



Massachusetts Association for the
Blind and Visually Impaired

HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEER

Click the arrow on tool bar or scroll down to view all slides. After you complete the unit, there will be a "completed and continue" button prompting you to move on.

TYPICAL VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENT

1-2 HOURS WEEKLY OR
BIWEEKLY

This is very flexible. You will set up a schedule that works best for you and the person you are matched with.





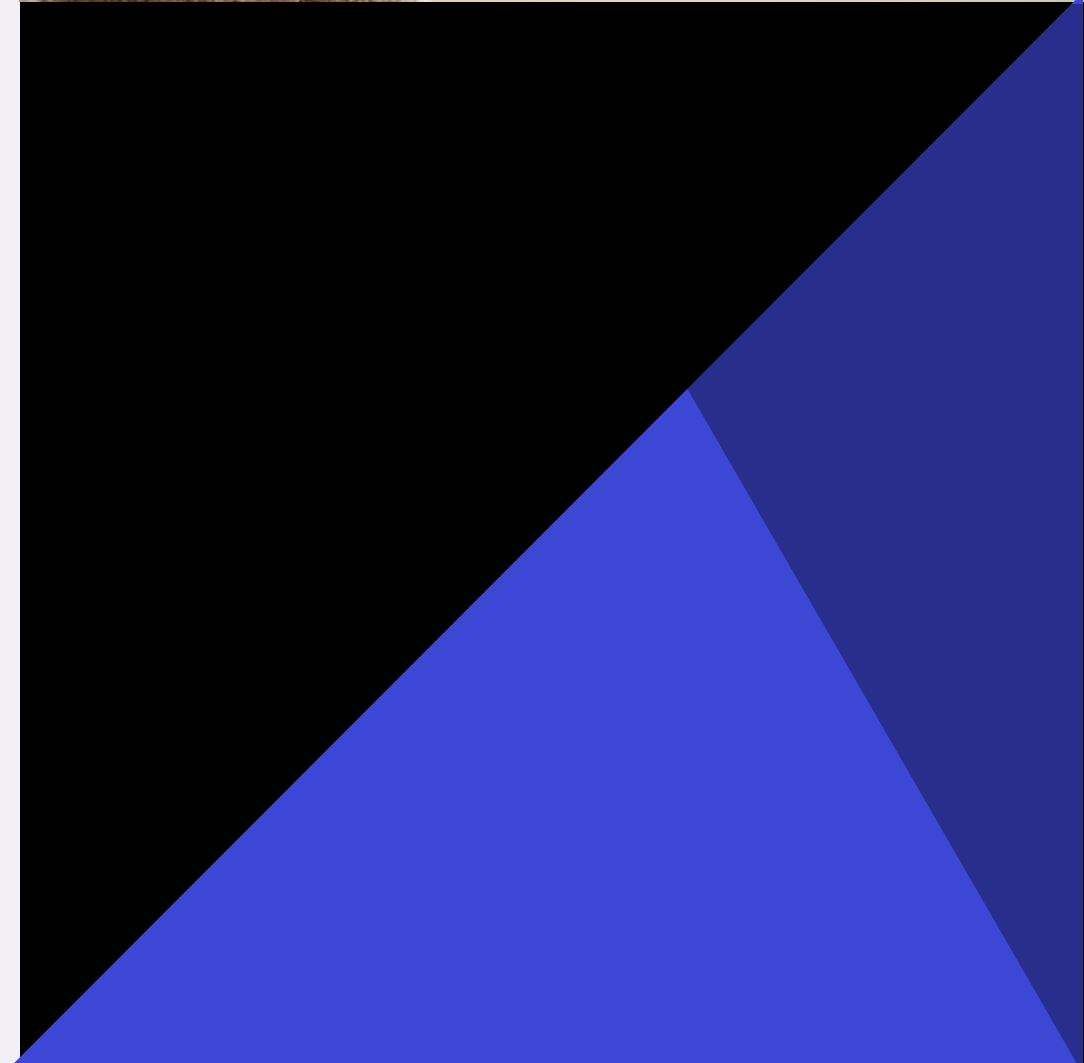
SET LIMITS FOR YOURSELF

**"WHAT TASKS CAN WE ACCOMPLISH IN
1-2 HOURS?"**

Setting time limits keeps the relationship productive, and keeps you from feeling overwhelmed. If you feel that the person you are matched with could benefit from having another volunteer to get all the tasks accomplished, please contact us so we can find your consumer additional support.

