

For more information, call (405) 522-3333 in Oklahoma City.

Where can I get answers to questions not answered in this book?

Check out the “Where to Get More Information” section which lists the many agencies, organizations and suppliers of equipment and technology in Oklahoma focusing on blindness and vision loss.

To locate the Division of Visual Services office nearest to you, please phone the state office at (405) 951-3400 in Oklahoma City or (800) 845-8476 toll free. The toll free number may also be

used for TTY/TDD calls by individuals who are deaf.

Individuals who are 55 years or older and legally blind can receive assistance in remaining independent through Visual Services' Older Blind Independent Living Services program. To reach the Older Blind program staff, phone (918) 551-9400 or you can call the Rehabilitation teacher serving your area.

The Department of Rehabilitation Services also publishes a 950-page Disability Resource Guide. This is available on the Internet at <http://www.okdrs.org/drupal/guide/home> or it can be ordered free of charge by calling (800) 845-8476.

Special Devices and Equipment

There are a variety of devices and specialized equipment available to help people with vision loss. These items vary in cost, quality and ease of use. The best way to decide which will work for you is to get advice from a professional who is familiar with a wide range of equipment, such as an eye doctor, vision care specialist or Division of Visual Services staff. Devices bought for someone else may not be helpful to you. Some devices require training and much practice before they are useful.

Visual Services rehabilitation teachers can discuss a range of available equipment and can usually let you try items before you buy them from

businesses of your choice. To locate the Division of Visual Services office nearest to you, please phone Visual Services' state office at (405) 951-3400 in Oklahoma City or (800) 845-8476 toll free. The toll free number may also be used for TTY/TDD calls by individuals who are deaf.

Visual Services operates a Rehabilitation Technology Lab for Blindness and Low Vision with staff who can evaluate your vision needs and help you try out their equipment to see what works best for you. If you are not able to come to the lab, staff can bring some equipment to your home. For more information, call (405) 522-3333 in Oklahoma City.

Here is information about some of the equipment you might want to try:

Magnifiers make objects and print look larger. They are designed to be held close to whatever you want to see. Magnifiers are available in different powers, which indicate how large they will make images. Smaller magnifiers tend to have more power, but they reduce the field of vision, making it more difficult to scan pages. Hand-held magnifiers are held over whatever you want to see. Generally, a steady hand is needed to use them well. Stand magnifiers have a stand or base that will hold them steady at a desired distance from what you are viewing. Both hand-held and stand magnifiers may be

illuminated by batteries or electricity to make the material you are looking at easier to see.

Telescopes make distant objects look larger. They have a series of lenses lined up at specific distances from each other and can be hand-held, worn on the head or mounted onto glasses. A telescope for one eye is called a monocular; one for both eyes is a binocular. Reading telescopes are worn like glasses and can be useful for tasks that are done at arm's length, like sewing or wood working. They can be difficult to use. Only small areas can be seen at one time and movements can make the viewing areas blurry. Training and practice are required to use telescopes successfully.

Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) or Video Magnifiers can enlarge images up to 60 times by using a small television camera to project text, photos or other images onto a screen for viewing. You can choose black letters on a white background or white letters on a black background, depending on what works best for you. Some models have color available.

Computers can be used with special software programs that enlarge print or verbally read to computer users with vision loss. You may be able to use a large computer monitor with a 19 inch-21 inch screen. Most people need training and practice to become familiar with the various features that are available.

Vision Care Specialists

Types of Vision Care Specialists

Ophthalmologist (M.D.): A medical doctor who specializes in treating eye conditions. Ophthalmologists can prescribe medicine as well as glasses and can perform eye surgery.

Optometrist (O.D.): A licensed professional, specializing in the prescription of glasses and recognition of eye diseases.

Optician: A licensed professional who dispenses glasses and other optical devices from the written prescription of an ophthalmologist or optometrist.

Questions for Your Vision Care Specialist

What is my visual acuity?

Do I have a field loss? If yes, how much?

What is the cause of my vision loss?

Will I lose more sight?

What can I do to protect my remaining vision?

