



Booklet of **Services**



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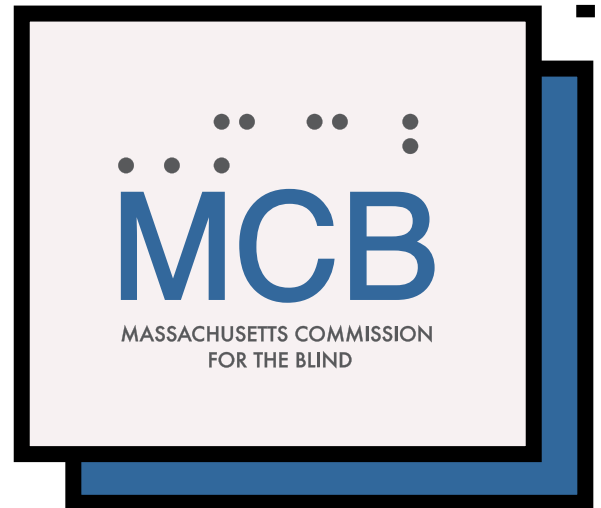
Welcome!

A Message from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB)

As one of the original Commissioners of MCB, Helen Keller was instrumental in establishing the first commission for the blind in the United States in 1906. Today, we continue to build on her philosophy.

Navigating the world of blindness and vision loss can be overwhelming and often involves lifestyle changes and emotional adjustment. This Booklet of Services offers an overview of the benefits, programs, and services available to residents of Massachusetts who are legally blind.

Each person's case is highly individualized. Consumers should work with their counselor to develop a plan specifically designed for them.



Our Mission:

To provide individualized training, education, and empowerment to people who are legally blind, and advocate for inclusive policies across the Commonwealth, with the goal of life-long independence and full community participation

Our Vision:

All residents of the Commonwealth who are legally blind are empowered to live a fulfilling and independent life, with opportunities to work and thrive



Eligibility and Registration

Definition of Legal Blindness:

- Vision with correction of 20/200 or less in the better eye; or
- Peripheral field of ten degrees (10°) or less, regardless of visual acuity

Registration Process:

All eye care providers must report within 30 days all cases of legal blindness to MCB pursuant to Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 6, § 136.

Eye care providers must file a Mandatory Report of Legal Blindness with MCB for each patient they determine is legally blind. MCB will review the report and certify the determination of legal blindness.

MCB's Blindness Registry will mail a letter of determination to the patient and the eye care provider.

If MCB certifies the determination of legal blindness, the patient will become registered with MCB and assigned a counselor.

The MCB counselor will contact the newly registered consumer for a complete explanation of benefits, programs, and services.



Please note: A person must be registered with MCB to receive services from the agency. All referrals for services should be made to the counselor assigned to the consumer.

For questions about eligibility and registration, contact

MCB Blindness Registry:

Email: BlindnessRegistry@mass.gov

Phone: 617-626-7415

Fax: 617-350-7959

Benefits

Certificate of Blindness (COB)

A Certificate of Blindness (COB) certifies the consumer is registered with MCB and may be requested to verify legal blindness for various purposes including applying for tax exemptions.

To request a COB:

- Contact the consumer's MCB counselor
- Email the MCB Blindness Registry at BlindnessRegistry@mass.gov
- Call the MCB Blindness Registry at 617-626-7415
- Complete the MCB Certificate of Blindness Request Form (mass.gov/mcb/certificate)

A COB expires one year from the Date of Issue.

MCB Identification Card

MCB issues an Identification Card which certifies the holder is legally blind and registered with the agency. Under Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 6, § 135, any person or business who accepts a driver's license for the purpose of identification in granting credit or cashing checks must accept the MCB Identification Card in the same way.

The MCB Identification Card does not meet all the requirements of the REAL ID Act. As of May 7, 2025, United States travelers must be REAL ID compliant to board domestic flights and access certain federal facilities.

To request an MCB Identification Card:

- Contact the consumer's MCB counselor
- Email the MCB Blindness Registry at BlindnessRegistry@mass.gov
- Call the MCB Blindness Registry at 617-626-7415
- Complete the MCB Certificate of Blindness Request Form (mass.gov/mcb/id)

The MCB Identification Card expires five years from the Date of Issue.



Benefits, continued

Income Tax Exemptions and Deductions

Consumers may be entitled to federal and state income tax exemptions and deductions. When filing tax returns, a current Certificate of Blindness, MCB Identification Card, or other medical evidence may be required for verification purposes if an exemption or deduction is claimed.

Real Estate Tax Exemption

Consumers may be eligible for a property tax exemption on a home they own and reside in. As the amount of the exemption varies, contact the local assessor's office for further details. A current Certificate of Blindness or MCB Identification Card may be submitted for proof of legal blindness.

Automobile Excise Tax Exemption

Consumers may be eligible for an excise tax exemption on a vehicle registered in their name. To apply for this exemption, contact the local tax department. A current Certificate of Blindness or MCB Identification Card may be submitted for proof of legal blindness.

Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI)

The United States Social Security Administration (SSA) has special rules that allow people who are blind or visually impaired to receive benefits when they are unable to work. SSA pays the benefits under two programs: the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.

Although the medical rules SSA uses to decide whether a person is blind are the same for each program, other rules are different.

Specialized Telephone Equipment Program

Consumers may be eligible for a specialized telephone through the Massachusetts Equipment Distribution Program (MassEDP). Depending on the consumer's income level, the telephone may be free or come at a reduced cost. MassEDP provides a landline phone or a wireless device. MassEDP does not cover the cost of the service plan for wireless devices.

