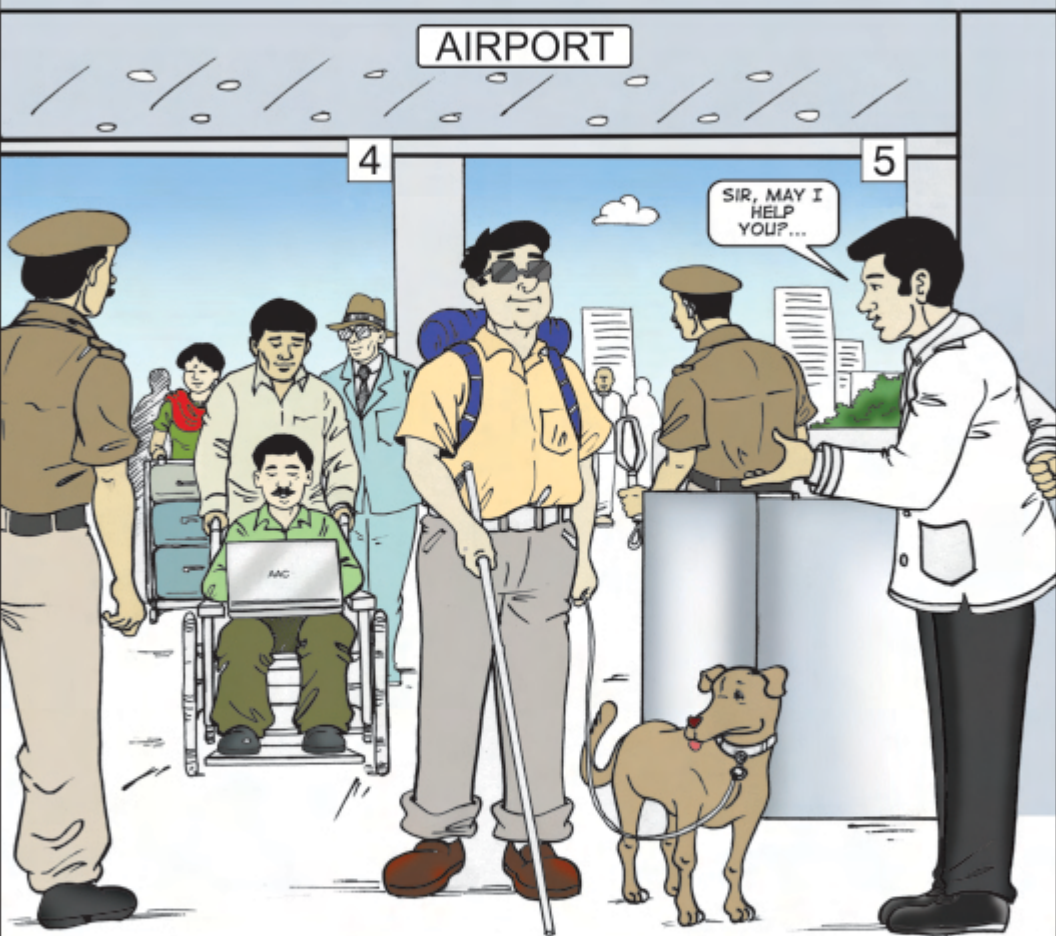


# Handbook

## Air Travel: Sensitization and Training



सत्यमेव जयते

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities  
Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment  
Government of India



*Samarthyam*

National Centre for Accessible Environments  
[www.samarthyam.com](http://www.samarthyam.com)



## About Samarthyam

Samarthyam is a civil society and research organization founded by persons with disabilities in 1995. Samarthyam is accredited by United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It evaluates, develops, and promotes universal accessibility in built & outdoor environments, transportation systems and products. It's mission is to improve environments through research, access audits, design innovation, and capacity building trainings. Samarthyam's goal is to promote the understanding and implementation of accessibility of the sustainable built, social and virtual environments, using the guiding principles of Universal Design and articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As Consultant with Government of India, Samarthyam has facilitated policy level changes to make Incredible India = Inclusive India.

### Copyright © Samarthyam, 2015

Any part of this publication may be reproduced with prior written permission and proper acknowledgement to Samarthyam.

## Disclaimer

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.

## For more information

Samarthyam

National Centre for Accessible Environments

B/181, Mansarovar Garden, New Delhi-110015, India

Telefax : +91-11-41019389, M: + 91 9810558321

Email: samarthyaindia@yahoo.com

samarthyamindia@gmail.com

Website: [www.samarthyam.com](http://www.samarthyam.com)

**STUTI KACKER**

सचिव

**SECRETARY**



भारत सरकार

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय

विकलांगजन सशक्तिकरण विभाग

Government of India

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Department of Empowerment

of

Persons with Disabilities

29th December 2014

## Foreword

Air travel has now come within the economic reach of a wider section of society. As persons with disabilities (PwDs) and Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRMs) are also one of the revenue generators for the airline sector, it is a matter of equity that PwDs and PRMs should also have equal opportunities for air travel as others users. For many years, air passengers with reduced mobility, whether due to disability, age or otherwise faced discrimination and careless or undignified treatment while travelling. Commonly reported problems range from being denied boarding simply because a person has disability, lack of required assistance, lack of good quality aisle chairs and wheelchairs, no respect for individual autonomy and freedom of choice and forcing of persons with visual impairment to sit on wheelchairs, etc.

The Handbook on Air Travel: Sensatisation and Training has been conceptualised to facilitate travel for PwDs and PRMs with dignity and safety. It is comprehensive and detailed and will be very useful for airport operators, airlines and staff for not only sensatising them to the needs of such passengers but in also making arrangements for them.



[STUTI KACKER]

**LOV VERMA**

सचिव

**SECRETARY**



भारत सरकार

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय

विकलांगजन सशक्तिकरण विभाग

Government of India

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Department of Empowerment

of

Persons with Disabilities

19th March 2015

## Foreword

It gives me immense pleasure to state that the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities in association with Samarthyam, an NGO with expertise in accessibility, has bought out this handbook on Air Travel: Sensitization and Training for use by Airlines, Airport operators and Airport terminal service providers.

