

## Tips for Supporting Someone who is Deaf-Blind

- Communication methods are as individualized as the person and may include:
  - Touch cues
  - Gestures
  - Real objects as reference
  - Tactile Sign Language
  - Large print or close up viewing for someone with low vision
  - Braille
- A person with deaf-blindness typically navigates life via touch; touching objects and people to understand information in the environment.
- Communication may take much longer than expected.
- The individual may prefer more communication than expected, such as describing where things are or what you are doing.
- Many people with deaf-blindness, particularly those with an additional disability such as a developmental disability, may not have a complete system of communication and may not understand a lot that is happening around them.
- Being in an unfamiliar environment and experiencing things out of the normal routine, is very challenging for someone with deaf-blindness. Helping the individual to feel safe and calm is an important prerequisite to communication and treatment.
- What to do:
  - Let them know you are there by touching them gently on the shoulder.
  - Identify yourself in the same way with touch (your watch, ring, long hair, glasses, etc.), your name, and your role, each time you interact with them.
  - Allow extra time for the person to consider their response. A delay does not necessarily mean they do not have a response.
  - Tell them when you are leaving the room.
  - Do not force them to touch something or move their hands or body without permission first.
  - Do not move important items around.
  - For someone with a vision loss, seeing the item up close, in their periphery, with brighter light, or with contrasting colors may be needed.