

# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (VR)

## Division of Visual Services

### Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)

#### PURPOSE

The Division of Visual Services, Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) helps Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired. Visual Services provides a wide array of rehabilitation programs that include: rehabilitation counseling, employment, independent living services, business enterprise operations, special library services and information access via telephone. Under the rehabilitation counseling and employment program, consumers and counselors work together to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IEP). Independent living services include rehabilitation teachers and mobility specialists that can provide adjustment counseling; instruction in personal and home management, communications, recreation or leisure activities, the community, and use of the white cane. The Older Blind Program assists persons who are 55 years old or older, blind and seeking greater independence. The business enterprise program trains and assists people who are blind in traveling safely and establishing and operating food service businesses in public and private facilities across the state. NEWSLINE® For the Blind gives free telephone access throughout the state to local and national newspapers for persons whose disabilities limit access to printed information. Visual Services also operates a telephone service which provides community and job information. America's Jobline is a service supported by DRS and Workforce Oklahoma to give telephone access to nationwide job listings.

#### ELIGIBILITY

- An individual :
  1. must have a physical or mental impairment which for such individual constitutes or results in an impediment to employment,
  2. can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from VR services, and
  3. requires VR services to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain gainful employment.
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998, stipulates that an individual who has a disability or is blind and is a Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) beneficiary or a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipient is presumed to meet eligibility criteria if that individual intends to achieve an employment outcome.
- Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less or when side vision results in a central field restriction of 20 degrees or less.
- Persons may be required to participate in the cost of some services, including AT, depending on their income level.
- Visual Services Division has many different programs that have different purposes, outcomes and eligibility. Even if your goal is not employment-related, you may seek other services from the different programs such as Independent Living Assistance or the Older Blind Independent Living Services.

#### AT SERVICES PROVIDED/COVERED

- Assessments & Evaluations
- Information & Referral
- Case Management
- Locating Alternate Funding
- Fabrication of Devices
- Maintenance & Repairs
- Supporting Software
- Training for Consumer & Family
- Advocacy/Other

#### AT DEVICES PROVIDED/COVERED

- |   |   |
|---|---|
|  Aids for Daily Living             |  Home Modifications              |
|  Aids for Hearing Impaired         |  Hospital Beds                   |
|  Aids for Vision Impaired          |  Prosthetics & Orthotics         |
|  Augmentative Communication        |  Seating & Positioning Equipment |
|  Computer Applications             |  Worksite & Office Modifications |
|  Educational Devices & Adaptations |  Wheelchairs & Mobility Aids     |
|  Environmental Controls            |   |



**CONTACT**

Jane Nelson,  
Division of Visual  
Services, Administrator  
Oklahoma Department of  
Rehabilitation Services  
3535 NW 58th St., Ste 500  
Oklahoma City, OK 73112  
(405) 951-3400 (TDD)  
(800) 845-8476 (TDD)  
FAX: (405) 951-3529  
www.okrehab.org

Steven Stokes, Director  
Office of Handicapped  
Concerns  
2401 NW 23rd Ste 90  
Oklahoma City, OK 73107-  
2423  
(405) 521-3756 (OKC, V)  
(405) 522-6706 (TDD)  
(800) 522-8224 (statewide,  
V/TDD)  
FAX: (405) 522-6695  
www.ohc.state.ok.us/ cap.  
htm

See Appendix B for Visual  
Services Field Offices.

**FINANCIAL CRITERIA**

- See "Eligibility".

**APPLICATION PROCESS**

- Individuals are considered applicants when they
  - 1) have completed and signed an application form or have otherwise requested services (including, but not limited to requests made verbally, by telephone, in writing, by facsimile, etc.);
  - 2) has provided information necessary to initiate an assessment to determine eligibility and priority for service; and
  - 3) is available to complete the assessment process as soon as the counselor has a document signed by the individual requesting VR services. This may be a formal application or a letter signed by the applicant, applicant's parent, guardian, or other representative which provides the minimum basic information and request VR services.
- In application status, the counselor will secure sufficient information to make a determination of eligibility or ineligibility for VR services, determine a priority group assignment, or make a decision to put the client into extended evaluation. The information needed by the counselor may include the results of a physical examination, an assistive technology evaluation, or an extended evaluation of vocational potential to determine potential for gainful employment.
- If a person is determined to be eligible for services based on evaluation information, the counselor and the individual will develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that is designed to promote competitive employment for the individual.
- Unless extended evaluation/trial work is required, the counselor will make the eligibility determination decision within 60 days of application.

**APPEALS PROCESS**

1. Consumers who disagree with a VR Program decision are encouraged to contact the local District Supervisor to attempt an effective resolution of the issue. In the event of a reduction, suspension or cessation of VR services, individuals have a right to a case review by an impartial hearing officer, mediation, and/or assistance from the Client Assistance Program (CAP).
2. A request for a fair hearing should be made in writing to your VR Counselor within 30 days of DRS informing you of the decision with which you disagree. The fair hearing will be conducted by a hearing officer within 45 days of the written "Request for a Fair Hearing" by the consumer.
3. Individuals filing a "Request for a Fair Hearing" may request a confidential mediation session to resolve grievances. Mediation is voluntary and subject to the agreement of both parties. In the event mediation sessions do not resolve the grievance, individuals retain their right to a fair hearing.
4. After filing a "Request for a Fair Hearing," the administrative review must be conducted by the district supervisor and concluded within the same 45 days, with the results of the review provided in a written letter. If the review resolves the grievance, the Withdrawal of Request for Hearing Form must be completed; otherwise, the hearing will continue.
5. The written decision of the hearing officer including findings and grounds for the decision will be made to the consumer, hearings coordinator and the director of DRS within 30 days of the completion of the hearing.
6. Individuals may request a review of the hearing officer's decision by the Cabinet Secretary of Human Services within 20 days of the decision.
7. In the event an individual brings civil action regarding the decision, the final decision either by the hearing officer or the Cabinet Secretary will be implemented pending court review.

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### ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR APPEALS

- The Client Assistance Program (CAP) assists persons with disabilities who are seeking or receiving services from any program funded by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. CAP can:
  - a) advise clients of their rights and responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act;
  - b) assist clients in communicating their concerns to DRS; and
  - c) represent the individual in the fair hearing process when appropriate and/or needed.
- Additional information concerning vocational rehabilitation and the appeals process can be obtained from the CAP at (405) 521-3756 or (800) 522-8224 statewide.

### PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- The IPE is an individualized program of services based around a core of comprehensive evaluation, vocational counseling, and job placement that are needed to assist the person in attaining his or her employment goal. Any AT that the person needs for employment must be included in this plan. However, AT devices and services may be essential to help the person demonstrate vocational capabilities and are an essential part of the comprehensive evaluation.
- Once a decision has been made to supply an eligible client with AT, it may be possible to provide a wide range of devices if they are vocationally relevant. However, DRS cannot buy devices that other sources can buy or that ADA requires other sources to provide.
- Individuals may choose instead to purchase equipment through the Access-to-Telework Fund (ATF) and thus coordinate needed services in the IPE. (See BancFirst Alternative Financing Program, Page 93)