BENEFITS OF SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

- Share personal information gradually, in a mutually sharing and trusting relationship.
- Protect physical and emotional space from intrusion.
- Create an equal partnership where responsibility and power are shared.
- Confidently and truthfully say “yes” or “no” and be okay when the participant says “no” to you.
- Separate your needs, thoughts, feelings, and desires from the participant. Recognize that your boundaries and needs are different from theirs.
- Higher sense of respect for the participant and yourself.
- Empower yourself to make healthy choices and take responsibility for yourself.

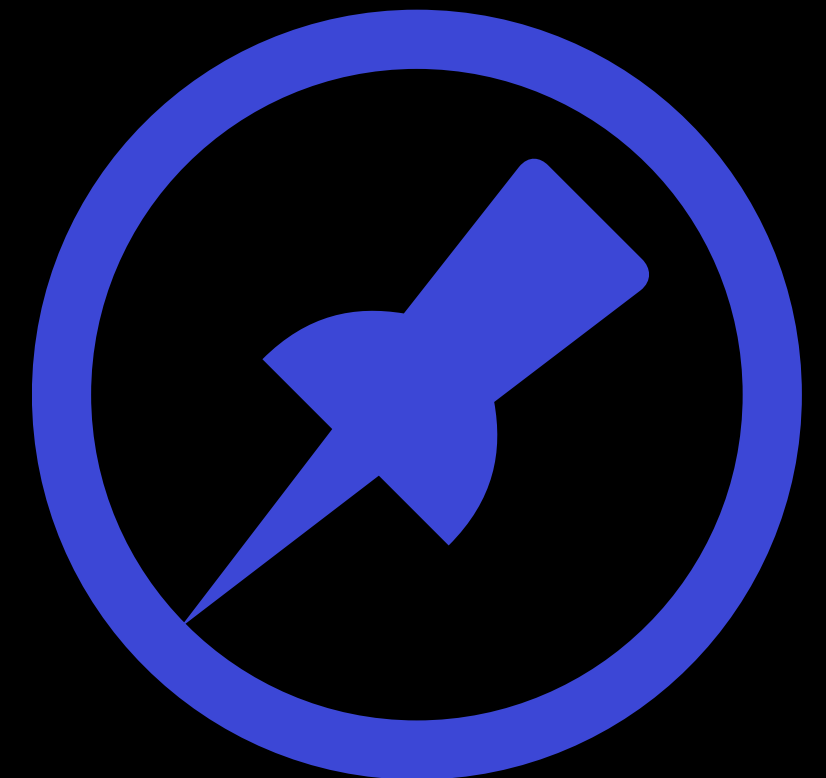


Be thoughtful about volunteering

- Participants are adults just like you, and need to make choices for themselves every day. They just happen to be living with vision loss.
- Make suggestions if you have an idea, or give advice if asked, but let the participant take it from there.
- Volunteering with a participant will increase equity, not save someone who is in need of saving.
- You have the right as a volunteer to be treated with kindness and respect.
- If you are unable to complete a certain task within a scheduled time, you are not responsible for making more time for the participant.
- Volunteers should not feel overused, or underappreciated by their participant match. It should be mutually beneficial, where fulfillment is equivalent to the time committed.

1. When you identify the need to set a boundary, do it clearly, calmly, firmly, respectfully, and in as few words as possible. Do not justify, get angry, or apologize for the boundary you are setting.
2. You are not responsible for the other person's reaction to the boundary you are setting. You are only responsible for communicating your boundary in a respectful manner. Plan on and expect possible questions but remain firm. Remember, your behavior must match the boundaries you are setting. You cannot successfully establish a clear boundary if you send mixed messages by apologizing.
3. At first, you will probably feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed when you set a boundary. Do it anyway and remind yourself you have a right to self-care. Setting boundaries takes practice and determination. Don't let anxiety, fear or guilt prevent you from taking care of yourself.
4. When you feel anger or resentment or start to dislike a relationship, you might need to set a boundary. Listen to yourself, determine what you need to do or say, then communicate assertively.
5. Learning to set healthy boundaries takes time. It is a process. Set them in your own time frame, not when someone else tells you.

TIPS FOR SETTING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES



**THE EASIEST AND MOST
EFFECTIVE WAY TO SET
HEALTHY BOUNDARIES IS
TO ESTABLISH THEM FROM
THE BEGINNING.**

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TAKE IT SLOW!

