



# **A Guide to Rehabilitation Services and Resources for Individuals who are Blind or Severely Visually Impaired**

Maryland State Department of  
Education, Division of  
Rehabilitation Services



## **VISION**

Our shared vision is that the State of Maryland is the best place in our nation for persons with disabilities to live, work and raise a family. Individuals with disabilities are welcome, fully included and actively participate in all Maryland communities.

## **MISSION**

The mission of the Division of Rehabilitation Services is to provide leadership and support in promoting the employment, economic self-sufficiency and independence of individuals with disabilities.

**DORS—Working For Maryland**

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)



**Susan Schaffer, Director  
Office for Blindness & Vision Services**

Welcome to the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS).

Our teachers, counselors and technical specialists are specially trained to help individuals who are blind reach their employment and independent living goals.

DORS offers two major program and service areas:

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs, which help people with disabilities obtain competitive employment.
- Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) programs that teach people, age 55 and over, how to become independent in their homes and communities.

The rehabilitation program that you develop along with your DORS counselor will lead you into the future. We invite you to learn about the many choices that you can make about programs that best fit your needs. Your involvement is essential to success.

All goals are possible with the right mix of knowledge about vision loss, skills and preparation.

We look forward to working with you to prepare for employment and independent living.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Schaffer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Susan Schaffer

Director

Office for Blindness & Vision Services

## **We would like you to know...**

- A person who is blind or severely visually impaired and eligible for DORS programs has access to all appropriate services available to any DORS consumer. In addition, OBVS provides specialized services including:
  1. Rehabilitation technology, including personalized evaluations to find out how computer technology and other aids can help a person who is blind stay independent
  2. Individualized counseling
  3. Evaluations for low vision, hearing, medical services and technology
  4. Appliances such as low vision devices, hearing aids and other necessary items
  5. Rehabilitation teaching services
- DORS counselors work with students who are blind or visually impaired to make the transition from high school to higher education, vocational training or directly to employment. Parent/guardian involvement is encouraged (required for minors).

- Each summer, OBVS sponsors a two-week summer program for high school students who are considering college. The program offers peer group support and activities that prepare students for campus life.
- People who are legally blind can enroll in the Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (MBEPB) and learn to operate vending, gift or food services businesses in public and private facilities. Last year, the average vendor's salary was \$47,000.
- DORS rehabilitation teachers work with individuals at home to teach personal independence skills such as orientation and mobility, Braille communication and home arts (cooking, money identification, sewing, telephone usage, cleaning and general organization techniques).



The **“Guide to Rehabilitation Services and Resources for Individuals who are Blind or Severely Visually Impaired”** provides information for DORS consumers to become informed and active participants in their rehabilitation program.

**Part I** describes services available through the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. It also includes information about how to obtain DORS services.

**Part II** is a Resource Directory that identifies additional available services and supports.



## **Part I**

### **Division of Rehabilitation Services**

The Office of Field Services (OFS) prepares people with disabilities to obtain and keep employment. These services may include career counseling, vocational training and/or job placement assistance.

DORS has more than 20 field offices and has representatives in Maryland's One-Stop Career Centers.

The **Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS)** offers all of the services available through OFS and specializes in service delivery to people whose primary disability is blindness or vision loss.

The OBVS administrative office is located in Baltimore. OBVS counselors and teachers are located in DORS field offices around the state and at the Workforce & Technology Center (WTC).

OBVS also oversees the **Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (MBEPB)**, which prepares individuals who are legally blind to operate vending, gift or food service businesses in public and private facilities.

The **Workforce & Technology Center (WTC)**, located in northeast Baltimore, offers career assessment, skills



training, job placement assistance, assistive technology services and other medical and support services.

The **Disability Determination Services (DDS)** makes medical decisions about disability claims filed by Maryland citizens through the Social Security Administration. The office is located in Timonium.

## **What to Expect During Rehabilitation**

### **Step 1: Referral & Application**

To refer yourself or someone else to DORS, contact the nearest DORS office or call 1-866-614-4780 to ask about office locations.

A referral form is available at [www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us) . This form can be submitted online, mailed, faxed or taken to a DORS office. Office locations are also listed on the DORS Web site.

A DORS counselor will then contact you about an appointment to complete an application.

If possible, bring any of the following records to the application appointment:

- Medical records about your disability
- School or vocational training certificates or diplomas
- Places and dates of previous employment

You may bring a support person(s) such as a family member, friend or advocate to the initial interview and subsequent meetings with DORS staff.

Your counselor will notify you within 60 days of your application (unless you agree on an extension) whether you are eligible.

Because DORS does not have sufficient funding to serve all eligible individuals with disabilities, there is currently a waiting list for services. DORS staff can let you know approximately how long you will need to wait to develop a plan and receive services.

## **Step 2: Assessment**

A DORS rehabilitation counselor will meet with you to talk about the problems that keep you from working or being independent. The specialist will help determine what is needed for you to go to work or acquire independence.

To help find out more about your abilities, DORS may ask your doctor or school for records. The counselor may also arrange special testing or assessments (at no cost) to find out more about physical or mental conditions that keep you from working or being independent.

### **Step 3: The Plan**

If you are found eligible for services and are no longer on the waiting list, a DORS counselor will work with you to identify an employment or independent living goal. You will also discuss what is needed to reach that goal.

Then, you and the DORS counselor will complete an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) or an Independent Living Plan (ILP). The plan is the agreement between you and DORS about what will happen during rehabilitation.

You will be provided your IPE or ILP in an alternative format such as Braille, large print, audiotape, CD or disc.

The IPE or ILP includes:

- The employment or independent living goal
- The steps needed to reach that goal
- Who will provide the services
- Who will pay for the services
- How the services will be evaluated
- When employment or independent living is expected to occur

DORS believes that you, as the consumer, should play the most important role in developing and writing the plan. You may write the IPE or ILP or ask for help from the rehabilitation counselor or someone else.

