

# "Focus"



## Please Share This Information

- Individuals
- Parents/Guardians/  
Caregivers
- Day/Residential  
Providers
- Employers
- DDS Service  
Coordinator
- MCB Case Manager
- School, DDS and/or  
MCB Transition  
Coordinator

## MCB/DDS Partnership Project: Orientation & Mobility / Vision Loss Services Central West Region

Serving individuals with intellectual disability who have vision impairment, legal blindness, deaf blindness, or a question of a vision loss, the MCB/DDS Partnership Project, Central West Region is here to help. We provide direct and consultative Orientation and Mobility/Low Vision services, training, and resource information. Services are provided by Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS). Our work is focused on each adult's unique vision loss needs.

**Areas Served:** Berkshire, Franklin/Hampshire, Holyoke/Chicopee, North Central, South Valley - Milford, South Valley - Southbridge, Springfield/Westfield, Worcester

# It all starts with a referral...

## What Is the Cost?

There is no cost to adults receiving O&M/Low Vision Services through the MCB/DDS Partnership Project. Services are funded by MCB for individuals who are registered as Legally Blind and by DDS for individuals who have vision impairment.

## How to Refer

Contact the DDS Service Coordinator, MCB Case Manager, DDS or MCB Transition Coordinator to request completion of the O&M/Low Vision Services Referral Form available for the Central West Region. Referral form is available on the "Focus" website: [www.focusonvisionandvisionloss.org](http://www.focusonvisionandvisionloss.org).

Please send referral form to Susan Banks, Community Systems Director, DDS CW Region: [Susan.Banks@state.ma.us](mailto:Susan.Banks@state.ma.us) with a cc to the DDS Area Director.

## When to Refer

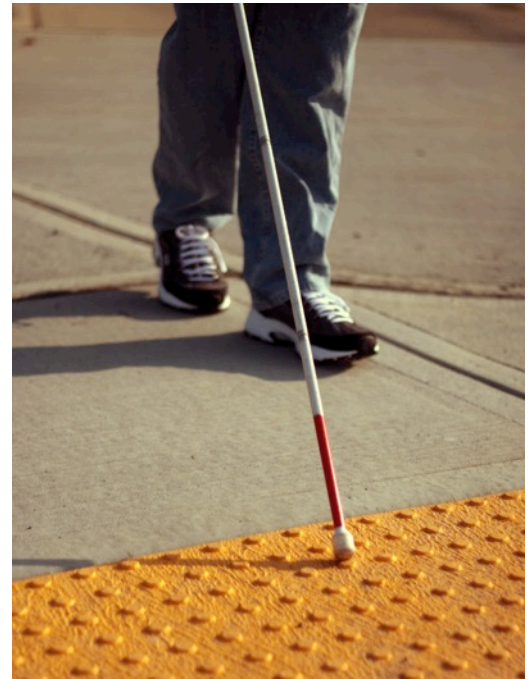
Referral can be made at any time, and especially when an adult experiences a change in vision, mobility, and/or environment.

Referrals for transition to adult services should be made during the year of, and preferably at least 6 months prior to, the student's planned transition. Transition to DDS adult services typically occurs between the ages of 18 and 22.

## What to Expect

Soon after the initial referral is received the COMS will schedule a visit to meet with the individual and key staff/team members at home, work, day services, and/or school for students who are transitioning to adult services.

As needed, suggestions for mobility, safety, use of functional vision, environmental modifications, eye care and/or other resources will be made, and an O&M Assessment or Progress note written. The COMS will train in use of orientation and mobility techniques, sensitivity to working with a person with vision loss, and on other visual / nonvisual considerations important for the individual.



## What to Include with the Referral

Sharing of information truly helps. Along with the referral form, please provide recent reports from:

- Specialists: COMS, TVI, PT, OT, SLP, Behaviorist
- Eye Care Providers: Ophthalmologist (MD) and/or Optometrist (OD)

# Specialized Services

Adults are on the move and so are we! Throughout an adult's life there may be new or progressive vision loss concerns, changes in employment, day program, residence, and/or new staff to work with. Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) through the MCB/DDS Partnership Project assist adults with vision loss during all of these life changes and transitions. We work with adults where they spend time and meet them at home, neighborhood, community, work, day program, and leisure activities.

## How can Specialized O&M/Low Vision Services help?

### Vision Loss Training & Support

Working with adults, families, caregivers, support staff and clinical teams, we provide:

- Sensitivity training, including use of Human Guide and all O&M techniques.
- Consultation re: impact on daily life, work, and leisure.
- Information on resources, materials, and events.

### Accessibility

Accessibility increases safety, independence, and visual function. We provide:

- Recommendations for use of color, contrast, lighting, furniture placement, handrails, and more.
- Identification of indoor/outdoor hazards and solutions.



### Mobility & Safety

Confident, safe mobility promotes independence, and prevents falls/injury. We offer:

- Instruction and plans for use of Human and/or Voice Guide, Trailing, Protective Techniques, Long or Adaptive Cane.
- Transportation and safety assessments.
- Orientation skills training at home, neighborhood, work, and day program.

### Strategies

Living with vision loss presents unique challenges. We can help:

- Safety, organization, and skill resources for independence and inclusion.
- Recommendations for maximizing use of functional vision and increasing participation.
- Strategies for daily living, work tasks, leisure activities, and risk management.

### Eye Care

Promoting eye care is important. We provide:

- Advocacy for high quality eye exams.
- Information at eye exams regarding use of vision in everyday situations.
- Assistance with eyeglass tolerance.
- Sunglass evaluation.

### Free Resources

Opportunities await! We offer registration assistance:

- APH Federal Quota Account
- Talking Book and Braille Library
- U.S. Currency Reader Program
- iCan Connect

Alternative formats of this Brochure are available:  
[focusonvisionandvisionloss.org](http://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org)  
508-384-5539

## APH Federal Quota

Eligible adults can receive free products from the MCB American Printing House for the Blind Federal Quota Account (APH).

Information regarding eligibility, registration, and a link to the APH Products Catalog can be found on the "FOCUS" website. Please review and ask your MCB Case Manager or DDS Service Coordinator to complete and send along the Pre-Registration form.

Students previously registered on the DESE APH account during school years, must also complete a new registration form for the MCB/APH Quota Account.

Prior account eligibility on the DESE APH Account is not needed for a young adult to be found eligible for the MCB APH Quota Account.

## Collaboration and Oversight Details

MCB and DDS collaborate with and provide funding to private not-for-profit organizations for administrative support and specialized service by COMS. Current partners include the Carroll Center for the Blind, MAB Community Services, and Shriver Clinical Services Corporation.

Oversight for services is provided by the Statewide Director for Vision and Vision Loss Services at DDS in collaboration with MCB.

## Getting to Know COMS

COMS on our Partnership Teams are University trained and certified through the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP). COMS provide specialized services that include mobility skill instruction (human guide, protective techniques, voice guide, trailing, long cane, adapted cane), orientation instruction to new routes and locations, functional vision and environmental evaluations. COMS also offer blindness/vision impairment sensitivity training to staff and caregivers.

## Additional Resources

[focusonvisionandvisionloss.org](http://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org)

Western MA Vision Symposium

Eye Care Provider Resources

Let's Walk Together Video

And more!

## For More Information

Please visit our "Focus" website:  
[focusonvisionandvisionloss.org](http://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org)

Lisa DiBonaventura, MA, COMS  
Statewide Director Vision & Vision Loss Services  
Department of Developmental Services

[Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us](mailto:Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us)  
Office: 508.384.5539