

The Division of Visual Services

Help for Oklahomans who are blind or visually impaired is available through the Division of Visual Services of the Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services. The agency's mission is to open doors to employment.

The Division of Visual Services meets this mission through a wide array of rehabilitation programs for people who are blind or visually impaired.

The major components of the programs include:

- Rehabilitation counseling
- New skills and techniques to address the challenges of blindness or visual impairment
- Confidence development
- Employment
- Independent living assistance
- Business enterprise operations
- Library services
- Information access via telephone

Specialists in each program area help clients develop self-confidence in their abilities to live and work independently.



Rehabilitation Counseling and Employment

The Division of Visual Services offers vocational counseling and employment assistance to thousands of Oklahomans each year. Many clients retain their current employment, return to work or enter the workforce for the first time as a result of these services.

Clients and counselors work together to develop a rehabilitation plan to meet individual needs. Together they identify areas where assistance is needed for the client to retain or gain a successful career.

Through DRS, clients have access to services which might include, but are not limited to:

- Counseling and guidance
- Intensive training in ways to deal with vision loss
- Adaptive technology education and training
- Job analysis and modification
- Job placement and follow-up

Clients may be required to participate in the cost of some services, depending on their income levels and resources.

Independent Living Assistance

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
- Braille, keyboarding skills, low vision technology and adaptive techniques
- Preparation to return to work

Orientation and Mobility Specialists provide instruction to blind individuals in using white canes and other techniques for traveling independently in their communities.



Programs for People who are Blind and age 55 or Older

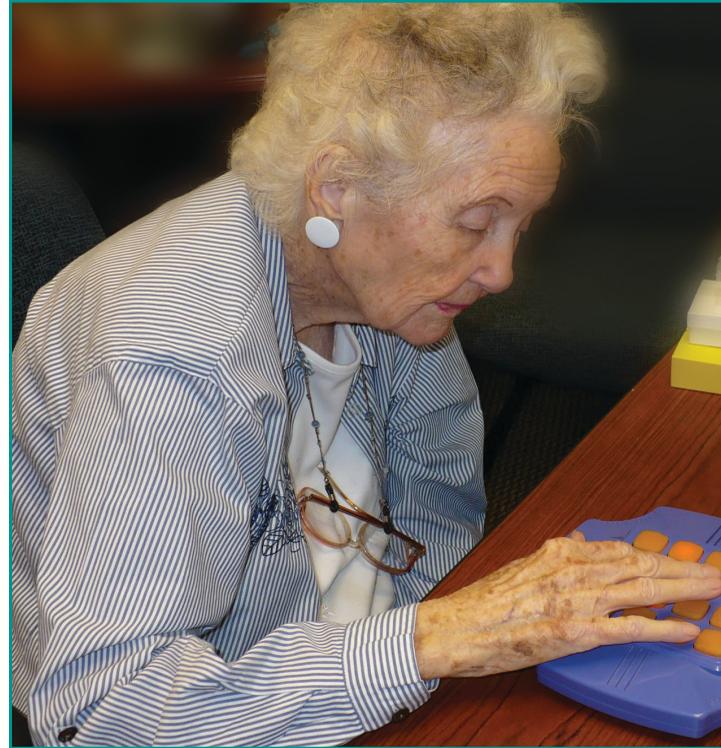
We welcome and encourage persons of all ages to consider pursuing employment after training in blindness and visual impairment is completed. We recognize some who are 55 or older may desire independence training. This program provides independent living services to people who are 55 years old or older, legally blind and seeking greater independence. This program emphasizes advocacy, self-expression, freedom of travel and full participation in community life.

If you are 55 years or older, legally blind and want to maintain or regain greater independence, the Older Blind Program is the right choice for you.

Some people think the term “blind” means that a person can see nothing at all - total blindness. Actually, the majority of people who are blind have some vision. Some people may see shapes, shadows or motion, or they are able to determine that there is some kind of light source. The key to success is having a variety of available solutions, visual and nonvisual.

What can we do for you?

- Teach you how to travel efficiently in your home and community.
- Teach you how to accomplish tasks of daily living, using the phone, signing your name, cooking, identifying money, time telling and matching your clothing. A Rehabilitation Teacher will work with you in learning how to perform these tasks efficiently and independently. The Rehabilitation Teachers will help you maintain or regain independence by coming to your home and teaching you how to perform various skills by a combination of approaches. You may be able to use your remaining vision, use your sense of touch, or a combination of both. Instruction is geared to meet your goals.
- Offer you a five-day training session with the Rehabilitation Teachers and Orientation and Mobility Specialists at the Visual Services Center that gives you a jump start on learning independent living skills.



Business Enterprise Program

Visual Services trains and assists entrepreneurs who are blind in establishing and operating food service businesses in public facilities across the state. The division secures and equips locations, provides initial inventory and offers on-going business counseling.



Former DRS client Callie Chappell works as a cook at the Francis Tuttle restaurant Tuts five days a week. She said she loves the independence a career gives her.

Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

The Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped offers services for people whose disabilities prevent them from using print materials.

Thousands of books, textbooks and periodicals in recorded and braille formats, are available to eligible library patrons at no charge. The library also houses a collection of books written by Oklahomans.

Contact the Oklahoma Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped at 1-800-523-0288.

Telephone Information Service

Visual Services sponsors a telephone access service to local and national newspapers for those who have disabilities that make using print materials difficult. The service also includes community and job information.

Services for People Who Are Deaf-Blind

Assistance includes information and referral, interpreting and advocacy. Visual Services provides tactile, vibratory and other equipment which assists clients in communicating and receiving environmental information. We also assist Deaf-Blind persons to find employment.

How to Reach Us

To locate the nearest Visual Services office, call 800-487-4042 toll free in Oklahoma. Those who are deaf or hard of hearing may 1-800-845-8476 toll free.

A map of all VS offices is accessible from the DRS web site, www.okdrs.gov.

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