The IPE or ILP also describes your responsibilities and those of DORS. DORS must approve the plan before services can begin.

#### **Step 4: Services for Eligible Individuals**

DORS may arrange one or more of the following for individuals who have an employment goal:

- **Career decision-making, counseling and referral**—DORS rehabilitation counselors will give you the information you need to explore various career options, make decisions about career goals and identify the services you need to reach those goals.
- **Vocational training**—Many job-training programs are available as well as specialized training that helps students adjust to working.

DORS may pay for books, tools and other materials. DORS, using financial guidelines, can assist with funding for college or technical training.

- **Job search, placement and job-keeping services**—DORS rehabilitation specialists help develop job-seeking skills or refer students to other agencies that provide these services.

Follow-up is provided for at least 90 days after the job begins.

- **Supported employment/job coaching**—DORS can provide funding for job coaching services. Job coaches teach work skills and behaviors, often at the work site.
- **Assistive technology**—DORS is a leader in technology services that help a person get or keep a job. Worksite accommodations include adapted computers and workstations, mobility aids and other aids to assist in employment.
- **Medical rehabilitation services**—DORS can help supply certain medical services such as short-term counseling, visual aids and prosthetics.
- **Other support services**—Assistance may also be available for transportation, maintenance and personal assistance services.

### **Specialized services**

DORS and OBVS also offer services specific to the needs of individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. These include:

- Adjustment to blindness training
- Orientation and mobility skills training
- Communication skills training in Braille, handwriting, keyboarding and computer literacy
- Training to perform activities of daily living
- Low vision evaluation and devices
- Reader services

- Specialized devices and equipment

### **Independent Living Older Blind Program (ILOB)**

The Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) Program is designed for individuals (age 55 and above) who want to enhance independence in their homes and communities, though they may not have a goal of employment.

DORS may arrange one or more of the following for individuals who have an IL goal:

- Information and referral to other needed support services
- Evaluation and training in assistive technology such as computer access, household devices and communication/low vision aids
- Braille training
- Orientation/mobility skills training
- Home arts and activities of daily living training
- Interpreter services for deafblind individuals, readers, and transportation or guide services

### **Step 5: Job Placement**

Participants in VR programs may ask DORS for assistance in finding a job or apply for jobs on their own. Rehabilitation counselors provide specialized help with job hunting. If follow-up is needed, the rehabilitation counselor can also work with you and your new employer to make sure that the job match is successful.

## **Step 6: Case Record Closure**

DORS closes a case record when you have worked successfully for 90 days and you and the rehabilitation counselor have determined the job is satisfactory.

It will also be closed if you are unable to complete the program. If services are needed in the future, a case record can be reopened.

### **Disagreements that may arise:**

DORS makes all attempts work towards solutions to all disagreements about services. If there is a disagreement with a decision that has been made by a rehabilitation specialist, you can try to resolve the issue with the counselor or the immediate supervisor.

The **Client Assistance Program (CAP)** assists people with disabilities in understanding the rehabilitation process and works to resolve disagreements. See Page 17 to learn more about the appeals process.

## **Other Important Things to Know**

**Eligibility** – You are eligible for the VR program if:

1. You are blind or severely visually impaired, which is considered “most significantly” impaired. The DORS definition of blind or severely impaired is when your visual acuity is 20/200 or less in the better eye with

best correction, or your field of vision is 20 degrees or less in the better eye. Cases outside of these parameters will be considered on an individual basis.

2. Your blindness or visual impairment is a substantial impediment to employment for you.
3. You need VR services to begin or continue employment or to stay independent.
4. If you are eligible to receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, you are presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.

You are eligible for the ILOB program if:

1. You are blind or severely visually impaired.
2. Your ability to function independently with your family or in the community is substantially limited.
3. IL services would improve your ability to function in the family, community or in employment.
4. You are age 55 or older.

### **Financial Responsibility**

The DORS rehabilitation specialist will provide detailed information about who pays for services. There is no



payment required for such services as career guidance and counseling, testing and job placement. There is a sliding scale based on family income for most other services. There are separate financial policies for higher education.

To help as many people as possible, and as required by law, DORS counselors help look for other sources of funding for most services. DORS will only pay for services that have been pre-approved and authorized.

SSI and/or SSDI recipients are not required to contribute to the cost of services.

These financial policies ensure that VR funds are available to assist as many people as possible.

### **Informed Choice**

Informed choice is an important idea in vocational rehabilitation. Rehabilitation law says that you have the right to make your own decisions about jobs and living independently.

When discussing goals, DORS staff will help you find out your options and the pros and cons of each option. Then the best decisions can be made about how to reach an employment goal. This is called "informed choice."

There may be times that policy or funding does not support a choice. However, your preferences are

always an important part of planning employment goals.

### **Representation, Advocacy & the Appeal Process**

Advocacy plays an important role in the rehabilitation process. You have the right to receive assistance from a person of your choosing at any stage in the process. The Client Assistance Program (CAP), administered by DORS, is available to help you upon request.

Other advocacy organizations are available to assist you throughout your rehabilitation process. (See Part II, Resource Directory, Advocacy and Peer Support Section.)

### **Client Assistance Program**

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) helps individuals who have concerns or difficulties when applying for or receiving rehabilitation services funded under the Rehabilitation Act.

A CAP specialist can:

- Advocate for you to resolve problems with applying for or receiving rehabilitation services.
- Explain your rights and responsibilities in applying for and receiving rehabilitation services.
- Assist in communicating your viewpoints to DORS and assist DORS staff in understanding your views and requests.

