

## Vision Impairment and Blindness Peer Support Groups

### **Become a Support Group Leader**

DDS and MCB are seeking staff at both day and residential programs across Massachusetts to facilitate support groups with and for adults with vision impairment and blindness:

- Create opportunities for leadership and friendship among adults with ID and vision loss.
- Strengthen the self-advocacy and self-determination skills of adults who experience vision loss.
- Enhance your agency's offerings with free curriculum-based materials and learn about available resources including assistive technology for vision loss\*.

\*Online Resources, Support Group Curriculum, Resource Lists for Equipment/Materials, and Ongoing Support will be offered FREE of charge to all accepted applicants.

**Reach Out!** If you are interested in starting a Vision Impairment and Blindness Support Group at your residential agency or day services, please complete the application form:

[focusonvisionandvisionloss.org/train-the-leader-support-groups.html](http://focusonvisionandvisionloss.org/train-the-leader-support-groups.html)

This project is made possible through the support of a  
Becker Family Trust Grant for Innovation and by  
Shriver Clinical Services Corporation

# Vision Impairment/Blindness Education/Peer Support Group (cont.)

## Why Vision Impairment Support Groups?

More than 20% of adults served by DDS in Massachusetts have a visual diagnosis, progressive and/or age-related vision impairment, legal blindness, or deafblindness. Vision loss can directly affect an individual's informed choice making and self-advocacy. Support groups co-led by adults with vision loss and intellectual disability, along with agency group leaders will help to address unique needs associated with vision loss. Group participants will learn about and share vision loss strategies, explore adaptive technologies, make new friends, and have fun!

## How Does It Work?

### Step 1: Register & Learn

All interested in becoming a support group leader must register by completing the application and sending to [Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us](mailto:Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us) . Support group leaders will then receive a link to create a password to review support group materials and resources online, including:

- Support Group Guidelines and Resources
- Topics, Agendas and Curriculum for more than 12 group sessions
- Materials Lists for Equipment/Resources needed for each topic
- Stipend for materials up to \$160.00 for each Support Group (limited availability).

### Step 2: Plan & Advertise

- Plan the support group topic(s), gather materials, and organize the group.
- Schedule support group meetings at the day, time, location and frequency that works best for your group and/or agency.
- Advertise within your program/community.
- Email Support Group information/flyers to [Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us](mailto:Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us) for posting on the [Vision Loss Support Group](#) page of the "Focus" website.

### Step 3: Have Fun & Explore Resources

- Moving through the curriculum, group leaders, members, and staff/caregivers will learn about available resources, get hands-on experience with adaptive technology and promote self-advocacy.
- Members will also be encouraged to share interests and priorities of topics/resources/needs for the group.

**Questions?** Please contact: [Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us](mailto:Lisa.DiBonaventura@state.ma.us)