For more information regarding MassEDP, including eligibility, contact MassEDP:

- Phone: 800-300-5658
- Visit: mass.gov/edp

Benefits, continued

Disability Plates and Placards

Consumers are eligible for disability plates and placards offered by the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). Disability plates and placards allow people with disabilities to park vehicles in designated handicap parking spaces. They also allow people with disabilities to park at meters without paying fees or penalties. Disability license plates are issued for cars and motorcycles. Placards are displayed on the rear-view mirror and are issued to qualified residents on a temporary or permanent basis.

Disability Placard

- No fee is required for a placard.
- The person who is disabled is not required to have a vehicle registered in their name.

Disability Plate

- Registration fees apply.
- Only issued to a person who is primary owner with vehicle registered in their name.

For more information, contact the RMV:

- Phone (RMV Medical Affairs): 857-368-8020
- Visit mass.gov/rmv

A Certificate of Blindness can substitute a healthcare provider's certification for the application.

Note: Consumers are required to surrender their Massachusetts driver's license. MCB is legally required to notify the RMV of all cases of legal blindness.

MBTA Blind Access CharlieCard

Consumers, as well as an accompanying guide, can ride most MBTA services for free with a Blind Access CharlieCard. These cards are valid for five years.

Consumers can apply for a new, renewal, or replacement Blind Access CharlieCard online or at the CharlieCard Store.

- Apply online at mbta.com/fares/reduced/blind-access-charliecard

Consumers can also replace a lost, stolen, or expired Blind Access CharlieCard by contacting MBTA Customer Support:

- Phone: 617-222-3200
- Email via mbta.com/customer-support

Benefits, continued

The RIDE

The RIDE paratransit service provides door-to-door, shared-ride public transportation to people who can't use the subway, bus, or trolley all or some of the time due to temporary or permanent disability.

The RIDE is available year-round in 58 cities and towns in the greater Boston area, with similar operating hours to the MBTA – generally from 5 a.m. to 1 a.m. daily. Customers schedule their trips on The RIDE one to five days in advance and are given a pick-up window for their ride's arrival. Travel times are comparable to the same trip taken on fixed-route transit (bus, subway, or trolley) plus an additional 20 minutes. Like other public transit services, The RIDE is a shared service, so riders travel with other customers going in the same general direction.

Learn how to apply for The RIDE at mbta.com/accessibility/the-ride.

MBTA Mobility Center


The Mobility Center, located at 1000 Massachusetts Avenue in Boston, is available to anyone looking to explore accessible transit options and other community transport resources.

For more information, contact the Mobility Center:

Phone: 617-337-2727

Other Regional Transportation

15 Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) provide fixed-route and paratransit service in communities across Massachusetts.



Older adults and people with disabilities may qualify for discounted fares when riding the fixed-route. Transit authorities are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide paratransit service under certain circumstances. ADA paratransit is an eligibility-based service for people whose disabilities sometimes or always prevent them from using the fixed route and who are traveling in an area served by fixed route service. However, some transit authorities also provide additional paratransit services above and beyond what is federally required.

Many councils on aging in Massachusetts also offer transportation services to people with disabilities in addition to elders. Find your council on aging at mcoaonline.com.

Learn about the types of services transit authorities offer and which municipalities are members of each transit authority at mass.gov/publictransportation.

Voting Rights

Massachusetts is committed to making voting accessible for all voters. The Secretary of the Commonwealth checks each polling place to make sure it meets state accessibility regulations, in addition to training poll workers on assisting voters with disabilities. Please contact the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Elections Division if you have suggestions about how to improve accessibility.

Phone: 1-800-462-VOTE (8683) TTY: 1-800-720-3480

Email: elections@sec.state.ma.us

Benefits, continued

Talking Book Libraries

The Perkins and Worcester libraries provide free access to books, newspapers, and publications in digital audio, large print, and braille formats, loan playback equipment, as well as audio-described movies, and the Newsline talking newspaper service, to thousands of registered borrowers across Massachusetts who are unable to read print materials due to vision loss, physical or reading disabilities. Applications for service and disability eligibility must be certified by any of the following: rehabilitation or medical professionals, ophthalmologist, optometrist, educator, social worker, case manager, counselor, rehabilitation teacher, reading specialist, school psychologist, superintendent, or librarian, and/or professional staff of schools, hospitals, clinics, or state or private agencies.

To obtain an application for free library services, call or email:

Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library

800-852-3133

www.perkinslibrary.org

library@perkins.org

Worcester Talking Book Library


800-762-0085

talkingbook.mywpl.org

talkbook@mywpl.org

Massachusetts Audio Information Network (MAIN)

The Massachusetts Audio Information Network (mass.gov/mcb/main) is a group of six Massachusetts non-profit radio reading service organizations. Each organization provides the reading of material to ensure important local news and information is accessible for



people who are blind, have low vision, and are print impaired. The materials read include newspapers, magazines, books, and community announcements.

The radio reading service is available by phone, Internet (each station's website), smart speakers (Alexa and Google), mobile apps for iPhone and Android, podcasting, local community access television stations, and specialized radio receivers – all at no cost to listeners.

MAIN organizations are funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, grants from local foundations, and businesses and individual donations.

Each MAIN organization operates independently. For more information regarding this service or to volunteer, please contact one of the organizations directly.

