

Kentucky Office for the Blind Consumer Handbook

**Department for Workforce Investment
Education and Workforce
Development Cabinet**



**Alternative formats available upon
request:
Braille, Large Print and Audio Cassette**

www.blind.ky.gov

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Mission Statement --To provide opportunities for employment and independence to individuals with visual disabilities.

1. Purpose of Program

What is the purpose of the Office for the Blind?

The Office for the Blind, an agency of the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet, provides opportunities to individuals with visual disabilities so they may improve or develop their skills for obtaining or maintaining employment and become more independent and productive in the community and workplace.

2. Eligibility

How will my eligibility for services be determined?

- You must have a visual disability that results in an impediment to employment.
- You require vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Note: You are presumed eligible at time of application if you receive Social Security benefits based upon a visual impairment and documentation is available.

3. Order of Selection

What is the order of selection?

If a determination is made that the agency lacks available funds for all eligible individuals who apply for services, then the agency shall follow an order of selection. Service priority is based upon the significance of any individual's disability and

the services needed to achieve the employment outcome. Priority is given to individuals with the most significant disability.

4. Evaluation

What information is needed to determine my eligibility and the services I will need?

In order to determine eligibility, your visual disability must be documented by an eye examination provided by either an ophthalmologist or optometrist or with information provided by the Social Security Administration which establishes your eligibility for that program.

To help you determine what rehabilitation services you may need to become employed, the counselor may arrange and provide other appropriate medical, vocational, work adjustment, technological and educational evaluations. Whenever possible, existing records will be used.

5. Consumer Responsibilities

What are my responsibilities?

- To participate as a full partner in the vocational rehabilitation process.
- To be active in selecting your employment goal or outcome.
- Through informed choice select services needed to achieve the outcome, service providers and methods used to secure services outlined in your Individualized Plan for Employment.
- To follow through with appointments needed for medical exams, evaluations and training to work toward achieving the goals identified on your Individualized Plan for Employment.
- To take an active role in obtaining employment to enable a successful outcome of your vocational goal.

When your case record is closed, you will be asked to participate in a consumer satisfaction survey. A private third party will conduct the survey. Your responses will be

kept confidential. This information will be used in an effort to assist the office in improving services for future consumers.

6. Role of the Counselor

What exactly is the role of my counselor?

Your vocational rehabilitation counselor has specialized training and experience in the rehabilitation of individuals with visual impairments and understands how this relates to your life, the community and the workplace. Your counselor can assist you in building relationships, aligning resources and making informed choices concerning your vocational goal.

Your counselor will act as a facilitator to assist you in determining your strengths and potential so that your Individualized Plan for Employment will incorporate the services that can lead to a successful job and career.

In the event that your counselor resigns, transfers, or is no longer available to assist you the regional manager will provide

appropriate assistance to you or assign you to another counselor.

7. Informed choice

What choices do you have?

- Appeal rights are given to you at application. More information regarding your appeal rights is provided in this handbook.
- Your counselor has an obligation to make certain you understand every aspect of your Individualized Plan for Employment.
- An Individualized Plan for Employment shall be developed and implemented in a manner that affords you, as an eligible individual, the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting an employment outcome, the specific vocational rehabilitation services to be provided under the plan, the entity that will provide the vocational rehabilitation services, and the methods used to procure the services.

8. Individualized Plan For Employment

How will my individual needs be met?

Your Individualized Plan for Employment will list the services you are going to receive, the providers of the services, any similar benefits available, a plan to evaluate your progress toward your goal and your views regarding this program of services. Your Individualized Plan for Employment will be consistent with your strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.

The Individualized Plan for Employment should be the result of a partnership between you and a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor. Our agency will provide information about mandatory components of the plan and the forms that may be used. The emphasis of this plan must be on your attainment of a specific goal that will lead to employment in the competitive labor market, the practice of a profession, self-employment, homemaking

or a successful employment outcome in the community. Your vocational goal will be tailored to your abilities and capacities.

Things to consider:

- Local Job market
- Wage expectations
- Financial needs
- Distance of mobility
- Academic abilities
- Relevant experience

There are four options for the development of the Individualized Plan for Employment.

You can:

- 1) develop your entire plan with the assistance of a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor;
- 2) develop part of your plan without assistance of a qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor;
- 3) develop your plan without assistance; or
- 4) develop your plan with assistance from another source (including your representative).

9. Change in Individualized Plan for Employment

What if my employment goal is not achieved or I want to change my employment goal?

You and your counselor may review your plan and changes can be made at any time as long as you are working toward becoming employed. Counselors are required to review your plan annually with you. Your counselor may be contacted at any time if you have changes.

If you and your counselor determine that you are not able to achieve your vocational goal or an appropriate employment outcome, even after looking at other alternatives, then services may be discontinued. It is important to contact your counselor immediately if you are not able to complete services or there has been a major change in your life.

10. Services

What kind of services may the Office for the Blind provide?

The Office for the Blind may provide or help you obtain many of the services you might need to reach your vocational goal and enter employment. Services may include:

- Diagnostics and evaluations
- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Physical and Mental Restoration
- Personal skills development
- Low vision aids
- Rehabilitation technology and equipment training
- Occupational licenses, tools and equipment
- Supported employment
- On-the-job training
- Job placement assistance
- Post-employment support

- Interpreter services provided for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Vocational training
- Independent living services
- Orientation and mobility services

11. Limitations on Services

Are there any limitations set on services?