The Handbook is a training guide, with detailed account of service needs for persons with different types of disabilities, who often encounter difficulties due to lack of sensitization training and orientation of the airport and airlines staff on disability equity and etiquette.

The intent is primarily to raise awareness on how to best serve persons with disabilities to promote a safe and pleasant trip. The handbook provides information and training inputs on the special needs for various types of disabilities and to build capacities among airport staff to communicate effectively and sensitively with passengers with disabilities.

I am certain that this handbook can serve as an effective tool in meeting the goals and objectives of barrier free ambience for persons with disabilities.

[LOV VERMA]

## **Preface**

For many years, air passengers- those with reduced mobility, whether due to disability, age or otherwise, have faced discrimination and careless or undignified treatment at the airports and at the hands of all airlines. Commonly reported problems range from being denied boarding simply because a person has a disability, lack of required assistance being provided to persons with some types of disabilities, lack of good quality aisle chairs and wheelchairs, not respecting individual autonomy and freedom of choice.

The Handbook on Air travel: Sensitization and Training is the need of the hour, to facilitate travel for persons with disabilities and reduced mobility with dignity and safety. It is a comprehensive detailed training guideline for the airport operators, airlines and staff to get sensitized to the needs of these passengers.

## **Acknowledgment**

We duly acknowledge the guidance of DPOs, NGOs, the National Trust, O/o the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Rehabilitation Council of India and National Institutes of Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.

Group consultations are undertaken to include inputs and suggestions of wider disability groups to make this handbook comprehensive and inclusive.

Our heartfelt thanks goes to United Nations ESCAP for formulating the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and Pacific.

Special thanks to Ability Foundation for helping in editing, and Vidyasagar and Action for Autism for valuable inputs on specific disabilities.

We would like to thank the entire team of Samarthyam for their unstinted support, especially Mr. Debabrata Chakravarti for documentation.

The contents of this handbook are adapted from Transport Canada Training Guidelines (website: [www.otc-cta.gc.ca](http://www.otc-cta.gc.ca)) and Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India, report on Amendment of the Civil Aviation Requirements for Persons with Disabilities, September 2012.

Anjlee Agarwal  
Executive Director and Access Consultant  
Samarthyam  
National Centre for Accessible Environments

# Table of Contents

## Glossary

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Section- Introduction .....</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| 1.1      | Need for the Handbook.....  | 1         |
| 1.2      | Intent of the Training .....  | 2         |
| 1.3      | Objectives and Format.....  | 3         |
| 1.4      | Focus Areas .....   | 4         |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Section- Why Training and Sensitization?.....</b>                              | <b>6</b>  |
| 2.1      | Persons with disabilities are a growing segment of the travelling population..... | 6         |
| 2.2      | Ensuring Appropriate Staff Training .....   | 6         |
| 2.3      | Understanding Passengers’ Needs .....   | 7         |
| 2.4      | CAR Prescribe Training and Sensitization Programs ....                            | 7         |
| 2.4.1    | Initial Training .....  | 8         |
| 2.4.2    | Refresher Training.....   | 8         |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Section- Who should be Trained?.....</b>                                       | <b>9</b>  |
| 3.1      | Ground, Commercial and Airlines staff.....  | 9         |
| 3.2      | Training of Security Staff .....  | 10        |
| 3.2.1    | Interaction with Persons with Disabilities.....                                   | 10        |
| 3.2.2    | Screening Process .....   | 11        |
| 3.3      | Training of Cabin Crew .....  | 13        |
| 3.4      | Disembarkation, Transfer Arrangements and Leaving the Airport .....               | 14        |
| 3.5      | Baggage Retrieval, Immigration and Customs.....                                   | 15        |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Section- General Awareness.....</b>  | <b>16</b> |
| 4.1      | Terminology.....  | 16        |
| 4.2      | Etiquette.....  | 18        |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Section- Assisting a Person with a Visual Impairment or who is Blind.....</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| 5.1      | Terminology.....  | 21        |



|           |  |           |
|-----------|--|-----------|
| 5.2       | How to assist a person with a visual impairment or who is blind .....    | 21        |
| 5.3       | Devices and Supports.....  | 23        |
| 5.4       | Do's and Don'ts .....  | 25        |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Section - Assisting a Person with a Mobility Impairment.....</b>      | <b>27</b> |
| 6.1       | Terminology.....   | 27        |
| 6.2       | How to assist a person with mobility impairment .....                    | 27        |
| 6.3       | Devices and Supports.....  | 30        |
| 6.4       | Do's and Don'ts .....  | 32        |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>Section - Assisting a Person who is Hard of Hearing or Deaf .....</b> | <b>33</b> |
| 7.1       | Terminology.....   | 33        |
| 7.2       | How to Assist a Person who is Hard of Hearing or Deaf.....               | 33        |
| 7.3       | Devices and support .....  | 35        |
| 7.4       | Do's and Don'ts .....  | 36        |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Section- Assisting Persons with High Support Needs .....</b>          | <b>38</b> |
| 8.1       | Terminology.....   | 38        |
| 8.2       | How to Assist Persons with Other Disabilities .....                      | 39        |
| 8.3       | Summary .....  | 42        |
| <b>9</b>  | <b>Guide to Conduct Disability Simulation Exercise .....</b>             | <b>43</b> |
| 9.1       | What is Simulation Exercise?.....  | 43        |
| 9.2       | When to use the simulation exercise?.....                                | 43        |
| 9.3       | Briefing on Disability .....   | 44        |
| 9.4       | Demonstration on use of Devices.....                                     | 44        |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Section Training Module .....</b>                                     | <b>46</b> |

## Glossary

### **Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS)<sup>1</sup>**

BCAS is an independent department and is the regulator for Civil Aviation Security and for laying down the standards for pre-embarkation security.

### **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**

CISF is the security agency of India, mandated to provide security to major critical infrastructure installations of the country in diverse areas. CISF is currently providing security cover to airports.

