

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services
OBVS Policy Information & Fact Sheet

Reference: [RSM 2, Section 400](#)

This informational sheet is for OFS staff considering transferring a consumer to OBVS.

DORS Policy

[RSM 2, Section 400](#): Referral to Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS) or Office of Field Services (OFS)

Office for Blindness & Vision Services:

- All individuals who are legally blind, or are significantly vision impaired, are served by OBVS.
- Individuals who are deaf-blind but do not rely on American Sign Language are served by OBVS.
- Individuals who require Independent Living Older Blind services are served by OBVS.

Office of Field Services:

- All other consumers are served by the Office of Field Services.

If at any time during the rehabilitation process it becomes apparent that a consumer assigned to one Office (OFS or OBVS) would be more appropriately served by the other Office, the OFS regional director and OBVS supervisor shall facilitate the transfer consistent with [RSM 2, Section 311](#).

How do I determine if an individual on my OFS caseload would be more appropriately served by OBVS?

OBVS serves all individuals with significant vision impairments no matter what other disabilities they may also have. If you have a consumer with a significant vision disability, it is appropriate to give that file to your supervisor for review and transfer to OBVS.

A significant vision impairment can be identified by reviewing the medical documentation, usually an eye report. The VR Priority Guide in the Counselor Toolkit provides specific information regarding what is considered a significant and most significant vision impairment.

What if I am taking a referral or have received a referral that indicates the consumer is blind or visually impaired?

Often consumers describe their vision as impaired if they wear glasses or if they are blind in one eye. A couple of follow-up questions can help determine if they are appropriate for OBVS:

- **Can you drive, or are you able to drive?**
(If the MVA will not allow someone to drive because of their vision, the referral is most likely appropriate for OBVS.)

- **Do you have difficulty completing activities of daily life (ADLs) because of your vision impairment?**

(If they say “No,” it is likely that their vision is correctable with glasses.)

What if the information that I have regarding the consumer's vision is unclear?

OBVS staff are in each Region and can assist with determining if a consumer has a significant vision impairment. If the medical information is insufficient to make a determination, the OBVS staff can assist by providing information on where and how to obtain a low vision examination.

What if I have an appointment scheduled with a consumer and when they arrive, they are visually impaired?

Sometimes individuals with multiple disabilities do not report their vision impairment in the referral process. If a consumer arrives for an appointment and it is clear they have a vision impairment:

- Proceed with the planned activities for the appointment and discuss with the consumer that they might be served by OBVS.
- Explain to the consumer that because of their vision impairment their case will be transferred to another unit that specializes in serving people with vision disabilities.
- Enter your Case Note and include a statement of how it was determined that the consumer has a significant vision impairment.

The case can then be given to the supervisor for review and transfer to OBVS.

Can the local OBVS counselor or supervisor consult on cases that are deemed not appropriate for transfer to OBVS?

Yes. For example, the OBVS staff in your Region can serve as a consultant on cases where the consumer is deaf-blind and uses sign language. Because of the need to communicate in ASL, individuals who are deaf-blind and whose primary mode of communication is ASL are served by the DHHU's rehabilitation counselors for the Deaf.

Likewise, if a consumer has a vision impairment that does not meet the vision criteria to be served by OBVS, OBVS staff can still act in a consultative manner regarding vendors, reports, and accommodations related to those with vision difficulties.

Vision Criteria for Eligibility

Most Significant – Category 1

Blind/Legally Blind: One or more of the following:

- Distance visual acuity (DVA) of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction
- DVA between 20/100 and 20/200 if newer methodologies are used
- Visual field no greater than 20° in the better eye

Significant – Category 2

Vision Impaired: One or more of the following:

- Distance visual acuity (DVA) of 20/70 or less in the better eye after best correction
 - Visual field no greater than 40° in the better eye
 - A diagnosis of hemianopia
 - A diagnosis of disabling scotomas (blind spots)
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Common Abbreviations/Terminology

OD	Right Eye
OS	Left Eye
OU	Both Eyes
HM	Hand Motion
LP	Light Perception
VAcRx or cc	Visual Acuity with correction glasses/contacts
VAsRx or sc	Visual Acuity without correction
VF	Visual Field
CVF	Central Visual Field

Who do I contact if I have questions?

OBVS Supervisor District 81, Elo Enoch 301-949-3750 ext. 6312

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

OBVS Supervisor District 82, Beneda Cannady 410-554-9328 ext. 9328

Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Howard and Harford Counties

OBVS Supervisor District 83, Shawna Leonard 410-974-7604 ext. 6605

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

OBVS Deaf-Blind Specialist, [vacant] 410-554-9372 ext. 9372

Statewide

The Deaf-Blind Specialist assists the counselors in OBVS by consulting on Deaf-Blind cases and assisting with coordination of related services.