



SHELTER GUIDE FOR HOSTING INDIVIDUALS WITH ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

Many disabilities are not visible or immediately clear. Ask them what they need, and work with them to find a reasonable accommodation.

People with Limited or No English Proficiency

- Use language cards to determine the language
- Know the process for call-in language interpretation
- When using an interpreter, keep eye contact with person who you are talking to, not interpreter

People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

- Speak slowly and clearly facing the individual
- Offer paper and pencil for written communication
- Make all info given orally available in writing as well
- May need a sign language interpreter

People with Disabilities that Affect Speech

- Pay attention and be patient
- Tell them what you heard and ask for clarification as needed
- Offer paper and pencil
- Be open to using assistive speech technologies

Pregnant Women

- Some pregnant women may not need help; ask them what they need
- Make sure they have plenty of water
- Prioritize seating
- Make sure they know location of all restrooms



People with Cognitive Impairments

- Need extra time to process and respond
- Be patient, employ teamwork
- May lack social norms
- Escort them to a quieter environment if needed
- If without a caregiver, consult with shelter director

People with Mental Health Conditions

- May be confused or exhibit unusual behavior
- Remain calm, offer reassurance
- If agitated or delusional, bring in behavioral health
- Call security if there is a risk of danger

People with Mobility Impairments

- Set up furniture with at least 3' of space around
- Tell them where to find accessible facilities
- Offer assistance, let them say what they need
- Make sure all paths are clear and do not move someone's mobility device

People with Service Animals

- Service animals must be under control of handler at all times
- Permitted anywhere in facility
- Separate those with allergies/asthma from animal
- Notify shelter director if not properly trained



People Who are Blind or Have Low Vision

- Introduce yourself and explain the surroundings
- Avoid phrases like “over there”
- Talk to them in a regular tone and do not shout-- they are not deaf
- Warn them of objects that they might need to know about
- Ask if they need help and do not touch them unless they ask. Not everyone needs help, and that’s okay
- Make sure large print communications are available, and that printed information is presented verbally if it cannot be read
- Assign the person(s) to a location that is easily accessible, such as on the fringe of sleeping stations

People Who are Deafblind

- Ask the person what his or her preferred method of communication is
- They may want to communicate on a phone or iPad. If they are pointing and using gestures, be attentive to this
- Though they might, do not assume that they can see or hear you
- The person may need an in-person sign language interpreter (video remote interpreting will not work)
- Have braille communications available, if possible
- If alone, consult the shelter director