### **Civil Aviation Regulations (CAR)**

Civil Aviation Requirements, Section 3 – Air Transport, Series 'M' Part I, Issue 2, Dated 1st May 2008 Effective: 1st May 2008: Carriage by Air of Persons with Disability and/ or Persons with Reduced Mobility is referred to in this Handbook as CAR.

### **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)**

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation is the regulatory body in the field of Civil Aviation primarily responsible for regulation of air transport services to/from/within India and for enforcement of civil air regulations, air safety and airworthiness standards.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, New Delhi, India, 2012

## **Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA)**

The Ministry of Civil Aviation is responsible for formulation of national policies and programmes for civil aviation. Its functions also extend to overseeing the provision of airport facilities, air traffic services, carriage of passengers and goods by air, operations, licensing of aerodromes, air carriers, pilots, etc.

# 1 Section- Introduction

In the recent years due to the open sky policy and competitive prices, air travel has come within the economic reach of wide section of the society. It is a matter of equality that Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRMs) should have opportunities for air travel comparable to those of other people. The PwDs and PRMs are one of the major revenue generators for the airline sector.

## ***1.1 Need for the Handbook***

The lack of awareness on the requirements of people with different types of disabilities coupled with the need for the sensitization of staff, including but not limited to the airport staff, airline staff and security personnel has made travel by air a harrowing and often humiliating experience. It also highlighted the need to train the people who come in direct contact with the passengers. In addition, what minimum requirements are expected from the airport authorities, the airlines, the help desk counters, the boarding passes issuance, luggage check in, security check by CISF personnel, ground staff handling, cabin crew handling and their assistive devices including wheel chairs, transfer to seats, aisle chairs and the disembarkation process.

While some positive steps such as the introduction of Civil Aviation Requirements<sup>2</sup> (CAR) on Carriage by Air

---

<sup>2</sup> Series 'M' Part I, Section 3- Air Transport, 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014

of Persons with Disability and/or Persons with Reduced Mobility have been taken, the experience on the ground remains at an unacceptably low level.

## **1.2 Intent of the Training**

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India brought out this handbook on Air Travel: Sensitisation and Training for use by Airlines, Airport operators and Airport Terminal service providers. This handbook gives understanding and knowledge of appropriate ways of assisting travellers with disabilities and to promote a safe and pleasant trip for the customer. This handbook should be used for orientation of the staff during recruitment, for refresher training courses/ workshops and should be incorporated as mandatory module in all the other trainings of the airlines/ airport authorities. The Incheon Strategy<sup>3</sup> to “Make The Right Real” for persons with disabilities, Goal 3 “Enhance access to the physical environment, public transportation, knowledge, information and communication” makes it mandatory to provide accessible airports and air travel.

The first Section is a general introduction to serving PwDs and the need for the handbook. Sections 2-4 cover the need of the training, who should be trained and general awareness. Sections 5-7 detail particular service needs for the persons with the types of

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unescapsdd.org/publications/incheon-strategy>

disabilities most often encountered by airport terminal staff, security personnel and aircraft crew. Section 8 provides tips on better serving persons with other types of disabilities. Section 9 gives briefing on simulating disabilities and Section 10 proposes a training module. For ease of reading, the pronouns 'he' and 'she' will be alternated in the text rather than using he/she or his/hers.

### ***1.3 Objectives and Format***

Training should be provided to all staff that provide direct assistance to persons with disabilities, including personnel employed by contractors and subcontractors. Some examples of those who provide direct service are<sup>4</sup>:

- Personnel providing services or physical assistance to PwDs.
- Personnel from the airport managing body, or any sub-contractor acting on its behalf, providing assistance to PwDs at the airport, including:
  - o assistance personnel
  - o airport management personnel
  - o security staff
  - o complaints officers
- Personnel from the operating air carrier, including cabin crew

---

<sup>4</sup>Report on Amendment of The CAR For Persons With Disabilities, MoCA, September 2012

## **1.4 Focus Areas**

- Training of staff coming in direct contact with passengers with disabilities is imperative for providing quality service in a respectful manner to PwDs.
- Training for all staff including security personnel in the process of air travel/service delivery is necessitated to ensure the requirements of PwDs are appropriately met.
- This handbook addresses the attitudinal, physical and organisational barriers that affect dignified and safe air travel of PwDs.
- The contents of the handbook will help prepare airport, airline and security staff to provide assistance to PwDs as a professional service to which the person is entitled, rather than a favour or sympathetic gesture.
- This handbook's goal is to familiarise service providers with the knowledge to appropriately serve passengers with disabilities. However, it should be emphasised that travel needs of PwDs are quite individual and the key will be effective communication with the passenger. Such as:
  - Know about the special needs resulting from various types of disabilities;
  - Be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with passengers with disabilities; and
  - Have a heightened understanding of how to better serve PwDs.

- The handbook also includes an understanding of disability and its diversity including hidden disabilities such as autism, and helps staff develop an awareness of and appropriate responses to PwDs.
- It covers a diversity of disabilities, which includes:
  - persons with physical, sensory, hidden or learning disabilities;
  - persons with mental (intellectual) disabilities;
  - persons who use wheelchairs;
  - persons with walking difficulties or limitations in balance, agility or coordination that affect their mobility;
  - persons who are deaf or hard of hearing;
  - persons who are blind or partially sighted;
  - persons with Autism;
  - persons who are deaf-blind;
  - persons with impaired speech;
  - persons who are aged;
  - persons who require attendants/ carers and the role of the attendant/ carers; and
  - persons travelling with a service animal including the role and needs of that animal.



## 2 Section- Why Training and Sensitization?

Here are some important reasons to increase awareness on how to best serve PwDs and PRMs.

### ***2.1 Persons with disabilities- growing segment of the travelling population***

Essentially, about 15% of the population in India have a disability in some form or another. Their disability may not be readily apparent, such as persons who are hard of hearing or deaf, and persons with artificial limbs, mental health or learning disabilities.

In addition, the level of impairment varies widely. For example, people with some vision can be considered legally blind. Others have only peripheral vision, and some are totally blind. 'Persons with disabilities' are not a homogenous group.

