

# October is White Cane Awareness Month!

The white cane enables:



The purpose of White Cane Awareness Month is to promote better understanding and mutual responsibility for the safety of people who are blind.

- \* **Freedom**
- \* **Self-reliance**
- \* **Identification to the public of a person's blindness**

New York State law\* requires every driver of a vehicle approaching an intersection or crosswalk to Yield The Right of Way to a pedestrian crossing or attempting to cross when they are accompanied by a Dog Guide or using a Cane which is metallic, white, or white with a red tip. Only persons who are legally blind are allowed to carry a white cane. \*Title VII Rules of the Road, Article 27 Pedestrian Rights and Duties, Section 1153 Provisions relating to people who are blind or visually impaired <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/nycodes/c128/a51.html>.

Also under NYS law\*, a person with a disability and accompanied by a guide dog has the right to enter all public and private facilities to which the public is invited or permitted. This includes all modes of transportation, employment, housing accommodations, all places where food is offered for sale, all theaters, resorts, entertainment, or businesses to which the public is normally or customarily invited or permitted. No additional charge may be imposed for admittance of a dog guide. The dog guide must be properly harnessed and trained by a qualified person. It is critical for the safety of the person who is blind that **the guide dog must never be distracted**. Taxes cannot be charged on any goods or services pertaining to a service dog such as a guide dog. \*NYS Civil Rights Law Article 4-B, Sections 47-47c Rights of Persons with a Disability Accompanied by Guide Dogs, Hearing Dogs or Service Dogs. NYS Transportation Law Article 7, Section 147 Dogs Accompanying Persons with a Disability <http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/nycodes/c17/a7.html>.

\*It is a **violation of NYS law** to interfere with these rights.

Long canes and the highly specialized training to use them can be obtained from certified orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists (COMS). Certification of O&M specialists is established through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP) [www.acvrep.org](http://www.acvrep.org) (520) 887-6816. There is a critical shortage of certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) and teachers of visually impaired students (TVI's). Scholarships and other types of tuition assistance are available. For more information about careers involving work with people who are blind or visually impaired, contact the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) [www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org) at (703) 671-4500. For more information on cane travel, guide dogs and other means of mobility for people who are blind, visit <http://www.aerbvi.org/OandM>.

-Judi Piscitello, COMS