



## How to welcome guests with visual impairments to your hotel

The majority of people with disabilities is a group referred to as the visually impaired. Add the number of senior citizens as well and you know that it is an not-too-be-missed issue when you make decisions on signage, menus, hotel maps, use of public spaces and naturally the (bath) rooms in your hotel.

People with lower vision, or people who are blind mostly use a cane and/or an assistance dog to help them find their way. (See our website for How to welcome assistance dogs). In hotels it is important they can find their way easily, they will be there for a first time and need to rely on their orientation. All help is welcome here. Hotels can do many things to improve and offer services for their guests who are visually impaired.

### At Check-In

- Before you act, tell what you are about to do
- Ask what your guest's needs are and explain what services you can offer
- Ask directly, do not expect answers from the guest's company (partner, family, friend)
- Do not explain where the hotel facilities are, but take the guest there. Blind or visually impaired people need to remember everything. It is very helpful – they most likely are at your hotel for the first time – to give them a tour (restaurant, pool, terrace, shop)
- Do not pet the assistance dog, because he is at work
- Do explain the emergency route, and take your guest there after check-in.

### Food and Beverage

- Offer a table near the buffet. Suggestion: reserve the table
- Offer assistance, even if there is an assistance dog, or company
- When meals are served, tell guests that you are at the table, and what you are serving. Also tell what you are doing (Here is your glass, and this is your

- plate and cutlery)
- Have (several copies of) your menu's available in large font and in braille, in the restaurant, the bar and the lobby
- Offer a bowl of fresh water when they have four paws company.

## In the room

Most hotel guests who are visually impaired can use any room. We highly recommend though to offer some rooms specially designed for people who have low or no vision. To offer the wheelchair accessible room is not the best choice, since all lowered furniture and facilities will be difficult to find or use. The most important things to know:

- It is important to have indirect lighting, to be able to use and regulate it
- Curtains, and how to use it (to control day light influence)
- High contrast in use of colors in the room and in the bathroom. E.g. An all white bathroom is very difficult to use
- No sharp objects or furniture. Suggestion: use soft and/or round materials
- Display the coffee and tea set on the desk (not in a closet)
- Offer a braille floor plan
- Offer a braille emergency plan
- The room number clearly marked (on the door or the in the hall way in braille and high contrast colors, big size font)

## In the pool, gym or other area

Most important service to blind people or people with lower vision is to have no obstacles near doorways, in hall ways and near the stairs or elevators.

- Stair bannisters should be marked at the beginning and the end so people can feel it. Stairs – if possible – marked on every step
- In the elevator the menu on the display is recommended to have braille or a voice indication system
- All doors and windows are marked at a preferred height of 150 cm (59 inches)  
Signage throughout the hotel is in contrast colors
- Tactile marking outside on the pavement (ask local government on rules and regulation)
- In public toilets contrasting colors are highly recommended. Walls versus sink, toilet versus floor, soap dispenser versus wall, etc.
- Door sign and door knob or handle clearly marked

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