Doctor's Name:

Address:

Phone:

Rehabilitation Specialists

Types of Rehabilitation Specialists

Orientation and Mobility Specialist: A professional person who teaches people with visual losses how to move around their homes or travel in their communities. Instruction might include how to use canes and special equipment and walking with a sighted person who functions as a guide.

Rehabilitation Teacher or Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist: A professional person who teaches people with vision impairments new ways to do everyday tasks. These tasks, such as cooking, housekeeping or personal care, are sometimes called daily living skills.

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor: A professional person who helps people with disabilities obtain services and training that will help them reach employment goals.

Questions Your Visual Services Specialist May Ask You

In order to help with your specific needs, your Visual Services specialist will ask questions like these:

What are you having trouble doing?

What daily living skills, tasks or other goals do you want to accomplish?

Do you want the Division of Visual Services to help you find or keep a job?

Rehabilitation Specialists' Name(s)

Name

Phone

Name

Phone

Name

Phone

Services for People with Vision Loss

Employment Services

DRS's Division of Visual Services provides vocational rehabilitation and employment services to help people with vision loss get or keep jobs in careers of their choice. Counselors and eligible individuals work together to develop a rehabilitation plan that meets individual needs.

Services may include diagnosis and evaluation, counseling and guidance, physical or mental restoration, special technology, education and training, job analysis and modification and job placement. Some services, such as medical examinations to determine if

you are eligible for services, vocational counseling and job placement are always provided at no charge to you. You may be required to share the cost of some services, depending on your income and financial resources.

Your counselor may refer you to an Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Rehabilitation Teacher to receive instruction in independent living skills that will enhance your employment potential.

Instructional Services

Rehabilitation Teachers provide instruction and counseling services through a home visitation program which helps individuals adjust to the

loss of sight. Instructional services offered may include:

- **Adjustment counseling**
- **Personal and home management**
- **Communications methods training, Braille, keyboarding skills, low vision technology and adaptive techniques or devices.**
- **Recreation or leisure activities**

Orientation and Mobility Specialists provide instruction to blind individuals in using white canes and other techniques for traveling independently in their communities. They provide instruction in such areas as sighted guide (travel with another person), seating, room familiarization, street

crossing, and traveling on public transportation.

Services for Oklahomans Ages 55 and Over

The Older Blind Independent Living Services program offers a variety of services for people who are 55 years and older, legally blind and seeking greater independence. The program is operated by the Division of Visual Services.

Rehabilitation teachers use federal funding provided through this program to provide specialized adaptive equipment and training discussed throughout this booklet.

Older Blind Program staff present training for businesses, organizations and community service providers to develop greater awareness of the abilities and needs of older persons who are blind. The main number is (918) 551-4900.

Library Services

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped provides books, magazines and other materials on audio cartridge and Braille at no cost to people who are blind or visually impaired and others whose disabilities make it difficult to use regular print. They also provide the equipment needed to use the materials at no cost. There is no charge

to mail items to or from the Library. Professional librarians, who advise readers and order materials, may be reached at (405) 521-3514 in Oklahoma City, (800) 523-0288 toll free or (405) 521-4672 TTY/TDD for individuals who are deaf.

Teachers may order instructional materials in Braille and other accessible formats provided by the Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center operated by the Library for students with visual impairments from birth through grade 12.

**The Oklahoma Telephone Reader (OTR)
OTR content includes news and editorials, sports, grocery ads, and a variety of other information not normally available on radio and/or television news sources.**

You can call the Library at (405) 521-3514 or (800) 523-0288 to sign up to obtain the codes to use this system.

The Library is the contact point for NEWSLINE, a newspaper reading service accessed by toll free telephone and offered free of charge for people unable to read regular print. NEWSLINE was developed by the National Federation of the Blind and funded in Oklahoma by the Division of Visual Services.

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped located in Oklahoma City also has an award-winning sensory garden and walking path designed with special features for people with disabilities.

Services for Individuals Who Have Vision and Hearing Loss

The Division of Visual Services operates a Deaf-Blind Services Program to help Oklahomans with vision and hearing loss. There are no age requirements; however, this program primarily serves adults. Special devices and systems may be available to improve communication and personal safety at little or no cost.

For more information, phone (405) 522-1475. Individuals who are deaf may use TTY/TDD to contact this number.