- Give accurate information on rehabilitation programs and services and explain DORS policies and procedures.
- Provide legal services when appropriate to resolve rehabilitation concerns.
- Provide information about your employment rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended.

For additional information contact:

### **Maryland Client Assistance Program**

2301 Argonne Drive  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
Voice: 410-554-9361  
TTY: 410-554-9360  
FAX: 410-554-9362  
Toll-free: 800-638-6243

### **Appeal Procedure**

You have the right to appeal any decision of your rehabilitation counselor that affects provision of services. You should first attempt to resolve disagreements informally if possible. You may do this by discussing your point of view with your counselor or your counselor's supervisor. You may wish to request assistance from CAP or another advocate or representative of your choice. You have the right to request an appeal hearing if the matter cannot be resolved at this level.

To request an appeal hearing, write a letter within 60 days of the DORS decision or action with which you disagree. Your request must be sent to:

Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation  
Services  
2301 Argonne Drive  
Baltimore, MD 21218

A CAP specialist or your counselor or an advocate can assist in writing this request if you wish. The request should include:

- The action or decision being appealed
- A brief statement of your reasons for appealing the action or response you are requesting from DORS
- Your signature or signature of your authorized representative

The Assistant State Superintendent of DORS will acknowledge in writing receipt of your request and assist in scheduling a hearing.

At the hearing, you have the right to be represented by an attorney. You may request legal assistance available through the CAP program. The hearing will be conducted by an impartial hearing officer and you will receive a written decision.

## **Notice of Non-Discrimination**

The Division of Rehabilitation Services complies with the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act and does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, color, age, national origin, residence, physical or mental disability or political affiliation in providing services and employment opportunities.

**Visit [www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us) or call 1-866-614-4780 for more information.**

## **Part II**

### **Resource Directory**

The following list of resources for individuals who are blind or visually impaired has been developed to help you identify the vast array of services available to you. We have verified all information at the time of printing; however, details often change.

The Resource Directory is divided into the following categories of services and resources available in Maryland to individuals who are blind or visually impaired:

- Advocacy and Peer Support
- Adjustment to Blindness Rehabilitation Services
- Career Development/Employment
- Education/Training
- Library and Information Services
- Low Vision Services
- Scholarships
- Social Security Benefits
- Specialized Products and Appliances
- Technology Centers
- Volunteer Services

## **Advocacy & Peer Support**

### **American Association of the Deaf-Blind**

PO Box 2831

Kensington, MD 20891

Video Phone: 301 563-9107

Voice: 301-495-4403

Fax: 301-495-4404

Email: [aadb-info@aadb.org](mailto:aadb-info@aadb.org)

[www.aadb.org](http://www.aadb.org)

“The American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) national consumer organization of, by, and for deaf-blind Americans and their supporters. “Deaf-Blind” includes all types and degrees of dual vision and hearing loss. Our mission is to ensure that all deaf-blind persons achieve their maximum potential through increased independence, productivity, and integration into the community.”

### **American Council of the Blind**

American Council of the Blind

2200 Wilson Boulevard,

Suite 650,

Arlington, VA 22201-3354

Phone: 202-467-5081 800-424-8666

Fax: 703-465-5085

Email: [info@acb.org](mailto:info@acb.org)

[www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) is the nation's leading membership organization of blind and visually impaired people.

ACB strives to improve the well-being of all blind and visually impaired people. Services include:

- Toll-free information and referral on all aspects of blindness
- Scholarship assistance to blind/visually impaired post-secondary students
- Public education and awareness training
- Support to consumer advocates and legal assistance on matters relating to blindness
- Leadership and legislative training
- Consulting with industry regarding employment of blind and visually impaired individuals
- Governmental monitoring, consultation and advocacy including the "Washington Connection," a national legislative hotline
- Annual national convention

ACB publishes the *Braille Forum*, a free monthly magazine with a circulation of 26,000. It also produces a monthly one-half hour radio information program, *ACB Reports*, for radio reading information services.

### **American Council of the Blind of Maryland**

Charles Crawford, President

1906 Rookwood Rd.

Silver Spring, MD 20910-1730



H: 301-562-2057  
ccrawford@rcn.com  
[info@visabilities.org](mailto:info@visabilities.org)  
[acb.org/node/90](http://acb.org/node/90)

The ACB of Maryland is one of more than 70 affiliates of the American Council of the Blind. The ACB of Maryland hosts an annual State Convention, publishes a quarterly newsletter and sponsors students with scholarships.

### **Metro-Washington Association of the Deaf-Blind MWADB**

% Bruce Denhart  
5027 Mangum Road  
College Park, MD 20740  
[board@mwadb.org](mailto:board@mwadb.org)  
[www.mwadb.org](http://www.mwadb.org)

MWADB is a social organization where Deaf-Blind people and their friends meet on a regular basis to share stories and enjoy activities. The Deaf-Blind members are people who have both some hearing and visual loss

### **National Federation of the Blind**

1800 Johnson Street  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
410-659-9314  
410-685-5653 FAX  
[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is a consumer and advocacy organization with nearly 50,000 members and affiliates in all 50 states.

According to the NFB, "The real problem of blindness is not the loss of eyesight, but the misunderstanding and lack of information which exist."

Special services of the NFB include:

- The National Federation of the Blind Jernigan Institute, which (1) provides education, advocacy and outreach toward the quest to understand the real problems of blindness and (2) develops innovative education, technologies, products and services that help the world's blind to achieve independence.
- The International Braille and Technology Center for the Blind, the world's largest and most complete evaluation and demonstration center for all speech and Braille technology used around the world.
- NFB-NEWSLINE<sup>®</sup> for the Blind, the world's first free talking newspaper service, which offers consumers the complete text of leading national and local newspapers with the use of only a touch-tone telephone.
- Jobline, which offers national employment listings and job openings through a telephone menu system to anyone free of charge.