Audible Local Ledger

(Mashpee)

audiblelocalledger.org

508-539-2030

Lowell Association

for the Blind (Lowell)

lowellassociationfortheblind.org

978-454-5704

Audio Journal

(Worcester)

audiojournal.org

508-797-1117

Talking Information

Center (Marshfield)

ticnetwork.org

781-834-4400

Berkshire Talking Chronicle

(Pittsfield)

ucpwma.org/assistive-technology-at/at-resources/

413-442-1562

Valley Eye Radio

(Springfield)

valleyeyeradio.org

413-747-7337

Social Rehabilitation (SR)

SR services help consumers become more independent in their homes and communities while adjusting to their vision loss.

SR counselors connect consumers with support services within the agency, including rehabilitation teaching, orientation and mobility, and assistive technology. Consumers receive services in their home environment. The consumer and counselor work together to select the most appropriate services and develop an Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

The counselor may connect the consumer with outside services or community resources, including councils on aging, elder services, transportation systems, and more.

Services are highly individualized based on the consumer's needs and goals, but may include:

- Rehabilitation Teaching – Learn new ways of performing activities of daily living; train on accessibility features of smart devices (Apple and Android); provide low vision aids and devices.
- Orientation and Mobility – Learn to safely navigate their environment. Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) provide personalized training for their travel needs, including the use of a white cane, orientation within their home and community, use of public transportation and paratransit services, and in-service human guide training for families and caregivers.



- Assistive Technology – Teach consumers how to leverage technology, including smart speakers to video magnification, to increase their independence, reengage in previously enjoyed activities, and discover new opportunities.
- Low-Vision Evaluations and Devices – Low vision ophthalmologists and optometrists evaluate vision needs and prescribe appropriate magnification devices. They identify ways to maximize remaining vision with the help of optical aids and lighting. Dependent on eligibility, availability of eye care providers, and funding.
- Peer Support Groups – Counselors provide consumers information on how to access support groups within their community and make referrals as needed. The support groups allow people who are legally blind to connect with and learn from one another by sharing experiences, frustrations, success stories, and information.



Children's Services

When a child is registered with MCB, support is available for families through MCB's Children's Services program. Our Children's Services workers (CSWs) have a wide range of information and resources to support the growth and development of children who are legally blind.

The Process

- Once a child is registered with MCB, a CSW will contact the family to schedule a home visit or virtual meeting to offer a complete explanation of available benefits and services geared toward assisting the child reach his or her full potential.
- If the family decides they would like to receive MCB services, the CSW will develop an Individualized Service Plan (ISP) that reflects the goals and needs identified during an intake process. Services are tailored to each child's needs.
- CSWs work with children and families to prepare them and assist with the transition when they age out of the Children's Services program.
- If a family is not interested in services at the time, they can request services later. All services are voluntary.

Children's Services, continued

An Individualized Service Plan (ISP) for a child may include:

- Information and referral about MCB services
- Interagency collaboration with state partners and community organizations
- Case management
- Transitional support
- Advocacy (including for vision services at Individualized Education Plan meetings)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI) vision screening and referral
- Assistance with applications and procedures for MassHealth programs
 - CommonHealth
 - Kaileigh Mulligan Program
- Medical Review Team (MRT) referrals
- Disability placard through Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV)
- Support counseling
- Social recreational activities (varies by region)

**Subject to income eligibility
and availability of funds:**

- Flexible family support funding
- Camperships and recreational programs





Older Independent Blind (OIB) Program

Federal grants are made to MCB under Title VII, Chapter II of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. MCB's OIB Program provides support services for people aged 55 and older whose severe visual impairment makes competitive employment difficult to obtain but for whom independent living goals are feasible.

Overview

Concentrating on the unmet needs of elders coping with limitations imposed upon them by legal blindness, advancing age, and social isolation, MCB's OIB Program provides direct and purchased services to eligible consumers so they can live independently and confidently in their homes and communities.

Eligibility

MCB's OIB Program provides services to residents of Massachusetts:

- Who are age 55 and older;
- Who are legally blind;

(continued on next page)

Older Independent Blind (OIB) Program, continued

- Whose ability to function independently at home or in the community is substantially limited due to legal blindness; and
- For whom the delivery of independent living services will substantially improve their ability to function, continue functioning, or progress toward functioning independently in their home or community.

Services

Depending on the individual need, the following services may be provided by MCB's OIB Program to eligible consumers:

- Case management and advocacy
- Rehabilitation teaching, which includes independent living skills training, meal preparation, housekeeping, grooming, safety, and medication management
- Orientation and mobility training
- Low vision evaluations and devices, including video magnification, handheld magnifiers, and other identified devices
- Assistive technology and training
- Counseling on adjustment to blindness
- Information and referral to community resources
- Diabetes education

- Presentations regarding vision loss to enhance public education

OIB services are available statewide and subject to the availability of grant funding.

Peer Support Groups

MCB provides funding to the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI) and Sight Loss Services to help host FREE peer support groups across the state.

Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI)

mabvi.org

mabvi@mabcommunity.org

888-613-2777

Sight Loss Services

sightloss.org

info@sightloss.org

508-394-3904





Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

including Pre-ETS, Employment Services, and Vending

MCB offers VR services to eligible consumers seeking to obtain or maintain employment.