Services for Children

**The Oklahoma School for the Blind,
(a division of DRS)**

**Phone: (918) 781-8200 in Muskogee
or (877) 239-7136 toll free,
provides free residential and day
education, evaluations, outreach
services to students in public schools
and early intervention services to help
young children prepare for school.**

**The Oklahoma Area wide Services
Information System (OASIS),**

**Phone: (405) 271-6302 in Oklahoma City
or (800) 426-2747 toll free,
is a statewide telephone information and
referral system for children and other
people with disabilities and their
families.**

SoonerStart,

**Phone: (800) 42-OASIS, has services
available to families with children who
have delays in development or have
diagnosed conditions known to lead to
delays.**

Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center

The AIM Center, operated by the OLBPH, maintains a central depository of Braille and large print textbooks and other specialized instructional materials for loan to Oklahoma students who cannot use regular print.

Call, fax or email the AIM Center for information on how to request Braille textbooks or other specialized instructional materials. Sooner Start coordinators and consultants may contact the program directly to request developmental aids for blind and visually impaired children from infancy through age three.

Advice for Family and Friends

A person who is blind may need help, but he/she does not need or want pity. Thousands are successful employees. Many have achieved independence through training and rehabilitation.

When you do help someone who is blind, here are some common sense guidelines to follow.

If the person does not want assistance, do not insist.

Many people make copies of this information for family and friends.



Points to Remember When You Meet a Person Who is Blind

Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services
3535 NW 58, Suite 500, Oklahoma City, OK 73112
Public Information Office: (405) 951-3488

- ◆ **The term "blind" does not always refer to total blindness. A person is "legally blind" if his/her best corrected vision is 20/200 or less in the better eye or if the visual field is restricted to 20 degrees or less. Legally blind persons can have varied types of vision loss and different abilities to use their remaining sight.**
- ◆ **When loss of vision occurs, one does not gain another sense. The remaining four senses are strengthened out of necessity.**

- ◆ **Colors and denominations of bills are not determined through touch. Blind people have various ways of keeping track of their money and matching their clothes. For example, bills may be folded differently for each denomination. Braille color tags, buttons or other markings can be sewn on clothes to signify color. Being well organized and using one's memory are important assets that help a blind person function independently.**
- ◆ **When walking with a blind person, always let him/her take your arm.**
- ◆ **When going through doors with a blind person, precede through the door ahead of the individual rather than pushing him/her through first.**

- ◆ **Don't hesitate to offer assistance to a blind person, but do not be offended if he/she refuses it.**
- ◆ **Speak in a normal tone of voice when talking with blind people. Talk directly to them and not to the person accompanying them. If possible, call them by name, and if not, touch them lightly on the arm or shoulder to indicate you are referring to them.**
- ◆ **When assisting a blind person, never grab his/her cane or give directions to his/her dog guides.**
- ◆ **Do not touch, feed or speak to a dog guide. Dog guides are working animals and their undivided attention and loyalty to their masters is**

- ◆ **essential to maintain the safety and quality of their work.**

- ◆ **When you offer help to a person who is blind, address the person directly to help him/her locate you. Speak in a normal tone. Ask, “May I help?” If the person does not want help, do not insist.**

- ◆ **Never grab the arm or cane of a person who is blind. Offer the person your arm, saying, for example, “Would you like to take my left arm?” or “Here’s my right arm.”**

- ◆ **When you walk, move at a normal pace. Hesitate slightly before starting up or down stairs or curbs. Mention obstructions ahead.**

- ◆ **Don't point when you give directions. Use landmarks or identify intersections by street names. For example, say, "Go three blocks west, and cross the third intersection. The building will be on your right."**

- ◆ **If you're assisting a person who is blind in being seated in a chair, place his/her hand on the back of a chair. Don't push him/her into it. Touch and experience will tell the person about the chair's type, width and height.**

- ◆ **Offer to read the menu when you are in a restaurant. Mention the price and what comes with each selection. As each item is placed on the table, tell the person who is blind where it is located.**

- ◆ **When making change with bills of more than one denomination, hand the bills to the person separately and identify each bill as you hand it to him/her.**