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
Southeast 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, Southeast 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) and Vision Rehabilitation Assistants (VRA). Our work is focused on each adult's unique vision loss needs.

Areas Served: Brockton, Cape Cod/Islands, Fall River, New Bedford, Plymouth, South Coastal, Taunton/Attleboro
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 Southeast Region. Referral form is available on the "Focus" website: www.focusonvisionandvisionloss.org.

Please send referral form to:
Jennifer Thoren, Assistant Facility Director, Program Services, WDC Jennifer.M.Thoren@mass.gov

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
508-384-5539
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, 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 and VRAs

Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (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.

Vision Rehabilitation Assistants (VRAs) work directly with individuals to practice the skills and programs developed by COMS including trailing, cane travel and human guide, braille reading/writing, set up of work space with proper lighting, contrast, and/or tactile information. The VRA does not conduct functional vision evaluations, mobility assessments or teach street crossings.

For More Information

Please visit our "Focus" website: focusonvisionandvisionloss.org

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

Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us
Office: 508.384.5539

Additional Resources

focusonvisionandvisionloss.org

Annual “Focus” Conference
Eye Care Provider Resources
Let’s Walk Together Video
And more!