### ***2.2 Ensuring Appropriate Staff Training***

Airport Authority (ground handling staff) and airlines must ensure the following:

- Staff assigned to deal with passengers with disabilities, for example cabin crew/commercial staff including floor walkers and counter staff etc., must be trained in:-
  - Disability Awareness,
  - Assisting persons with disabilities (on-ground and during embarkation), and
  - Assisting unaccompanied passengers with disabilities (in-flight).

- Appropriate training is provided to the loader staff to ensure proper storage and handling of mobility equipment.
- Staff training for assisting emergency evacuation of passengers with disabilities.

### ***2.3 Understanding Passengers' Needs***

- Provide the appropriate service.
- Accommodate passengers' unique needs.
- Meet passenger expectations.
- Reduce possible injuries to yourself and the passenger.
- Reduce boarding and disembarking delays.
- Make your work easier and more rewarding.

### ***2.4 CAR<sup>5</sup> Prescribe Training and Sensitization Programs***

“4.3 Airlines should develop emergency evacuation procedures and training of their staff for handling persons with disabilities and include the same in their safety manuals. The training program shall include detailed procedures of handling, evacuation and develop awareness towards disabled passengers, persons with medical conditions, elderly persons, infants, pregnant women, etc”. It is recommended that initial training and refresher training should be provided<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Civil Aviation Requirements Section 3 – Air Transport Series 'M' Part I

<sup>6</sup> Report on Amendment of The Car For Persons With Disabilities, MoCA, May 2012

### **2.4.1 Initial Training**

- Airport operators and airlines should ensure staff and contractors complete initial training before their entry upon duty.
- Initial training should train personnel to a skilled and adept level that allows personnel to be able to complete their duties and provide the necessary services effectively and respectfully from the first time they work with passengers.

### **2.4.2 Refresher Training**

- Airport operators and airlines should provide refresher training periodically/ when appropriate (annually or every two years, for example). Any feedback from passengers that signals necessary improvements should be incorporated into training programs.
- Routine, ongoing training should be provided by way of information on new equipment, policies and procedures and the related implications on providing accommodation to meet the needs of PwDs, as these are introduced or implemented.

### 3 Section- Who should be Trained?

When PwDs or PRMs arrives at an airport for travel by air, the airport operators/ airlines is responsible for ensuring the assistance that the person is able to take the flight for which he or she holds a reservation.

#### **3.1 Ground, Commercial and Airlines Staff**

Training on assistance and arrangements is necessary to enable PwDs and PRMs to:

- Communicate their arrival at an airport and their request for assistance at the designated points inside and outside terminal buildings,
- Move from a designated point to the check-in counter,
- Check-in and register baggage,
- Proceed from the check-in counter to the aircraft, with completion of emigration, customs and security procedures,
- Board the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate,
- Proceed from the aircraft door to their seats,
- Store and retrieve baggage on the aircraft,
- Proceed from their seats to the aircraft door,
- Disembark from the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate,

- Proceed from the aircraft to the baggage hall and retrieve baggage, with completion of immigration and customs procedures,
- Proceed from the baggage hall to a designated point,
- Reach connecting flights when in transit, with assistance on the air and land sides and within and between terminals as needed, and
- Move to the toilet facilities if required.

### ***3.2 Training of Security Staff<sup>7</sup>***

While there is no doubt that security is paramount, the dignity of PwDs must not be violated during the security process, particularly when it is possible to conduct security screening while completely respecting the rights of PwDs. Some of the problems faced by passenger with a disability include persons in wheelchairs being asked to stand up, people being asked to remove their clothes so that their prosthetic limbs/callipers can be touched by the security personnel, persons with autism are usually asked to 'behave or tagged as not fit to fly', etc.

Given below are the best practices to be followed during the security process.

#### **3.2.1 Interaction with Persons with Disabilities**

Screeners shall be trained to:

- a. Be courteous and friendly,

---

<sup>7</sup>Report on Amendment of The Car For Persons With Disabilities, MoCA, May 2012

- b. Treat everyone fairly and equally,
- c. Be respectful throughout the screening process,
- d. Assess the needs of the person to be screened,
- e. Ask, and not assume the type of assistance needed,
- f. Provide appropriate screening options.

### **3.2.2 Screening Process**

- For passengers using a wheelchair or other mobility aids, the screening officer shall advise on the screening process that will be required prior to entering the departure lounge. Passengers are to advise the screening officer of their condition and if required, request separate screening to avoid passing through a metal detector.
- The screening points should have full body scanners, chairs and walking aids for semi ambulant walking-aid users.
- Full body scanners should be used for passengers using their own wheelchairs and should not be asked to stand up or transfer to wheelchairs provided by the airport. A wheelchair user unable to move, raise hands, etc. shall be subjected to secondary screening and shall undergo a pat down (frisk search) of the person by a screening officer of the same gender. Screening officers shall obtain consent to conduct a frisk search. Before a frisk search is carried out, the screener shall offer the use of a private search room. Private screening rooms shall be available upon request.
- For passengers who are blind/low vision, the screening staff shall:

- o offer screening options to stand or sit for primary screening;
  - o assist persons through the Walk-Through Metal Detector (WTMD);
  - o provide an option for private screening;
  - o where a physical search of personal belongings is required, replace all items where they were originally located;
  - o make certain that an assistance animal, such as a guide dog, is not separated from a person during screening;
  - o shall make or put up an identification mark on the baggage;
  - o an identity card or badge number of the "assistance" provided to escort the passenger who is blind/low vision must be communicated in writing.
- For passengers with a hearing impairment, the following techniques can be used:
    - o speak in a normal tone and pace, in a clear and concise manner;
    - o use hand signals and gestures to help express spoken direction (pointing and nodding);
    - o maintain eye contact at all times and speak directly to the person with the impairment;
    - o point out visual alarms by physical indication;
    - o if communication difficulties persist, screening officers shall use written instructions (preferably in simple language and should

- o include plenty of graphics) to communicate to the guest; and
  - o if requested, allow an escort to assist, and go through security checks with the person with disability of the opposite sex.
- For passengers with a Autism, Cerebral Palsy and Mental retardation the following techniques can be used:
    - o speak in a normal tone and pace, in a clear and concise manner;
    - o use hand signals and gestures;
    - o speak directly to the person with the impairment;
    - o if communication difficulties persist, screening officers shall use written instructions (should include plenty of graphics) to communicate to the guest and allow the co-passenger travelling with the guest to communicate; and
    - o if requested, allow an escort to assist, and go through security checks with the person with disability of the opposite sex.