NFB Publications include:

- *Braille Monitor*, providing a positive philosophy about blindness and discusses events and activities of the NFB and in the blindness field.
- *Future Reflections*, a publication of the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children, a division of the NFB.
- *Voice of the Diabetic*, focusing on special interests and needs of diabetics. It is a publication of the Diabetes Action Network, also a division of the NFB.

### **National Federation of the Blind of Maryland**

Melissa Riccobono, President

1026 East 36th Street

Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 410-645-0632

Email: [president@nfbmd.org](mailto:president@nfbmd.org)

The National Federation of the Blind of Maryland (NFB of MD) is the Maryland affiliate of the NFB.

Via a network of local chapters and special interest divisions, the NFB of MD reaches out to blind children, students, adults and senior citizens in order to help those who are currently losing vision.

There are chapters in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Central Maryland, Cumberland, Frederick, Frostburg, Silver Spring and Southern Maryland.

Special interest divisions include: The Blind Youth Association, The NFB of MD Business Division, The Maryland Diabetic Support Network and the Parents of Blind Children Division.

Each fall, the NFB of MD hosts a three-day convention that is attended by hundreds of Marylanders. The NFB of MD sponsors a statewide scholarship competition for legally blind students living and/or studying in Maryland. This award is given at the convention each year.

The NFB of MD produces two free publications: *The Braille Spectator* and *Horizons* (for families and teachers of blind children).

## **Adjustment to Blindness Rehabilitation Services**

### **Blind Industries and Services of Maryland**

Headquarters—The BISM Rehabilitation Center  
3345 Washington Blvd.

Baltimore, MD 21227

410-737-2600

(888) 322-4567

410-737-2665 FAX

[www.bism.org](http://www.bism.org)

Eastern Shore Division  
2240 Northwood Drive  
Salisbury, MD 21801  
410-749-1366  
888-749-1366  
888-548-5085 FAX

Western MD Division  
322 Paca Street  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
301-724-4111  
888-267-4111  
888-316-4116 FAX

The Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) Rehabilitation Center offers a full-time training program to blind and visually impaired adults. The program, which lasts six to nine months, is designed to teach valuable skills, promote independence and enhance self-esteem.

The multi-disciplinary teaching staff includes several blind and visually impaired instructors. The core curriculum includes:

- Braille reading and writing
- Independent cane travel
- Cooking, sewing and home management
- Typing
- Computer literacy
- Physical conditioning

Twice-weekly discussions and seminars focus on important issues and attitudes affecting blind individuals. Students also enjoy meeting successful blind adults. Through off-site educational and recreational activities, students have the opportunity to further develop their newly acquired skills.

Most services are offered free of charge to blind or visually impaired Marylanders who are pursuing either personal or vocational goals.

### **Workforce & Technology Center**

Maryland State Department of Education

Division of Rehabilitation Services

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21218

410-554-9277

Toll-free: 888-200-7117

410-554-9197 FAX

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)

E-mail: [dors@dors.state.md.us](mailto:dors@dors.state.md.us)

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides services to individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired through the Office of Field Services, the Office for Blindness & Vision Services and the Independent Living Program for Older Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

DORS counselors may refer consumers to the Workforce & Technology Center, operated by DORS. Services include career assessment services, medical services, counseling, occupational and physical therapy, speech and hearing services, tutoring, and recreational programs. Skills training programs are also available. WTC has residential facilities (open Sunday evenings through Friday afternoon each week) for those who find that commuting is not feasible.

### **Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind**

8720 Georgia Avenue  
Suite 210  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
301-589-0894  
877-595-9228 FAX

Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind (CLB) offers comprehensive rehabilitation services that assist individuals to reassert control and independence. CLB professionals meet with individuals to design a program tailored to meet needs. Rehabilitation and mobility instructors provide hands-on practice in successfully facing daily challenges including managing household chores, traveling in the community and managing personal finances.

CLB's rehabilitation services include independent living skills training, Braille instruction, orientation and mobility. They also offer PRIDE (People Regaining Independence and Developing Experiences). PRIDE

offers older adults the ability to reconnect with family, friends and the world around them by teaching independent living skills, orientation and mobility training and by providing assistive technology, computer training and support services.

Additional services include support sessions with the client's family members, loved ones and assisted living facility staff to help them understand the challenges and opportunities that affect blind and low vision people as they age.

## **Career Development**

### **Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind**

Maryland State Department of Education

Division of Rehabilitation Services

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21218

410-554-9452

410-554-9455 FAX

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)

E-mail: [bep@dors.state.md.us](mailto:bep@dors.state.md.us)

DORS operates the Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (MBEPB), which provides small business enterprise opportunities for eligible individuals who are blind to become managers of their



own vending facilities. Candidates for MBEPB must be US citizens.

DORS is the designated State Licensing Agency and is authorized under the Randolph Sheppard Act to issue licenses to blind persons for the operation of vending facilities on Federal and other property. The MBEPB screens applicants, trains and licenses new vendors, provides business counseling and management services and upward mobility training for current vendors.

The Committee of Blind Vendors actively participates with DORS in policy-related matters affecting the overall operation of the Program. There are over 70 licensed blind vendors operating more than 80 vending facilities throughout Maryland.

## **Education and Training**

### **Connections Beyond Sight & Sound**

Donna Riccobono, M.Ed., Project Director

University of Maryland

1308 Benjamin Building

College Park, MD 20742

301-405-0482

E-mail: [donnaric@umd.edu](mailto:donnaric@umd.edu)

[www.cbss.umd.edu/index.html](http://www.cbss.umd.edu/index.html)

This project supports children in their home, school, and community by providing consultation, training and special programs, technical assistance to children, their families, and care providers.

