

**MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND**

**COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL INDEPENDENT LIVING SOCIAL SERVICES  
PLAN**

**OCTOBER 1, 2022 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2023**

**David D'Arcangelo**

**Commissioner**

**The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) is a comprehensive rehabilitation agency with a broad mandate (M.G.L. Chapter 6, Section 29) to provide independent living and rehabilitation services to approximately 27,000 blind citizens of the Commonwealth. Social and rehabilitative services are designed to increase independence and to overcome the physical, psychological, social and economic problems that may accompany blindness. The focus of MCB is the legally blind\* consumer for whom the agency provides an organizational and programmatic framework for comprehensive services. Within this framework, individual service plans are developed for each legally blind consumer, and services are designed to promote the individual's maximum functioning compatible with his/her individual desires and capabilities for independence. The Commission seeks to promote the full integration of blind persons into the mainstream of the social and economic life of the community.**

**MCB's service plans encompass a wide range of services that are drawn upon to meet the special needs of each consumer. In keeping with state statutes, the Commission for the Blind maintains a central register of all legally blind persons in Massachusetts. \_**

**\* Legal blindness is defined as a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with corrective lenses or a visual field of 20 degrees diameter or less.**

## **FUNDING SOURCES FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND**

**The Commission for the Blind is unlike other Massachusetts Human Service agencies in that it is a comprehensive agency for a special consumer group, legally blind individuals. This is possible because MCB derives its major funding from multiple sources:**

- Vocational rehabilitation services funding under the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. This program serves youth and adults who are preparing for employment. It is funded partly by the state of Massachusetts and partly by the federal government.**
- Independent living social services provide services needed to reach independent living goals to legally blind individuals of all ages.**
- The majority of the funds for this program are appropriated by the Massachusetts Legislature. Other substantial sources of funding are: federal funding under the Social Services Block Grant Act (SSBG) and federal funding for Independent Living Services for Older Blind Individuals (OIB) under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.**

**In order to streamline service provision and case management, the agency has established a blended services model for legally blind consumers aged 55 and older who are eligible for both the Independent Living Social Services Program (SSBG) and the federally-funded program of Independent Living Services for Older Blind Individuals (OIB). Case management and service coordination to consumers aged 55 and older are provided by workers funded by either program. Case management and service coordination to consumers aged younger than 55 are provided by workers funded by either state or SSBG funds. While services and case management for a particular individual over aged 55 are blended to provide a seamless**

experience and to avoid delays and administrative duplication, funds from the accounts of the two programs are not co-mingled and required reports to the two federal oversight agencies (Office of the Administration for Children and Families and the Rehabilitation Services Administration) are prepared separately.

Several ILSS services are provided exclusively to consumers aged 55 and older and, therefore, eligible for the OIB program. These are:

- **Diabetic Self–Management**
- **Senior Vision Assessment**
- **Elder Peer Support Group Services**

SSBG funds are not used for these three services.

## **ASSESSING NEEDS AND PLANNING TO MEET THEM**

Periodic censuses conducted by the Commission provide information about the service needs of individuals who are blind. An open-ended solicitation of needs is administered to approximately 27,000 persons; the needs expressed through this survey include talking books, counseling services, orientation and mobility training, low-vision devices, rehabilitation teaching services, and homemaker services.

Other surveys are often conducted to assess the needs of consumers and to solicit the opinions and suggestions of consumers and other professionals working with blind persons.

Using these direct sources of input, the Commission engages in a yearly planning process. Integral to this process are the six regional Consumer Advisory Councils, the Statewide Independent Living

**Advisory Council, and the Rehabilitation Council, who formulate their own objectives for the year, as well as reviewing the agency's objectives. Service delivery, program development, and other regional and program unit activities are monitored quarterly, and in-depth evaluations of specific programs and services are conducted periodically.**

**Periodically, in-depth studies are requested on programs and patterns of service that have been Commission priorities.**

## **INDEPENDENT LIVING SOCIAL SERVICES PROGRAMS FOR BLIND PERSONS**

**MCB is one of two Social Service Block Grant Agencies (the Department of Children and Families being the other) in Massachusetts and, as such, is responsible for administering and providing social services to blind persons. Independent Living Social Services are delivered primarily through offices serving six geographic regions.**

**The social services mandate is for the provision of comprehensive social services to a population in need. Although the MCB Independent Living Social Services Program is restricted to a population defined by a single limiting disability - blindness - it is comprehensive in that it is designed to service a wide range of needs for all age groups.**

