

Discover Your Story Tour Guidelines

Tour Questions for Staff from Memory Care Facilities

As you may already know, Discover Your Story tours will always have two docents assigned – one as lead with an assistant. Each docent will receive two credits for the tour because of the setup and takedown time required to make each tour as successful as possible. It is too much to ask one docent alone to move this tour through the museum safely. If a participant needs to have a bathroom break, the assistant, knowing the lead's route, can break away from the group and rejoin without stopping the whole group for five or ten minutes. (Remember, you need to have either a staff member or family member accompany the individual to the restroom.) If you need to take two groups up the elevators, each group has a docent. You can determine if you want to split the presentations up, but keep in mind “simpler is better” with this group.

As with any other tour, the lead will be in charge of contacting the health facility. Paula and Jennifer are attempting to get as much information as possible from the contact person/staff member at the facilities during their initial conversation, but it isn't always possible to have all of our questions answered at that time. Many times the staff isn't sure which residents they will be bringing along for that particular tour, due to mood and health concerns on the tour day, so it's important that the Lead Docent start from scratch in eliciting information. Here are some things you want to talk with your contact about:

1. Let the staff know that they will need to supply one “official” staff member (not volunteer) from the facility per five residents. It would be great if they could also supply an additional volunteer, but the staff ratio is by far the deal breaker. We've found that with the mid-stage clients, a one-on-one ratio is very important for a positive tour. It helps to lessen the client's anxiety level allowing them to truly enjoy their time at the museum. (We have a list of Friends Volunteers up on the website and in the prop box.) We've had facilities show up with three or four more clients than they had originally booked, thinking that's okay. But, it makes for a chaotic and not particularly fun tour. So they need to realize they have to stick to the numbers they gave when booking the tour. Of course, we welcome them to schedule another tour in the near future.
2. Ask your contact if they know whether the resident is early or mid-stage. Thus far, we've seen mostly mid-stage from these facilities, but it doesn't hurt to ask.
3. Ask your contact if they need the museum to provide wheelchairs, and if so, how many. If they decline wheelchairs, inquire whether or not the participants can stand for one hour. Let them know we can provide folding chairs.

Note: Check to see how many wheelchairs are at the Target entrance. The Visitor and Member Services staff usually makes sure the wheelchairs are where we need them in advance, but on rare occasions, you might have to wheel additional chairs over from the Link coatroom, if museum staff is busy. The yellow chairs in the coatroom at the Target

entrance are for our tours. You can wheel them upstairs on the handcart and set them up in front of the art works you will be touring. Then store the cart in one of the computer rooms – not in a hallway. We know that participants, if they are not in a wheelchair, need to use the yellow chairs since the stools are not stable enough. You can use the stools for caregivers/family members and volunteers to sit alongside their partners during the tour.

4. What is the general level of verbal ability in the group?
5. Would they like us to provide listening devices for any members of the group?
6. Ask your contact if they have any residents that like to wander? If so, we could use a heads-up on who they are.
7. Sometimes it's difficult to determine who the client is, especially when the facility brings along additional volunteers. So it would be very helpful to have nametags already on the client – just their first names – so we know who's who.
8. If your contact knows their residents or clients well, ask them to have an idea of how to break them into groups before they arrive at the MIA. It can be helpful to group higher-functioning clients together, so that we can adjust the tour to fit their needs.
9. Let your contact know that their tour is entering through the Stevens Avenue (new Target wing) entrance. This has been very confusing for many homes. Let them know that along with their tour confirmation is a map of the museum with this entrance marked. Telling them to look for the loading docks has been helpful for the drivers.
10. Please confirm pickup time and entrance with the bus driver before they leave.

Setting Up for a Tour

Contact the Memory Care Facility with the above questions.

Day of Tour

Get the evaluation forms/postcards/props/nametags from the office. We have two large umbrellas and dry cloths in the black museum bags near the prop box.

Pick up any listening devices from Michael at the Information Desk. Make sure they have been charged and are on the correct setting.

It's important that the lead lets the assistant know their route in case the assistant needs to break off with a resident (and staff or family member) for a bathroom break.

Check to see how many wheelchairs are at the Target entrance. Sometimes the people at Visitor Information will help you move chairs from the Link over to Target – it depends on if they are busy.

*Preset yellow chairs in galleries you will be using if your group requires them.

If you are not using yellow chairs, set out camp stools in the Target Lobby for partners to grab and put them on the back of the wheelchairs.

Confirm with the lobby guards that there will be a captain to open the door. They're supposed to get an advance request, but it doesn't always happen. It's a good idea to ask the guards to call over to the Link entrance and ask them to keep their eyes open, just in case the memory care facility's bus ends up at the wrong entrance.

Once the bus arrives, a lead docent can go out to meet the bus and find out whether or not they require wheelchairs brought out to the bus or if the residents can walk in with assistance.

If you have enough volunteers, it would be great to ask them to partner with a resident right from the start. They can introduce themselves and tell the client that they will be right along side them for the entire tour. This helps to cut down on the newness and resulting anxiety of entering the MIA for these people.

When the residents enter the Lobby, someone can take their coats and get them a nametag, if they aren't wearing one – just first names are fine. If the memory care staff can help you divide them into groups, it would help cut down on the chaos.

Ask the staff if anyone needs a bathroom break. If so, staff needs to take them to the bathroom, not a volunteer from the MIA.

If anyone is using a listening device, hand it to the volunteer first and have him or her do a sound check and then fit it on the resident.

Once your groups are formed, the Lead Docents should take the time to sit down, introduce themselves and welcome the participants to the museum. Nothing elaborate – keep it simple and brief, but remember repetition is good. Tell them again where they are and that someone will be with them at all times – they needn't worry. You may need to do this several times throughout your tour to reassure the participants.

If you are wearing a transmitter, either turn it off or move the mouthpiece up and away from your mouth while you are moving your group around the museum. We've been told that it is confusing for the client who is wearing the receiver to hear your voice when you're not in front of them.

When boarding your groups on the elevators, someone needs to hold the button inside the elevator; otherwise the doors close too quickly. Try to break up the group so that there is a docent in each elevator.

During the tour, invite the partner to sit alongside the resident. We encourage the lead docent to sit as well. It seems to work better for eye contact with the group participants.

SLOW DOWN. Listen actively and let them tell you their stories.

Check in with your group several times during the tour to make sure they can all hear you.

Please remember – many of these individuals can clearly remember events from 20 or 30 years ago, but won't remember what you said at the last object. It can be frustrating for the participant if you refer back to something that happened a short time ago. Keep it in the moment.

Occasionally one individual will dominate the conversation. You can try to get down in front of them, make eye contact and thank them for sharing. Then tell them that you are going to share what they've said with the rest of the group. It's a good idea to redirect and ask another participant, by name, a different question to get the conversation going again. You can also ask the partner to talk quietly with the gregarious individual.

On the other side of the coin, you may have a very quiet individual. In this case, after making sure that they can hear your voice, you can sit and make eye contact with them and ask them something, addressing them by name. By talking to them individually and inviting them to comment, we've found many of the quieter participants will open up. If they choose not to participate, you can try a "turn and talk" and invite the dyad to work on a question together.

At the end of the tour, please remember to give the residents a postcard/brochure and an evaluation form to the staff member in charge.

Once again, find a guard to open the door.

We have been told that helping to load the bus is greatly appreciated by the memory care staff, so if possible, walk or wheel the residents out and say goodbye.