### **Hadley School for the Blind**

700 Elm Street

Winnetka, IL 60093-2554

800-323-4238

847-446-8111

847-446-0855 FAX

[www.hadley-school.org](http://www.hadley-school.org)

E-mail: [info@hadley.edu](mailto:info@hadley.edu)

The Hadley School for the Blind offers approximately 90 accredited courses to blind and visually impaired adults, their families and blindness professionals through distance education completely free of charge. The school's 8,000 enrollments are from all corners of the United States and more than 90 foreign countries.

Courses are offered in six core areas:

- Academic and high school studies
- Braille and other communications skills
- Technology
- Independent living and life adjustment
- Recreation and leisure time
- Parent/family education

Courses are available in Braille, large print and audiocassette. Call for a catalog or visit the website for additional information.

## **Image Center**

300 East Joppa Road, Suite 302

Towson, MD 21286

Phone: 410-982-6311

Fax: 410-372-4037

Email: [info@imagemd.org](mailto:info@imagemd.org)

[www.imagemd.org](http://www.imagemd.org)

The IMAGE Center for People with Disabilities is a center dedicated to new thinking about disability. Those of us with disabilities need an environment in which we can experiment and create - finding new ways and new solutions to what have seemed insurmountable problems. Whether it is a blind person learning to pour coffee or a person in a wheelchair trying to reach high cupboards, far too often, solutions go unexplored because we assume they don't exist.

Here at the IMAGE Center we are dedicated to the creation of a learning and thinking environment that challenges concepts of what people with disabilities can do. We see the potential for people to become full contributing partners in their families, on the job and in the community. The more full contributors we empower, the sooner disability is seen as a normal part of life - challenging, manageable, possible.

## **Maryland School for the Blind**

3501 Taylor Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21236-4499

410-444-5000

410-319-5700 FAX

[www.mdschblind.org](http://www.mdschblind.org)

E-mail: [info@mdschblind.org](mailto:info@mdschblind.org)

The Maryland School for the Blind (MSB) is a private, non-profit school housed on a 95-acre campus in the Parkville area of Baltimore. It is the only residential and day school in Maryland for students who are blind or visually impaired. Students must be referred by their local school district. They attend tuition-free. Criterion for referral is a visual impairment, which, even with correction, adversely affects educational functioning. Ninety percent of MSB students have multiple disabilities in addition to blindness or visual impairment.

The school provides services for individuals from birth to age 21. Students participate in vocational rehabilitation services while transitioning from MSB to the community and employment. Independent Living services include:

- Personal management
- Braille
- Handwriting
- Typing
- Home management

- Orientation and mobility training

Employment services include:

- Prevocational evaluation
- Career and skill counseling
- Occupational skill development
- Vending stand training
- Consultation with other organizations

## **Library and Information Services**

### **The Maryland State Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped**

415 Park Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21201-3603

410-230-2424 (Baltimore metro area)

800-964-9209 (outside metro area)

410-333-8679 (TDD Baltimore metro area)

800-934-2541 (TDD outside metro area)

410-333-2095 FAX

[www.lbph.lib.md.us](http://www.lbph.lib.md.us)

E-mail: [recept@lbph.lib.md.us](mailto:recept@lbph.lib.md.us)

Hours: 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. M-F; 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. second Saturday of the month

The Maryland State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped offers free library service to persons unable to read or handle ordinary books and magazines because of a visual or physical impairment.

The Library provides a variety of materials on popular subjects, current events and best sellers. Materials are available in Braille, on cassette or CD, and in large type. Patrons may either visit the library, browse online or have materials mailed free of charge. The library can also provide players and selected accessories.

This service is provided as a part of a national library program administered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress.

### **Enoch Pratt Free Library**

400 Cathedral Street

Baltimore, Maryland 21201-4484

410-396-5430

410-396-3761 (TTY)

410-396-1441 FAX

[www.prattlibrary.org](http://www.prattlibrary.org)

List of Accessibility Resources:

[www.prattlibrary.org/services/index.aspx?id=58412](http://www.prattlibrary.org/services/index.aspx?id=58412)

E-mail:

[www.prattlibrary.org/about/email\\_question.aspx](http://www.prattlibrary.org/about/email_question.aspx)

The Pratt Library has the following services for people who are blind or have visual impairments:

- Fiction and non-fiction large print books
- Books on tape and CD
- DVDs with Descriptive Audio tracks
- SARA reading machine

- CCTV magnifier (SmartView Xtend)
- Magnifying glasses

The Central Library has computers with both large print and speech output (ZoomText) for accessing the Internet and Pratt databases.

The Pratt's General Information/Telephone Reference Service has operated since 1967. You can call the above numbers for answers to reference questions on all subjects. E-mail questions can also be directed to the above address.

**The Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc.**

12061 Tech Rd, Silver Spring, MD 20904

Phone (301)681-6636

Fax (301)625-1986

[www.washear.org](http://www.washear.org)

E-mail: [information@washear.org](mailto:information@washear.org)

Established in 1974, The Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc., is a nonprofit organization providing reading and information services for people who are blind, visually impaired and physically disabled and who cannot effectively read print, see plays, watch television programs and films, or view museum exhibits.

There is a daily radio reading service 24 hours a day, seven days per week. Readings of newspapers, magazines and books are broadcast over special receivers, available free of charge.

The Washington Ear also provides a dial-in newspaper service that enables individuals to read the *Washington Post* via telephone, 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

In addition, The Washington Ear provides a Descriptive Video Service (DVS) for selected live theater performances via a small FM radio transmitter and provides recorded notes for National Symphony Orchestra performances. They also have available tactile and large print atlases of Maryland and Washington D.C.