THE BEST WAY TO START OUT A NEW
RELATIONSHIP IS TO TAKE THINGS
SLOWLY.



How to "take it slow" with your match

- **TAKE YOUR TIME GIVING OUT PERSONAL INFORMATION**
- **DO NOT OVER COMMIT OR OFFER FAVORS BECAUSE YOU THINK IT IS SOMETHING THE PARTICIPANT WANTS**
- **FOCUS ON THE TASK AT HAND, AND THE BEST WAY TO COMPLETE THE TASK THAT WORKS FOR BOTH YOU AND THE PARTICIPANT**
- **BE HONEST ABOUT YOUR AVAILABILITY AND TIME**
- **CHECK-IN WITH YOURSELF AND MAKE SURE YOU ARE FEELING FULFILLED BY THE MATCH ROLE**
- **DO NOT RUSH THROUGH VOLUNTEERING TO "CHECK IT OFF THE LIST"**

EXAMPLES

FIRST TIME MEETING YOUR MATCH

Discuss when you are available to help, and listen to the participant's schedule as well.

Verbalize a time frame with a beginning and an end.

Example:

Volunteer: "I am available Monday evenings for 2 hours, or Saturdays from 10-12pm."

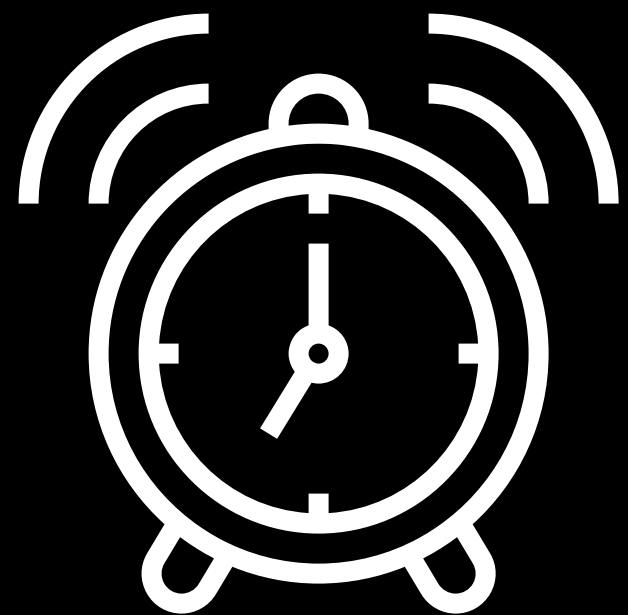
Try not to say, "I am free Monday evenings," or "Saturdays at 10am."



REPEAT ONCE YOU HAVE SET A TIME

SETTING AN ALARM ON YOUR PHONE IS AN EASY WAY TO STAY ON THE SAME PAGE ABOUT TIMING. SO, IT DOES NOT COME AS A SURPRISE WHEN THE TIME COMES TO LEAVE.

Volunteer: “It’s 6:45 Sally. So, we have 15 minutes left. What do want to finish up here today?”



Do not wait for the participant to acknowledge the time or remember you need to leave at 7pm. It is not the participant's responsibility to hold you to your time frame.



Do not be afraid to tell the participant that you need to leave. If you do not speak up, then the boundary seems more like a suggestion.

HOW DO WE SET BOUNDARIES IN AN ESTABLISHED RELATIONSHIP?

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SCENARIO #1

You have a great rapport with a participant. What started out as reading mail for two hours has crept into two and a half hours, and sometimes three hours. This is because you are joking more, laughing more, And they Are telling you stories. You really enjoy it, however, you are starting to get apprehensive about continuing the relationship because of the time commitment.

HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

SCENARIO #1

WHEN YOU ARRIVE AT THE PARTICIPANT'S HOME, ESTABLISH THE TIME YOU NEED TO LEAVE.

Volunteer: "Hi Sally, I have two hours this afternoon, so I will need to leave by 5pm."

MAKE A PLAN

When you arrive, sort the mail so you are prioritizing the things that need attention.

IF YOU SOCIALIZE DURING THE VISIT

You and the participant can be confident that the time sensitive things are taken care of.



How to set healthy boundaries

cont. scenario #1

- **SET AN ALARM ON YOUR PHONE, WITH A 30 MINUTE REMINDER SO YOU STAY ON TRACK.**

“It’s 4:30, we have half hour left. What should we tackle?”