**One of the more widely utilized direct Independent Living Social Services is Rehabilitation Teaching. Through this program, consumers learn home management skills that will help them to function safely and independently in their homes. Rehabilitation Teachers mark**

**stoves and familiarize consumers with safe cooking techniques as well as products that will allow them greater freedom in their homes.**

**These skills, combined with an intensive program of personal management, communication skills such as Braille or the use of adaptive technology enable individuals (particularly elder consumers) to maintain themselves in their own homes.**

**Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services are one of the Independent Living Social Services offered by the Commission that has been extremely successful in increasing the independence of legally blind consumers. O&M services provide the consumer with skills such as orientation to home and place of employment, cane technique, use of public transportation, and other techniques so that he or she may learn to travel as well as a sighted person.**

**Rehabilitation Teaching, Orientation and Mobility, and Library Services are but three of the many Independent Living Social Services that the Commission will provide during the Federal Fiscal Year 2023 (October 2022 through September 2023). The following are the list of services to be provided; detailed descriptions of these services can be found in the directory of services:**

## **PRIMARY SERVICES**

- Adjustment to Blindness Training**
- Adaptive Software and Assistive Technology Devices**
- Adaptive Software and Personal Computers for Blind Children**
- Adult Day Health Care Service**

- **Advocacy**
- **Assistive Technology Training**
- **Essential Skills Training**
- **Counseling**
- **Deaf-Blind Community Access Network Services**
- **Diabetic Self-Management (consumers aged 55 and older)**
- **Diagnosis & Evaluation**
- **Flexible Family Supports**
- **Homemaker Services\***
- **Information and Referral**
- **Interpreter Services**
- **Elder Peer Support Group Services (consumers aged 55 and older)**
- **Orientation and Mobility**
- **Recreation/Campership Services**
- **Rehabilitation Counseling**
- **Rehabilitation Teaching**
- **Respite Care**
- **Socialization Services for Legally Blind School-Age Children**
- **Transportation**
- **Senior Vision Assessment (consumers aged 55 and older)**

**\*For consumers under the age of 60; those 60 years of age and older are referred to The Executive Office of Elder Affairs - Home Care Corporation for this service.**

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

- **Assistive Listening Devices**

- **Low Vision Aids/Devices**

## **SOCIAL SERVICES GOALS**

**Registrants of the Commission are eligible for services if the services are aimed at meeting one or more of the following goals:**

- (1) achieving or maintaining economic self-support to prevent, reduce, or eliminate dependency;**
- (2) achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency, including reduction or prevention of dependency;**
- (3) preventing or remedying neglect, abuse or exploitation of children and adults unable to protect their own interests, or preserving, rehabilitating, or reuniting families;**
- (4) preventing or reducing inappropriate institutional care by providing for community-based care, home-based care, or other forms of less intensive care; or**
- (5) securing referral or admission for institutional care when other forms of care are not appropriate, or providing services to individuals in institutions.**

## **CHILDREN'S SOCIALIZATION/RECREATION PROGRAMS**

**MCB, in cooperation with community organizations across the state, offers programs of socialization/recreation services for legally blind**

children 3-12 years of age. The programs operate when school is not in session. Among the activities are basketball, table top games, swimming, crafts, various ball games, and field trips. The purpose of the program is not only to provide the children with recreational activities that will be satisfying in themselves, but also to assist them to develop social, recreation, and psycho-motor skills which may increase the potential for their inclusion in activities with their sighted peers.

## **SERVICE ELIGIBILITY**

In order to receive services from MCB, an individual must be legally blind and be in need of MCB services for achievement of a specified goal. For some services, the consumer must meet certain financial eligibility requirements as well. If a consumer indicates interest in receiving services, MCB rehabilitation counselors will advise the consumer of the services and benefits for which they may be eligible. Those services offered without regard to income are Advocacy, Assistive Technology Training, Counseling, Directly Provided Diagnostic & Evaluation, Information and Referral, Interpreter Services, Orientation and Mobility, Rehabilitation Counseling, Rehabilitation Teaching, Socialization Services for Legally Blind School-Age Children, Deaf-Blind Community Access Network Services, Essential Skills Training, Diabetic Self-Management (aged 55 and older), Senior Vision Assessment (aged 55 and older), and Elder Peer Support Group Services (consumers aged 55 and older)

Services which are subject to financial eligibility requirements include Adaptive Software and Assistive Technology Devices, Adjustment to Blindness Training, Adult Day Health Care, Diagnosis & Evaluation, Flexible Family Supports, Homemaker, Recreation/Campership Services, Respite Care, Support Services, and Transportation. These

services can only be purchased for a consumer by MCB if the consumer meets the Commission's financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services. \* Because of funding limitations, the provision of services is subject to the availability of funds.