To be eligible for VR services, the consumer must:

- Have a substantial impediment to employment due to their legal blindness
- Require the services to obtain or maintain competitive integrated employment
- Be able to benefit from the services in terms of an employment outcome

Process

- Once determined eligible, the consumer will meet with a VR counselor to discuss their skills, interests, and goals.
- The consumer and the counselor will develop an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) outlining services.
- The services will be provided until the goal of employment is reached and the consumer can adequately perform all essential functions of the job.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), continued

Services are highly individualized based on the consumer's needs and goals, but may include:

Information and Referral

- Assistance completing applications for benefits relating to legal blindness (Certificate of Blindness, MCB Identification Card, disability plates and placards, MBTA Blind Access CharlieCard, etc.).
- Assistance connecting with various agencies such as the United States Social Security Administration (SSA), MassHealth, Veterans Affairs, or other community resources.

Vocational Counseling and Guidance

- Explaining and discussing interests, career paths, and options regarding work, including interest inventories, resume and cover letter writing, assistance completing job applications, and mock interviews.

Low Vision Assessment and Treatment of Impairment

- Referring a consumer in certain cases to a low vision eye care provider to assess functional vision. MCB may be able to pay for eligible devices.

Orientation and Mobility

- Training in travel and navigating new environments, such as workplaces and public transportation. This often also includes training in use of a white cane.

Rehabilitation Teaching

- Learning to perform basic daily living tasks again or in a new way. This can include food preparation, cooking, organizing, labeling, and cleaning. This may also include evaluation of magnification and other low-tech devices.

Assistive Technology Devices and Training

- Evaluating, providing, and training in various equipment, tools, and devices that allow access to print and/or electronic materials needed for education and/or employment.

College/University

- Funding per semester based on FAFSA's eligibility and determination of unmet need. Funding for books and supplies is also available.
- Assistance working with disability services to ensure proper accommodations are established.

Job Readiness Training (including adjustment to vision loss)

- Making a referral to a provider for intensive adjustment to blindness skills in preparation for returning to work.
- Offering internship opportunities.
- Providing soft skills training.
- Learning interpersonal and communication skills in pursuit of new employment, specifically as a person who is legally blind or visually impaired.

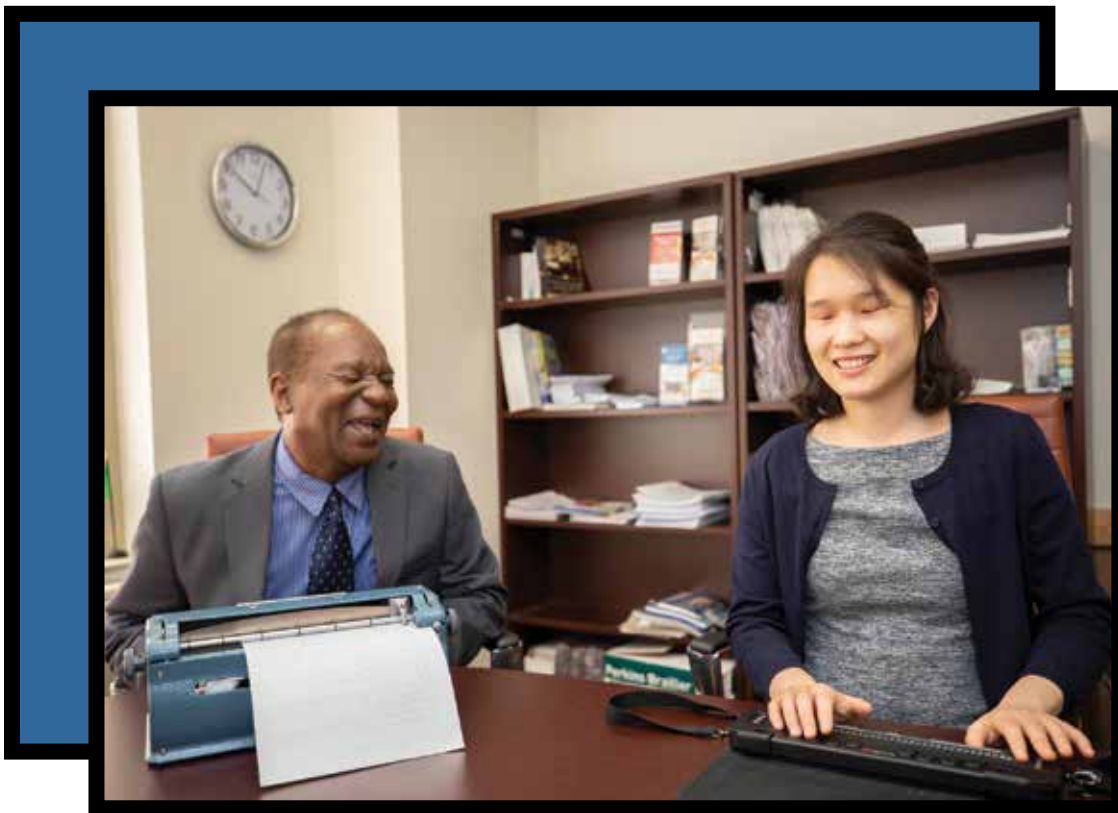
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), continued

Job Placement Services

- Providing either one-on-one guidance with an Employment Services Specialist or referral to a community agency. This may include a trial work experience or initial job coaching.

Benefits Counseling

- Making a referral to a benefits specialist to outline how Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits would be affected once employed.



Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (W.I.O.A.) requires vocational rehabilitation agencies to set aside at least 15% of their federal funds to provide “pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS)” to “students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services.” W.I.O.A. defines five service categories Pre-ETS students should receive to encourage better preparation for postsecondary education, independent living, and employment. The five Pre-ETS service categories are:

- Job Exploration Counseling
- Work-Based Learning
- Counseling on Post-Secondary Education & Training Opportunities
- Workplace Readiness Training
- Instruction in Self-Advocacy

MCB pays contracted non-profit organizations and educational partners to provide Pre-ETS. Pre-ETS are designed to build on the transition services already occurring within the local education agency. Meaningful delivery of Pre-ETS is most effective when educators, families, and employers are engaged and working together on the student’s behalf. With successful collaboration, the transition team can address the complex needs of students and contribute to opportunities to improve post-school outcomes for children with disabilities.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), continued

Employment Services

MCB provides employment-related services to eligible vocational rehabilitation (VR) participants.