- **VOICE THE PLAN AND GET ON THE SAME PAGE.**

“Let’s get your utility checks done straight away because these are due soon. Then you can show me that photo album.”

- **REMAIN CONSISTANT AND STICK TO YOUR TIME FRAME. IF YOU DO NOT GET TO ALL THE MAIL, THAT’S OKAY.**

Assure the participant that you will be back, but the important things are attended to.





BUILD CONSISTENCY

WITH CONSISTENCY COMES TRUST.

Try to arrive when you say you will, and leave when you say you will. If a volunteer is consistent, even if a lot of time is spent socializing, the participant can trust that the volunteer will be back. Consistency allows you to plan to do things that were not done this week, next week.

This eliminates the need to “stay until everything is finished.”

Sometimes it is not possible to complete everything with the participant. this can be a little frustrating for the participant, and overwhelming for the volunteer.

You can always suggest that the participant have a second volunteer or be connected to more resources.

Please reach out to the volunteer department if you think this would be helpful.

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SCENARIO # 2

You are meeting with a participant to help them pay their bills. The participant is having work done on their home, and you are writing the checks to pay the contractor. However, you observe that the work does not seem to be getting done. You are worried that the contractor might be taking advantage of this participant. You told the participant what you think, and yet she continues to have you write the checks.

HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

SCENARIO #2

We encourage volunteers to voice any concern they have for the participant. What the participant does with that information is completely up to them. As a volunteer, you need to respect that decision.

CORRECT WAY

Volunteer: Sally, each week I come over and write a check to the contractor, but I am worried that the work is not getting done.

Sally: Thank you for your concern, but I would like to continue writing the checks

Volunteer: Okay, I just wanted to tell you how I feel based on what I'm observing. I would feel terrible if I did not say anything and something happened.

Sally: Thank you, but I will chat with the contractor if I feel the need.



INCORRECT WAY

Volunteer: Sally, each week I come over and write a check to the contractor, but I am worried that the work is not getting done.

Sally: Thank you for your concern, but I would like to continue writing the checks

Volunteer: No, I would rather not write checks to someone who is not getting the work done. I will go speak to them for you.

IF YOU STILL FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE WITH WHAT IS HAPPENING, YOU CAN CONTACT THE MABVI VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT AND WE WILL CHECK IN WITH THE PARTICIPANT ABOUT THE SITUATION.

In this scenario the volunteer needs to respect the boundaries of the participant, even if they are not "happy" with the situation, or would have handled it differently if the roles were reversed.

However, this is not for the volunteer to worry about. You are not responsible for making decisions for the participant. We encourage volunteers to voice concerns, ask questions or make suggestions to provide information. What the participant does with that information is up to them.

If you feel that the situation could bring harm to the consumer, we ask that you contact the volunteer department.

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SCENARIO #3

You shop once a week at the grocery store for a participant. Last month, the participant needed a favor, and you obliged. This month, the participant, called you three times for other things. They asked you to pick prescriptions, help them take their cat to the vet, and asked if you could shovel their front walkway. You are happy to help out, but you are worried that this is only going to increase over time.

HOW TO SET HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

SCENARIO #3

ASK YOURSELF: ARE THESE TASKS APPROPRIATE FOR A MABVI VOLUNTEER TO BE DOING?

If 'yes', then decide what about this relationship is bothering you.

If the answer to this question is 'no' or you are unsure, then please contact the MABVI volunteer department.

IF THESE TASKS ARE APPROPRIATE FOR A MABVI VOLUNTEER, THEN ASK YOURSELF, "WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE WORK FOR ME?"

- Are you happy to do more errands but they need to be combined with your grocery shopping so it's not so sporadic?
- Are you only interested in volunteering for a specific time frame?
- Do you want to go back to just grocery shopping because you are not comfortable picking up prescriptions?
- Is it the frequent calling that is starting to bother you?



IDENTIFYING YOUR LIMIT

Once you have identified what is bothering you, and what will make this volunteer experience work, it is time to address the participant. It helps to have a suggestion for a compromise. If you do not feel comfortable doing this, the volunteer department is here to help! We are happy to talk to the participant on your behalf.