## **FINANCIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR SOCIAL SERVICES**

### **Without Regard to Income:**

The following services will be provided without regard to income:

**Adaptive Software and Personal Computers for Blind Children, Advocacy, Assistive Technology Training, Counseling, Directly Provided Diagnostic & Evaluation, Information & Referral, Interpreter Services, Orientation & Mobility, Rehabilitation Counseling, Rehabilitation Teaching, and Socialization Services for Legally Blind School-Age Children, Deaf-Blind Community Access Network Services, Essential Skills Training, Diabetic Self-Management (aged 55 and older), Senior Vision Assessment (aged 55 and older), and Elder Peer Support Group Services (consumers aged 55 and older), and services provided toward the goal of preventing or remedying neglect, abuse or exploitation of the blind.**

### **Current Recipients of Income Maintenance Payments:**

**Any consumer eligible for one of the following income maintenance programs is also financially eligible for all Independent Living Social Services: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Supplemental Security Income - Aid to the Blind (SSI-BI); Supplemental Security Income - Disability Assistance;SI-DI); Supplemental Security Income - Old Age Assistance (SSI-OA)**

## **Income Eligibility:**

**Other consumers whose income does not exceed the levels listed below may be eligible for purchased independent living social services.**

<b>Family ize</b>	<b>Monthly Income</b>	<b>Annual</b>
1	\$2,265	\$27,180
2	\$3,052	\$36,620
3	\$3,838	\$46,060
4	\$4,625	\$55,500
5	\$5,412	\$64,940
6	\$6,198	\$74,380
7	\$6,985	\$83,820

**A family member is defined as a spouse or any child under 18 related by blood or law to the consumer and residing in the same household with the consumer unless the consumer is claimed as a dependent for income tax purposes by another person. The financial eligibility requirement may be waived with the approval of the Regional Director and the Deputy Commissioner for Services when they find that an emergency or extraordinary circumstance warrants such a waiver.**

## **Eligibility Determination Process:**

**Application made through MCB will be processed through the following steps:**

- **Determination of legal blindness by MCB Register and registration of the individual as legally blind.**
- **Filing of an application for services with the MCB office. A rehabilitation counselor will be available to explain services to the applicant either in the office or in the applicant's home, including: the services available in the community; the eligibility requirements; the application form and the types of information requested on the form; the rights and obligations of the applicants**
- **Completion, signing and dating of the application form. The rehabilitation counselor will help the consumer fill out the form if necessary.**
- **Income information beyond that of categorical eligibility will not be sought from recipients of TANF or SSI.**
- **Notification to the applicant in regard to his/her eligibility or ineligibility for participation in the services program. This notification will include information about the individual's right to a fair hearing.**
- **Development of a service plan for eligible persons and delivery of services in accordance with this plan.**
- **Notification to eligible persons when the services requested are not available, which includes procedures to be followed for registering for waiting lists so that the applicant may receive the services when they become available.**
- **If requested, the rehabilitation counselor will explore with the consumer the possibility of alternate services when the service requested is not available.**

**Redetermination: Redetermination of a person's income eligibility shall be made by MCB in the following cases:**

- **After each one-year period of services.**
- **Within thirty days of receipt of information regarding changes in the consumer's financial status that may render the consumer ineligible.**
- **When required on the basis of information received about anticipated changes in a consumer's financial status that may make him/her ineligible.**

**Financial eligibility redetermination will be made in the following ways:**

- **For TANF and SSI recipients - use of a current Medicaid card.**
- **For income eligible consumers (including MA-only)  
- declaration of gross monthly income.**

**The Deputy Commissioner for Services may waive the income eligibility guidelines listed here, upon documentation that the consumer/family is experiencing extraordinary financial hardship.**

## **ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

**Some of the Commission's purchased services have, in addition to the financial eligibility requirements, certain other criteria.**

### **Orientation and Mobility**

**A medical evaluation is required prior to initiation of services. If a consumer is determined, after evaluation by an orientation and**

**mobility instructor to be unable to benefit from the service, further instruction will not be provided.**

### **Homemaker Services**

**Medical documentation regarding consumer's physical capacity must be submitted prior to initiation of services. In emergency situations, this can be postponed at the discretion of the Regional Director**

