EMERGENCY GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAFBLIND

1. Let the deafblind person know you are there by a simple touch on the shoulder or arm.

2. People who are deafblind sometimes have usable speech, vision, and/or hearing. Try to determine if the individual prefers speech, American Sign Language, fingerspelling, writing with a dark pen, or print-on-palm (see below).

3. If possible, avoid glare and loud environments.

4. Identify yourself.

5. Communicate directly with the person, even when using an interpreter.

6. Do not assume the deafblind person knows where they are or what is going on. Share as much information as possible.

7. Always tell the person when you are leaving, even if it is for a brief period of time. Leave them as comfortable and safe as possible. It is good to offer them a chair, table, or wall for an anchor.

8. When guiding a person who is deafblind, never place him/her ahead of you. Allow the person to hold your arm above the elbow. It is rarely necessary to “help” the deafblind person sit down or climb stairs; placing their hand on a chair or banister will give them the information they need.

PRINT-ON-PALM

For print-on-palm, use your index finger to trace capital letters into the palm of the deafblind individual, pausing after each word.

SIGN LANGUAGE ALPHABET

The sign language alphabet can be used to spell a word visually or tactually. To “fingerspell” to an individual who is unable to see your letters, you can sign the letters into the palm of the person’s hand.

Contact the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services-Deafblind Services
For Statewide Information call 1-800-628-5115 (extension 0573-Voice/TTY)
Deafblind Specialist for Houston/Beaumont/San Antonio areas: 512-377-0566 (Voice/TTY)
Deafblind Specialist for Dallas/Fort Worth/Lubbock/Tyler areas: 214-378-2645 (Voice/TTY)
Deafblind Specialist for Corpus Christi/Rio Grande Valley/El Paso/Austin/Waco areas: 512-377-0572 (Voice/TTY)
Deafblind Apartments: 512-451-2967 (voice) or 512-451-2974 (TTY)

Adapted from information shared by the American Foundation for the Blind