EXAMPLE

Volunteer: Hi Sally, I really enjoy grocery shopping for you, and I don't mind doing a few other errands, however I need to be able to do them in the two hours I have set aside for volunteering. I am unable to answer the phone each time you need a favor. Why don't I call you a few days before our scheduled shop, and if you have other errands we can plan how to fit them in.

Stick to what you need and do not apologize for voicing your boundary. Remember, you are voicing this boundary because you want to continue to help, and this is how the relationship will remain sustainable.

Again, it is always helpful to suggest that someone get a second volunteer, or ask the MABVI volunteer department to suggest further resources.

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COMMUNICATION

COMMUNICATION IS CRITICAL. IT'S THE BEST WAY TO LEARN HOW TO HELP THE PERSON YOU ARE MATCHED WITH! ASK QUESTIONS! SHARE YOUR STORY AND LISTEN TO THEIRS! IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE MABVI VOLUNTEER DEPARTMENT. DO THIS WHENEVER YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS, CHANGE IN STATUS OR A STORY TO SHARE!

CONFIDENTIALITY

YOU MAY BE PRIVY TO MEDICAL REPORTS, FINANCIAL INFORMATION, ETC. PLEASE KEEP THIS INFORMATION TO YOURSELF. ALSO, WHEN SPEAKING ABOUT YOUR VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS, ONLY SHARE THE FIRST NAME OF THE PERSON WITH WHOM YOU ARE MATCHED.

IMPORTANT POINTS

THE GOLDEN RULE

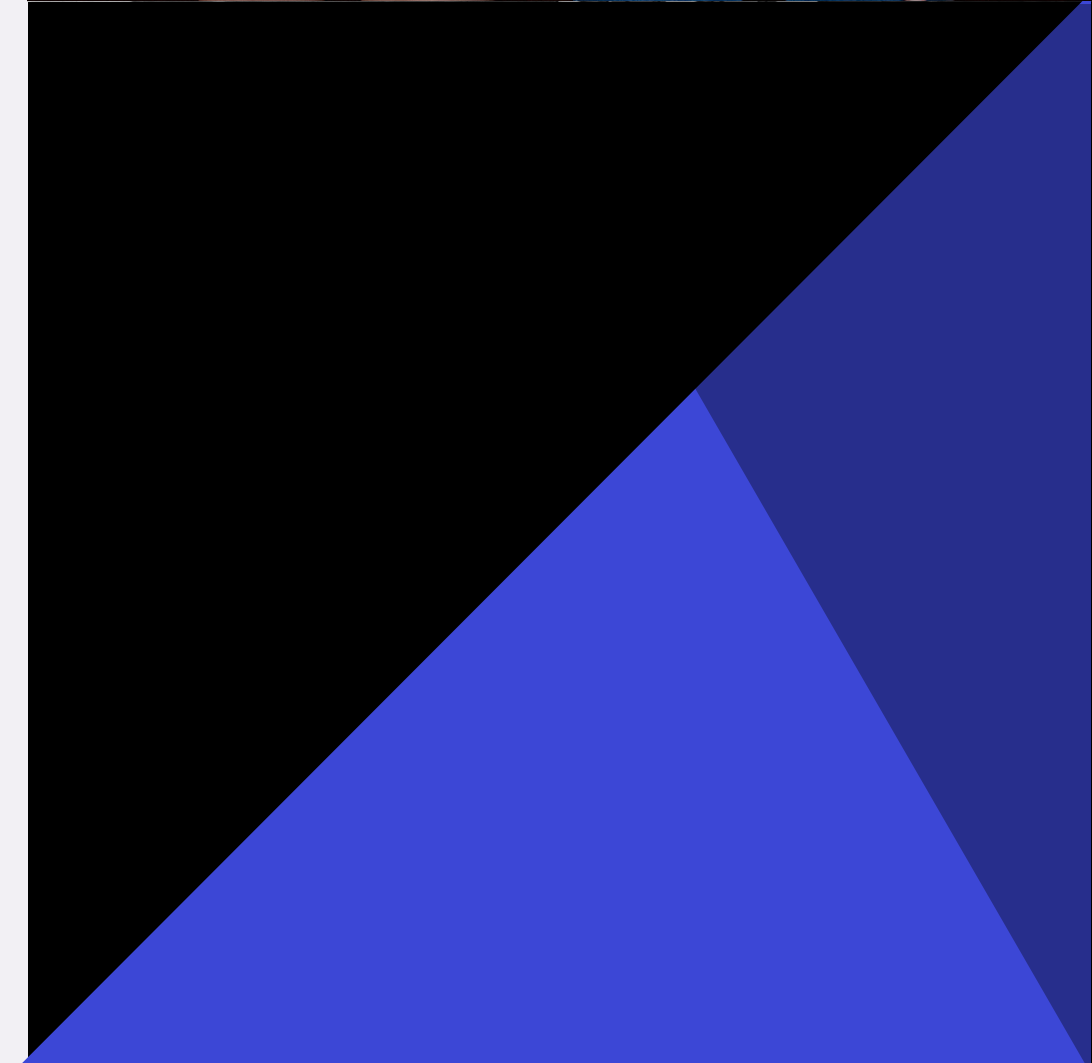
Treat the person you are matched with as you would want to be treated if the roles were reversed.