MCB Employment Services staff work collaboratively with MCB VR counselors to prepare job seekers for the job search process. Direct services are flexible based on each job seeker's individual need and may include:

- Resume and cover letter development
- Business correspondence creation
- Mock interviewing
- Employment networking strategies
- Referral to programs dependent upon eligibility

These activities have been recognized as problem areas for any job seeker but pose unique difficulties for people who are legally blind.

We can also assist in job searches and provide information on job fairs and hiring events.

Leading Expertise and Networking for Success (LENS)

LENS is a mentorship program for job seekers aged 14 to 22 who are legally blind or have low vision. Participants are paired with a mentor who is also legally blind or has vision loss and is currently employed.

The goal is to improve the career outcomes and support the personal development of transition through one-to-one virtual mentorship. Areas of focus include career exploration, goal setting, soft skills, and the job application process.

Summer Internship Program

Early work experience leads to long-term vocational success, but people with disabilities often face greater challenges getting their first job offer. MCB works to increase the percentage of people with a disability in the workforce. Our annual Summer Internship Program, which started in 2003, is a unique public-private partnership that creates valuable opportunities for high school and college students who are legally blind, as well as adult job seekers looking to reenter the workforce. The participants are provided competitive internship positions throughout the Commonwealth and the opportunity to develop professional skills in real-world settings. MCB provides a stipend for each intern and the adaptive technology necessary to perform the job duties.

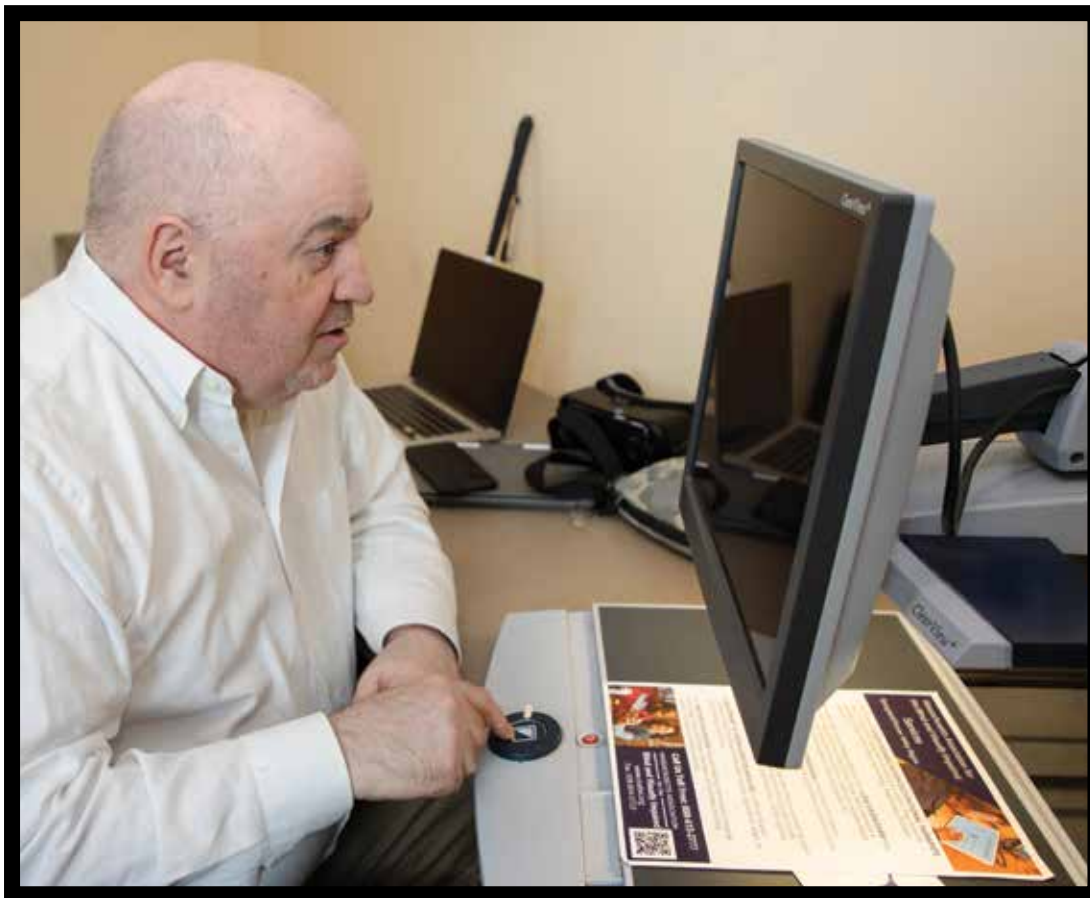
Employer Information Sessions and Webinars

MCB invites employers to learn about the support we provide before, during, and after the hiring process. From initial recruitment through workplace accommodations, employers will hear about companies that have successful candidates who are legally blind. In addition to webinars, Employment Services staff are happy to provide training on location at employers' worksites or virtually.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), continued

Job Fairs

MCB hosts a job fair annually in the fall that is specifically for registered job seekers who are actively seeking employment. Job seekers have the opportunity to show employers how they are ready to apply their skills and experiences in the workplace. The job fairs may be held in person or virtually depending on the format.



Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facilities Program

MCB's Vending Facilities Program, which operates under the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act, prepares people who are legally blind for a challenging and rewarding career in concession management.

Vending facilities are in federal and state buildings. Currently, the majority are in the Greater Boston area.

Federal Requirements for Eligibility

- Legally blind
- 18 years old or older
- A United States citizen

Types of Locations

- Newsstands
- Snack bars
- Coffee shops
- Cafeterias



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), continued

The Process

- Referral from MCB vocational rehabilitation counselor
- Informational meeting
- Interview
- Classroom and on-the-job training
- Selection for an available location is based on seniority and requisite ability

Training Components

- Customer service and cashiering
- Ordering, stocking, merchandising, and marketing of products
- Food preparation
- Massachusetts State Lottery
- Financial management

Vendor Responsibilities

- Daily operation of the vending location
- Customer service
- Purchasing, merchandising, and marketing

- Maintaining and repairing equipment
- Employee hiring and training
- Financial management

MCB Responsibilities

- Accept referrals and assess potential candidates for the program
- Provide training in all areas of the program
- Provide equipment and initial inventory for each location
- Evaluate each vendor and location for compliance with federal and state regulations and all applicable laws

Interested consumers should contact their MCB VR counselor to see if this program would be right for them.



DeafBlind Extended Supports (DBES)

DBES counselors provide statewide services to consumers ages 14 and older who are DeafBlind and/or legally blind with cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and complex medical conditions with the goal of increasing their independence and community participation. DBES counselors provide various services including advocacy and hands-on assistance with community resources and purchased services to our eligible consumers.

Services are highly individualized based on consumer needs, program eligibility, and availability of funds, but may include:

- Case management and advocacy
- Information and referral to community resources and other state agencies
- Referrals for orientation and mobility
- Rehabilitation teaching
- Adaptive technology and training
- Low vision aids
- Support with communication access and safety alert systems

(continued on next page)



DeafBlind Extended Supports (DBES), continued

- Respite
- Homemaker services
- Family flex funding
- Recreation and campership funding
- Referrals to DeafBlind Community Access Network (DBCAN)
- Referrals to DeafBlind Contact Center
- Community/center-based day supports
- Vocational counseling and guidance
 - Assessment of vocational/prevocational needs
 - Explaining and discussing interests, career paths, and options regarding work. This may also include practical skill building, resume and cover letter writing, assistance completing job applications, and mock interviews.
 - College/university: Funding per semester based on FAFSA's eligibility and determination of unmet need. Funding for books and supplies is also available.
 - Job readiness training and placement services including referral to community agencies specialized in DeafBlind employment supports

Upon transition from the school district, DBES counselors serve DeafBlind consumers turning age 22 and requiring intensive 24/7 residential placement supports in Massachusetts. MCB relies on state funding to provide residential services to these consumers.

For more information:

Call: 800-392-6450 (voice)

Videophone: 857-366-4198

Email: DeafBlind@mass.gov

Visit: mass.gov/mcb



Rehabilitation Teaching (Vision Rehabilitation Therapy)

Rehabilitation Teaching (Vision Rehabilitation Therapy) is the educational process that prepares a consumer to perform daily living tasks safely and independently in any environment.

Rehabilitation Teachers (Vision Rehabilitation Therapists) instruct consumers to use their compensatory skills paired with assistive technology to enable them to live safe, productive, and independent lives. Specialized teaching services, including simple devices and techniques, can improve the quality of life for consumers. Reasonable goals are discussed. Services are planned and provided based on the consumer's individual needs, interests, and aptitudes.

Specific areas of instruction taught by Rehabilitation Teachers (Vision Rehabilitation Therapists) may include:

Home Maintenance and Management

- Use of contrast as well as tactile markings for appliances and household items
- Cooking, kitchen organization, safety, and appliance use
- Household organization, cleaning, and labeling techniques



Rehabilitation Teaching (Vision Rehabilitation Therapy), continued

Personal Management

- Self-care (grooming, clothing organization, and care)
- Medication identification/management
- Orientation to time
- Budget and record keeping
- Money management

Recreational and Leisure Activities

- Talking books (BARD, Perkins Talking Book Library, Newsline)
- Hobbies (crafting, sewing, etc.)
- Massachusetts Audio Information Network

Communication Systems

- Telephone/basic smartphone use
- Handwriting
- Braille skills



Maximization of the Use of Residual Vision

- Effective use of low vision devices
- Functional vision assessment
- Magnification and lighting
- Optical and non-optical devices

Assistive Technology Assessment

- Keyboarding skills
- Use of screen magnification and screen reading software
- Smartphone applications

Orientation and Mobility (O&M)

MCB's Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) provide specialized Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training, including travel skills with a long cane, orientation to new environments, and environmental assessments within a consumer's home, workplace, and community.

Consumers seeking O&M services should first contact their social rehabilitation or vocational rehabilitation counselor to initiate a referral.

O&M services may include obtaining an O&M Clearance Form from the consumer's medical provider. Through the use of an O&M Clearance Form, COMS take into consideration input from the consumer's medical provider when developing a training program.

Instruction begins with an assessment of the consumer's travel needs, motivation, and visual and physical abilities.

Based upon this assessment, a training program is developed with goal-directed instruction to maximize safety and independence.

For the more experienced traveler, training may focus on providing orientation to a new environment, such as a home, workplace, or college campus.

