

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

Guide for taxi and rideshare drivers



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.
- If your company uses an app, passengers who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision can use accessibility software on their smartphone that magnifies the screen or reads out information, provided the app is designed with the correct compatibility.

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. This may mean waiting with the person until a new taxi/rideshare arrives for them.
- 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.



Common barriers while using taxis and rideshares and what you can do to help

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

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.



Continued from page 4: Navigating unfamiliar, unsafe or busy areas

- 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: Pickup and drop off, especially in busy areas

How you can help

- Your passenger may not be able to see you pull up. Avoid pulling up on the opposite side of the street from your passenger, as they may not be able to get across to you safely. Pull up on the same side of the street as close to their location as possible.
- Try to pull-in as close as you can to the location/curb to make it safer for passengers to get in or out of the vehicle.
- Identify yourself and the passenger's name.
 - "Hi, (passenger name), I'm (driver name) from (taxi/rideshare company name)."
- Always speak directly to the person, not their companion, interpreter, or guide dog.
- 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.



Continued from page 5: **Pickup and drop off, especially in busy areas**

- Never grab, drag or pull someone, their white cane, or their guide dog. It's disrespectful, disorienting and dangerous.
 - Instead of taking someone by the arm, try asking, "Would you like some assistance?" and then, "How can I best assist you?"
- Describe the vehicle orientation and/or handle location. Remember that the person you are speaking to may not be able to see pointing, gestures, or body language.
- Most people who are blind, Deafblind, or have low vision can get into a car on their own if given proper cues and information. If guiding someone to the car door, place the hand of your guiding arm on the door handle to allow the person to follow down your arm and locate the handle. Then guide their other hand to the roof above the top corner of the door so that they don't bump their head.
- Upon arrival, provide your passenger with a verbal description of their location.
- Be clear and descriptive when giving directions.
 - For example: "The restaurant is on your right, about 10 feet down the sidewalk."
- If you are unable to pull up close to the desired drop-off location, let the passenger know and be prepared to provide additional assistance if needed.





Barrier: The payment process

How you can help

- Communicate clearly and respectfully throughout the payment process.
- Upon arrival at the destination, state the fare amount and ask how you can best assist with payment.
- For cash payments, always count aloud the cash provided by the passenger and the change you're returning to them.
- For credit or debit card payments, describe the payment terminal, including button locations and screen prompts.
- Be patient - many payment machines lack accessibility features. Your passenger might ask for your assistance if they can't navigate the payment terminal.
- When purchasing new payment terminals, select one that includes built-in accessibility features.

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.



1-800-563-2642

info@cnib.ca

Charitable registration #119219459 RR0003

CNIB