



# Appropriate Touch Procedure Guidance for BLVS Staff

This guidance is for Blind and Low Vision (BLVS) Training - staff regarding appropriate physical touch with persons we serve (PWS). This guidance outlines why physical touch may be needed to participate in PAT services, identifying appropriate and inappropriate forms of touch, procedures for facilitating conversations and training regarding appropriate touch, and procedures for reporting and documenting inappropriate (or perceived inappropriate) touch.

Individuals receiving training services through BLVS have a visual impairment and/or legal blindness which poses challenges to training and learning necessary skills to achieve successful employment outcomes. A common practice during such training involves the use of physical touch when meeting in-person to facilitate tactile learning and/or proper body alignment or positioning.

The following definitions are provided by the American Printing House for the Blind (APH):

- Hand-Under-Hand Technique: “When you use the hand-under-hand technique, your hands perform the activity while your student’s hands rest on top of yours—in this way, they can feel what your hands are doing. If the activity is new to your student, they’ll be able to focus their energy on feeling the movements of your hands. They may also feel more comfortable and in control because they can freely remove their hands if they want to. As you perform the activity, verbally describe what you are doing with your hands.”
- Hand-Over-Hand Technique: “When you use the hand-over-hand technique to help your student do an activity, you place your hands over their hands. Your student is the one who is touching the materials, and your hands guide them as they manipulate the materials to complete the activity. As you find they are able to do small parts of the activity, you can lessen the support your hands are providing by either pulling your hands away or moving them to their wrist or arm. This way, your hands are ready to come back and lend support if they need assistance.”

Areas of the body that may need to be touched during training include:

- Shoulders and/or upper back
  - To facilitate proper orientation and/or body alignment or facilitate Human Guide (for example, during O&M training, to position the person facing the proper direction).
  - In emergencies (for example, during Orientation and Mobility training, if the person steps into the street during a dangerous or incorrect time, the PAT Staff may touch their shoulders and pull them back to prevent them from an accident).
- Hands
  - To facilitate proper skills via Hand-Over-Hand or Hand-Under-Hand Techniques (for example, typing position on a keyboard, use of adaptive equipment, proper grip on a white cane, etc).
  - The back of the hand, and/or with fingers tucked under, is considered proper etiquette when reaching out to locate something (such as another person’s hand to shake, a physical item, etc). This also reduces the opportunity for injury to the fingers.
- Forearms, wrists, and/or elbows
  - Used when providing or teaching Human Guide.



- To direct someone to an object (for example, directing the person to take a seat, find an object, etc).

## **Addressing Appropriate Touch with the Persons We Serve**

### During the first appointment prior to the start of training (with BLVS staff or a vendor):

The BLVS staff agrees to explain the potential need for physical touch during in-person interactions with the PWS, utilizing the definitions above, when participating in training services. The BLVS staff agrees to discuss with the PWS the potential for *unintended* and/or *accidental touch* during in-person interactions related to training services (bumping into each other, accidentally touching during a lesson, etc) that can occur due to the nature of the person's vision loss. This can be compounded when both the PWS and the staff have vision loss. The BLVS staff shall explain that the PWS has the ability to offer and rescind consent at any instance.

The BLVS staff agrees to remind the PWS of DVR's Appeal Rights that were provided during the intake appointment by the Rehabilitation Counselor. If requested, the BLVS staff can provide an additional copy of this document. The BLVS staff will explain that at any time, should the person have any concern regarding inappropriate touch (or perceived inappropriate touch), they are encouraged to follow the processes outlined in the Appeal Rights. This conversation and subsequent consent by the PWS shall be documented via a case note in the PWS' file.

### During the duration of training services:

The BLVS staff will gain consent prior to touching the person we serve prior to each instance of physical touch. This should be accompanied by a clear, direct announcement stating the location of the reach and the intent/purpose of the touch. Auditory cues may be utilized to localize the position of the person's reach, if necessary.

Coaching and training on appropriate touch is routinely provided and facilitated by the BLVS training staff to the person we serve as a part of training services, and is tailored to their unique training needs, questions, and other instances that may arise. This may include items such as teaching the Hines Break during Orientation and Mobility training, discussing how to appropriately exchange handshakes at a job interview, training on how to find physical items such as door handles, signage in public areas, dropped objects, and much more.

The PWS always reserves the right to decline consent for physical touch, at any moment, and this shall be respected and adhered to by PAT staff.

## **Identifying and Reporting Inappropriate Touch during Training**

Inappropriate touch may include, but is not limited to:

- Touch that lingers past the necessary duration of time and purpose (as outlined above)
- Any touch that is not necessary for engaging in training services (as outlined above)
- Touch to any other area of the body not outlined above
- Any other touch that is perceived to be inappropriate or uncomfortable by either the PWS or the BLVS staff.

The BLVS staff agrees to report to their direct supervisor, any possible or perceived inappropriate touch, whether the touch occurred to the BLVS staff or to the PWS. The BLVS staff will



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additionally document the situation via a case note in the PWS' case file and notify any other necessary parties.

Staff Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_