Guidelines for Conducting Business with a Person who is Blind or Visually Impaired

• Always speak directly to the individual with whom you are conducting business. Many people tend, instead, to address a sighted companion, even if they are doing business with the person who is blind.

• Speak in a normal tone of voice unless you are aware the individual has a hearing loss.

• Do not push or pull a person who is blind to try to direct them where to go. Rather, ask the individual if he or she would like some assistance. If the individual indicates they would like your help, offer them your arm, and he or she will likely hold your arm near the elbow.

• If you are presenting written materials to a person who is blind or has vision loss, ask the person if s/he would like materials read to them.

• If you are aware you will be meeting with an individual with a vision loss arranging large print or Braille materials ahead of time will be helpful.

• Say “I am handing you some papers” before you give the individual written materials. Place the papers directly in the individual’s hands.
• If papers are on the desk give verbal directions on how to locate the papers: straight ahead and to the left.

• Ask the individual if they need help signing papers. If the individual does want help, put their finger (or a signature guide) on the starting position.

• When showing a person who is blind their chair put their hand on the back of their chair and indicate which way the chair is facing.

• Do not be afraid to use words like look, see and blind. These words are used in everyday speech and most people who are blind not only accept this but use the words when talking to others.

• Do not say phrases like “over there” without describing the direction you are talking about.