

Tours for People with Disabilities

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“There is a disabled person unable to find a ramp.”

OR

“There is a person who is disabled by an inaccessible building.”

Address the person first, then the disability

- Person who has a physical or learning disability
- Person who uses a wheelchair
- Person who is deaf or hard of hearing
- Person who is blind or has low vision
- Person with mental retardation or cognitive disabilities

NOT disabled, handicapped, confined, blind, deaf, or retarded person

Barriers are imposed by society, environment, or other people

Contrasting Models of Disability

- Disability is a deficiency or abnormality.
- Disability is a negative.
- Disability resides in the individual.
- The remedy for disability-related issues is cure or “normalization” of the individual.
- The agent of change must be professional or institutional.
- Disability is a difference.
- Disability in itself is neutral.
- Disability derives from the interaction between the individual and society.
- The remedy for disability-related issues is change in the interaction between individual and society.
- The agent of change is the individual, an advocate, or anyone who affects the arrangements between the individual and society.

Tour Offerings at the MIA

- ASL-interpreted or assisted-listening tours for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Individual or small-group tours for people who use wheelchairs.
- Tours for people with memory loss and their friends and caregivers.
- Small-group tours for people with mental retardation or cognitive disabilities.
- Individual, docent-guided touch/"white glove" and tactile diagram tours for people who are blind or have low vision.

Things to consider: all tour groups

- Sitting, standing, walking: wheelchairs, gallery stools, elevator vs. stairs
- Assisted-listening devices (available at VMS desk)
- Accessible restrooms: locations
- If you're not sure what to do, ask first!
And then follow directions.
- If your offer is declined, do not insist.

Working with an ASL Interpreter

- Talk with ASL interpreter prior to the tour – be sure to come early! (Darlene Snelson)
- Work out where both of you will stand so that the art work is visible to everyone in group.
- Introduce the interpreter to the group.
- Don't single out those who are there for interpretation; the interpreter is aware who is there.
- Speak at your usual pace, looking directly at the group. The person watching the interpreter may not be looking at you. Pause after you speak to allow time for looking.
- Do not walk and talk at the same time. Interpretation will not be possible!

Tours for Visitors with Cognitive Disabilities

- Be alert to your groups' responses and adjust your method of communication accordingly.
- Use direct sentences and concrete language. Use visual aids and props that can be touched.
- Repeat information as necessary.
- Give people time to respond to questions.
- Do not be discouraged if people do not respond as you expect. Encourage any form of participation.
- Don't try to cover too much information or territory—people will be overwhelmed.

Teaching through Touch: White Glove Tours and Tactile Diagrams



Henry Moore, *Warrior with Shield*, bronze, 1953-54





Pablo Picasso, Baboon and Young, bronze, 1951

Using Tactile Diagrams

- Selection of images
- Diagrams of Van Gogh's *Olive Trees* and Cadzi Cody's *Elkhide*, explored by touching a raised physical "map" while a docent verbally describes the work.
- Single vs. multiple diagrams with details



Vincent Van Gogh, Olive Trees, 1889





Cadzi Cody, Scenes of Plains Indian Life, 1880



Museum Accessibility Team

- Discusses/gives recommendations for disability-related issues throughout the museum
- Members from Visitor Services, Human Resources, Museum Guide Programs, Security, Exhibitions Design, Community Relations, Press and Public Relations, and Facilities
- Accessibility information on website, brochure listing museum-wide services, physical plant issues, mobility issues