### **Radio Reading Network of Maryland**

3501 Taylor Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21236

410-779-4969

410-779-4968-fax

[www.radioreadingnetwork.org](http://www.radioreadingnetwork.org)

E-mail: [radioreading@nni.com](mailto:radioreading@nni.com)

The Radio Reading Network of Maryland serves persons who cannot read standard print. Nearly 150 volunteers read portions of selected newspapers and magazines.

This service is broadcast on sub-carriers of WBJC in Baltimore, WFWM in Frostburg and WESM in Princess Anne. The Reading Network can also be heard statewide on stereo television sets over the Second



Audio Program (SAP) channel of Maryland Public Television (MPT) during its regular broadcast hours.

Scheduled programs include readings from the *Baltimore Sun*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal* and various county newspapers. Among the magazines read regularly are *Time*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, *Esquire*, *Working Mother*, *Fortune* and *The Economist*. A schedule of weekly programs, in large print, is sent to each listener. The daily schedule is also available by phone.

Except for broadcasts on the SAP channel of MPT, programs are heard by means of a special receiver available through The Radio Reading Network. There is an annual fee of \$35. However, in a case of need, the fee can be waived.

### **Newsline for the Blind**

410-659-9314 x 2356

(888) 882-1629 (access line)

866-504-7300 (helpline)

[www.nfbnewsline.org](http://www.nfbnewsline.org)

Newsline is a service that provides access to such newspapers as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Baltimore Sun*, *USA Today* and the *Wall Street Journal* by telephone. Any person who cannot read conventional newsprint can qualify.

Subscribers can access this free service beginning at 6:30 a.m. of the publication date. The daily papers remain available for two days; the Sunday papers remain available for the week.

### **LearningAlly**

5225 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 312

Washington, DC 20015

800-221-4792

[www.learningally.org](http://www.learningally.org)

Recording for the Blind is a national organization that provides recorded and electronic textbooks, library services and educational resources to those who cannot read standard print because of a visual, physical or perceptual disability.

## **Audio Description Services**

### **Local Theaters**

Attend a theater performance and listen to an expert narrator describe the scenery, costumes and actions on stage via a tiny radio earphone. The service is available at certain performances at the Arena Stage, Ford's Theater, Kennedy Center, Lansburgh, National Theater, Olney, Tawes and Round House Theater. Free escort services to audio described performances are available.

## **National Symphony Orchestra**

Program note recordings are available free at the National Symphony Orchestra concert series. The cassettes are also mailed upon request prior to the concert.

## **Maryland Arts Access**

c/o Community College of Baltimore County, Essex  
Room B-200

7201 Rossville Blvd.

Baltimore, MD 21237-3899

443-840-2424

[www.ccbcmd.edu/performingarts/MD Arts Access.html](http://www.ccbcmd.edu/performingarts/MD_Arts_Access.html)

E-mail: [mdartsaccess@comcast.net](mailto:mdartsaccess@comcast.net)

Maryland Arts Access is dedicated to making art and cultural activities more accessible to disabled patrons. They help visually impaired patrons enjoy the arts with Audio Description, an exciting way of providing live descriptions at theaters and museums without disruption to other audience members. They also provide Braille and large print programs and brochures. Partners include: The Baltimore Opera, B&O Railroad Museum, Center Stage, Cockpit and Court, Pumpkin Theater, Maryland Center for the Performing Arts and the National Aquarium.

## **The Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc.**

The Washington Ear provides a Descriptive Video Service (DVS) for selected live theater performances

via a small FM radio transmitter and provides recorded notes for National Symphony Orchestra performances.

## **Low Vision Services**

Low vision specialists work in private practice throughout the state. A few clinics are listed below.

### **The Richard E. Hoover Rehabilitation Services for Low Vision & Blindness**

Greater Baltimore Medical Center  
6569 N. Charles Street  
Physicians Pavilion West, Suite 504  
Baltimore, MD 21204  
443-849-2658  
443-849-2603  
443-849-2631 FAX  
Hours: M–F 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

Hoover Rehabilitation Services provides both low vision evaluation and rehabilitation services. The Hoover team includes ophthalmologists, rehabilitation teachers, and orientation and mobility instructors. The main objective of Hoover Services is to teach individuals who are visually impaired how to most effectively use their remaining vision. A client of Hoover Services first receives an at-home pre-assessment. A low vision examination in the clinic follows. Optical and non-optical aids, together with professional instruction, is provided.

Follow-up services, as well as orientation and mobility instruction, are delivered at home, school or work. Specialists may also suggest changes in lighting and contrast to enhance visual performance as a result of an environmental analysis.

### **The Lions Low Vision Research and Training Center at Johns Hopkins**

Johns Hopkins Hospital

600 N. Wolfe Street

Baltimore, MD 21287

410-955-5080

800-215-6467

[www.hopkinsmedicine.org/wilmer](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/wilmer)

E-mail: [wilmerinfo@jhmi.edu](mailto:wilmerinfo@jhmi.edu)

The Low Vision Consultation Service at Johns Hopkins is designed to provide advanced clinical low vision care through a comprehensive service model. Optometrists and clinical social workers work together to identify the most effective intervention. The goal is to help an individual function more fully and with greater comfort, safety and independence.

Individuals first undergo a functional assessment/interview to determine the impact of low vision on daily life. Next, the optometrist evaluates visual performance, performs measurements and tests the effectiveness of several low vision devices. Special glasses, magnifiers, telescopes, sunglasses and other

optical devices are evaluated. Items such as lighting, large print, audio materials and adaptive writing systems are also tested. Individuals can also learn about and be referred to an array of related services and sources of adaptive equipment.

### **Low Vision Center**

4905 Del Ray Avenue, Suite 504

Bethesda, MD 20814

301-951-4444

Email: [LowVisionCtr@aol.com](mailto:LowVisionCtr@aol.com)

[www.lowvisioninfo.org](http://www.lowvisioninfo.org)

The Low Vision Center (LVC) is an information and referral service for those who have, or are experiencing transition to, partial vision. LVC helps individuals find resources that can help them become more independent and reach their full potential. All services are free of charge. LVC also offers a free demonstration center where interested individuals can examine and evaluate commonly available low vision devices.