YOU ARE OFFERING USE OF YOUR EYESIGHT, YOU ARE NOT THEIR EDITOR.

You are there to relay information to the person you are matched with, not make decisions for them about what to do with that information. Just read exactly what you see.

KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOR!

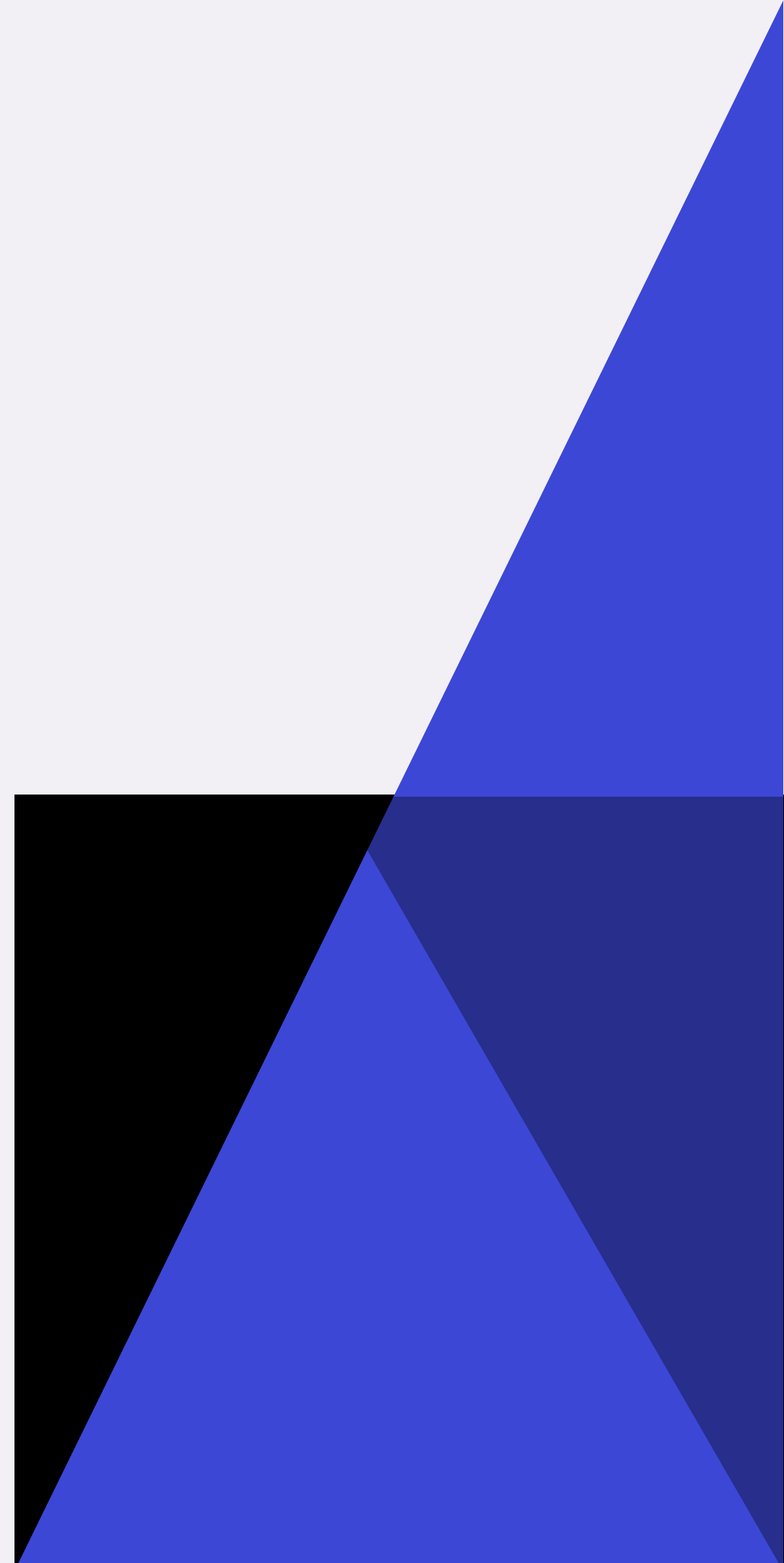
You are just helping another person with daily tasks!



