

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



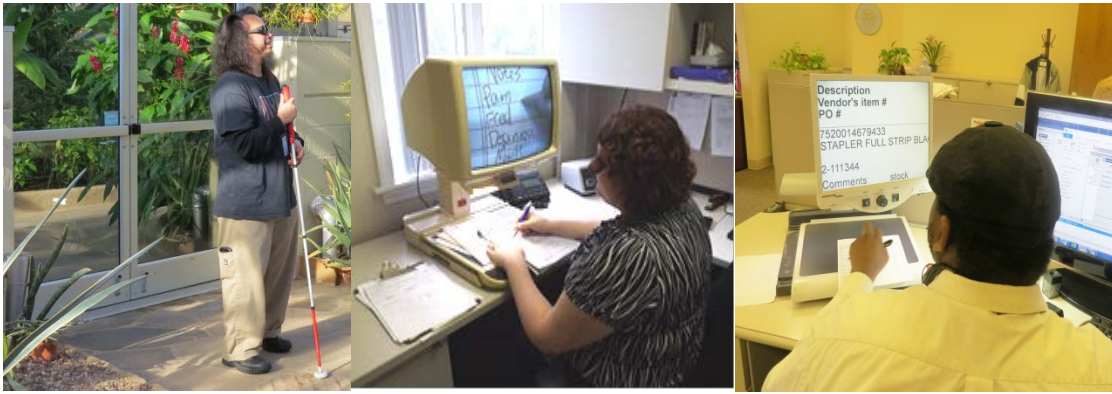
VISION

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 (DORS) is to provide leadership and support in promoting the employment, economic self-sufficiency, and independence of individuals with disabilities.

DORS - Helping Marylanders With Disabilities Go To Work



www.dors.maryland.gov
Email: dors@maryland.gov

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 three major program and service areas:

- 1. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)** program, which helps students with disabilities to prepare for the transition from high school into a suitable employment or post-secondary education program and to function independently in their family or community.
- 2. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)** programs, which help people with disabilities, obtain competitive employment.
- 3. Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB)** programs that teach people with vision loss, age 55 and over, how to become independent in their homes and communities.

The rehabilitation program that you and your DORS counselor develop will lead you into the future. We invite you to learn about the many choices 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 transition from high school, prepare for employment or maintain independence.

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:

- Rehabilitation technology
- Individualized counseling
- Evaluations for low vision and hearing
- Appliances such as low vision devices, hearing aids and other necessary items
- Rehabilitation teaching services
- Career guidance & assessment
- Vocational or academic education
- Independent living skills training
- Orientation & mobility
- Job placement

Transitioning Students

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. A current student who is blind or visually impaired and between the ages of 14 and 21 is qualified for the following pre-employment transitioning services (Pre-ETS):

- Job exploration counseling
- Work-based learning experiences, which may include:
 - In-school or after-school opportunities
 - Experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), provided in an integrated environment in the community
- Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, including:
 - Instruction in person-centered planning
 - Peer mentoring

Each summer, OBVS sponsors summer programs for all students with disabilities who qualify for Pre-ETS.

Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind

The Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (MDBEP) provides opportunities for individuals who are legally blind to operate retail concession, gift, or food service businesses in public facilities. MDBEP operates under the Randolph-Sheppard Act.

Independent Living Older Blind – Ages 55 and Older

The Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) Program helps individuals 55 or older who are blind or have vision impairment live independently in their homes and communities.

DORS rehabilitation teachers will come to your home to provide assessment and training. The program reaches out to individuals in all areas of the state, including those living in rural counties.

This “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

DORS has more than 20 field offices and representatives available in Maryland's American Job Center locations.

DORS vocational rehabilitation (VR) program prepares people with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment. Services may include career counseling, vocational training, or job placement assistance.

DORS Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS) offers all of the services available through the VR program and specializes in additional services for individuals whose primary disability is blindness or vision loss.

OBVS counselors and teachers are located in DORS offices throughout the state and at the Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) in northeast Baltimore. WTC offers career assessment, skills training, job placement assistance, assistive technology services and other medical and support services.

What can I expect from DORS?

If you are eligible for DORS services, your counselor will work with you to help figure out your employment goals and what services you will need to reach these goals.

Services can include:

- Career counseling
- Career assessment
- College or career training
- Work-readiness training

- Assistive technology
- Job placement
- Job coaching
- Other support services

DORS staff will help you figure out your options and the pros and cons of each option to help you make decisions about how best to reach your goals. This is called "Informed Choice" and it is your right under federal law.

