Addressing Sensory Loss Checklist

Note: While some of these applications target one specific sense, redundancy is beneficial and a combination of approaches is needed for adults with dual sensory loss.

Technological Considerations	
☐ Magnification	Handheld magnification devices or electronic magnification leveraging smartphones or tablets allow users to increase font to desired sizes.
☐ Contrast Enhancement	Ensure online information is provided in high contrast or has options to enhance contrast.
☐ Text to Speech	Text-to-speech technology, including smartphone and tablet applications, reads written text out loud thereby increasing access to information for people with vision loss.
☐ Smartphone Application Accessibility	Smartphone and tablet applications often offer options to increase information access to people with vision loss through built-in accessibility options such as increased font size, enhanced contrast, etc. Depending on the user and need, applications with these options can be leveraged to increase information access.
☐ Guided Technology	A new generation of camera-based technology has recently emerged. These accessibility options either use artificial intelligence (AI) to identify objects via the camera, such as with Seeing AI, or connect the user to a guide who "sees" the camera images, such as with Aira and Be My Eyes. The information is relayed in real-time to the user to assist with tasks, including reading, identifying objects, and navigation.
☐ Handheld Amplification	Simple handheld devices such as the Pocket Talker (Williams Sound, Eden Prairie, MN) or SuperEar (Sonic Technology Products, Nevada County, CA) allow users to use standard headphones and easily amplify sound as they desire with the volume control to improve communication.
☐ Amplified and Captioned Telephones	These telephones are specially designed for people with hearing loss and provide increased amplification and captioned conversation.
☐ In-Room Videoconferencing	Leveraging video technology to communicate with patients may seem as though it would pose barriers; however, it allows for providers to speak clearly and show their mouth for lip reading. In addition, technology companies can amplify frequencies important for speech and use speech-to-text capabilities to caption the video in real time.
☐ Speech to Text	Speech-to-text applications, such as the software provided by Google (Mountain View, CA), are increasingly available. These apps can provide live transcription of conversation to assist people with hearing loss.
☐ Smartphone Amplification	Apps such as Google Sound Amplifier (Mountain View, CA) offer high-quality noise reduction algorithms and amplification in personal smartphones. These may represent an option when handheld amplifiers are not available.
Environmental Modifications	
☐ Improve Room Lighting	Proper lighting, including task lighting, helps people with vision loss during most activities.
☐ Reduce Glare	While enhanced lighting is important, glare, such as from a window with open shades on a sunny day, can be distracting and prevent good visibility.

☐ Reduce Background Noise	Reducing background noise by turning down the television and closing the door to noisy areas can assist people with hearing or vision loss.
☐ Use Pre-prepared Placards	Pre-printed placards of common phrases, questions, and comments used throughout the hospital stay or outpatient visit can be helpful. Using large font with high-contrast color can further help older adults.
☐ Use Whiteboards or Tablets	Although it can be cumbersome using whiteboards or tablets to write out or type conversation, these items represent a last resort option.

Communication Considerations

☐ Ensure Attention	Conversation and communication require both parties to be attentive and ready.
☐ Describe Any Images or Figures	Using short but descriptive summaries of all figures, photos, and graphs allows people with vision loss to have access to this type of information.
☐ Introduce Yourself Every Time	People with vision loss may not recognize who or when someone enters a room or who is speaking. Be sure to identify yourself by name whenever you enter a room or begin speaking if in a group setting.
☐ Do Not Rely on Gestures	Gesturing or pointing without a verbal description leaves the person with vision loss left out of the conversation. For example, instead of saying "Walk that way" and pointing to the right, say "Walk to your right."
☐ Do Not Rely on Facial Expressions	Similar to gesturing, facial expressions often are important aspects of communication. Do not assume someone with vision loss can or cannot see your facial expressions, and include voice intonation, change in tone, or descriptions to capture what your facial expression is portraying.
☐ Ask for Feedback	There is no one-size-fits-all approach to disability or communication. Never make assumptions. Ask people if they understand, and ask how you can best interact, share information, and communicate with them.
☐ Use Face-to-Face Communication	Ensuring that the listener can see your face to leverage lip reading skills is important. Facing each other also ensures sound is being directed at the listener rather than in another direction. This means looking up from charts and away from computers when possible to communicate.
☐ Promote Visibility of the Mouth When Possible	Covering the mouth area is a must to prevent spread of the COVID-19 virus. However, any opportunity possible to use clear masks or distance videoconferencing without masks can help people who consciously and subconsciously lip read.
☐ Speak Slowly and in a Lower Tone	Age-related hearing loss generally occurs in higher frequencies and limits the clarity of speech. Slowing down and using a slightly lower tone can help listeners with hearing loss follow the conversation.
☐ Do Not Shout	Most age-related hearing loss is an issue of clarity rather than volume. While some increased volume helps, shouting often further distorts information.
☐ Give Context to Conversation	Placing the conversation in context helps the listener decipher and fill in the gaps of difficult to hear words. This means adding supporting information such as common descriptions or actions associated with topics and adding redundancy to information presented.
☐ Rephrase Rather Than Repeat	Rephrasing can help the listener gain new context about the conversation. Use words that are easier to hear when rephrasing. Repeating can create a frustrating negative feedback loop.