### **Respite Care**

**To be eligible to receive this service, families/primary care givers of legally blind individuals under age 60 cannot be eligible for respite care services from the Department of Developmental Services or Department of Children and Families, or, if they are eligible, they must have expended the maximum numbers of days available under that agency's funding. This service is limited to a maximum of 48 hours per quarter (not to exceed 168 hours per year); however, if extraordinary circumstances are present, the Deputy Commissioner for Services has the authority to waive the limit.**

### **Diabetic Self-Management**

**To be eligible to receive this service, the individual must be aged 55 or older and eligible for Independent Living Services for Older Blind Individuals.**

### **Vision Assessment provided by a Low Vision Therapist**

**To be eligible to receive this service, the individual must be aged 55 or older and eligible for Independent Living Services for Older Blind Individuals.**

## **Support Services**

**These services - assistive listening devices, evaluations, and low vision aids, (evaluations and devices) - may be purchased on behalf of a legally blind consumer only when the following conditions have been met:**

- In the case of prescription low-vision aids, the consumer has had a low-vision evaluation by a qualified physician or optometrist and the physician or optometrist recommends that the provision of such a device would improve the vision of the consumer.**
- The consumer is not eligible under Title XIX (Medicaid) or Vocational Rehabilitation; however, the consumer must be within the income limits defined in this plan.**
- The Individual Service Plan must describe how the provision of such device(s) would assist the consumer in achieving his/her highest degree of independent functioning within the limits of his/her disability.**
- When the acquisition cost of a low-vision device is more than \$500, prior approval must be obtained from the Deputy Commissioner. If the acquisition cost of the low vision device(s) is less than \$500, prior approval must be obtained from the Regional Director.**
- The service is an integral and subordinate part of one or more primary services.**

## **NONDISCRIMINATION**

**It is the policy of this Commission that no person shall be denied services or be discriminated against in the provision of services on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or handicap.**

## **REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION**

**In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and Article 114 of the Massachusetts Constitution, the Commission provides reasonable accommodation to enable persons with disabilities to benefit from its services. For example, interpreter services are provided in order to improve the person's ability to access services.**

## **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW AND FAIR HEARING FOR CONSUMER DENIED SERVICES**

**MCB provides an Administrative Review and Fair Hearing procedure for those consumers who wish to appeal the denial, reduction or termination of services, or failure of the Commission to act upon a consumer's request with reasonable speed. Applicants or consumers requesting redetermination by the Commission of decisions concerning denial or abridgment of services should write to the Director of Policy Development, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, 600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111, within 30 days of such an action.**

## **WHERE TO APPLY FOR SERVICES OR INFORMATION**

**Application for all services provided by MCB must be made through an MCB office. In addition, persons desiring information about the MCB Independent Living Social Service Plan or MCB services should address their questions to one of the offices listed below:**

### **Central Office**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**(617) 727-5550\* or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450\***

**Toll Free: 1-800-392-6556 (TDD Only)**

**Region I Office - Springfield and Western Massachusetts**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**2nd Floor Room 211**

**436 Dwight Street, Room 109**

**Springfield, MA 01103**

**(413) 781-1220 (V/TDD) or Toll Free: 1-800-332-2772 (V/TDD)**

**Region II Office - Worcester and Central Massachusetts**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**(617) 727-5550\* or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450\***

**Toll Free: 1-800-392-6556 (TDD Only)**

**Region III Office - Northeastern Massachusetts**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**(617) 727-5550\* or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450\***

**Toll Free: 1-800-392-6556 (TDD Only)**

**Region IV Office - Greater Boston except Brookline**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**(617) 727-5550\* or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450\***

**Toll Free: 1-800-392-6556 (TDD Only)**

**Region V Office - Southeastern Massachusetts**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**(617) 727-5550\* or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450\***

**Toll Free: 1-800-392-6556 (TDD Only)**

**Region VI Office -Boston and Brookline**

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**600 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111**

**(617) 727-5550\* or Toll Free: 1-800-392-6450\***

**Toll Free: 1-800-392-6550 (TDD Only)**

**Or leave message on main number, or Toll Free: 1-800 392-6450**

**\* Voice First, Then TDD**

**DIRECTORY  
OF  
SERVICES**

## **SERVICE: Adaptive Software and Assistive Technology Devices**

**DEFINITION:** Provision of commercially-available adaptive software and assistive technology devices designed to meet the needs of legally blind persons who know how to use personal computers or relevant devices. Includes initial training in the use of the adaptive software or assistive technology device. The least expensive adaptive software or device available to meet the individual's needs will be provided.

**AVAILABILITY:** Availability subject to sufficient agency funds.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind consumers who meet the financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services.

For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and direct.