### **3.3 Training of Cabin Crew**

Cabin crew are trained in safety procedures at regular intervals that are approved by safety regulators. This training should be combined with disability awareness and how to assist PwDs and PRMs in the cabin environment. All cabin crew, including the flight crew, must receive disability awareness training. For cabin



crew, this should be refreshed in line with training in safety procedures. Cabin crew training should be geared to familiarising PwDs with their immediate environment and possible hazards within the cabin, and assisting them in the competent use of the facilities that are provided.

Training programs and emergency procedures should include special provisions related to the evacuation of PwDs.

### ***3.4 Disembarkation, Transfer Arrangements and Leaving the Airport***

Airport operators shall provide assistance and arrangements necessary to enable PwDs and PRMs to:

- retrieve cabin baggage on the aircraft,
- proceed from their seats to the aircraft door,
- disembark from the aircraft, with the provision of lifts, wheelchairs or other assistance needed, as appropriate,
- proceed from the aircraft to the baggage hall and retrieve baggage, with completion of immigration and customs procedures,
- proceed from the baggage hall to a designated point, and
- reach connecting flights when in transit, with assistance on the air and land sides and within and between terminals as needed.

### ***3.5 Baggage Retrieval, Immigration and Customs***

- Staff assisting passengers with disabilities through the terminal should also assist them with the retrieval and carrying of baggage. This may require more than one staff member to comply with health and safety requirements.
- Assistance should be provided from the aircraft up to the designated departure point, for example, car park or shuttle bus to long term car park, bus station, railway station or taxi stand.
- Before leaving the passenger, staff should, where necessary, ensure that the onward transport provider has been notified of their presence and need for assistance.

## 4 Section- General Awareness

### 4.1 Terminology

Being aware of the appropriate terminology is an important way to signal that you understand and are sensitive to PwDs.

| <b>Preferred</b>                       | <b>Avoid Using</b>   |
|--|----------------------|
| Person with a disability since birth   | Birth defect         |
| Person who has a congenital disability | Congenital defect    |
| Sport for athletes with disabilities   | Disabled sport       |
| Accessible parking                     | Disabled/handicapped |

Generally, use the word “person” or “passenger” before employing the adjective referring to the individual’s disability. If in doubt, listen for clues as to how the customer refers to herself.

Many PwDs are capable of travelling on their own and acting for themselves. Your practical assistance can help them to retain their independence. The following sections provide some general rules for assisting persons with particular disabilities.

### **Questions to ask the traveller before the trip:**

- Are you an experienced traveller? Are you familiar with the travel processes and procedures?
- Do you require any special assistance during the trip?

### **When interacting with passengers with disabilities:**

- Offer assistance, but don't insist.
- Address the person directly- not the interpreter or attendant, unless accompanied by an escort who suggests otherwise.
- Ask how to assist and what to do.
- Take into consideration the person's knowledge of his own needs.
- Ask whenever you are uncertain.
- Ask about the passenger's disability only when pertinent to travel needs.



Graphic courtesy: Samarthyam

## **4.2 Etiquette**

Naturally, no one wishes to cause offence. Sometimes, people avoid interacting with PwDs as they are unsure what is appropriate. Here are some tips.

### **Should I offer to shake hands?**

If the person is blind or has a visual impairment, you should do so as long as you accompany it with a cue such as "How do you do?" The person with a disability may offer the left hand to shake. If you are unsure whether the person can shake hands, for example a person who may not control his limbs, you can wait for a cue from him or simply nod and say something like "Pleased to meet you."

## **If a passenger's attendant is talking, to whom should I address myself?**

Some PwDs travel with attendants who provide personal services not usually offered by a carrier. In some cases, an attendant may assist with communications. However, all questions and comments should be directed to the person with a disability. You should not ask the attendant to offer opinions or make decisions unless it is indicated otherwise.

## **Should I avoid expressions like "Be seeing you", "Got to run along", or "Walk this way" if the person addressed could not do these things?**

No, don't avoid them. PwDs will often use these phrases themselves, as they are common terminology.

## **Am I not causing embarrassment if I keep asking the person to repeat what was said?**

Persons with speech impairments are aware that communication can be difficult. It is more important that they get across their message. You might try asking them to write down what they need or, if that is not possible, to write down what you think they need. Ask for a 'yes/no' movement of the head.



Disability Etiquette- Communicating with a wheelchair user at eye level

Graphic courtesy: Samarthyam

## 5 Section- Assisting a Person with a Visual Impairment or who is Blind

People with visual impairments might not see as sharply or as clearly as those without this disability. Most individuals who are legally blind have some vision; however, some might be able to see only directly ahead, and some only peripherally. Others may be able to make out shapes but have trouble reading. Only 10% of persons with visual impairments are totally blind.

### 5.1 Terminology

| <b><i>Preferred</i></b>                                    | <b><i>Avoid using</i></b>  |
|--|----------------------------|
| Persons who are blind/<br>Persons with a visual impairment | Blind<br>Visually impaired |

### 5.2 How to assist a person with a visual impairment or who is blind

#### **Ask if and how you can assist.**

- Identify yourself and your role. Even if you are wearing a uniform, the person may not be able to see the insignia.
- Use a normal tone of voice.
- Ask if he needs assistance. If so, ask the person the best way to guide him.
- When offering directions, do it in distances, for example say "two steps behind you" or "a meter to



your left". People may not be able to see landmarks. Pointing or saying "over there" is not helpful.

### ***Offer your arm.***

- If you will be taking the person to her destination, offer your arm (verbally) and touch her on the back of the arm with your hand. Don't take her arm unexpectedly.
- Walk at a normal pace. The person will walk about a step behind to be forewarned of your next move by changes in your body position and direction.