Who pays for DORS services?

Most DORS services, such as career guidance, counseling, skills testing and job placement, are provided at no cost to you.

You and your family may be asked to help pay for some services according to a sliding scale based on family income. Your DORS counselor will give you more information about who pays for services and help look for other sources of funding.

Due to funding limitations, DORS can only pay for the least expensive services or goods that will meet your needs. If you decide you want more expensive services or goods that cost more than DORS is allowed to pay, you will need to pay the difference.

If you receive Social Security disability benefits (SSI/SSDI), your DORS services will be provided at no cost to you, unless you choose a more costly service than DORS can provide.

There is a separate financial policy for college or university training.

What happens after I find a job?

Your DORS counselor follows up to make sure you are successful on your job.

If you like, DORS can also work with you and your employer to help you to adjust to any changes in the workplace.

When you have been at work successfully for 90 days, DORS will close your case.

If you think that you might need some things after your case has been closed, you can contact your DORS counselor to see what we can do.

If there is any change in your disability or your job, and you think you need DORS services again, you may re-apply.

The DORS Process

Step 1: Referral & Application

You can refer yourself or a family member for DORS employment services (or, if you are 55 years or older and are blind/vision impaired, independent living services) in one of three ways:

1. Fill out an [online referral form](#). On the DORS website (www.dors.maryland.gov), click on the link under **I Want To:** that says **Begin DORS Services**.
2. Call [your nearest DORS Office](#) and we'll help you complete the referral over the phone.
3. Visit [your nearest DORS Office](#) and we'll help you in person.

If you need help locating your nearest DORS Office, go to the DORS website (www.dors.maryland.gov), click on the link under **I Want To:** that says **Find My Local DORS Office**.

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

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 before you can develop a plan and receive services.

Step 2: Assessment

A DORS rehabilitation counselor will meet with you to talk about the barriers that keep you from becoming employed and will help you determine a plan for employment.

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 employment.

Step 3: The Plan

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

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

If needed, you can get a copy of your plan in an accessible format such as Braille, large print, audio file, or electronic format.

The plan includes:

- Your employment (or independent living) goal
- The steps needed to reach your 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, the consumer, should play the most important role in developing and writing the plan. You may write your plan yourself or ask for help from the rehabilitation counselor or someone else.

The plan 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, to help 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 people adjust to the workforce.

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

- **Job search, placement and job-retention 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 have a visual impairment and 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 independent living goal:

- Training in how to manage personal care and household tasks
- Labeling and organizing personal care items, clothing, appliances and medications
- Safe cooking techniques
- Orientation and mobility training
- Braille instruction
- Referral to community peer support groups and other services

Step 5: Job Placement

DORS rehabilitation counselors provide specialized help with job hunting and applying for jobs. You may also apply for jobs on your own. Once you obtain a job, 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 to work out 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. Learn more about [CAP and the appeals process](#) later in this document.

Other Important Things to Know

Eligibility

You are eligible for the VR program if:

- 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.
- Your blindness or visual impairment is a substantial impediment to employment for you.
- You need DORS services to begin or continue employment.
- If you are eligible to receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, you are presumed to be eligible for DORS services.

You are eligible for the ILOB program if:

- You are age 55 or older.
- You are blind or severely visually impaired.
- Your ability to function independently with your family or in the community is substantially limited.

- Independent living services would improve your ability to function in the family, community or in employment.

Financial Responsibility

Your 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 funds are available to assist as many people as possible.

Informed Choice

Rehabilitation law says that you have the right to make your own decisions about jobs and living independently.

When discussing rehabilitation 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 and 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
Toll-free: 1-800-638-6243
Fax:410-554-9362
TTY: 410-554-9360
Email: cap.dors@maryland.gov

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:

- 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.maryland.gov or call 1 888-554-0334 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 and Training
- Independent Living Resources
- Library and Information Services
- Low Vision Services
- Scholarships
- Social Security Benefits
- Specialized Products and Appliances
- Technology Centers
- Volunteer Services

Advocacy and Peer Support

American Association of the Deaf-Blind

PO Box 2831

Kensington, MD 20891

VP: 301-563-9107

Phone: 301-495-4403
Fax: 301-495-4404
Email: aadb-info@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

2200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 650
Arlington, VA 22201-3354
Phone: (202) 467-5081 (800) 424-8666
Fax: (703) 465-5085
Email: info@acb.org
Website: 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

Cindy LaBon, President

403 Fleece Flower Dr.

Gaithersburg, MD 20878-2646

Phone: 301-990-1435

Email: cindylabon@gmail.com

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)

Eddie Martinez, President

Email: president@mwadb.org

The mission of the Metropolitan Washington Association of the Deaf-Blind (MWADB) is to encourage, recognize and promote the social, cultural and educational objectives of Deaf-Blind people in the Metropolitan Washington area toward the goal of economic security, social equality, access to community resources, and privileges as citizens.