## **SERVICE: Adaptive Software and Personal Computers for Blind Children**

**DEFINITION:** Provision of commercially-available adaptive software designed to meet the needs of legally blind children aged 11-13 who cannot see well enough to use a computer without adaptive software. A personal computer will also be provided when necessary. Initial training in the use of the adaptive software will be provided to the child. The least expensive adaptive software and personal computer available to meet the child's needs will be provided. The computer and software will be placed in the home only, and are not in lieu of adaptations to be provided by the school. School systems are required to provide any adaptive software and equipment that are necessary for educational purposes. Agency staff will evaluate that the consumer's needs and determine whether the child has the necessary motivation and physical capacity to use the equipment successfully.

**AVAILABILITY:** Availability subject to sufficient agency funds.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind children aged 11-13 years old.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and direct.

## **SERVICE: Adjustment to Blindness Training**

**DEFINITION:** Provision of a short-term structured program of adjustment to blindness training designed to meet the needs of legally blind persons who need to learn new skills in areas such as activities of daily living, Braille, or communication.

**AVAILABILITY:** Availability subject to sufficient agency funds.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind consumers who meet the financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services.

For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Adult Day Health Care Services**

**DEFINITION:** Provision of a structured program of health care and socialization designed to meet the needs of legally blind persons who might otherwise be institutionalized. The services must be provided in a Medicaid-approved Adult Day Health facility and will only be provided to consumers who have been determined to be ineligible for MassHealth. Adult day health care services for MassHealth eligible consumers aged 60 and older is available through the state home care program. Referral should be made to one of the local Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) for evaluation of the consumer's needs and eligibility.

**AVAILABILITY:** Availability subject to sufficient agency funds. Limited to a maximum of three (3) days per week of service to each consumer.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind consumers who have been determined to be ineligible for MassHealth but who otherwise meet the financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services.

For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Advocacy**

**DEFINITION:** To advocate for, and help to secure, those resources available outside of the Commission. Includes such activities as advocating in the Chapter 766-TEAM process; assisting the consumer in the application and/or redetermination process for SSI, Medicaid, Food Stamps; working with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and other State agencies to obtain service for consumers; advocating for and researching availability of housing for consumers; securing Visiting Nurse Association and other home care services for consumers; advocating for volunteer services for consumers. For blind persons aged 60 and older, the Information and Referral Department at the local Aging Services Access Point (ASAP) is an excellent resource. For blind people turning 65, SHINE counselors are available to determine the best options for Medicare and MassHealth services. Also includes advocating for protective services for elder consumers, and children insuring their protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Direct

**SERVICE: Assistive Technology Training**

**DEFINITION:** Provision of a short-term structured program of assistive technology training designed to meet the needs of legally blind persons who need to learn new skills in order to use specialized adaptive software and assistive technology devices.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and Direct

## **SERVICE: Rehabilitation Counseling**

**DEFINITION:** Assessment, planning, counseling and coordination of the specialized service components as needed by the consumer and assurance of progress through the rehabilitation process. The professional services of MCB's Independent Living Social Service Staff include rehabilitation counseling as an integral activity with consumers.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Direct

## **SERVICE: Essential Skills Training**

**DEFINITION:** Provides specialized training to legally blind individuals who need instruction in kitchen skills, financial management, medication management, and personal organization to perform daily tasks with limited vision. Designed to assist the individual in attaining the goals specified in the Individual Service Plan. The program is provided on an individual basis and is offered at various times based on individual needs.

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who need this service. Also, to individuals aged 55 or older and eligible for Independent Living Services for Older Blind Individuals.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide, subject to the availability of funds and contractual arrangements with vendors.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB and Regional or Central Offices.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

**SERVICE: Counseling**

**DEFINITION:** Assess and identify consumer needs and goals, and provide supportive counseling around the issues of blindness. Referral to outside resources when other issues are present. Designed to assist the individual and/or family unit in attaining the goals specified in the Individual Service Plan.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB and Regional or Central Offices.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Direct

## **SERVICE: Deaf-Blind Community Access Network Services**

**DEFINITION:** Assess and identify deaf-blind consumer needs for community access and provide personal services to meet those needs including, but not limited to, basic communication, sighted guide and personal accompaniment, assistance with shopping and conducting personal business, and other forms of appropriate, consumer-driven individualized assistance.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Subject to sufficient agency funds)

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who are also deaf and who need this service, upon individualized assessment.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Deaf Blind Extended Supports Unit

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Diabetic Self-Management**

**DEFINITION:** Provides specialized training to legally blind individuals aged 55 and older who need instruction on adaptive techniques to manage diabetic medication with limited vision. Designed to assist the individual in attaining the goals specified in the Individual Service Plan. Diabetic Self-Management is a one-time service provided in the individual's home by a qualified nurse trainer.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide, subject to the availability of funds and contractual arrangements with vendors.