### ***Keep the person informed of the environment.***

- Keep up a running dialogue on things like:
- Changes in slope or irregularities in terrain; tripping hazards;
- Obstacles; handrails; doors (whether they open towards or away from you); and
- Stairs: Tell the person whether you are going up or down. Let her feel out the first step. Keep one stair ahead. Tell the person when the last step is coming up.

### ***Leave the person secure at her destination.***

- Describe the landscape or room at destination. Layout, dimensions, other people and objects are all helpful to know.

- If the person wishes to sit, place her hand on the back of the chair or in contact with the chair so her knees lightly touch the seat. Mention the kind of chair, for example arm chair or bench.
- If the person wishes to remain standing, try to leave her in contact with a tangible object, such as a wall or a table.
- Give your cell phone no. so that the person can call you while boarding announcements are made.
- Let the person know when you are leaving.

### ***5.3 Devices and Supports***

#### **Guide dogs or other service animals:**

Service animals are often used by people who have a visual impairment; however, they are also used for a variety of other tasks. Properly trained service animals are allowed on board at no extra charge and are permitted in any public place, at any time. They are also permitted to remain on the floor at the passenger's feet as long as they are properly harnessed. Passengers may be required to produce written proof of their service animal has been trained by a professional service animal institution.

#### **Guiding a person with a service animal:**

- Avoid patting, feeding or talking to a service animal wearing a harness. The animal is working.
- The person with a service animal might prefer to follow your directions rather than take your arm, so ask.

- Before opening a door, check with the person. He might be using its location as a reference point, or might prefer to open it himself to protect the animal's paws.
- Ensure you know the designated relieving areas for service animals in the airport terminal facility.

### **White Cane:**

This cane assists persons who are blind or have a visual impairment.

### **Braille:**

A Braille creates Braille in tactile dots on paper. A *stylus* is used to take Braille notes by hand.

### **Devices to read print:**

Magnifying devices, machines that transmit print into tactile information, scanners that 'read' print information aloud, and other technical advances can help persons with visual impairments to access print information. Therefore, even if the material is only available in print format, the customer may still find it accessible.

### **Other devices:**

Other assistive devices may be computers adapted with voice synthesizers, screen readers, Braille read-out, hand-held computers, talking book machines which may be used for reading during the trip, and trekkers for navigation.

## 5.4 Do's and Don'ts

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DO ask if and how you can best assist.          | DON'T touch the person without warning.              |
| DO offer your arm to guide.                     | DON'T touch a service animal without permission.     |
| DO keep the person informed of the environment. | DON'T use vague phrases like 'over there'.           |
| DO leave him secure at destination.             | DON'T forget to tell the person when you're leaving. |



### Disability Etiquette-

- Offering elbow to males with visual impairment
- Females with visual impairment may give you their white cane to hold instead of holding your elbow

Graphic courtesy: Samarthyam

## 6 Section - Assisting a Person with a Mobility Impairment

As with all disabilities, the degree of mobility impairment ranges greatly. Some people may be able to move well with the help of a cane, walking stick or walker; while others do best with a wheelchair specially tailored to their particular needs.

### 6.1 Terminology

| <b>Preferred</b>                                 | <b>Avoid using</b>  |
|--|---|
| Person with a physical disability                | Physically challenged                                       |
| Person who uses a wheelchair;<br>wheelchair user | Confined, bound, restricted to or dependent on a wheelchair |
| Person with a mobility impairment                | Crippled  |

### 6.2 How to assist a person with mobility impairment

#### Ask if and how you can assist.

- Sometimes assistance is not necessary or desired. Ask the passenger how he prefers to be assisted.
- Sit down, when speaking with a person using a wheelchair to avoid forcing the person to look upward for an extended period.

- Always ask the person before taking action, for example “Shall I start pushing the chair?”
- Ask permission before leaning, resting against, or touching a person’s wheelchair. A wheelchair is seen as an extension of the person’s body.
- While folding the wheelchair of the person, ask about the safety features of the mobility device, including any detachable/ removable parts.
- If you are unsure how to handle an obstacle, such as an incline or level difference, ask the person to guide you.

### **Mention physical obstacles.**

When giving directions, include any physical obstacles, such as stairs, level differences, heavy or narrow doors, or uneven surfaces.

### **Transfer the person safely.**

Transferring a person from his own mobility aid to one provided by the airlines requires particular techniques. These will safeguard you and the passenger from injury as well as respect the passenger’s dignity and comfort. Transfers should only be attempted by persons who have received proper training. It is always preferred to be assisted by a female staff for girls and women with disabilities.



Assisted transfer of wheelchair user



Disability Etiquette- Communicating with a wheelchair user at eye level

Graphic courtesy: Samarthyam



## **6.3 Devices and Supports**

### **Wheelchairs**

There are many types of wheelchairs, which range in size, height, weight and the degree to which they fold or collapse. They may also come with special operating devices, for example head controls, which can be both sensitive and fragile.

### **Scooters**

There are models with three and four wheels, often with "add-ons", such as baskets, backpacks, and lights.

### **Walkers**

Some models have two wheels, either with both wheels at the front, or with two wheels at the back. They may be equipped with a seat.

### **Crutches**

There are generally two types: forearm or underarm. Most passengers take them on board but sometimes they are transported with other luggage.

### **Canes**

Users typically take their canes on board, as they can be easily stored.

### **Leg braces**

Passengers will wear them while boarding but may remove braces on board when seated.

## **Transporting mobility aids**

If a passenger's mobility aid is damaged or unavailable on arrival, the airlines should provide a suitable temporary replacement immediately and at no cost. A passenger is entitled to use the temporary replacement until her own aid is either repaired or replaced.

In addition, and more importantly, the lack of such a specialized piece of equipment for the days or months it takes to replace the damaged piece can seriously impede the passenger's freedom of mobility.

Preparing the mobility aid for transport is critical. It is essential that staff involved in this process have received training on handling wheelchairs, which are personal items and essential to the PwDs. Personal wheelchairs should be the last items to be loaded in the hold and the first to be unloaded. They should then be returned to their owner with the minimum of delay.

