



# For Welcoming People with Visual Impairments

## <<Foreword to Issuance of this Manual>>

With the advent of an aging society, **the creation of an environment that enables all people**, including seniors and people with disabilities – whose market segments are projected to grow in the future – **to enjoy traveling safely, securely and comfortably** is an important point in expanding the tourism industry in Okinawa. This manual was prepared to offer fundamentals for welcoming seniors and people with disabilities, in particular. We hope that you will use this manual when attending to seniors and people with disabilities in particular, which will **promote the creation of an environment in which all people can enjoy traveling with peace of mind.**

## 1. Four “Barriers”

It is said that **four “barriers”** exist in the lives of seniors or people with disabilities when they go out, travel, or engage in social activities. When considering how to welcome them, it is necessary to understand the presence of these “barriers” and remove obstacles.

- ❑ **Physical barriers:** Barriers caused physically in roads, buildings, homes, stations, etc.
- ❑ **Cultural and Information Barriers:** Barriers caused by the failure to provide information essential for daily life and transportation.
- ❑ **Institutional Barriers:** Barriers caused mainly by institutional restraints when people receive education, find employment, and lead self-reliant lives in their community.
- ❑ **Barriers in Consciousness:** Barriers caused by discrimination or prejudice against people with disabilities, or misunderstanding due to lack of understanding of them.

## 2. Attitude Toward and Key Points to Attending to Guests

- ❑ **Respect each person’s dignity.**  
Respecting the dignity of seniors and people with disabilities is the basis of attending to them. They do not need any special treatment. You should attend to them in the same way as you do with other people. Instead of talking to the companion or caregiver, communicate with seniors or people with disabilities directly.
- ❑ **Understand correctly and respond to necessary assistance.**  
Each person has different levels of mental and physical functions and disability, and need different support. Avoid being judgmental but ask them to fully understand what kind of support they need. Avoid forcing support on them, but it is important to talk to proactively and communicate with them, to understand their needs. Make sure to grasp what they need and respond appropriately.
- ❑ **Leave what they can do by themselves to them and avoid doing things you may not be capable of.**  
Even if people are old or have disabilities, they may not need all kinds of support. Respect their autonomous actions and watch over them when they do not need support. If you do not think that you can handle the situation on your own, avoid taking chances and ask people around you for cooperation.
- ❑ **Provide information on facilities and equipment.**  
People know the best the degree of their physical and mental conditions and disability, as well as necessary support. Whereas it is important to understand and respond to needs, it is also important to provide detailed information so that seniors and people with disabilities can make their own decisions.

If you do not know what to do when attending to people, talk to them by using two “magic words.”  
 \*When you first meet: **“Is there something I can help you with?”**  
 \* When you do not know what to do when attending them: **“How do you usually handle this?”**

## 3. Characteristics of People with Visual Impairments

### [Characteristics of the impairments]

- ◆ Not all people with visual impairment are completely without sight. Eyesight and the field of vision vary from person to person. (It is said that about 10% of people with visual impairments are completely blind.)  
Example) Blindness, amblyopia, narrowing of the visual field (Limited visibility), color blindness (Some colors look different from their true colors), glaucoma (Part of the field of vision is missing), cataract (Things appear blurry), etc.
- ◆ Some people are born blind, but many people acquire a visual impairment partly due to disease.
- ◆ Some people who go out using a white cane while others move about with a guide dog.

### [Inconveniences in daily life]

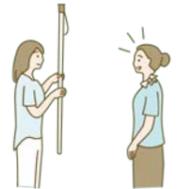
- ◆ People with visual impairments have difficulty in taking in information because they can only obtain limited amounts of visual information.  
It is important to guide people with visual impairments using sound, such as audio announcements and chimes.
- ◆ People with visual impairments find it hard to grasp space and ascertain the distance and route to their destination.
- ◆ Some people have difficulty reading or writing. In particular, many people with acquired visual impairments cannot read Braille, so considerations are needed, such as reading information out to them.
- ◆ It is difficult for people with amblyopia to have others notice by appearances that they have difficulties, which can cause misunderstanding.
- ◆ When the background of an information board and the text are the same color, some people find it difficult to read the content.  
It is important to use contrasting colors.

