

Working with Persons who have Vision Loss

"Vision loss" is an inclusive term that covers all people who are blind, legally blind or partially sighted. Provided below are tips to increase accessibility and inclusion of people with vision loss in work and learning environments.

Communication

- Speak directly to the person, not through another person
- State your name each time before speaking
- Speak clearly without increasing your tone of voice
- Give detailed directions. Instead of saying, "the washroom is over there," say, "the washroom is to your immediate left, two feet away"
- Always ask permission before interacting with a person's guide dog

Meeting or Group Discussion

- Never leave a person who is blind in an open area. Before leaving, ask if you may guide them to the side of a room or to a chair or other landmark
- When you leave the presence of someone with vision loss either quietly inform the person that you are leaving or say "It was nice speaking with you, I'm leaving now." This prevents the person who is blind or visually impaired from speaking to an empty chair
- State your name each time before speaking
- When facilitating a meeting refer to other participants by name, instead of pointing to the participants
- Discourage side conversations. This can be a distraction for persons with vision loss

Presentation

- Presenters should enquire into accommodation needs prior to presenting
- Inform participants that handouts are available in alternate formats upon request
- Presenters should use descriptive words while describing on images, videos or animated images that are on the presentation slides or presentation props. This allow participants with vision loss to understand the information that is shared
- Presenters should use a microphone whenever possible. When using a microphone ensure the mic is close to your mouth and that your voice is amplified

Colour and contrast in your presentation materials

People with vision loss have difficulty in perceiving or distinguishing between colours. When choosing a color for your presentation, the best color contrasts are:

- White or grey text on black background
- Black or grey text on white background
- Crimson or red-orange on white background

Presentation Materials

- Have extra reading materials such as PowerPoint notes, meeting agenda and minutes in alternate formats such as braille, Microsoft word
- Avoid using animations texts and images
- Use five to six bullet points per slide
- The space between bullet points should be 1.5 to facilitate easier reading
- Text size for large print documents should be at least 18 to 20 point in bold
- Text size for PowerPoint presentations should be between 14 to 18 point
- Use left justification for your texts. Full justification makes reading more difficult because it creates extra space between words
- Avoid the use of multiple font styles and colors
- Use Sans Serif font types such as Tahoma, Arial and Verdana because they are the best fonts for the screen reader to read the text out loud

References:

1. Best Practices and Guidelines for Large Print Documents. (2016, July 18). Retrieved December 05, 2017, from <http://acb.org/large-print-guidelines>
2. Accessibility and Usability at Penn State. Color and Contrasts on Web Pages. (2015). Retrieved December 05, 2017, from <http://accessibility.psu.edu/color/contrasthtml/>
3. Sight Loss Etiquette 101, CNIB. Retrieved December 05, 2017 <http://www.cnib.ca/en/living/independent-living/friends-family/Pages/etiquette-0108.aspx>
4. Strategies for Working with People who have Disabilities. Retrieved December 05, 2017 <http://www.washington.edu/doit/strategies-working-people-who-have-disabilities>