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons aged 55 and older who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB and Regional or Central Offices.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Elder Peer Support Groups**

**DEFINITION:** Elder Peer Support Groups provide practical and emotional support to individuals aged 55 and older coping with legal blindness. Consumers come together to discuss and share information on topics such as specialized equipment to use in the home or on the job, how to maintain independence, aging and vision loss, or the effects of vision loss on family and friends. Approximately 47 groups meet monthly in various community locations; many are led by visually impaired peer coordinators.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide, subject to the availability of funds and contractual arrangements with vendors.

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind individuals aged 55 and older who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Medical Evaluation**

**DEFINITION:** Services necessary to establish eligibility or to aid in the development of an appropriate Individual Service Plan. This service can include such evaluations as medical, eye exams, low vision evaluation and follow-up, audiological exams, and occupational therapy evaluations.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Subject to sufficient agency funds)

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who meet the financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services:

- Recipients of SSI-BI, SSI-DI, SSI-OAA, or TANF.
- Income eligible persons, including persons on Medicaid, whose income is within the MCB limit.

For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional or Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and Direct

## **SERVICE: Flexible Family Supports**

**DEFINITION:** Provided to legally blind persons to meet exceptional needs for financial assistance or clothing. Examples of the kind of assistance that may be provided are: the purchase of a winter coat or assistance in traveling out of state to attend a family funeral. It should be noted that the Massachusetts Home Care Program has a “Little Necessities” program that blind individuals aged 60 and older may be able to access.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide, with the following restrictions:

- **Subject to sufficient agency funds.**
- **Similar benefits must be exhausted before the service is provided by MCB. Services cannot be provided to replace assistance available to the individual or family through other funding sources.**
- **The maximum amount of funding that an individual/family can receive is \$1,500 annually (during a Massachusetts State Fiscal Year, July 1 through June 30) for adult consumers. The maximum is \$1,000 annually, (during a Massachusetts State Fiscal Year, July 1 through June 30) for child consumers (ages 0-14). The Massachusetts State Fiscal Year maximum may not be exceeded although there may be several requests.**
- **If extraordinary circumstances are present, the Deputy Commissioner for Services has the authority to waive this limit.**

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind persons who meet the financial eligibility requirements for independent living social services:

- **Recipients of SSI-BI, SSI-DI, SSI-OAA, or TANF**
- **Income eligible persons, including persons on Medicaid, whose income is within the MCB limit.**

**For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.**

**WHERE TO APPLY: MCB Regional or Central Offices**

**METHOD OF DELIVERY: Purchased and direct**

## **SERVICE: Homemaker**

**DEFINITION:** Provided to legally blind persons under the age of 60 who have a serious medical problem in addition to their blindness that is preventing them from performing necessary homemaking tasks. Services are provided on the basis of priority of need. In order to be determined to be in the highest priority category for this service, a legally blind person must: live alone; or live with minor children only; or live with another severely disabled adult, who is incapable of performing these tasks, or need assistance in preparing meals, grocery shopping, or laundering clothes.

Other legally blind persons who are eligible for homemaker services will receive them only if sufficient funds are available and based on priority of need as determined by the Commission.

Homemaker services for eligible consumers aged 60 and older are available through the Massachusetts Home Care Program. Referral should be made to one of the local Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) for evaluation of the consumer's needs and eligibility.

### **AVAILABILITY:**

Statewide, with the following restrictions:

- Subject to sufficient agency funds.
- Similar benefits must be exhausted before the service is provided by MCB.
- Limited to a maximum of four (4) hours per week. If unusual circumstances are present, the Regional Director has the authority to waive this limit to provide up to six (6)

**hours per week. If extraordinary circumstances are present, the Deputy Commissioner has the authority to waive this limit.**

**ELIGIBILITY: Legally blind persons who meet the financial eligibility requirements for independent living social services:**

- **Recipients of SSI-BI, SSI-DI, SSI-OAA, or TANF**
- **Income eligible persons, including persons on Medicaid, whose income is within the MCB limit.**
- **Substantial secondary disability**

**For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.**

**WHERE TO APPLY: MCB Regional or Central Offices**

**METHOD OF DELIVERY: Purchased**

## **SERVICE: Information and Referral**

**DEFINITION:** Provision of information about available services both internal and external to MCB; includes referral to the most appropriate service. This service is the most widely utilized of all primary Independent Living Social Services and can range from providing a consumer with a brochure of services to identifying the appropriate outside resource, referral to that resource, and follow-up on the services delivered.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who need the service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional and Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Direct

**SERVICE: Foreign Language Interpreter Services**

**DEFINITION:** Provided to the non-English speaking consumer for purposes of 1) facilitating communication between the consumer and his/her rehabilitation counselor; or 2) enabling the consumer to benefit from other social services provided, whether purchased or directly provided.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Subject to sufficient agency funds).