In addition to the long white cane, COMS can provide a support cane for assistance in detecting inclines and obstacles in pathways.



Orientation and Mobility (O&M), continued

MCB provides one free white cane to each consumer. Consumers should contact their counselor for information on how to purchase additional or replacement canes.

Consultation Services

MCB's O&M Department also offers consultation services to families and other professionals on issues such as:

- Advocacy
- Accessibility issues such as accessible pedestrian signals, safe travel routes, and environmental barriers which impact pedestrians who are legally blind
- In-service training on human guide and blindness etiquette to professionals, such as employers, senior centers, assistive living residences, group homes, etc.





Dog Guides

O&M training is an essential part of preparing people who are legally blind to be successfully partnered with a dog guide. MCB does not provide dog guides, but our counselors can assist with connecting interested consumers with resources. After a consumer is paired with a dog guide, COMS are available to provide route orientation.



Assistive Technology (AT)

The AT program provides adaptive devices and technical consulting to consumers and employers to help in the management of the consumer's home, classroom, and workplace.

Assistive Technology (AT) is an umbrella term that includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for people who are legally blind. MCB's AT program provides critical computer and adaptive equipment training to consumers to help them maintain or improve their functional capabilities. AT services include deployment and training on usage of software programs and/or devices such as screen readers that turn regular computers into talking personal computers. AT also includes the process used in selecting, locating, and using technology to perform activities of daily living independently or with assistance.

MCB can assist with several forms of technology, including:

Screen Magnification Technology

Many of MCB's consumers have some residual vision, which allows them to benefit from the use of video magnifiers and computer screen magnification software. If the consumer is able to use functional vision, they may benefit from the use of a Closed-Circuit Television System (CCTV) or screen magnification software.

Closed-Circuit Television

A Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) is an electronic magnification system consisting of a video camera, reading tray, and large video monitor. CCTVs can be used to read books, magazines, food

Assistive Technology (AT), continued

containers, prescription bottles, and anything you need to access for independence and employment. Material to be read is placed on the reading tray beneath the camera, the desired magnification level and other adjustments are selected, and the text is viewed on the television screen. Using a CCTV is relatively easy with some training and practice.

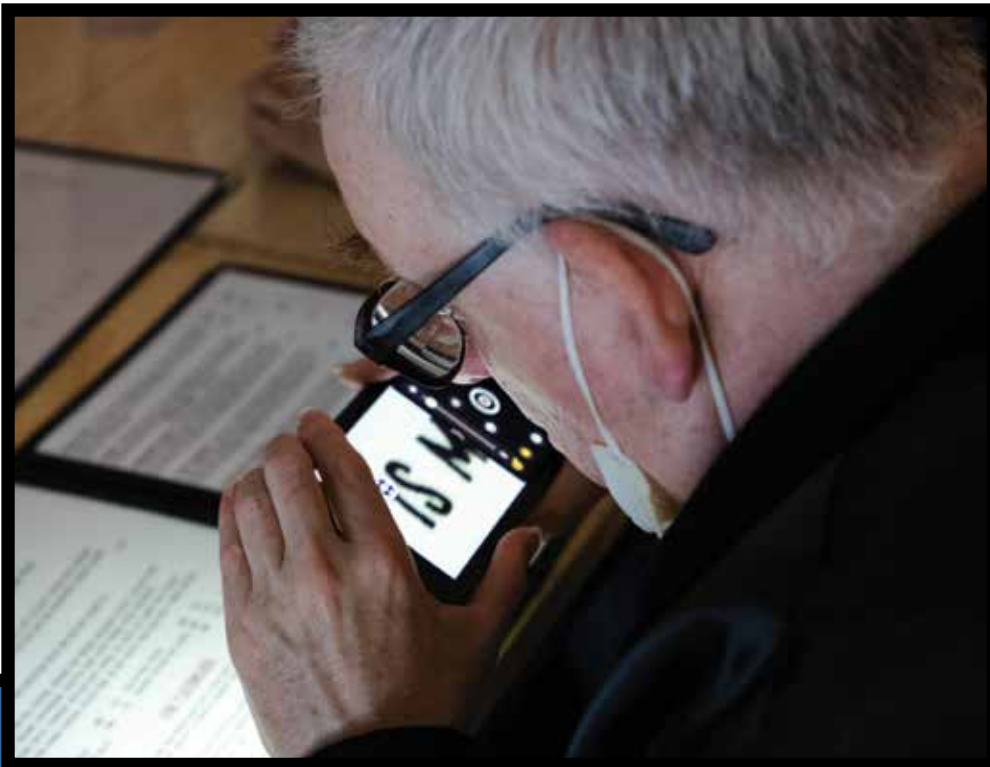
Alternatively, some consumers may elect to use a portable handheld video magnifier which will allow for some magnification of items which might not be conveniently placed under a fixed desktop camera. These portable devices allow for spot reading of restaurant menus or packages on supermarket shelves.

Optical Character Recognition (OCR)

Optical character recognition (OCR) is technology that renders digital images of typed, clearly handwritten, or printed text into digitally read text. The technology can be a self-contained standalone device, an added camera for a computer system with supporting software, integrated into a video magnification device as an added feature, or part of a downloaded application on a smart device with a camera. Many forms of this technology are transportable to allow for the consumer to freely move between locations. The device is primarily used for reading correspondence, printed news, financial documents and statements, business cards, printed data, text of computer printouts, or any suitable documentation.