### [ABCs of communication]

- ◆ **Speak to people with visual impairments from the front and ask them if they need support.**  
They may not be aware that they are being spoken to. They will feel more comfortable **if you reveal your job and name first when speaking to them.**  
Example) “I am △ △ from ○ × Hotel. May I help you?”
- ◆ **Give information with words and sounds.** The key is to turn visible information into audible information.
- ◆ To explain what is on a dining table or in a room, **use the clock position and explain it to them** in an easy-to-understand manner.  
Example (1): Salad is in the 1 o'clock direction.  
There's hot soup in the direction of 9 o'clock.  
Example (2): With the door behind you, there is ●● in the direction of 3 o'clock.
- ◆ If people with visual impairments hold their white cane about 50 cm above their head, it is a **“white cane SOS signal.”**  
Speak to them from the front, ask them if there is a problem, then assist them.



▲ Clock position



▲ White cane SOS signal

Guests whom you attend to as “healthy people” may actually feel stressed because they have “difficulty in seeing.” Speak to them from the front and **speak clearly with “a smiling voice.”** Also, when you attend to them, introduce yourself first and then **ask them what information they want.**

### [Guide Dogs (assistance dogs for people with physical disabilities)]

Some people with visual impairments go out with a guide dog.

- ◆ Among the assistance dogs for people with physical disabilities (guide dogs, service dogs, and hearing dogs), a “guide dog” is equipped with a white or yellow harness to support people with visual impairments in walking safely and comfortably.
- ◆ Even if they are with an assistance dog, speak to them and ask whether they need support.
- ◆ Inform people with an assistance dog if their dog causes trouble to people around them, such as where the dog is sitting.
- ◆ When you are asked where the dog may defecate, confirm the preferred place and guide them there.
- ◆ Since there are people who are allergic to dogs and people who do not like dogs, ask people around if it is alright before taking a seat.



If people with visual impairments have a white cane or the harness of a guide dog, **never touch their cane or harness, the hand holding such things. Basically, stand on the opposite side to the hand holding a harness or cane,** but first ask how they want to be guided.

## 4. Points and Responses when Attending to Guests

### ① Learn and inform people of the current status of the facility

- ◆ Check facility information in detail, **such as the status of routes and whether there are steps or bumps.**
- ◆ When providing information, **offer as much detailed information as possible** to ensure people with visual impairments can decide whether they can use the facility.
- ◆ Since some people with visual impairments tend to trip on low steps or even gentle slopes, **check slippery or risky spots in advance** and guide them prior to their actual use when there is a large public bath in the facility.

### ② Learn and inform people of the current status of facilities in the vicinity

- ◆ Check detailed information on barriers and barrier-free status of various facilities in the vicinity related to regional tourism, such as tourist attractions, accommodations, commercial buildings, public services and other places, and **offer information on the barrier-free status in the region.**
- ◆ It is helpful when attending to guests if you confirm as much information as possible about services that are available in facilities in the neighborhood, such as the dispatch of care-givers and helpers.
- ◆ It is important to **check information on access to the accommodation** when arriving from railway stations or airports.
- ◆ Regarding information on access and traffic, provide detailed information, such as the barrier-free status in stations and airports, distance and travel times from stations and airports, in addition to offering a map. **(Also, check information distributed by transportation companies.)**

### ③ Considerations in communication

- ◆ **Firstly, tell them that you are staff of the facility and your name** and guide them to the check-in or reception counter.
- ◆ **Firstly, explain the barrier-free situation**, such as services and routes in the facility to guests who use the facility.
- ◆ Some people are not good at taking in lots of information in a short period of time, so avoid using technical terms, jargon or abbreviations and **lay out information slowly, clearly and concisely in a way to ensure it can be understood.**
- ◆ While giving due consideration to privacy to the extent necessary, **confirm whether guests have necessary information, and accurately understand and respond to the situation.** **Do not become complacent** that guests have understood information without confirming with them. **If people with visual impairments wish, fill in forms, etc., on their behalf.**
- ◆ **When you leave your seat, tell them that you are leaving.** On returning, inform them that you are back.
- ◆ When giving or receiving money, **read out the names of coins and bills for mutual confirmation.**

### ④ Considerations in Attending to Guests

- ◆ When informing guests of directions, say, “There is ● in the direction of ● o’clock.” or “We are turning in the direction of ● o’clock.” **Use clock positions in this way** for ease of understanding.
- ◆ When guiding people with visual impairments, **you should always walk a half step ahead of them** and have them hold your elbow.  
If people with visual impairments are tall enough, you can have them hold your shoulder.  
Instead of you holding guests, you should have them hold part of you that is comfortable for them.
- ◆ **Alert them before going over a step or changing the direction.**  
“We will go 10 meters and turn right in the direction of 2 o’clock. In this way, tell them what you are going to do well before doing so.
- ◆ When using an escalator, have them hold the handrail and tell them the timing in order to avoid stepping on two steps at the same time.
- ◆ When boarding a taxi, have them touch the door or the roof of the car and board it after they confirm it is safe.