National Federation of the Blind

200 East Wells Street

at Jernigan Place

Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Phone: 410-659-9314

Email: nfb@nfb.org

The National Federation of the Blind is the largest organization of the blind in America. Interested sighted persons also join.

Founded in 1940, the Federation has grown to include over 50,000 members.

Some of the NFB programs include:

- 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-LINK® - Recently launched, this innovative program pairs individuals seeking information or advice with

experienced Federationists. This is a great resource for anyone who wants to learn more about a variety of blindness issues, from how to use services at college effectively to how to re-pot an orchid non-visually.

- NFB-NEWSLINE® 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.
- NFB Youth Slam
- NFB Scholarship Program
- Braille Literacy Programs
- Possibilities Fair for Seniors

National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Sharon Maneki

Phone: 410-715-9596

Email: 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

Phone: 410-737-2600 888-322-4567

FAX: 410-737-2665

www.bism.org

Eastern Shore Division

2240 Northwood Drive

Salisbury, MD 21801

Phone: 410-749-1366 888-749-1366

FAX: 888-548-5085

Western MD Division

322 Paca Street

Cumberland, MD 21502

Phone: 301-724-4111 888-267-4111

FAX: 888-316-4116

Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) offers free life skills rehabilitation programs for blind and low vision people of all ages. Our mission at BISM is to provide each student with the ability to achieve self-sufficiency, personal growth, and independence.

Comprehensive instruction is offered in Braille, Cane Travel, Adaptive Computer Technology, and Independent Home Living. The majority of BISM instructors are blind and serve as mentors and role models to the students.

If you or someone close to you is struggling with the loss of vision, please call BISM and take the first step to regaining control of your life! Call 1-888-322-4567 to learn more.

Services include:

- CORE - Adult residential program
- Youth Services
- SAIL Program - Senior Services and the Seniors
Achieving Independent Living

Workforce & Technology Center

Maryland State Department of Education

Division of Rehabilitation Services

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 410-554-9100 888-200-7117

Email: wtc.dors@maryland.gov

Website: www.dors.maryland.gov

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

Phone: 301-589-0894

Fax: 877-595-9228

Website: www.clb.org

Since 1900 Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind has been dedicated to helping the blind or visually impaired population of the greater Washington region overcome the challenges of vision loss. Our work enables people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired to remain independent, active, and productive in our society.

Independence is our vision. We provide the right variety of life style changing services to enable each and every blind or

visually impaired person in our region to achieve their highest level of economic independence and quality of life.

Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind's (CLB) programs and services include training and consultation in assistive technology, employment marketing skills training, career placement services, comprehensive low vision care, and a wide range of counseling and rehabilitation services.

CLB provides programs and services to people of all ages who are blind or visually impaired, regardless of their ability to pay. Programs and services include adaptive technology, professional and career services training, low vision services, rehabilitation, counseling, children's services, independent living and older adult programs.

Career Development/Employment

Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind

Maryland State Department of Education

Division of Rehabilitation Services

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 410-554-9452

Fax: 410-554-9455

Email: bep.dors@maryland.gov

Website: www.dors.maryland.gov

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

Phone: 301-405-0482

Email: donnaric@umd.edu

www.cbss.umd.edu

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

Phone: 800-323-4238 847-446-8111

Fax: 847-446-0855

Email: info@hadley.edu

Website: www.hadley-school.org

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.