WORKING WITH ELDERLY ADULTS

OTHER POSSIBLE HEALTH CONDITIONS

Many of our consumers are seniors, and it is important to remember that the person you are matched with may have other health issues besides their vision loss. The volunteer department follows HIPAA guidelines, and can only share information that the consumer has asked us to share. We ask that you keep an open mind, and a sense of understanding that you may be matched with someone who has other health issues besides their vision loss. As a volunteer for MABVI, you are there to help with tasks related to their vision loss. If you feel that other health issues are making you uncomfortable or not allowing you to fulfill your volunteer role, please contact the MABVI volunteer department.

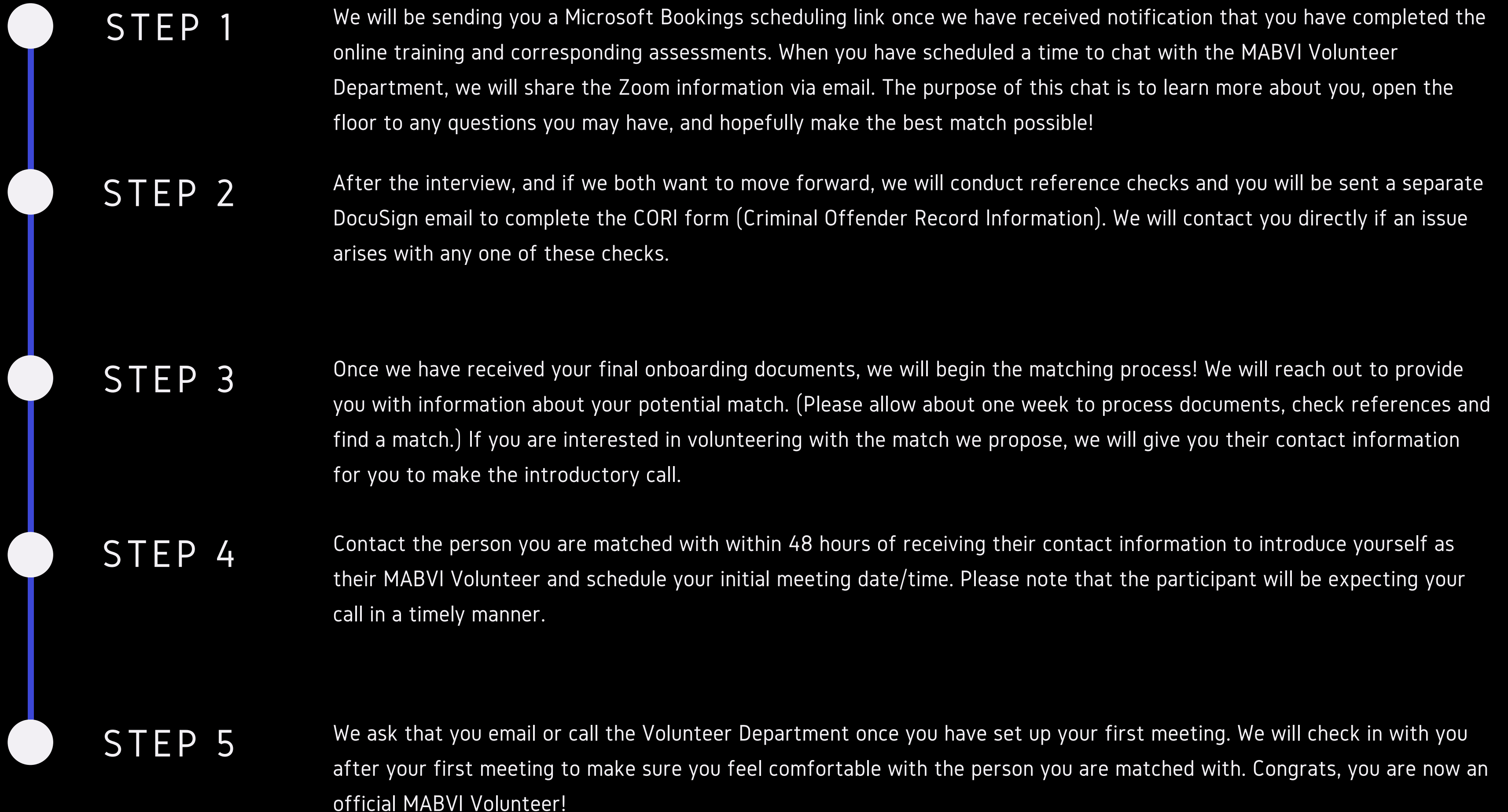


The person you are matched with may be an older individual, and it is possible that they may go into hospital or hospice care while you are volunteering with them. This can be a delicate situation, and the relationship you have formed with the person you are matched with will greatly determine how you wish to proceed. The MABVI Volunteer Team is here to support you and the person you are matched with, so we ask that you please communicate this with us if the situation does arise.

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WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

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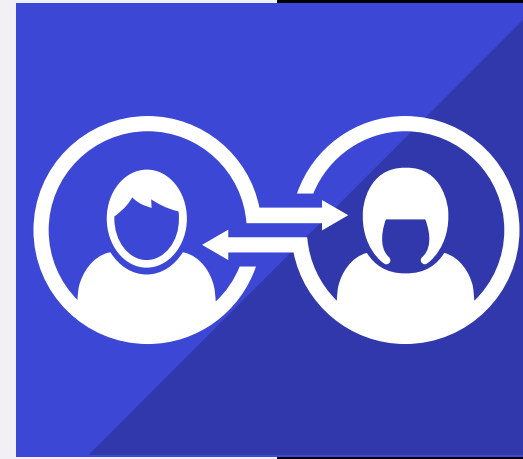
POSSIBLE IMPEDIMENTS TO FINDING A MATCH