It is also important to note that there are specific requirements for the transportation of battery-operated wheelchairs on aircraft. All detachable parts should be enumerated viz. batteries, foot rests and arm rests, which are generally removed for storage and many a times misplaced. Hence, while storing the wheelchair one must ensure that the detachable parts are securely kept should be given back to the passenger.

## 6.4 Do's and Don'ts:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DO ask if and how you can best assist.                                | DON'T touch the person's wheelchair unnecessarily.   |
| DO ask the passenger how to handle the mobility aid.                  | DON'T transfer a passenger from his mobility aid without having been properly trained.   |
| DO include descriptions of physical obstacles when giving directions. | DON'T neglect your own health (especially your back), and safety requirements in effecting transfers. Learning transfer technique safeguards both the passenger and assistant. |

## 7 Section - Assisting a Person who is Hard of Hearing or Deaf

Hearing loss is a very common problem and the range of disability, like all other disabilities is wide. Some people are hard of hearing, some can lip-read, some cannot, some use sign language and/or the written word to communicate.

### 7.1 Terminology

| <b>Preferred</b>  | <b>Avoid using</b>                                   |
|---|--|
| Person who is deaf,<br>hard of hearing<br>Person with a hearing | Deaf and dumb, deaf<br>mute, the hearing<br>impaired |

### 7.2 How to Assist a Person who is Hard of Hearing or Deaf

**As with all other disabilities - ask first. Then follow the assistance asked for.**

- Get the person's attention by a tap on the shoulder or a discreet movement of your hand.
- Speak directly, face to face, without turning your face away and ask "What is the best way I can help you?" and follow as per what suits the person best.

**S/he will tell you if s/he lip reads or not.**

- If the person can lip-read:

- o Allow a clear view of your mouth/lips.
- o Ensure you have good lighting.
- o Do not cover your mouth with your hand.
- o Do not talk while eating/chewing.
- o Speak at a natural rhythm.
- o Do not turn your face away from the person.
- o If a particular word is not understood, try to substitute that word with another word.
- o Keep a paper and pen handy to write down anything, if necessary.
- If the person cannot lip read:
  - o Use written communication - keeping with you a notepad and a pen.
  - o Ideally, the services of a sign language interpreter (one or two of the airline staff trained in sign language) could be utilized at such times of need.

### **Help the person to hear better.**

- If the person can hear:
  - o Look directly at the person;
  - o Eliminate distractions like a radio by turning them off or muting;
  - o Speak clearly in a normal tone of voice;
  - o Don't shout, since it increases distortion;
  - o Ask short questions that require short answers;

- o Rephrase; don't just repeat if you're not understood. Some words are easier to understand than others; and
- o Don't use slang.

### **Provide writing materials if appropriate.**

Write out the information so that the person can read what you are trying to communicate. However, writing may not be appropriate for persons whose first language may be sign language. When writing notes, the general rule should be: "Keep It Simple". Make public information visual with plenty of graphics and use plain language.

## ***7.3 Devices and support***

### **Interpreters:**

The interpreter's role is to interpret the conversation with the person who is hard of hearing or deaf, not to participate in it. Speak to the person with the hearing loss, not to the interpreter. However, most people with a hearing loss do not travel with an interpreter. Some rudimentary sign language should be taught in the training programme.

### **Hearing Aids:**

Hearing aids may help users but problems may still be experienced in noisy environments.

### **Teletypewriter (TTY):**

These electronic communication devices are built with a keyboard and a small screen to allow persons who are hard of hearing or deaf, as well as persons with no

hearing impairments, to use the telephone to communicate. Instead of speaking and listening, users communicate by typing back and forth to one another. Communicating with a TTY is noticeably different from communicating with a telephone. As such, airport operators/ airlines responsible for providing front-line customer services to PwDs are to receive training on the use of this equipment.

### **Pagers and Cell Phones:**

These devices can be used for text messaging in the same manner as general users do.

#### ***7.4 Do's and Don'ts:***

|   |  |
|---|--|
| DO get the person's attention discreetly.                     | DON'T cover your mouth, for example with hands or paper. |
| DO face the person directly.                                  | DON'T shout.   |
| DO remember lip-reading only gives 30-40% of the information. | DON'T use jargon.  |
| DO rephrase or write the information in plain language.       | DON'T use exaggerated lip movements.                     |



Sign language communication with a person who is hard of hearing or deaf

Graphic courtesy: Samarthyam



## 8 Section- Assisting Persons with High Support Needs

Persons with other types of disabilities, such as those with cognitive, speech, mental health impairments, persons who are deaf-blind, persons with Autism and seniors also can have special needs. In general, all PwDs, persons with reduced mobility and those with high support needs to be assisted with courtesy. An understanding that each person is different and may have specific requirements needs to be respected.

### 8.1 Terminology

| <b>Preferred</b>                                  | <b>Avoid Using</b>                          |
|---|---|
| Person with a learning disability                 | Learning disabled, learning difficulty      |
| Person with intellectual disability               | Retarded, mentally retarded                 |
| Person with autism                                | Hyper, autistic                             |
| Person with cerebral palsy, person who has spasms | Spastic (as a noun)                         |
| Person with multiple disabilities                 | Handicap, disabled                          |
| Person with Down's syndrome                       | Mongoloid                                   |
| Person with mental illness                        | Mental patient, mentally ill, schizophrenic |
| Seniors   | The aged, the elderly                       |
| Person who has epilepsy                           | An epileptic                                |

## **8.2 How to Assist Persons with Other Disabilities**

This section provides some tips on assisting persons with other common disabilities. As with all persons with disabilities, the fundamental rule is to first understand what the person desires or requires in assistance.

### **Tips for Assisting a Person with a Cognitive Impairment**

Persons with cognitive impairments take longer to understand and take time to respond. To help them:

- Use short sentences.
- Give one piece of information at a time.
- Give instructions in the order the person needs to follow them.
- Be patient and supportive.
- Be prepared to repeat and rephrase.
- Offer to write the information.
- Wait for the response, it may take a bit longer – called a time lag in response, but will be important to know their preference.