Screen Magnification Software

A computer such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone can be modified with screen magnification software to enlarge and enhance the contrast of text and graphics on its display. This software can work on Windows, Macintosh, Linux, iPhones, Androids, and other computer platforms. Using a screen magnification software program, one can gain full access to computers, software, information, and the internet. The consumer can magnify the size of text and graphics to a level that is most comfortable for working with their applications.



Assistive Technology (AT), continued

Screen Readers and Voice Technology

Combining screen readers with speech synthesis is one of the most powerful and cost-effective adaptive technologies currently available. The screen reader turns a computer into a talking personal computer. Using a screen reader, a consumer can hear all of their keystrokes as they are entered, as well as read back any information displayed on the computer monitor. One can use a screen reader to help with sending and receiving electronic mail, for browsing websites on the internet, for database and spreadsheet management, and for accessing computers and information in general.

Braille Refreshable Displays and Embossers

Those who are strong braille readers may benefit from using a refreshable braille display and/or a braille embosser. Reading braille can enhance literacy, reading comprehension, and spelling. A braille reader uses a refreshable braille display in conjunction with a screen reader software program to access a computer and the internet just like a sighted computer user reads a monitor. A person who is DeafBlind may use braille embossers and displays to assist with day-to-day communication and computer access for work, school, or home independence. A braille embosser and translation software can be used to “print” hard-copy braille from computer documents for a wide variety of applications.



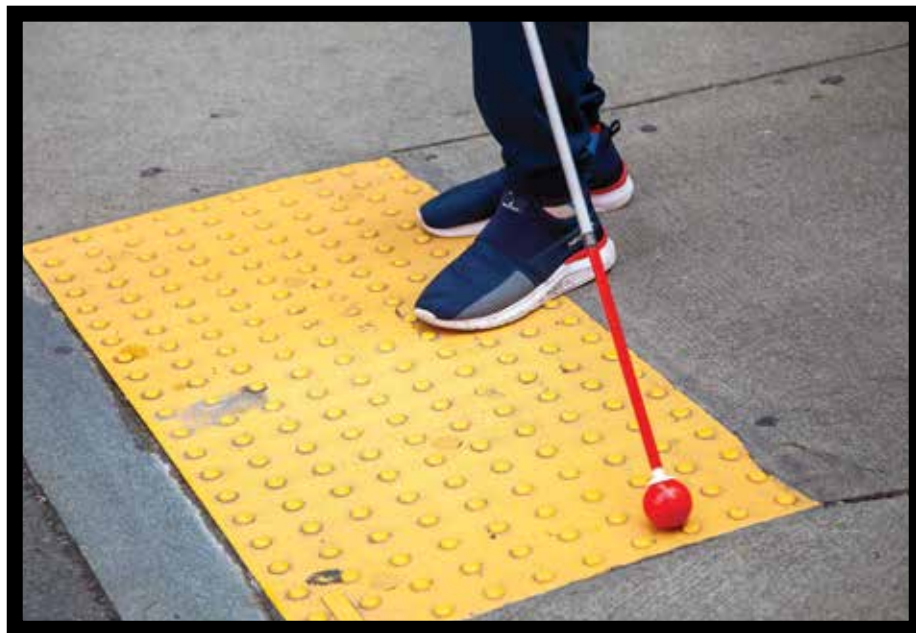
Advocacy Services

The Massachusetts Office on Disability's Client Assistance Program (CAP) provides information and advocacy to applicants and consumers who have concerns about:

- Vocational rehabilitation (VR) services from the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) and/or the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), or
- Independent living (IL) services from Independent Living Centers

The CAP team helps by:

- Providing information and advocacy for applicants and consumers who are facing barriers to VR or IL services, including informal resolution, appeal representation, and referrals
- Training and outreach about available VR and IL services, how to navigate the VR process, disability in employment, and more
- Tracking and resolving systemic problems in VR and IL services through informal advocacy and participation in advisory boards
- Educating the public about VR, IL, and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)



CAP services are free, confidential, and independent. CAP does not discuss anything about clients without their consent. They are independent of VR and IL agencies, so they can provide neutral information and advocacy.

Contact CAP:

617-727-7440

D/HH: VRS or dial 711 to 617-727-7440

Email: ContactCAPMA@mass.gov

Website: mass.gov/MOD/CAP

Administrative Review

An applicant for or recipient of services from the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) who is dissatisfied with any decisions of MCB regarding the furnishing or denial of services under any of the programs administered by MCB may file a request for review of the decision by letter addressed to the Ombudsperson at MCB no later than thirty (30) days after written or oral notice of that decision.

The letter shall contain the name, address, and telephone number of the person seeking review, the name of the MCB employee directly related to the decision to deny services or whose action in furnishing services is unsatisfactory to the person seeking review, and the nature of the service claimed to have been denied or furnished in an unsatisfactory manner.

For further information on the administrative review process, contact the Ombudsperson:

Phone: 617-626-7586

Email: mcb-ombudsman@mass.gov

Nondiscrimination Statement

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind advises its employees and the public that it does not discriminate in employment or in access to its programs, services, and activities on the basis of race, color, age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetics, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, religion, creed, ancestry, national origin, disability, or veteran's status (including Vietnam-era veterans).

If you feel you have been discriminated against, contact the Ombudsperson:

Phone: 617-626-7586

Email: mcb-ombudsman@mass.gov





Contact Information:

Phone (Main Boston Office): 617-727-5550

Toll Free (Main Boston Office): 800-392-6450

Toll Free (Springfield Office): 800-332-2772

Videophone: 857-366-4198

Email: mcbinfo@mass.gov

Website: mass.gov/mcb





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