

Centre Checklist For Participants who are Blind Or Have Visual Impairment

At the Sakyong's Council meeting in Boston, 29th April to 1st May 2005, it was agreed by all present that we have a firm commitment that in Shambhala Society access needs to be provided for seniors and people with disabilities to all activities, programs, practices, any teachings they would otherwise be able to receive, community events, etc. and this access needs to be as safe, workable, uplifted, and dignified as access is for anyone else.

What is visual impairment?

The range of visual impairment is broad and varied. Consequently, no single improvement can make the sangha and the dharma accessible to all people with visual impairments. Access to full participation in the sangha is affected not only by the nature of the person's visual difficulties, but also by the communication between the sangha members and the person who is visually impaired, the quantity and quality of light present, and the quality of the communication of the dharma in written and/or oral form.

How to use this list

The Shambhala international working group on Accessibility and disability (A&D) is charged with helping and guiding accessibility efforts for both physical environments and electronic media. What we are trying here is to match accessibility adaptations to realistic expectation of resources at *your* centre.

Many effective solutions to accessibility challenges are homemade. Making the adaptation your self can be both cost effective and precisely tailored to the situation at hand. In reading these notes, think of how you might be able to put together a system that will work for you. You also might want to join the accessibly forum group in the Shambhala network site ([URL here](#)) as well as check out the list of resources for visual problems we have put together ([URL here](#)).

Visual impairment becomes more common in the age group of 50 and older. Therefore, as our sangha ages, it behoves us to take standard precautions to predict this issue with our existing sangha. But as new persons visit us with this condition or if more severe visual problems develop, communication with and more adaptation for the blind or visually impaired person/s can be made.

Because adaptations for those with visual impairment are generally not expensive, the following assessment checklist is provided as a guide for centres regardless of size.

Contact us

We have several websites:

- The A & D working group Shambhala network group
http://Aliquamdignissim.dui_non/
- The Accessibility and disability network web pages:
http://Aliquamdignissim.dui_non/

The websites, besides containing discussion forums also have lots of useful downloadable documents (like this one)

You can email us at AandD@shambhala.org

or write to:

Accessibility and Disability working group
Shambhala international
Some address
Halifax, NS Canada
B4T 5R6

<needs correct addresss and review by deaf person 18.11.12>

1. Has your centre extended a welcome mat to the blind or visually impaired?

- ☐ Have you published on your website the contact information for your health and wellness director letting the public know that needs for accommodation can be discussed confidentially with this person before or during their visit to the centre?
- ☐ Have you informed the public that a tour by a centre representative and an orientation and mobility specialist of their choice can be scheduled?
- ☐ Do program application forms include a question concerning if the person is blind or visually impaired and request information about what would help that individual?
- ☐ At residential programs in particular, coordinators and other staff involved should be sensitized to the needs of participants with visual impairments and trained to help these people. A system needs to be in place to ensure this always happens. The coordinator/s or their designee needs to make contact with the participants one-on-one to discuss any special needs while recognizing and clarifying their desire for confidentiality. Ideally, this would be done well in advance of the program. The coordinator should also take the responsibility of checking in with the participant throughout the program.

- ☐ Do you imbed video captioning on your website?
- ☐ Are your website, emails, and descriptive links friendly for those using screen readers?
- ☐ Do you provide some large print chant books (18-24 fonts, verdana and arial being best)?

2. Have you taken basic precautions to make your centre safe?

- ☐ Have you cleared clutter or objects from the walking paths or at the edge of walking paths?
- ☐ Have you cleared low overhanging objects, signs, or brush?
- ☐ Do you regularly dust the light bulbs and light fixtures at your centre (this can improve lighting by 50%)?
- ☐ Are brighter light bulbs that don't cause glare needed?
- ☐ Are there safety issues such as open stairways, blind corners, or unexpected changes to floor level along the walking routes?
- ☐ Are transitional areas properly marked and lit?
- ☐ Do high door thresholds, wide door swings, sloping floors, or water fountains present obstacles?
- ☐ Do Braille signs indicate elevator buttons and which floor it is?

3. Once you have talked to a visitor/member who is visually impaired about their specific needs, are there other visual barriers that you must remove?

- ☐ The primary lighting issue is not the intensity of light but its direction, placement, and uniformity. Are there problems of glare and surface reflectance that need to be dealt with?
- ☐ Is an additional light source needed especially during certain tasks such as when reading chants?
- ☐ Are large print chants and other handouts available (18-24 fonts, verdana and arial being best)?
- ☐ Only a small number of persons who are blind read Braille so you should talk to your visually impaired member/visitor before purchasing such materials. But for those who do, do you make chants and handouts available in Braille? There may be a library or other service who will convert text to Braille for free.
- ☐ Would audiotaped chants or talks be helpful to the participant? Volunteers could read book, transcripts, chants, etc. into a tape machine or read directly to the person.
- ☐ Do you have good signage in front of the sangha? Do you use the international symbol for accessibility to indicate accessible parking

spaces, loading zones, and accessible restrooms? Are the signs wall mounted and hung 60" above the floor to the centreline of the sign and illuminated in the range of 10 to 30 fc. (fc. means foot candle: the amount of light produced by a candle flame at the distance of one foot)?

- ☐ Would it be helpful to have a person who is blind or visually impaired visit your centre to provide feedback on visual barriers?
- ☐ Do members know that seeing eye dogs are working and should not be treated as pets?
- ☐ Would a color transparency to cover text help reduce glare?
- ☐ Would it be helpful to mark steps with bright high contrast and different textured tape especially the first and last step?
- ☐ Can you provide a buddy system of 2 or 3 people who can assist a participant who is visually impaired as needed? (Having a team ensures that the participant is not left alone which can be isolating.)
- ☐ Would it be helpful to mark handrails with white or yellow tape to mark their beginnings and ends?
- ☐ Do handrails begin and end where the steps do? If not, fix this condition if you can. If not, orient the participant to this condition.
- ☐ For participants who are unable to go or get into the centre, is a phone with a speaker and microphone available so they can attend meetings, talks, etc.?
- ☐ Would it be helpful to drape a brightly colored or textured piece of cloth over the seat of a person who is blind or visually impaired to help them find it?