### **Tips for Assisting a Person with Language and Communication Impairment**

A person who is non verbal may use an Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Device. To assist him:

- Be patient and supportive.

- Be prepared to repeat and rephrase.
- Wait for the person to finish typing/pointing at a picture or graphic, etc.
- Give a preference for the front row aisle seat so as to have freedom to use AAC device at ease.
- A pictorial AAC LOWTECH system to be available on board-with vocabulary pertaining to travel included.
- Wheelchairs should have a tray table to hold the AAC devices to be provided on request by the airlines ground staff.
- Provision to charge the AAC devices onboard.

### **Tips for Assisting a Person with Psychosocial Disabilities**

Psychological disorders affect a person's ability to function within society. The majority of persons respond to treatment. However, some people experience periods of detachment from reality, depression, or bizarre behaviour. To help them:

- Stay calm.
- Attend to the questions at hand. Provide only the necessary information.
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues. Rapid breathing, nervous pacing, and perspiration may indicate distress.
- If the person seems in crisis, seek assistance.

- If the person is in crisis, calmly ask him for the name of someone to contact.

### **Tips for Assisting a Person who is Deaf-Blind**

A person who is deaf-blind is an individual with a substantial degree of vision and hearing loss. He might travel with an attendant who is called an intervener. Due to dual sensory loss, communication and accessibility is a major issue for deaf-blind persons. Deaf-blind persons face difficulties in accessing the physical environment and access to information is a major constraint. Tactile Sign language interpretation, Braille and large print signage and sighted guide service are very basic and unique needs of a deaf-blind person, which need to be addressed.

- As always, make sure you understand the passenger's needs. The intervener will communicate for you through signing on the passenger's hand (tactile) and can use sign language also.
- Never touch a person who is deaf-blind suddenly or without permission.
- Guide the passenger's hand to objects by letting her hand rest lightly on the back of yours.
- Do not leave without letting the passenger know by touch or by signal, even for short periods.
- Do not move the passenger or hand something to her without prior explanation.

## **Tips for Assisting the Elderly**

As the rate of disability increases with age, and since the population of seniors will significantly increase in the coming years, it is important to remain aware of the needs of this group. Most seniors will not need special assistance or, if they do, the help may be found under the sections for the particular disability, for example persons who are hard of hearing or deaf. However, you can generally help by:

- Asking if and how you can be of assistance.
- Adjusting your pace if the person moves or speaks slowly.

### **8.3 Summary**

In addition to the disabilities noted above, people may have a condition, such as arthritis or a temporary disability, which can impact on their ease of travel. This training cannot cover all types of conditions or disabilities, as they are as varied as people themselves.

In assisting every person with a disability, the principle rule is to ensure you understand what is needed. The person with the disability is in the best position to tell you that. If you can accommodate those needs, you will promote a safer and more pleasant trip for your customer.

## 9 Guide to Conduct Disability Simulation Exercise

### 9.1 *What is Simulation Exercise?*

This is an exercise that can be used, to give participants an understanding of what it is like to be elderly and disabled. It is most effective if the exercise can span at least for 30-45 minutes, and one can simulate many normal acts of daily living, such as going to the toilet, walking, eating and transferring, etc.

### 9.2 *When to use the simulation exercise?*

- It is best used in a workshop situation. It can be used for small groups of five or six people or a large group of up to 30, which is divided into smaller subgroups.
- Wheelchair user, being an amputee, having a broken leg, cataract, tunnel vision, blindness, hearing loss, heart/chest conditions can all be simulated.
- Equipment and materials required for simulation exercise per group of ten participants:
  - self-propelled wheelchair,
  - pair of adjustable crutches,
  - one adjustable walking frame,
  - one adjustable tripod walker,
  - two crepe bandages,
  - cotton wool,
  - one set of thin surgical gloves,
  - safety pins and
  - talcum powder.

### ***9.3 Briefing on Disability***

It is important that a short briefing is given on each disability, its causes, effects and limitations. This will help to improve understanding and involvement in the role-play situation. If blindness is being simulated, then a demonstration of how to lead a blind person must be given by someone who is familiar with the correct way of doing this.

Emphasize that the purpose of the simulation exercise is to help participants understand the mismatch between the diverse levels of physical and sensory functioning and the existing physical environment. Clarify that it is not the purpose of the simulation exercise to test the limits of the participants' abilities.

### ***9.4 Demonstration on use of Devices***

A demonstration is given on how to use a wheelchair, white cane, walking frame, etc. A detailed input is provided to the trainees on how to navigate in open areas and in crowded places with these devices. A combination of both assisted and independent usage of wheelchairs is important as most of the times the ground/ airline staff assist wheelchair users.



Use of assistive devices to simulate disabilities

Photo courtesy: Samarthyam



## 10 Section Training Module

The training session can be designed to suit the type of participants and can range for half a day to full one day. The training session given here is suggestive and can be designed as per the type of training- refresher, orientation or advance.

|    | <b>Activity</b>  |
|----|--|
| 1. | Orientation on Course-Including Aims and Objectives.<br>General awareness on Persons with Disabilities<br>- Physically Impaired<br>- Vision Impaired<br>- Hearing Impaired<br>- Hidden Disabilities<br>Difference between Persons with Disabilities and Persons with Reduced Mobility        |
| 2. | Terminology, etiquette and communication   |
| 3. | Disability Awareness: Simulation Exercise<br>Understanding assistive devices, their usage and other mobility aids used by persons with disabilities ( <i>30-45 minutes simulation is necessary to understand usage, handling, and securing of assistive devices and mobility aids etc.</i> ) |
| 4. | Simulation Feedback (sharing of experiences)- sensory, physical, cognitive and elderly.  |
| 5. | Assisting a person with a: Mobility impairment, Visual impairment & Blind, Hard of Hearing & Deaf, and High Support Needs  |
| 6. | Interaction Session: Question and Answers  |





**Samarthyam advocates for “Universal Design ”, which eliminates all attitudinal, physical, informational and environmental barriers and promotes inclusion and full participation of persons with disabilities**

---

**Samarthyam Publication**