Maryland School for the Blind

3501 Taylor Avenue

Baltimore, MD 21236-4499

Phone: 410-444-5000

Fax: 410-319-5700

Email: info@mdschblind.org

Website: www.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 and 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

Independent Living Resources

Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, non-profit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. CILs are unique in that they operate according to a strict philosophy of consumer control, wherein people with all types of disabilities directly govern and staff the organization. Centers for Independent Living provide:

- Peer Support
- Information and Referral
- Individual and Systems Advocacy
- Independent Living Skills Training

For more information: mdcilready.com/about-cils

Maryland Centers for Independent Living by County:

Allegany, Garrett & Washington Counties

Resources for Independence, Inc.
Lori Magruder, Executive Director
30 North Mechanic St., Unit B
Cumberland, MD 21502
Phone: 301-784-1774
Fax: 301-784-1776

Anne Arundel & Howard Counties

Accessible Resources for Independence, Inc.
Katie Collins-Ihrke, Executive Director
1406B Crain Hwy South, Suite 206
Glen Burnie, MD 21061
Phone: 443-713-3914

Fax: 443-713-3909

Baltimore City, Baltimore & Harford Counties

Independent Marylanders Achieving Growth through

Empowerment (The Image Center)

Michael Bullis, Executive Director

Hampton Plaza

300 E. Joppa Road, Suite 312

Towson, MD 21286

Phone/TTY: 410-982-6311

Calvert, Charles & St. Mary's Counties

Southern MD Center for Independent Living, Inc.

Sandra Dent, Executive Director

38588 Brett Way, Suite 1

Mechanicsville, MD 20622

Phone: 301-884-4498/5110 TTY: 711

Fax: 301-884-6099

**Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's,
Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico & Worcester Counties**

Bay Area Center for Independent Living, Inc.

Pattie Tingle, Executive Director

909 Progress Circle, Suite 300

Salisbury, MD 21804

Phone: 443-260-0822

Fax: 443-260-0833

Carroll & Frederick Counties

The Freedom Center, Inc.

Jamey George, Executive Director

14 W. Patrick Street, Suite 10

Frederick, MD 21701
Phone: 301-846-7811
Fax: 301-846-9070

Montgomery & Prince George's Counties

Independence Now, Inc.
Sarah Sorensen, Executive Director
12301 Old Columbia Pike, Suite 101
Silver Spring, MD 20904
Phone: 301-277-2839

Library and Information Services

Maryland State Library for the Blind & Physically Handicapped

415 Park Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21201-3603
Phone: 410-230-2424 800-964-9209
TTY: 410-333-8679 800-934-2541
Fax: 410-333-2095

marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DLDS/LBPH/index.aspx

Library Hours:

Monday – Friday 8 A.M. – 5 P.M.

Second Saturday 10 A.M. – 2 P.M.

Email: Reference.desk@maryland.gov

Voice: 410-230-2424 or 1-800-964-9209

TTY: 410-333-8679 or 1-800-934-2541

Fax: 410-333-2095

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.
<https://www.loc.gov/nls/index.html>

Enoch Pratt Free Library

400 Cathedral Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-4484
Phone: 410-396-5430
TTY: 410-396-3761
Fax: 410-396-1441
Website: www.prattlibrary.org

The Enoch Pratt Free Library has the following assistive devices available at the Central Library and some branches for individuals who are blind or have visual impairments:

- Fiction and non-fiction large print books
- Books on tape
- Kurzweil Reader (Reading Edge)
- CCTV magnifier (SmartView Xtend)

- SARA reading machine
- Magnifying glasses

The Metropolitan Washington Ear, Inc.

12061 Tech Rd

Silver Spring, MD 20904

Phone: 301-681-6636

Fax: 301-625-1986

Email: information@washear.org

Website: www.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

Phone: 410-779-4969

Fax: 410-779-4968

Email: info@radioreading.org

Website: www.radioreadingnetwork.org

The Radio Reading Network provides hours of programming from many popular publications! These include newspapers, magazines, and books.

Newsline for the Blind

Phone: 410-659-9314 x 2356

Access Line: 888-882-1629

Help Line: 866-504-7300 (helpline)

Website: 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.

Learning Ally

5225 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Suite 312

Washington, DC 20015

Phone: (800) 221-4792

Website: www.learningally.org

For nearly 70 years, Learning Ally has been dedicated to helping students with print disabilities, including blindness, visual impairment, and dyslexia. Learning Ally improves the way students learn at home and in the classroom.

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 North Charles Street
Physician Pavilion West Suite 504
Baltimore, MD 21204
Phone: 443-849-2658
Fax: 443-849-2631
Website: www.gbmc.org/lowvision
Hours: M–F 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.

The Richard E. Hoover Rehabilitation Services for Low Vision and Blindness is a unique program dedicated to helping people with low vision and blindness resume active, satisfying more independent lives. Hoover Services staff members work directly with visually impaired individuals to determine which devices and techniques will m them meet their personal goals.

