

# NC DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND POLICIES AND PROCEDURES VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

---

<b>Section:</b>	<b>D</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Deaf-Blind Services</b>
<b>Current Effective Date:</b>	<b>02/08</b>
<b>Revision History:</b>	<b>Revised 01/96; 02/02; 10/04; 10/05;01/08</b>

---

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has a responsibility, through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, to serve an individuals with significantly disabilities who are deaf-blind. This population has unique needs because of the combination of hearing and vision losses. Programs solely designed to meet the needs of persons who are deaf or blind cannot adequately serve individuals who are deaf-blind. Eligible individuals who are deaf-blind must have equal access to, and receive, appropriate services in order to reach their highest level of rehabilitative independence within the home, community, and employment.

The agency is committed to serving individuals with hearing and vision loss and maintains specialized staff to provide the exceptional services needed to serve individuals with hearing and vision loss. Specialty staff consists of: the Deaf-Blind Specialists, Deaf-Blind State Consultant and the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB).

## **The Deaf-Blind Specialist**

The Agency maintains five (5) regional Deaf-Blind Specialists who provide comprehensive services to individuals who are deaf-blind through services in our Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Independent Living Rehabilitation Program (ILR).

The Deaf-Blind Specialists provide the support necessary to assist individuals with finding suitable employment and/or increasing their level of independence within the home. The Deaf-Blind Specialist's role involves advocacy, consultation, assessment, technical support, service coordination, training, transition planning, job placement and development, and much more. Specialist positions are located in the Wilmington, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Asheville, and Greenville offices (On-Line Appendix-Deaf-Blind Specialist Service Areas).

## **The Deaf-Blind State Consultant**

The Deaf-Blind State Consultant is also a resource to service delivery personnel. In addition to managing program policy and procedures, the Statewide Consultant is an available resource to assist with complex cases that present for VR services.

## **The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB)**

Services for individuals who are deaf-blind are also provided at the RBC by experienced staff who assist persons who are deaf-blind with obtaining the skills necessary to live independently and reach an employment outcome. Staff includes a Program Manager, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, a Community Employment Specialist and a Recreational Therapist. While at the RBC, individuals are able to realize their potential despite vision and hearing losses.

## Referrals for Deaf-Blind Services

The VR and ILR programs shall refer persons with vision and hearing loss to the Deaf-Blind Specialist, using the State Agency referral form (On-Line DSB-4002-VR Referral Form with instructions). Please include the following when making a referral for Deaf-Blind Services: ophthalmological report, audiological report, if available, appropriate mode of communication, Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) (On-Line DSB-4005b-VR Individual Plan for Employment with instructions) and other relevant information.

## Coding

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors must make every effort to properly code individuals with hearing loss as being deaf-blind under primary disability on the Electronic Services System (ESS) and on the Blind Register.

The following information contains a comprehensive description of the roles and responsibilities of all staff serving individuals who are deaf-blind, followed by a county by county list of provider contact information.

## Responsibilities of the Deaf-Blind Specialist to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

The Deaf-Blind Specialist will function as a consultant to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and perform the following services as directed:

1. In compliance with informed individual choice, the Deaf-Blind Specialist shall serve all persons with hearing loss.
2. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall conduct an assessment of all individuals referred with hearing and vision loss within 30 calendar days. The assessment shall include but not be limited to the following areas: medical, hearing, vision, communication, technology, independent living etc.
3. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall send a written report to the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor within 45 calendar days after the Deaf-Blind Specialist receives the initial referral.
4. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall include recommendations to the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor on how to improve employability, independent living skills, and overall quality of life.
5. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall recommend and assist with facilitating the procurement of Assistive Equipment/Devices as necessary, utilizing comparable benefits as feasible.
6. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall install equipment as necessary and provide training to the individual and/or family on how to properly utilize equipment.
7. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall serve as a facilitator of communication when individuals present unscheduled and no sign language interpreter is available. Please note that this is not major function of the Deaf-Blind Specialist.

8. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall provide staff, as needed, an updated list of interpreters available for hire during the VR process of an individual who is deaf-blind.
9. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall be involved with the job development process. The specialist shall serve at the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's discretion to educate the potential employer of the dynamics of deaf-blindness and how to successfully work with individuals who are deaf-blind.
10. The Deaf-Blind Specialist may accompany the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to a job site and function as a job coach, mediator, etc. as needed in order to assist a person who is deaf-blind with achieving a successful employment outcome.
11. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall provide education and consultation to families of persons who are deaf-blind.
12. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall serve active VR cases with priority and shall close all cases immediately after services are completed or simultaneously with case managers. No cases maintained by the Specialist shall remain in open status after the case manager has closed a case.

### **Responsibilities of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to the Deaf-Blind Specialist**

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are asked to adhere to the following recommendations to ensure quality services are provided to persons who are deaf-blind.

1. In compliance with individual Informed Choice (informed choice), the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall refer all persons with hearing loss to the Deaf-Blind Specialist.
2. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall strive to make all meetings accessible for persons who are deaf-blind. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall coordinate all meetings to include a sign language interpreter, Assistive Listening Devices, etc. as appropriate.
3. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall properly code all persons with hearing loss on the Rehabilitation Application (On-Line DSB-4004-VR Rehabilitation Application with instructions) with the primary code of deaf-blindness and the ESS.
4. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall review all equipment recommendations and approve or deny based on need and available resources.
5. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall function as the case manager for persons with hearing and vision loss.
6. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor shall utilize the Deaf-Blind Specialist as support staff in order to achieve the goal of employment.

### **Responsibilities of the Deaf-Blind Specialist to the Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR) Program**

1. In compliance with individual informed choice, the Deaf-Blind Specialist shall serve all persons with hearing loss, regardless of the degree of loss.
2. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall conduct an assessment of all individuals referred with hearing and vision loss within 30 calendar days. The assessment shall include but not be limited to the following areas: medical, hearing, vision, communication, technology, independent living etc.
3. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall send a written report to the referring Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor within 45 calendar days after the Deaf-Blind Specialist receives the initial referral.
4. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall recommend and assist with facilitating the procurement of equipment as necessary utilizing similar benefits as feasible.
5. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall install equipment as necessary and provide training to the individual and/or family on how to properly utilize equipment.
6. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall serve as a facilitator of communication when individuals present unscheduled and no sign language interpreter is available. Please note that this is not major function of the Deaf-Blind Specialist.
7. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall provide staff, as needed, an updated list of interpreters available for hire during the VR process of an individual who is deaf-blind.
8. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall provide education and consultation to family members of persons who are deaf-blind.
9. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall present at all Mini-Centers in coordination with the Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor.
10. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall close all cases immediately after services are completed or simultaneously with case managers. No cases maintained by the specialist shall remain in open status after the case manager has closed a case.

### **Responsibilities of the Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors to the Deaf-Blind Specialist**

The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors are asked to adhere to the following recommendations to ensure quality services are provided to persons who are deaf-blind.

1. In compliance with informed individual choice, the Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall refer all persons with hearing loss to the Deaf-Blind Specialist.
2. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall strive to make all meetings accessible for persons who are deaf-blind. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall coordinate all meetings to include a sign language interpreter, assistive listening devices, etc. as appropriate.

3. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall properly code all persons with secondary disabilities of hearing loss on the VR application regardless of the degree of loss.
4. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall review all equipment recommendations and approve or deny based on need and available resources.
5. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall function as the case manager for persons with hearing and vision loss.
6. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall utilize the Deaf-Blind Specialist as support staff in order to achieve the goal of increased independence.
7. The Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor shall schedule the Deaf-Blind Specialist to present on the dynamics of hearing and vision loss at all Mini-Centers.

### **Independent Living Services (ILS) Program**

The Deaf-Blind Specialist will function as a consultant to Social Workers serving individuals with hearing and vision loss. The Deaf-Blind Specialist shall not provide direct services to individuals in the Social Work program. Social workers may refer individuals to other agencies to receive services through comparable benefits.