

ABOUT VISION LOSS

Vision loss or low vision is a reduction in vision that can't be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses and it reduces a person's ability to function at certain or all tasks. It includes:

- inability to see images clearly and distinctly;
- loss of visual field;
- inability to detect small changes in brightness;
- color blindness; and
- sensitivity to light.³

Blindness means no vision or vision that, even with correcting glasses, is so limited that it prevents the performance of ordinary activities. According to the 2008 American Community Survey, approximately 6.8 million individuals in the U.S., or 2.3% of the U.S. population, have a visual disability⁴. In Delaware, 22,600 individuals (2.6% of all Delawareans) have a visual disability.

Caring for people with vision loss

Ask persons with vision loss what kinds of accommodations they will need when scheduling an appointment.

Every person with a visual impairment has a different level of sight.

Good lighting is essential. Avoid any type of glare that can disturb people's vision.

Make alternate formats of your practice's printed materials available such as brochures and care instructions. Alternate formats may include large print, Braille or audio versions.

Arrange to have intake forms available either online for improved accessibility and for use with screen readers or in large print format.

³ U.S. Legal. Retrieved from www.definitions.uslegal.com

⁴ Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2010, March 17). Disability Statistics from the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC). Retrieved from www.disabilitystatistics.org

⁵ Partially excerpted from Disability Etiquette, Tips On Interacting With People With Disabilities, United Spinal Association (2008). New York.



Introduce yourself to a patient with vision loss upon entering the room. If you leave the room, inform the person first. If leaving the person in the room, be sure to orient them to the layout of the room and make sure they are aware of landmarks - tables, doors, or equipment.

Explain any procedure or treatment before you execute it so the person knows what to expect.

If the person has a guide dog, walk on the opposite side of the dog. Do not touch the dog, as the dog is working and needs to concentrate on his/her task.

If the person uses a cane, do not touch the cane. The cane is considered part of the individual's personal space.

If the person needs to be guided, offer your arm but don't take his/her arm. The person may need his/her arms for balance.⁵

Resources

Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired
Biggs Building
1901 North DuPont Highway
New Castle, DE 19720
302-255-9800 Phone
302-255-9854 TDD
<http://www.dhss.delaware.gov/dvi/>

Delaware Association for the Blind
800 West Street
Wilmington, DE19801
302-655-2111 Phone
888-777-3925 Toll Free
302-654-1376 Peer Support
302-655-1442 Fax
<http://www.dabdel.org>

National Federation for the Blind
200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-659-9314 Phone
410-685-5653 Fax
<http://www.nfb.org>

American Optometric Association
1505 Prince Street, Suite 300
Alexandria, VA 22314
800-365-2219 Toll Free
<http://www.aoa.org>

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative
Locations in New Castle, Kent and Sussex
Counties
800-870-3284 Toll Free (Delaware only)
302-651-6790 Phone
302-651-6794 TDD
302-651-6793 Fax
<http://www.dati.org>