The Lions Low Vision Research and Training Center at Johns Hopkins

Johns Hopkins Hospital
600 N. Wolfe Street

Baltimore, MD 21287

Phone: 410-955-5080 800-215-6467

Email: wilmerinfo@jhmi.edu

Website: www.hopkinsmedicine.org/wilmer/services/low_vision

Low vision rehabilitation specialists use a combination of lenses, lighting, magnification devices, and non-optical aids to maximize a person's ability to participate in those daily activities. Although vision rehabilitation is not a substitute for any medical care you may be receiving for your eyes, it will serve to make the most of the visual function. Vision rehabilitation services at Wilmer are made possible, in part, through the generosity of the Lions Clubs of Maryland, Delaware, the District Columbia and the Lions Vision Research Foundation.

Low Vision Center

4905 Del Ray Avenue, Suite 504

Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: 301-951-4444

Email: LowVisionCtr@aol.com

Website: 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

Phone: 800-766-4466

Website: www.aoafoundation.org/vision-usa/

Assistance with eye examinations and glasses.

Maryland Society for Sight

Phone: 410-243-2020 800-MSS-EYES (800-677-3937)

Fax: 410-889-2505

Email: info@mdsocietyforsight.org

The Maryland Society for Sight works to achieve its mission through vision screenings for preschoolers, visual acuity and glaucoma screenings for adults, mobile eye care for the homeless, and eye health and safety education programs.

The Wilmer Eye Institute

Johns Hopkins Hospital

600 N. Wolfe St.

Baltimore, MD 21287

Phone: 410-955-5080 800-215-6467

General Questions: wilmerinfo@jhmi.edu

Website: www.hopkinsmedicine.org/wilmer

The Wilmer Eye Institute has long been recognized for bringing together ophthalmologists and optometrists consistently ranked by their peers as among the finest internationally, supported by a well-trained and highly-experienced team of physician assistants, nurses, technicians, and staff cited by patients for their knowledge, responsiveness, and sensitivity.

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

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

Fax: 202-467-5085

Website: www.acb.org

American Foundation for the Blind

11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300

New York, NY 10001

Phone: 212-502-7600 800-232-5463

Fax: 212-502-7777

Email: afbinfo@afb.net

Website: www.afb.org

The National Federation of the Blind

1800 Johnson St.

Baltimore, MD 21230

Phone: 410-659-9314

Fax: 410-685-5653

Website: www.nfb.org

Social Security Benefits

Social Security Administration

Phone: 800-772-1213

TTY: 800-325-0778 (TTY)

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 Services

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

Order Center: 713-893-7277

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

Website: www.blindmicemegamall.com

Helen Keller Services (HKS)

Phone: 718-522-2122

Email: info@helenkeller.org

Website: www.helenkeller.org/hks/about-hks

Since 1893, Helen Keller Services (HKS) has been committed to improving the lives of individuals who are blind, visually impaired or have combined hearing and vision loss.

HKS is comprised of Helen Keller Services for the Blind, a regional division serving the New York City/Long Island area, and the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults, a national division headquartered in Sands Point, New York, with a network of regional offices that extends HKS' reach across the United States.

Our instructors provide personalized training and guidance to each individual. Our clients are true partners in the process, collaborating with staff to design training plans that are tailored

to their needs and goals. Everything they learn through HKS has practical, real world applications.

One-on-one coaching, cutting-edge technology, hands-on learning and the chance to interact with people who know firsthand the challenges of living with vision or combined vision and hearing loss—it's all part of the HKS experience.

East Central Regional Division:
Cynthia Ingraham (Regional Representative)
14440 Cherry Lane Court, Suite 214
Laurel, MD 20707
Phone: 240-786-6534
VP: 240-667-7295
Email: cynthia.ingraham@hknc.org

I Can Connect – National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP)

Phone: 800-825-4595
TTY: 888-320-2656
Website: www.icanconnect.org/how-to-participate/maryland

iCanConnect was established by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and is also known as the as NDBEDP. If you have significant combined vision and hearing loss and meet federal income guidelines, iCanConnect can provide you with free communication technology and training to stay connected with family and friends.

iCanConnect serves people from a wide range of backgrounds, including older people who have lost their sight and hearing later in life, people with Usher and CHARGE Syndromes, and

others with combined significant vision and hearing loss who meet federal income guidelines. The equipment we provide includes smartphones, tablets, computers, screen readers, braille displays, and adaptive software.