### **Vision USA**

800-766-4466

[www.aoa.org](http://www.aoa.org)

Assistance with eye examinations and glasses.

### **Maryland Society for Sight**

1313 West Old Coldspring Lane

Baltimore, Maryland 21209

800-677-3937

[www.mdsocietyforsight.org](http://www.mdsocietyforsight.org)

Referral to community programs/services, information and advocacy.

### **Wilmer Ophthalmological Institution**

Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Johns Hopkins Hospital

729 Maumenee Building

600 North Wolfe Street

Baltimore, MD 21207

410-955-3429

Free diabetic retinopathy screening program.

### **Scholarships**

Blind students can take advantage of the same scholarships available to sighted students. There are additional resources available as well. The following is a list of organizations that award scholarships to legally blind post-secondary students:

#### **American Council of the Blind**

1155 15th Street, N.W.

Suite 1004

Washington, D.C. 20005

202-467-5081

800-424-8666

202-467-5085 FAX

[www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

## **American Foundation for the Blind**

11 Penn Plaza

Suite 300

New York, NY 10001

(212) 502-7600

800-232-5463

(212) 502-7777 FAX

[www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

E-mail: [afbinfo@afb.net](mailto:afbinfo@afb.net)

## **The National Federation of the Blind**

1800 Johnson St.

Baltimore, MD 21230

410-659-9314

410-685-5653

[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)

## **Social Security Benefits**

### **Social Security Administration**

800-772-1213

800-325-0778 (TTY)

[www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)

The Social Security Administration answers questions about Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as they relate to legally blind beneficiaries.



There are a number of Social Security rules important to blind individuals. Some apply only to people who are blind, while others apply to all beneficiaries. Learn whether you qualify for SSDI or SSI. If you are already receiving benefits, you will want to know more about the special rules designed specifically to make it easier for people who are blind to work.

Your local Social Security Office can answer your questions concerning your eligibility and can assist you in beginning your application process. Consumer advocacy organizations for the blind can also be an important source of information and assistance.

The Social Security Administration publishes a brochure that will help you understand the rules so you can use them to help meet your rehabilitation goals: Social Security Publication: *If You Are Blind Or Have Low Vision —How We Can Help*, SSA Publication No. 05-10052, January 2008.

## **Specialized Products & Appliances**

The organizations listed below offer a number of specialized aids and appliances for sale. Items such as white canes, Braille writing materials, labeling systems, games, kitchen gadgets, adapted medical devices, signature guides, talking calculators, clocks and medical devices are among the items available. Feel free to contact them for lists and catalogs.

## **Blind Mice Mart**

713-893-7277 Order Center

Office Hours: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. CST Monday - Friday

[www.blindmicemegamall.com](http://www.blindmicemegamall.com)

## **National Braille Press**

88 St. Stephen Street

Boston, MA 02115

617-266-6160

888-965-8965 (toll free)

Bookstore: 800-548-7323 ext. 520 (toll free US only)

[www.nbp.org](http://www.nbp.org)

The guiding purposes of National Braille Press are to promote the literacy of blind children through braille and to provide access to information that empowers blind people to actively engage in work, family, and community affairs.

## **NFB: Independence Market**

200 E Wells St @ Jernigan Place

Baltimore, MD 21230

410-659-9314 x 2216

[nfb.org/independence-market](http://nfb.org/independence-market)

E-mail: [independencemarket@nfb.org](mailto:independencemarket@nfb.org)

## **MaxiAids**

42 Executive Blvd.

Farmingdale, NY 11735

800-522-6294

631-752-0738 TTY  
[www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)

### **The White Cane Center**

Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped  
8720 Georgia Ave., Suite 210  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
301-589-0866  
Hours: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. M–Th.

### **LS&S**

145 River Rock Drive  
Buffalo, NY 14207  
800-468-4789  
Toll-Free TTY: 866-317-8533  
[www.lssproducts.com](http://www.lssproducts.com)

### **Independent Living Aids LLC**

200 Robbins Lane  
Jericho, NY 11753  
800-537-2118  
516-937-3906 Fax  
[www.independentliving.com](http://www.independentliving.com)

## **Technology Centers**

### **Rockville Memorial Library**

21 Maryland Ave  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-777-0959

Francie Gilman runs a technology users group for blind people who use computers. The group meets every fourth Sunday of the month.

## **The International Braille and Technology Center for the Blind**

200 E Wells St @ Jernigan Place

Baltimore, MD 21230

410-659-9315 option 5

410-685-5653 FAX

[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)

The International Braille and Technology Center (IBTC) is the world's largest demonstration and evaluation center for computer-related technologies used by blind persons. This unique facility is a valuable resource for blind individuals, their families, employers and other interested individuals. IBTC offers free information, demonstrations and advice about various kinds of computer-access devices, which are now available.

IBTC's goals are to:

- Stimulate development of technology for blind persons
- Facilitate comparative evaluation of state-of-the-art technological devices
- Test innovative technologies
- Function as a hands-on training center for blind individuals and other interested parties and groups

The center has an exhaustive inventory of computerized Braille-embossing devices, as well as Braille translation programs, speech synthesizers, screen review programs, reading machines, scanners, optical character recognition systems, Braille note taking devices, raised line drawing equipment, talking cash registers and more.

