

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

Section:	L
Title:	Low Vision Services
Current Effective Date:	06/09
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Low Vision Services are an integral part of the total services of eligible individuals that have partial sight. Low Vision Services will provide assessments and training that emphasize the **use of residual vision** rather than visual loss. Low vision assessments are available through the Nursing Eye Care Consultants located in the State Agency's district offices, Low Vision Program Specialist at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (RCB), and Consulting Low Vision Optometrists in the Low Vision Clinic on the Governor Morehead School Campus, Raleigh. Prior to receiving low vision assessments with the Nursing Eye Care Consultants, Low Vision Program Specialist, or Consulting Low Vision Optometrist, individuals should have a current eye report, within the past twelve months to include diagnosis, visual acuity, and if available, visual fields, refractive errors and a current eyeglass prescription, and received current medical eye care relative to the individual's specific condition(s). Eye reports may be on the Medical Eye Care Eye Examination Report (On-Line DSB-2202 Report of Eye Examination), the provider's letterhead, or the provider's chart notes. Low Vision Services may be deferred when a current eye report is not available, when the eye condition is deemed too unstable, immediately following surgery when the individual has experienced a significant change in their vision since their last eye exam, or when there has been an onset of systemic disease and/or medication regimen which may affect their vision. Prior to meeting with the Nursing Eye Care Consultants, individuals should have the best possible refractive correction (eyeglasses or contacts) and a fully completed referral form (On-Line DSB-2205-A Referral for Low Vision Evaluation with instructions).

Low Vision Services Provided by the Nursing Eye Care Consultant

Low vision assessments are available in all counties through a Nursing Eye Care Consultant. Nursing Eye Care Consultants provide individualized low vision assessments to assess the individual's visual strengths and challenges to determine the potential to use low vision aids. If appropriate, areas such as lighting, positioning, and contrast can be assessed. The most recent eye reports available are needed for the Nursing Eye Care Consultant to provide the best possible assessment. A Video Magnification (Closed Circuit Television) assessment can be performed if authorized by the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind. Video Magnification assessments only occur after the use of other low vision aids and adaptations have been explored and a determination has been made that the individual cannot adequately perform needed tasks through other means.

The Nursing Eye Care Consultant will schedule an appointment with the individuals at the earliest possible date. If the assessment indicates that one or more low vision aids equips the individuals to better meet their rehabilitation goals, the Nursing Eye Care Consultant will forward recommendations to the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind on the type of aid(s), price(s), and source(s) using the report form (On-Line DSB-2205-B Report on Low Vision Evaluation). In almost all cases, in-person delivery of low vision aids is needed to ensure the device is working properly and the individuals are able to use the device. When more extensive training in the use of the device is needed, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind may request the Nursing Eye Care Consultant deliver the device and provide training.

Video Magnification assessments will also be scheduled by appointment with individuals at the earliest possible date. After the assessment, the Nursing Eye Care Consultant will complete the Video Magnification assessment form (On-Line DSB-2007 Evaluation with Video Magnification with instructions) including vendor specifications and information for ordering as available and forward back to the referral source. The Nursing Eye Care Consultant is also available upon request to provide Video Magnification training.

Low Vision Services at the Rehabilitation Center/Evaluation Unit

Individuals attending the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind or the Evaluation Unit who have any residual vision may be referred to the Low Vision Program Specialist. The facility Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor or referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind may contact the Low Vision Program Specialist to request assessments or follow-up instruction needed as long as the individuals are attending the Center.

The Low Vision Program Specialist will conduct a functional vision assessment to assess the rehabilitation and/or demands of daily living needs. If appropriate, areas such as distance and near acuity, visual fields, lighting, positioning, color perception, contrast sensitivity as well as optical and non-optical aids can be assessed. Instruction in eccentric viewing or other adaptive techniques may also be provided.

When low vision assessments indicate that individuals are unable to adequately perform tasks through the use of conventional low vision aids and adaptations, individuals may be referred to the Assistive Technology Teacher at the RCB for a Video Magnification assessment if the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind requests this assessment. The Low Vision Program Specialist may perform this assessment when the Assistive Technology Teacher is unavailable. After the assessment, the Video Magnification assessment form including vendor specification and ordering information will be completed and forwarded back to the referral source.