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons who do not speak English and who need the service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional and Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and Direct

## **SERVICE: Interpreter Services**

**DEFINITION:** Provided to the Deaf-Blind consumer for purposes of 1) facilitating communication between the consumer and his/her Deaf Blind Extended Supports Counselor; or 2) enabling the consumer to benefit from other social services provided, whether purchased or directly provided; 3) facilitating communication for MCB Deaf Blind Extended Supports Unit staff working with a deaf consumer.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Subject to sufficient agency funds).

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons with severe hearing impairment who need the service, and MCB Deaf Blind Extended Supports Unit staff who need reasonable accommodation to work with eligible deaf consumers.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Deaf Blind Extended Supports Unit - Boston Office

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Orientation and Mobility**

**DEFINITION:** Provided to enable the consumer to negotiate his/her environment in a safe and effective manner. Activities may include providing sensory and conceptual training within the home, or immediate environment. Familiarizing consumers with work and home settings; providing consumers with and instructing them in the use of, prescriptive canes and/or mechanical devices suitable to individual needs; instructing consumer in the use of sighted guides; and maximum use of all senses. For registrants residing in institutional settings, a consultant is available to introduce staff of the facility with issues surrounding Orientation and Mobility for blind residents.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Subject to sufficient agency funds.)

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind consumers who need and can benefit from the service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional and Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and Direct

## **SERVICE: Recreation/Campership**

**DEFINITION:** A program of recreational services designed to meet the psycho-social and rehabilitative needs of the blind person on an individual or group basis. The program may be designed exclusively for blind individuals or it may be a program that incorporates the blind and the sighted. Because of a limited amount of Independent Living Social Service funds, the MCB will only provide up to a limit of \$500 per consumer towards the provision of recreation or campership services in any year.

In the case of camperships, the child's parents or legal guardians are responsible for informing the Children's Services rehabilitation counselor of their child's possible need for summer camp before June 1. Of those who apply before June 1, those who meet the financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services will be accorded priority. Parents will be encouraged to themselves investigate at least two alternative sources of funds to pay the camp fee and to inform the Children's Service rehabilitation counselor of the results of their investigation.

Because purchase of service moneys for camps is limited, Commission funds should not be expended for this service until all other private sources have been exhausted. All efforts to secure other funds must be documented in the consumer's case record. In addition to financial eligibility for camps, there are certain other eligibility criteria that must be met and documented before the Commission will purchase this service. Those criteria are as follows:

- **The provision of the service must be necessary for achievement of the consumer's Individual Service Plan.**
- **The consumer will benefit - as a result of the service - in at least two of the following ways: socially, psychologically, and behaviorally.**
- **The service should provide for an environment where the consumer's strengths will be enhanced.**
- **The service may be provided in order to continue an ongoing rehabilitation and/or education program beyond the normal school year.**

**AVAILABILITY:**

**Statewide (Subject to sufficient agency funds)**

**ELIGIBILITY:**

**Legally blind individuals whose Individual Service Plan specifies this service as an objective and who meet the financial social services:**

- **Recipients of SSI-BL, SSI-DA, SSI-OAA, or TANF.**
- **Income eligible persons, including persons on Medicaid, whose income is within the MCB limit.**

**For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect, or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.**

**For services provided on a group basis. - All legally blind consumers who need this service.**

**WHERE TO APPLY;**

**MCB Regional and Central Office**

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:**

**Purchased (Alternative funding sources must be exhausted first.)**

## **SERVICE: Rehabilitation Teaching**

**DEFINITION:** A range of services in the areas of daily living skills, communication, and the use of leisure time. Evaluation of skill levels is conducted. Activities may include: assessing abilities and skills of consumer in specific areas, such as ADL/home management, personal care, communication, therapeutic recreational activities and then providing instruction in these areas when needed. Rehabilitation Teachers are also actively involved with on-the-job training and teaching computer skills to consumers. Rehabilitation teachers also provide consumer support and education related to the use of low-vision services. Pre-screening (including use of standardized, written assessment tools), encouragement, and provision of training in the use of prescribed low-vision devices and adaptive computer software may be provided as part of the rehabilitation teaching service. Demonstration of common non-prescription low vision aids may be provided.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind consumers who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional and Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Direct

