

## What is the Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC)?

The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians (AEBC) is a non-profit consumer group of people who are blind, deaf-blind and partially sighted, working together so that all Canadians with vision loss can have equal access to the benefits and opportunities of society. The AEBC works to eliminate barriers to printed information and technology.

To these ends the AEBC also promotes the development of programs, legislation and policies. It also strives to enhance independence with access to education.

Raising public awareness and facilitating education initiatives are central to the AEBC mandate. Through local chapters, AEBC provides a vehicle for camaraderie, support and action on local issues.

Here are AEBC's national programs and services:

Mentoring program for adults and children who are blind, deaf-blind or partially sighted.

Scholarship programs: AEBC awards annual scholarships to outstanding blind, deaf-blind or partially sighted people.

Publication of the Canadian Blind Monitor:

This magazine highlights issues and achievements of persons who are blind, deaf-blind or partially sighted by presenting articles and information from Canada and abroad (all AEBC publications and correspondence are available in braille, large print, audio, cassette, e-mail or CD format). [www.blindcanadians.ca](http://www.blindcanadians.ca) is a fully accessible website filled with information on AEBC programs and more. Visit!

Information and referral is available through

Toll-free number (1-800-561-4774)  
or by email: [info@blindcanadians.ca](mailto:info@blindcanadians.ca)

E-mail list serve connects members and informs non-members.

## Capital Health Diversity and Inclusion Program:

Diversity is all the ways we are different. It includes difference in age, ability, culture, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, geographical location, physical characteristics, language, race, spirituality, values, etc.

Our goals include:

- Enhanced leadership in cultural competence, diversity and social inclusion.
- Greater engagement of culturally diverse citizens in policies, programs and services.
- Deepened capacity for innovation and learning to inform our work in cultural competence, diversity and social inclusion.
- Increased achievement of cultural competence in person-centered health.

To learn more about Capital Health's Diversity and Inclusion Program, please contact:

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This brochure has been produced collaboratively by the AEBC Halifax Chapter and Capital Health's Diversity and Inclusion Initiative.

For more information about the AEBC Chapter, contact [info@blindcanadians.ca](mailto:info@blindcanadians.ca) or call 1-800-561-4774

To arrange an AEBC presentation for your group or department, contact Capital Health's Diversity and Inclusion coordinator at (902) 473-1326 or the Healthy Workplace Department Administrative Assistant at 473-2313.

## DO YOU KNOW HOW TO HELP PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR PARTIALLY SIGHTED?

Patients and clients who are blind or partially sighted all have different needs



The Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians Halifax Chapter offers these suggestions...



## A Few Facts:

- Vision loss impacts each person differently. Some people have some sight even though they are “legally blind” (they may be wearing eyeglasses). They may have some or no central, peripheral or night vision. They may be able to read with a magnifier, or not at all.
- Blind and partially sighted people have differing levels of mobility skills and independence depending on their experience. They are individuals from all cultures and backgrounds.
- There are several types of aids used by people with vision loss. You might see people who are blind using a long white cane, a shorter white ID cane or a white support cane. Some use “walkers” because of other mobility challenges. Others travel with guide dogs.
- Some people who are blind or partially sighted may have other disabilities that impact their lives and the level of assistance they need.
- A person who is deaf-blind normally attends appointments with an “intervener” to facilitate communication. You can alert a person who is deaf-blind and becomes separated from the intervener in an emergency by forming a big “X” with your finger on their back. They will allow you to escort them to safety.

## How Do I Help? What Do I Need To Know?

ASK! When you see a person who is blind or partially sighted, identify yourself as an employee or staff person. Offer assistance. The person may or may not need your help. If the person wants assistance:

- Ask HOW you can help. The person will tell you how you can best help them; they might ask you to guide them and will tell you which of your arms they prefer to take (you can ask). They may only need directions. If they are with a Guide dog, they might command their dog to “follow” you to where they need to go.
- Be specific when giving directions. For example, “The elevator is down this hall. Go straight for 10 metres. It is on the left hand side. Do you want me to go with you?”
- Do not pat Guide dogs. These dogs are working and need to concentrate. Do not talk to the dog or attract its attention by calling or waving. Avoid eye contact with it. Speak to the handler. Never touch the harness. If the handler wants help, they will follow you or take your arm and hold the dog’s leash.
- If the blind or partially sighted person is accompanied by a sighted companion be sure to address the blind person directly.

## Appropriate Actions and Words

Introduce yourself to the blind or partially sighted person and explain your role. Please keep in mind that the person may not automatically recognize your voice after one meeting. Re-introduce yourself.

If you are a medical staff person and are about to perform a procedure or examination with a blind or partially sighted patient, explain to them what you are going to do before you touch them.

If you are a nurse or support staff member, you should alert a blind or partially sighted patient when you are entering the room. For example, tell the patient that the dinner tray has arrived or that you are about to mop the room.

Use normal tone and voice when speaking to someone who is blind or partially sighted. There is no need to speak loudly or slowly.

If you are leaving a blind person, tell them so before you walk away. People with vision loss can become disoriented in a new setting such as a hospital or clinic, particularly if the area is crowded or noisy. Standing in the midst of this is unpleasant and confusing. Help them to find a seat or a wall that can be a reference point for them.

It is helpful to tap (audibly) a seat and say, “Here’s the chair.” Similarly, you can tap to indicate counters, tables, beds etc.

It is likely that the person cannot see the number or the words on the paper you hand them. Offer to read it. Think of how they will know it is their turn at the booking desk or how they will remember the appointment information on the card.