If indicated through the low vision functional assessment, the Consulting Low Vision Optometrist may conduct a clinical examination of visual function to include near and distance acuity using materials and techniques specially designed for low vision assessment, refractive error assessment with provision of prescriptions when indicated, visual field assessments, assessment for optical devices, recommendations for additional assessments, as well as observations on how the eye condition(s) may impact their functioning. A report (On-Line DSB-4047-VR Low Vision Eye Doctor Evaluation Report) of clinical findings and recommendations are provided. Copies of all reports will be forwarded to the referral source.

After the assessment, the Low Vision Program Specialist will complete a report on the assessment which will include any ordering information if low vision aids are recommended. Reports will be given to the referral source. The Low Vision Program Specialist is available to provide training in the use of recommended aids while the individuals are attending the RCB or Evaluation Unit. Training activities and individual performance will be documented and forwarded to the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind who may request the Nursing Eye Care Consultant provide additional follow-up training in the use of the low vision aid(s) including Video Magnification.

Assessments for Monoculars

Field based assessments for monoculars will be conducted by Orientation & Mobility staff that can also provide training with the monocular for travel purposes. Individuals receiving services at the Low Vision Clinic may be evaluated for monoculars by either the Low Vision Program Specialist or Consulting Low Vision Optometrist. Additional assessment of and instruction in monocular use may be provided by RCB or field-based Orientation & Mobility Specialists after this initial assessment.

Field Referral for Special Low Vision Services, including Video Magnification Assessments, at the Rehabilitation Center

Low Vision Clinic facilities and equipment will sometimes be needed for assessments, recommendations and training for specific needs related to the Vocational Rehabilitation/independent Living Rehabilitation plan. In these cases, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind may make a referral to the Low Vision Program Specialist through the RCB after consulting with the Nursing Eye Care Consultant. At no time should a field-based referral to the Low Vision Program Specialist take the place of regular Nursing Eye Care Consultant services. Rather, Low Vision Program Specialist assessments for field referrals are intended as a supplement for specific needs which cannot be met through existing services and equipment available through the Nursing Eye Care Consultant. In these cases, the Low Vision Program Specialist may also coordinate a clinical examination by the Consulting Low Vision Optometrist if needed.

These requests will be sent to the Program Manager of the RCB. The Program Manager will notify the Low Vision Program Specialist who will coordinate the low vision assessment date with appropriate staff. Case material guidelines for the RCB should be followed. In particular, most current eye reports are needed to provide the best assessment possible.

If the low vision assessment determines that individuals are unable to perform necessary tasks with other low vision aids and adaptations, a Video Magnification assessment may be considered as an option. In this case, the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind will be contacted and may request a Video Magnification assessment by the Assistive Technology Teacher/Low Vision Program Specialist. The Low Vision Program Specialist or Assistive Technology Teacher will complete assessment reports and forms and forward the recommendations including any vendor specifications and ordering information to the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind.

Payment for Low Vision Aids

Each Program according to its payment policies will approve Eligibility and payment for low vision aids. All payment policies are contingent on the availability of State and Federal funds.

Low Vision Report

Low vision assessments, including those conducted by the Consulting Low Vision Optometrist, are intended to yield the best possible vision under conditions which may be altered to improve performance. These altered conditions may not meet, and are not intended to meet, legal guidelines for determining eligibility or legal blindness. Instead, low vision assessments are intended to equip individuals and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation

Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind with information on how to maximize the use of their remaining vision to improve the individual's vocational and/or daily living functioning.

Low vision assessments cannot replace medical eye care as received through the regular eye care provider. However, any concerns detected during this assessment which may require follow up will be noted and individuals will be directed to the regular eye care providers. If the low vision assessments determine the vision can be significantly improved through the prescription of contact lenses or eyeglasses and this improvement may impact eligibility for services then the referring Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor/Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind may elect to have individuals return to the regular medical eye care provider for a re-assessment of eligibility.