In Maryland, Perkins School for the Blind is responsible for the iCanConnect program, and works with TCS Associates to provide local service in Maryland.

For more information on how to apply for iCanConnect in Maryland contact:

TCS Associates

7361 Calhoun Pl, suite 350

Rockville Maryland 20855

Phone: 240-428-1820 855-862-4586

VP: 240-221-1227

Fax: 240-428-1830

Email: info@tcsassociates.com

Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM)

301 W. Preston Street, Suite 1008A

Baltimore, MD 21201

Phone: 410-767-6960

TTY: 800-552-7724

VP: 443-453-5970

Website: doit.maryland.gov/mdrelay/Pages/TAM.aspx

Maryland Relay is administered by Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM), a state agency within the Maryland Department of Information Technology. TAM oversees all Maryland Relay services and programs, including Captioned Telephone service and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program.

Get the telecommunications equipment needed to independently make or receive phone calls. The Maryland Accessible Telecommunications (MAT) program, a service of Maryland Relay, offers a wide variety of solutions and tools—from amplified phones to Braille TTYs to tablets—to support day-to-day communications.

TAM also is responsible for the administration of NFB-Newsline®, which provides 24/7 access to over 300 publications (including 4 Spanish periodicals) to the Blind and to those that cannot read conventional print. Content can be accessed via a touch-tone telephone, online, or by downloading publications to an e-reader and a free mobile app through iTunes. To register for this service or for more information, call 888-882-1629.

National Braille Press

88 St. Stephen Street

Boston, MA 02115

Phone: 617-266-6160 888-965-8965

Bookstore: 800-548-7323 ext. 520

Website: 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

Email: independencemarket@nfb.org

Website: nfb.org/independence-market

MaxiAids

42 Executive Blvd.

Farmingdale, NY 11735

Phone: 800-522-6294

TTY: 631-752-0738

Website: www.maxiaids.com

The White Cane Center

Volunteers for the Visually Handicapped

8720 Georgia Ave., Suite 210

Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 301-589-0866

Hours: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. M–Th.

LS&S

145 River Rock Drive

Buffalo, NY 14207

Phone: 800-468-4789

TTY: 866-317-8533

Website: www.lssproducts.com

Independent Living Aids LLC

200 Robbins Lane

Jericho, NY 11753

Phone: 800-537-2118

Fax: 516-937-3906

Website: www.independentliving.com

Technology Centers

The International Braille & Technology Center (IBTC)

200 E Wells St @ Jernigan Place

Baltimore, MD 21230

Phone: 410-659-9315 option 5

Fax: 410-685-5653

Website: 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

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21212

Phone: 410.554.9134

Fax: 410.261.2907

Website: www.v-linc.org

Mission: Special Solutions for Special Needs

To help people with disabilities fulfill their potential for a productive, independent life through the use of technology, at school, in the workplace, at home and in the community. V-LINC provides services without regard to economic circumstances, age, severity or type of disability. The "V" is for the volunteers who make it happen. Too often there is no one size that fits all.

Maryland Technology Assistance Program

Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD)

2301 Argonne Drive

Room T-17

Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 800-832-4847

TTY: 866-881-7488

Fax: 410-554-9237

Email: mdtap@mdtap.org

Website: www.mdtap.org

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

- AT Financial Loan Program, which provides low-interest loans to purchase assistive technology
- Project for Accessible Technology (IT), which provides technical assistance, training and consultation on accessible information technology
- 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.”

MSDE Division of Rehabilitation Services Rehabilitation Technology Services

Workforce & Technology Center

2301 Argonne Drive

Baltimore, MD 21218

Phone: 888-200-7117

TTY: 410-554-9583

Fax: 410-554-9222

Website: www.dors.maryland.gov

Email: dors@maryland.gov

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 St NW

Washington, D.C., DC 20001

Phone: 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

Phone: 410-659-9315

Email: actionfund@actionfund.org

Website: www.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® 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

Phone: 410-242-6133

Fax: 410-247-8830

Email: 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

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services

www.dors.maryland.gov

Administrative Offices: 410-554-9442

Toll-free: 888-554-0334

VP: 443-798-2840

Office for Blindness & Vision Services

Phone: 410-554-9277

Toll-free: 866-614-4780

Email: obvs.dors@maryland.gov

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