



SHELTER GUIDE FOR HOSTING INDIVIDUALS WITH ACCESS AND FUNCTIONAL NEEDS

Recognize that people with disabilities are diverse. Many disabilities are not visible or immediately clear. Ask them what they need, and work with them to find a reasonable accommodation. Most individuals with access and functional needs can be accommodated in a general population shelter with support.

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 the interpreter

People Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

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

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 People

- Some pregnant people 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

(Alzheimer's, dementia, autism, etc.)

- May 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 shelter director

People with Mental Health Conditions

(depression, anxiety, bipolar, PTSD, etc.)

- 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 all 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

- Must control animal at all times
- Animals permitted anywhere in facility when accompanied by handler
- 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 person(s) to a location that is easily accessible, such as on the fringe of the sleeping stations

People Who are Deafblind

- Ask the person what his or her preferred mode 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 person is alone, consult the shelter director