## **SERVICE: Respite Care**

**DEFINITION:** A temporary service to provide relief for the family/primary caregiver of a disabled blind person. The service may be provided in the primary caregiver's home, in the respite worker's home, or in a residential facility that provides respite care. Priority will be given to those families where an emergency situation necessitating the caregiver's absence has occurred. Respite care services for eligible consumers aged 60 and older is available through the state home care program. Referral should be made to one of the local Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) for evaluation of the consumer's needs and eligibility.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide, with the following restrictions:

- Subject to sufficient agency funds.
- Similar benefits must be exhausted before MCB funds can be accessed.
- Limited to a maximum of 48 hours per quarter (maximum 168 hours per year). If extraordinary circumstances are present, the Deputy Commissioner has the authority to waive the limit.

**ELIGIBILITY:**

- Families with legally blind individuals up to age 60 years who are not eligible for respite care services from other Agencies such as the Department of Public Health, Department of Developmental Services, and the Department of Children and Families, or are eligible but have expended the maximum number of days available under that agency's funding.

- **Recipients of SSI-BI, SSI-DI, SSI-OAA, or TANF.**

**WHERE TO APPLY: MCB Regional and Central Offices**

**METHOD OF DELIVERY: Purchased**

## **SERVICE: Senior Vision Assessment**

**DEFINITION:** Provides specialized, non-medical assessment by a Certified Low-Vision Therapist (CLVT) to legally blind individuals with low-vision, aged 55 and older who need an assessment and recommendations on how to use their residual vision to the greatest extent possible. Magnification (video and hand-held), controlled lighting, and computer adaptations are explored and may be recommended. Designed to assist the individual in attaining the goals specified in the Individual Service Plan. Senior Vision Assessment is a one-time service provided at a rehabilitation center by a Certified Low-Vision Therapist.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide, subject to the availability of funds and contractual arrangements with vendors.

**ELIGIBILITY:** All legally blind persons aged 55 and older who need this service.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB and Regional or Central Offices.

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased

## **SERVICE: Support Services/Vision Utilization**

**DEFINITION:** The provision of low-vision aids/devices (prescription or non-prescription) and/or non-prescription assistive listening devices to eligible consumers. Prescription devices must be deemed necessary by a physician or optometrist and the aid/device documented (in the ISP) as necessary to assist the consumer in achieving his/her highest degree of independent functioning. Closed circuit television devices (CCTV's) may be provided when necessary for independent living and when the consumer has been determined to have the necessary motivation and physical capacity to use the device successfully. Any CCTV provided will be the least expensive model that will enable the consumer to read. In general, multiple devices will not be provided. These services are termed "support" services because they are provided as an integral and subordinate part of primary services.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Availability of service subject to sufficient agency funds).

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind persons who meet the financial eligibility requirements for independent living social services:

- Recipients of SSI-BI, SSI-DI, SSI-OAA, or TANF
- Income eligible persons, including persons on Medicaid, whose income is within the MCB limit.

For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.

\*See Additional Guidelines/Conditions

**WHERE TO APPLY: MCB Regional or Central Offices.**

**METHOD OF DELIVERY: Purchased**

## **SERVICE: Transportation**

**DEFINITION:** Provided where appropriate public or other transportation is not available, utilized to provide access to Specialized Recreation Services, Adjustment to Blindness Training Services or Low Vision Services, or Vision Utilization Services when one of these services is specified in the consumer's Individual Service Plan.

Some transportation services for eligible consumers aged 60 and older are available through the Massachusetts Home Care Program. Referral should be made to one of the local Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) for evaluation of the consumer's needs and eligibility.

**AVAILABILITY:** Statewide (Availability of service subject to sufficient agency funds).

**ELIGIBILITY:** Legally blind persons who meet the financial eligibility requirements for Independent Living Social Services:

- Recipients of SSI-BI, SSI-DI, SSI-OAA, or TANF
- Income eligible persons, including persons on Medicaid, whose income is within the MCB limit.

For consumers with a goal of protection from abuse, neglect or exploitation, this service is provided regardless of income.

**WHERE TO APPLY:** MCB Regional and Central Offices

**METHOD OF DELIVERY:** Purchased and Direct