



Uploaded to the VFC Website

▶▶▶ November 2014 ◀◀◀

This Document has been provided to you courtesy of Veterans-For-Change!

Feel free to pass to any veteran who might be able to use this information!

For thousands more files like this and hundreds of links to useful information, and hundreds of "Frequently Asked Questions, please go to:

[Veterans-For-Change](#)

If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

Note:

VFC is not liable for source information in this document, it is merely provided as a courtesy to our members & subscribers.



BLIND REHABILITATION SERVICE FACT SHEET

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides blind and vision rehabilitation programs that target Veterans and military Servicemembers who are visually impaired. While the challenge to do this has greatly increased, VA is aggressively expanding innovative service delivery models to better meet these needs. VA has committed to provide world-class rehabilitation training by enhancing services, improving access to care, and increasing patient satisfaction for Veterans and military Servicemembers with visual impairment.

MISSION

The mission of Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) programs is to restore independence and quality of life for Veterans and Servicemembers with visual impairment, and to assist them in adjustment and re-integration into home and community life.



VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

The following are definitions of visual impairment:

- Legally blind (LB) – 20/200 in the better seeing eye, or visual field of 20 degrees or less.
- Low vision – 20/70 up to 20/200 in the better seeing

eye (Definition for BRS low vision clinic rollout in 2008)

- Visual dysfunction – any impairment in ability to perform everyday tasks related to the visual pathway (Current definition assures inclusion of patients with traumatic brain injury).

VHA BLIND REHABILITATION

BRS programs provide intensive case management for severely disabled blind Veterans. Services include:

- Life-long care and access to services.
- Partnering with teams of medical and rehabilitation specialists for Veterans and Servicemembers with Polytrauma; and
- Clinical research that advances evidence-based practices

BRS programs provide comprehensive rehabilitation including orientation and mobility, activity of daily living and communication training, and

manual skills training for crafts, hobbies and household repair. BRS services include training with assistive technology, low vision clinical examinations and low vision therapy, adjustment counseling, and patient and family education.

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

BRS programs provide needed assistive technology. Assistive technology could include vision-enhancing devices such as specialized optical and electronic devices that enlarge images for viewing, blindness aids including speech-output computers and peripherals, global position systems, and money-identifiers.

SERVICE ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Veterans and Servicemembers who have one or more functional disabilities from vision loss and need rehabilitation care may receive services. Visually impaired Servicemembers, Veterans with service-connected visual impairment, and Veterans rated 50 percent or greater for any



combination of disabilities receives priority care.

Visual disability among Veterans and Servicemembers may range from an inability to see well for reading, to difficulty managing changing lighting conditions, to total blindness.

The most common causes of vision loss among older Veterans are age-related conditions such as glaucoma, diabetes and macular degeneration. Young patients may have vision loss due to wounds, disease and trauma, especially traumatic brain injury.

BRS PROGRAMS

BRS national program office at VA national headquarters in Washington, D.C. provides support and oversight of services across VA, including:

- 157 Visual Impairment Service Team Coordinators
- 77 Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialists (BROS)
- 13 Inpatient Blind Rehabilitation Centers
- 12 outpatient blind rehabilitation clinics
- 44 outpatient low vision clinics

In 2012, there are approximately

700 Blind Rehabilitation Specialists and Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialists providing care in BRS programs.

BRS also partners with community agencies and vendors to provide computer assisted training in-home and in-community.



PATIENT GOALS

Frequently cited rehabilitation care goals for visually impaired patients include relearning to read and write using assistive technology; managing finances, medication and healthcare.

Activities of daily living goals include household skills (cleaning, making repairs, preparing meals), shopping, leisure, sports and social activities; family care (children or aging parents); grooming and clothing care; organizing and moving safely in their environment (such as taking public

transportation), and managing time.

Some Veterans with visual impairment who retain vision are able to drive again using adaptive devices.

Blind Rehabilitation Specialists and Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS) are multidisciplinary master's or baccalaureate professionals trained and credentialed to provide care for people who are visually impaired. These professionals can include:

- *Certified Low Vision Therapists, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, and Occupational Therapists.*
- *Visual Impairment Service Team Coordinators may include social workers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, or other counseling and case management professionals.*

