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Making things easier....for People with Vision Loss

- 1. Pay attention to lighting levels, glare from windows, trouble hearing, feeling isolated or stress about transit – mobility. Do they feel safe or functional.**
- 2. Make sure your reception staff is aware, that when people miss signs, or seem confused about where to go, that they might not see well. Teach them to Welcome, them and ask how they can help?**
- 3. Most will not ask some questions, if they think it will be embarrassing. Like Where is the bathroom? Is there more than one? Where is the trash can? What do you look like?**
- 4. Assessing fatigue, the intensity of adapting, and others attitudes about their potential, may give you a clue of what priorities may be most pressing.**
- 5. Find the humor in the crazy things that happen...encourage them to share their embarrassing moments. Expect odd things to be funny.**
- 6. Give them advance notice when possible on appointment time or schedule changes, so that those transit services that require 1-2 week advance notice can be utilized efficiently. Remember the 80% rule, which means that even with the best planning and efficiency if is a scheduled ride, it will not always work. Whats the backup plan for a transportation glitch that is out of client's control? Though I don't expect no consequence, just make sure it fits. For example, if the client has to pay a missed appointment fee, can they talk to you during their time by phone?**
- 7. Provide electronic documents in Word or Excel, not PDF. Make sure your web page is accessible, with labeled graphics, links and buttons. Use headings and form fields. Ask them if they encounter problems.**
- 8. Ask ahead time about the size font that works, or if they prefer audio recordings or other formats. Check in with them about what is changing or is needed ongoing.**
- 9. Consider an old iPad with earbuds in your lobby to provide documents in any size or speech readily.**
- 10. Consider using the client's phone or other device to record sessions, as it can be hard to track the physical details and process abstract information at the same time.**
- 11. Figure out a way to know what time it is in session.**
- 12. Figure out a plan ahead of time for getting safely out of the office if they are emotional when session is done. It takes a huge amount of focus and memory recall to pay attention to canes, dogs or trying to navigate.**
- 13. Remember that often vision fluctuates with stress and is more impacting if in unknown environments.**

- 14. Work with them on outside perceptions of the are you blind enough dilemma. If they are getting injured, avoiding going out at night or starting to say mobility is too hard, its time to use a long white cane or guide dog. Agencies use different criteria. For example, if under 55 in Oregon you need to be legally blind by a eye doctor exam per SSA definition-not able to see any letters on the 20100 line or less than 20 degrees of field in the best eye with correction or expected to progress to that. Yet if over 55, if you can't read newspaper print, you qualify for training. In schools if you are more than 20/40 you get help. Remember that it is not uncommon for completely – totally blind people with good adaptive skills, to be told “you don't look blind”. And you are faking it! Functional does not = sight. Many people with blindness are independent travelers, workers and homemakers.**
- 15. If early in the discovery/struggles: Encourage them to reduce the use of vision, encourage them to switch to audio and tactile methods, even if they can “still” see some. Explore the resistance.**
- 16. Help them to call for training with Oregon Commission for the Blind, especially if currently or want to work or over 55. They will need to identify what things are hard for them, or what hobbies, and tasks that they are no longer doing. Expect excuses and justifications. Sometimes it helps to explore how they would manage if spouse/partner or whoever, is unable to be home.**
- 17. Often since they don't imagine any solution, they don't see a point in trying. Yet most everything can be done, though differently, with training and persistence.**
- 18. Help them look for a good low vision support group, that matches their stage of loss and age group/interests. There are national list serves, a large Reddit group, FB groups and national conferences. Many have training opportunities and allows them to share with others facing similar emotional challenges.**
- 19. A wealth of resources are available from American Foundation for the Blind www.afb.org or Blindskills www.blindskills.com or many others. Oregon Commission for the Blind <https://oregon.gov/blind> 1-971-673-1588**