BEST PRACTICES FOR GUIDED TOURS

As you prepare to lead Americans and the Holocaust guided tours, please keep in mind the following touring techniques and suggestions.

EXHIBITION CONTENT

- Familiarize yourself with the exhibition content
  - Explore the entire exhibition, examining images, text, and media pieces
  - Focus on the main themes and questions of the exhibition
    - The exhibition examines the motives, fears, and pressures that shaped American responses to Nazism, war, and genocide
    - The exhibition asks two main questions:
      - What did Americans know about the Holocaust?
      - What more could have been done?
- Study the Script for Guided Tours of Americans and the Holocaust
  - To ensure content accuracy and tour consistency, the script should be presented as written
    - Do not add outside information to the tour; this will disrupt the flow of the tour
  - Note script instructions to:
    - Ask questions
    - Point to specific content on the panel
    - Transition between sections
- Practice your tour
  - Once you feel comfortable with the script, complete a full practice tour in the exhibition (either on your own or with a friend)
  - Tours should be 20-25 minutes long
    - Practice your timing (include time for transitions and visitor questions)
- Strive for accuracy
  - If you do not know the answer to a question, say so. It is better to say “I don’t know” than to provide inaccurate information by guessing
  - If you cannot answer a visitor question, direct the visitor to additional resources:
    - Holocaust and World War II books at the library
    - The Americans and the Holocaust online exhibition on the USHMM website
    - USHMM’s Holocaust Encyclopedia (encyclopedia.ushmm.org)

TOUR TECHNIQUES

- Position yourself between your group and the exhibition
  - Face your group with your back against the panel; visitors should face the exhibition
- Use the exhibition to tell the story
  - This is a tour, not a lecture
  - Encourage visitors to look at the exhibition images and text while you present your tour
- Maintain eye contact with the visitors
  - You may use notes if necessary
- Ask Questions [as indicated in the script]
  - Choose questions that prompt conversation and curiosity
    - Avoid yes/no questions
- Avoid “quiz” questions that may make group members feel unprepared or ill-informed
  - Practice active listening
    - Acknowledging and responding to visitor questions demonstrates that you value the
      group’s opinions and observations
  - Wait for a response
    - Pause and allow the group to consider your question before providing an answer
- Get the group involved
  - Offer opportunities for visitor participation by asking a group member to read a panel information
    aloud [as indicated in the script]
- Be mindful of your volume
  - Speak loud enough for all members of your group to hear you, but be aware of patrons in the
    surrounding area
- Practice pronunciation
  - Phonetic pronunciations are included in the script

**GROUP MANAGEMENT**
- We recommend that tour groups do not exceed 10-12 visitors
- Ensure that the tour start time and starting location are clearly indicated
- Offer an introduction
  - Introduce yourself, explain your role at the library, and thank the visitors for attending the tour
  - Indicate the approximate length of the tour
  - Encourage visitors to ask questions
  - Introduce the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
- Use your introduction to get to know your group
  - Try to identify information that will help inform your tour:
    - What do the visitors know about this topic?
    - Why did they choose to visit this exhibition?
    - What do they hope to learn?
- Offer a conclusion
  - Restate your name and thank the visitors for attending the tour
  - Encourage visitors to extend their experience by sharing information about related library books
    or upcoming programming at the library