### ⑤ Considerations when dining

- ◆ Attract the attention of guests, explain the menu, **lead their hands** to hand towels or dishes for them **to confirm the positions.**  
Regarding the location of dishes, “There is soup in the direction of ● o’clock.” In this way, **use clock positions to explain.**
- ◆ To explain the menu, and for ordering and paying the bill, communicate with people with visual impairments directly even when they are accompanied by their caregiver.  
If guests wish, read out the menu and guide them.

### ⑥ Considerations in guestrooms

- ◆ When guiding guests to their room, **walk at their pace.**
- ◆ In order for guests to know the correct direction that they should take once they leave their room, **relative to having the door behind you, inform them of the positions, directions and distances** of elevators, hand rails, emergency exits and evacuation routes prior to them entering the room for the first time.
- ◆ After entering the room, have them confirm the layout of the room, the position of furniture, how to use equipment and the location of the remote control by **actually touching these things with their hands.** In particular, it is necessary to carefully have the guest confirm the toilet (how to use it, the position of the toilet paper, etc.), and the bathroom (steps at the entrance, the location of shampoo, etc.).
- ◆ Be sure to tell them if the window is open or closed.
- ◆ If the room number is not noted on the door of the guestroom with raised numbers, mark the door knob with a rubber band or a ribbon to tell their guestroom from other ones.
- ◆ If the key of the guestroom is the card key type, pay special attention by marking the card to prevent the key from being inserted in the wrong direction.

### ⑦ Considerations in case of emergency

- ◆ When passing dangerous spots, ensure **that people with visual impairments walk on the safer side.**
- ◆ **Pay attention to obstacles from your feet to the height of your face** while guiding them.  
When you want to avoid an obstacle or turn the corner, say, for example, “We are turning right,” and make the turn.
- ◆ **Confirm with guests whether they need assistance in evacuation, how to assist, how to contact them, etc.,** beforehand.
- ◆ Unless guests give a room preference, **choose guestrooms that enable the guests to exit easily in case of emergency.**
- ◆ In the event of an emergency, such as an earthquake or a fire, the spread of information and evacuation tend to be delayed. Therefore, it is important to make **assumptions, preparations, and have mental preparedness in advance.**
- ◆ Check how to assist guests and the division of roles among staff during evacuation drills and similar occasions. It is important to **consider how to deal with emergencies on a daily basis.**

### ⑧ Prepare useful tools

- ◆ Prepare necessary equipment to the extent possible for accommodation.

#### [Examples of barrier-free equipment]

- Shampoo bottles with raised dots\*
- Digital clocks with voice announcements
- Clocks that can be touched with hands, or the like

\* Commercial shampoo bottles have raised dots on their sides to distinguish them from conditioner bottles.



### ⑨ Help desk

- ◆ If you have any questions or problems with attending to seniors or people with disabilities, read this manual. If you are still not sure of what to do, **contact the “Tourist Information Center for People with Disabilities and Seniors.”**
- ◆ The Tourist Information Center for People with Disabilities and Seniors is a help desk, located in the Naha Airport, Kokusai Street, and Naha Bus Terminal, to support seniors and people with disabilities. The center offers information on barrier-free facilities in Okinawa, such as where wheelchair-accessible facilities are located, to help ease the anxiety of travelers before and during travel.

#### [Tourist Information Center for People with Disabilities and Seniors]

- Tel: 098-858-7760
- Naha Airport: Arrival lobby on the 1st floor of Naha Airport Domestic Passenger Terminal, 150 Kagamizu, Naha City, Okinawa 901 0142

#### <<References>>

- Manual for Welcoming Seniors and People with Disabilities**  
Issued by: Japan Tourism Agency, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (March 2018)  
Refer to: [https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/news06\\_000352.html](https://www.mlit.go.jp/kankocho/news06_000352.html)
- Barrier-Free Tourism Manual by Industry --Toward Becoming a Fun-Filled and Amicable Tourist Destination for Everyone--**  
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