WHILE IT RARELY HAPPENS, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT YOU WILL BE MATCHED WITH A PARTICIPANT. BELOW ARE SOME REASONS ON THE VOLUNTEER SIDE THAT MIGHT MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO FIND YOU A MATCH:

1. Unvaccinated against COVID-19
2. Very Strict Availability/Only Evening Availability (most of our clients do not like going out in the dark especially in winter)
- 3.If you have a vehicle but prefer to do shopping without the consumer present
- 4.If you are a smoker
- 5.Unwilling to drive or commute over 15 minutes
- 6.If you plan to leave for large amounts of time during the year (such as the entire summer or winter months)

VOLUNTEER TOUCH POINTS

Once you are matched with a participant, we keep in touch! We are around 250 volunteers strong, working 1:1 across the state of Massachusetts. The MABVI Volunteer Team primarily uses emails and surveys for volunteer-wide communication. With that being said, our (virtual) door is always open! Please do not hesitate to give us a ring or email us in the meantime! We are so excited to have you on board!



New matches will receive a personal check-in from the MABVI Volunteer Department at 30 days.



All active volunteers must respond to quarterly, check-in surveys and will receive email updates regarding special events, upcoming trainings, one-off opportunities, new resources, etc.

LET'S TALK!

Contact:

Alexandra Maggio, Director of
Volunteer Services

Email: amaggio@mabcommunity.org

Call: (617) 972-9119



Connect with us

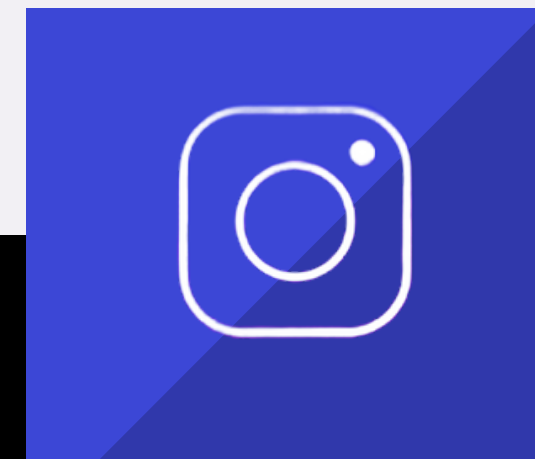
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