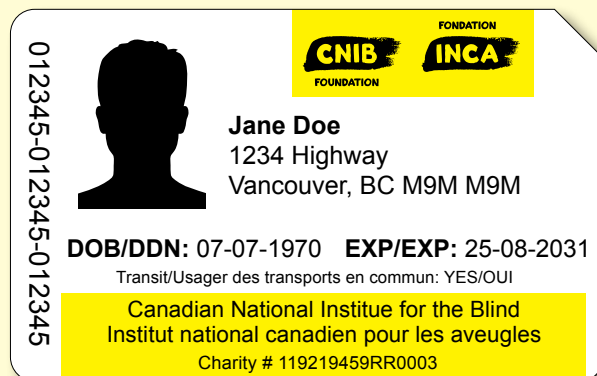
- Lack of awareness about the realities of life with blindness is the underlying barrier that creates most of the issues for people who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision.
- Blindness is a spectrum, not every passenger who is blind, Deafblind, or has low vision will require the same support.
- A white cane is a navigation and identification aid for people who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision.
- Not everyone who is blind, Deafblind, or has low vision will use or need a white cane or guide dog.
- Never ask someone personal questions about their disability or mobility aid.

Guide dogs

- Guide dogs are not pets. They are among the most highly trained dogs in the world, performing tasks that require intensive standardized training.
- Denying access to a guide dog team is against the law in all of Canada's provinces and territories. Penalties under human rights legislation range from \$100 to \$10,000.
- In situations where competing rights are an issue (such as allergies), a compromise needs to be made to maintain the rights of everyone involved.
- Guide dogs are allowed access to any premises the public would normally have access to. It's the law.
- You cannot deny service to riders with guide dogs because of a fear of animals. Fear of animals is not considered a protected ground under Canadian human rights legislation.
- Never pet, talk to, or distract a guide dog in a harness. This can jeopardize the guide dog's training and the safety of both the guide dog and handler.

The CNIB card

- The CNIB card is a photo identification card issued by CNIB that confirms that the individual named on the card meets the requirements for legal blindness.
- Benefits associated with the CNIB card vary by region and may include free or discounted transit services.
- Not everyone who is blind, Deafblind, or has low vision will have a CNIB card.
- If someone presents a CNIB card to access transit benefits, it's not acceptable to question the cardholder's legitimacy, as long as the photo on the card matches their appearance.



Common barriers while using public transit and what you can do to help

Passengers who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision may experience barriers while accessing public transit services. While many barriers can affect the accessibility of public transit, you can help bridge this gap.

Barrier: Access to information

How you can help

- Make sure internal and external stop announcements are on and audible. If the system isn't working, make verbal stop announcements until the issue is resolved.
- Communicate when you cannot make a scheduled stop due to a detour or safety reason, notifying passengers of the reason and the location of an alternate stop.





Barrier: Boarding and disembarking

How you can help

- Try to get as close as you can to the curb to make it safer for passengers to get on or off of the vehicle.
- If there are multiple vehicles queued at a stop, ensure you pull up to the front of the line so that passengers know their vehicle has arrived and do not risk missing their ride.
- Assist passengers by helping them locate the fare box or tap card location, either verbally or physically.
- Help keep aisles clear by making sure items like shopping carts and strollers aren't blocking the way.
- It's okay to offer help. Before offering your assistance, you should always ask if it's needed; never assume.
 - If assistance is requested, ask how best to help.
- Always speak directly to the person, not their companion, interpreter, or guide dog.
- Be clear and descriptive when giving directions.
 - For example: "The door is on your right, about 10 feet down the walkway."
- Let passengers know if priority seating is available when they board.
- Always stop at designated stops - even if no one signals, someone might still be waiting to get on or off.
- If a passenger is waiting at the door to board or disembark, automatically open the door for them as they might not be able to locate or operate a button or push bar easily.
- If you are unable to pull up close to a stop, or there are hazards such as construction or a snowbank, inform passengers and be prepared to provide additional assistance if needed.

Barrier: Navigating unfamiliar, unsafe or busy areas

How you can help

- Many people who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision feel comfortable navigating all kinds of places independently. But there are still times when being guided by someone can be helpful.
- Don't hesitate to offer to guide someone who is blind. They'll usually appreciate the gesture.
- Never assume someone needs or wants to be guided. Respect their reply if they decline your offer.
- If someone wants to be guided, they'll usually take your arm just above the elbow, placing their fingers on the inside of your arm and their thumb on the outside. Their grip will typically be firm enough to maintain contact with you but relaxed enough to be comfortable. Some people might prefer to hold your arm more tightly or even place their arm through yours, resting their hand on top of your forearm for extra stability.
- When approaching a narrow space, move your guiding arm behind you, so that your arm is now positioned diagonally behind your back. This signals to the person you're guiding that you're entering a narrower space, prompting them to walk directly behind you in single file.
- Never take the person's arm or hand or try to push or pull them along. Not only is this considered rude, but it's less effective in trying to guide someone.





Barrier: Guide dog refusal

How you can help

- Don't deny service to riders with guide dogs. Drivers have a legal obligation to provide service to riders with guide dogs.
- If you can't provide service to a rider with a guide dog, don't just drive away without informing them. Let the rider know you've arranged another ride or will wait until the next driver arrives.
- Don't ask for proof that a dog is a guide dog, unless it's behaving inappropriately. It's best practice to assume the dog is a qualified guide dog with an important job to do if it is wearing a harness with a handle.



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