

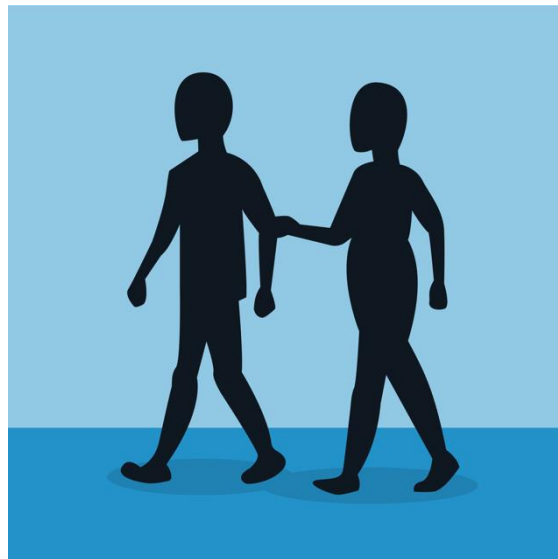


## **Smithsonian Accessibility Tip Sheet:**

### **Sighted Guide Amid COVID-19 Social Distancing Requirements**

When a person who is blind or has low vision visits a Smithsonian museum, they may request a “sighted guide.” This is a basic wayfinding service available without the requirement to call ahead or give advanced notice to the museum. It is a form of effective communication per federal accessibility laws.

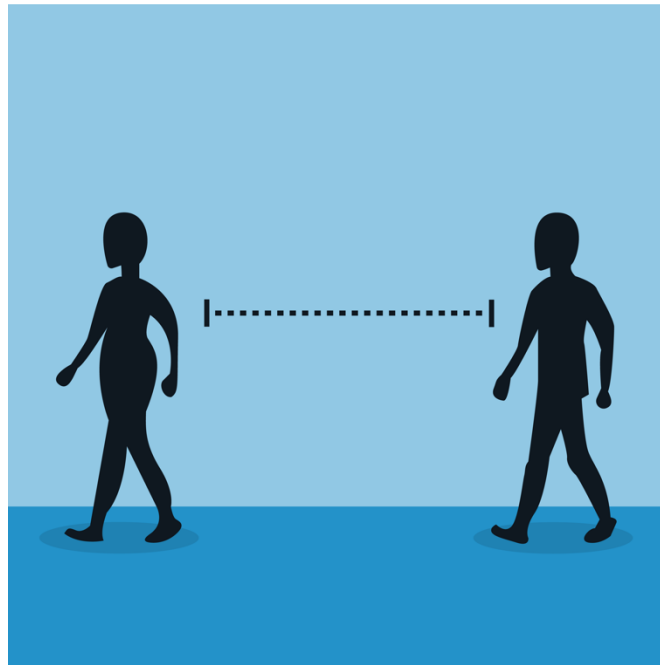
Prior to COVID-19 modifications to accessibility accommodations, sighted guide assistance meant a Smithsonian staff member or volunteer guided a visitor to where they need to go in the museum by the visitor holding the back of the staff member’s elbow. See image below:



As museums reopen, the technique has been modified by the blind and low vision communities to avoid physical contact while still receiving necessary wayfinding information.

Sighted guide can be accomplished through contactless, verbal guiding by a Smithsonian staff member or volunteer. It is important to start by asking the visitor how best to verbally guide them, especially asking where they want the staff member to stand.

A staff member will stand to the side, in front of, or behind the visitor and relay to them verbally how to navigate through the museum. The visitor will also likely have a cane and/or a service dog so there may be a combination of tools to make it possible for the visitor to safely navigate. See image below:



The person guiding will give verbal directional cues, describe the surrounding environment as they walk, and note any obstacles or anything surprising (i.e. a hole in the ground, a large crowd, etc.). A visitor may also request to have objects described or exhibit labels read to them.

For questions and further information, contact Access Smithsonian at [access@si.edu](mailto:access@si.edu)