### **V-LINC: Providing Independence Through Technology**

2301 Argonne Drive  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
410-554-9134  
410-261-2907 Fax

V-LINC creates technological solutions to improve the independence and quality of life for individuals of all ages with disabilities in Maryland through a mix of off-the-shelf computer software and equipment, and one-of-a-kind, customized assistive technology. V-LINC also uses technology in-action in our Inclusive Computer Arts Day Camp every summer. Campers use computers with assistive devices, as needed, and have fun on field trips and creating arts projects.

**Assistive Technology Services:** Today computer technology has the ability to open up doors for someone living with a disability. V-LINC helps pair clients of all ages and abilities with the right computer software and hardware, devices and/or strategies for their needs. V-LINC Assistive Technology Specialists

can assist with exploring technological solutions to help you complete tasks.

Customized Assistive Technology Services: V-LINC's customized assistive technology program also serves individuals with disabilities in Maryland. Volunteer engineers and medical professionals invent solutions (or modify existing ones) for some of the daily challenges faced by clients. V-LINC's goal is to create one-of-a-kind devices to help individuals live, work, or play more independently.

### **The Maryland Technology Assistance Program**

Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)

2301 Argonne Drive

Room T-17

Baltimore, MD 21218

800-832-4847

866-881-7488 (TTY)

410-554-9237 FAX

[www.mdtpap.org](http://www.mdtpap.org)

E-mail: [mdtap@mdtap.org](mailto:mdtap@mdtap.org)

MD TAP makes disability-related technology more available, affordable and usable for Maryland residents with disabilities. Programs and services include:

- The AT Financial Loan Program, which provides low-interest loans to purchase assistive technology

- The Project for Accessible Technology (IT), which provides technical assistance, training and consultation on accessible information technology
- The MD Assistive Technology Co-op, which provides discounts and training on assistive technology
- Information & Referral
- Equipment loans and demonstrations
- Training, workshops and seminars
- A quarterly newsletter, "Tapping Technology"
- Guides that include the "Home Modifications, Durable Medical Equipment, Funding and Loan Closet Guide."

**Rehabilitation Technology Services,  
Division of Rehabilitation Services**

Workforce & Technology Center

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21218

888-200-7117

410-554-9583 TTY

410-554-9222 FAX

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)

E-mail: [dors@dors.state.md.us](mailto:dors@dors.state.md.us)

The primary purpose of DORS Rehabilitation Technology Services (RTS) program is to prescribe the necessary technology-based equipment and provide the skills to enable DORS consumers to succeed in their programs.

The RTS program has acquired an international reputation for the progressive application of state-of-the-art microcomputer technology to assist individuals with disabilities.

Persons who are blind or visually impaired may receive evaluation and consultation on various assistive device options and the use of microcomputer based assistive technologies. The RTS staff also consults with employers to recommend appropriate reasonable accommodations and job-related technology.

### **Martin Luther King Library**

901 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20001  
202-727-1335

Patrick Timony runs a technology users group for blind people using Apple products.

## **Volunteer Services**

### **American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults**

1800 Johnson Street, Suite 100  
Baltimore, MD 21230-4998  
410-659-9315

[www.actionfund.org](http://www.actionfund.org)

E-mail: [actionfund@actionfund.org](mailto:actionfund@actionfund.org)



The American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults specializes in providing help, which is not readily available from other service systems. Action Fund volunteers provide vitally needed expertise and technical assistance. Special program services meet the needs of blind children, older blind people, and individuals who are deaf/blind.

Free services include:

- Lending library of children's books in Braille and twin-vision<sup>®</sup> formats
- Weekly Braille newspaper for deafblind readers
- Braille calendars

The Action Fund conducts public education campaigns, provides scholarships, and gives financial assistance to individual blind persons in need. Senior citizens can obtain information regarding vision loss in later years.

**Deaf Shalom Zone, Inc.**

1040 S. Beechfield Ave.

Baltimore, MD, 21229

410-242-6133

410-247-8830 Fax

Email: [deafshalomzone@gmail.com](mailto:deafshalomzone@gmail.com)

The Deaf Shalom Zone Inc. empowers the culturally Deaf and Deaf-Blind through advocacy, case management, education, and referrals. They offer case

management services, food pantries, interpreting services, finance counseling, and SSP services

### **The Maryland Society for Sight**

1313 West Old Cold Spring Lane

Baltimore, MD 21209-4989

410-243-2020

800-MSS-EYES

410-889-2505 FAX

[www.mdsocietyforsight.org](http://www.mdsocietyforsight.org)

E-mail: [info@mdsocietyforsight.org](mailto:info@mdsocietyforsight.org)

The Maryland Society for Sight provides vision screenings and public education to identify people at risk for vision impairment and guide them to resources they need to save their sight.

The Society began a volunteer program in 1994 which matches people who are newly visually impaired with sighted volunteers who provide assistance with reading, letter writing, shopping, planning activities, driving, companionship through home visits and telephone calls, and audio taping. Volunteers are also recruited to perform vision screening to identify persons at risk of losing vision.

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Rehabilitation Services**

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)

**Administrative Office**

410-554-9442; Toll-free: 888-554-0334

410-554-9411 (TTY)

[dors@dors.state.md.us](mailto:dors@dors.state.md.us)

**Office for Blindness & Vision Services**

410-554-9277; Toll-free: 866-614-4780

410-554-9195 (TTY)

[obvs@dors.state.md.us](mailto:obvs@dors.state.md.us)

**OBVS Regional Offices**

**Annapolis** 410-974-7604

Serving Anne Arundel, Calvert, Caroline, Cecil, Charles, Dorchester, Kent, Prince George's, Queen Anne's, St. Mary's, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester Counties

**Baltimore** 410-261-2943

Serving Baltimore City and Baltimore, Howard and Harford Counties

**Cumberland** 301-791-4764

Serving Allegany, Carroll, Frederick, Garrett, Montgomery and Washington Counties

[www.dors.state.md.us](http://www.dors.state.md.us)

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