You will be asked to participate in choosing your own goals, objectives and services, including service providers. However, in order to meet the needs of all individuals eligible for services and to maintain quality, the Office for the Blind operates under state regulations, which govern the scope, nature and costs of its services. Any service provided must relate to your employment goal.

12. Payment of Services

Will I have to pay for any services?

There is no requirement by the agency that your financial need be considered in the provision of services. However, each individual who is determined to be eligible for services shall be asked to voluntarily participate to help pay the costs associated with their plan. No services shall be denied to an eligible individual who does not have the available resources or who refuses to participate in the cost of their plan.

13. Purchase of Services

How are services purchased?

Your counselor must approve all services purchased in advance and send a written authorization to each service provider prior to services being provided. You have freedom of choice in service providers, but they must be appropriately licensed according to state law, and the agency may not pay in excess of the amount allowed under the agency rate of payment schedule.

Fee exceptions for any amount allowed under the agency rate of payment schedule in keeping with the established scope and nature of services shall be made at the discretion of the Director of consumer services with sufficient documentation supporting the rehabilitation needs of the consumer.

(1) A request for a fee exception shall be submitted to the Director by either the counselor or the consumer.

(2) A decision based upon the rehabilitation needs of the consumer shall be provided to the counselor and consumer within ten (10) working days of submission of the request.

14. Services for High School Students

Does the Office for the Blind provide services to high school students?

The agency is not able to purchase services for individuals who are in primary and secondary schools. However, if you are a student in high school, your counselor will

meet with you and your parents, your teachers and other school officials to help you plan your career goals and plan for your transition from school to work.

15. Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center

Are there other programs the Office for the Blind operates?

The Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center in Louisville provides specialized services to Kentuckians with visual disabilities in a comprehensive setting who want to develop the skills to function independently and become employed.

The programs are geared toward development of independence and employment outcomes. The vocational rehabilitation instructors and staff are available to assess and train in the following areas:

- Life skills
- Counseling
- Career Development
- Orientation & Mobility
- Rehabilitation technology
- Therapeutic Recreation
- Adult Basic Education
- Health Education

Many of the same specialized training services provided at the McDowell Center are also available in your community.

These services are provided by professionals who are located at regional offices. These professionals will travel to your community to provide services.

16. Kentucky Business Enterprises

Does the Office for the Blind operate any employment programs just for persons who are blind?

Yes. Kentucky Business Enterprises is a program that trains and supports individuals who are legally blind to be self-employed operators of snack bars, vending facilities and cafeterias in public and private buildings throughout Kentucky. You may wish to speak with your counselor regarding the availability of job opportunities with Kentucky Business Enterprises.

17. *Obligations to Other Agencies*

What if I am eligible for services or benefits from other agencies? Do I have to use them?

Yes. You are required by federal law to use any other benefits for which you are eligible. These similar benefits include training grants (for example, financial aid, Pell Grant, financial awards not based upon merit); Medicaid, Medicare, insurance and any needed equipment that an employer or other agency may purchase. This funding, whether it is partial or full funding will help reduce the overall cost of your services. If

you refuse benefits for which you are eligible, then we may not be able to assist with funding the service.

18. Right of Appeal

What if I am dissatisfied?

If you are dissatisfied for any reason with the provision or denial of services, the agency has established an appeals process. Any determinations made by personnel of the agency that affect the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to applicants or eligible individuals are subject to this process.

We have found that dissatisfaction often can be resolved on an informal basis. If you are dissatisfied with any of your service delivery it is recommended to contact a Regional Manager or Director of Consumer Services to resolve the issue. The Executive Director is also available to assist with any issues regarding services from the Office for the Blind.

Region I Manager (Western Area of State)

400 E Main Street, Suite 302
Bowling Green, KY 42101
Toll free: 1-800-222-1215
Phone: (270) 746-7479

Region II Manager (Central/Eastern Area of State)

153 Patchen Dr. #17
Lexington, KY 40517
Toll free: 1-800-291-8424
Phone: (859) 246-2111

Director of Consumer Services

Office for the Blind
275 East Main Street, Mail Stop 2-EJ
Frankfort, Kentucky 40621
Toll free: 1-800-321-6668
Phone: (502) 564-4754

Executive Director

Office for the Blind

275 East Main Street, Mail Stop 2-EJ

Frankfort, Kentucky 40621

Toll Free: 1800-321-6668

Phone: 502-564-4754

In addition, the Client Assistance Program is available to assist you with any dissatisfaction with decisions or services and your appeal rights.

Client Assistance Program

Education and Workforce Development
Cabinet

275 East Main Street, Mail Stop-2-EJ

Frankfort, KY 40621

Toll free: (800) 633-6283 (Voice or TDD)

If your issue is not resolved by contacting any of the above individuals there are two additional appeal options. One option is to request mediation. The process involves your request of a mediation meeting to discuss possible resolutions of the issues

that you have. A mediator who is not employed by the agency facilitates the mediation. Other people who may attend the mediation include your counselor, the regional branch manager, and other staff, as appropriate. The mediation may result in a negotiated written, binding agreement that is voluntary for all parties to sign. This agreement will outline the responsibilities of each party involved in the mediation process.

The other option is an impartial hearing. A hearing officer who is not employed by the agency will preside at the hearing. The hearing officer is responsible for providing a recommended order to the Commissioner of the Department for Workforce Investment. The Commissioner will issue a final decision that will be carried out according to the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.

If you have questions about any of your appeal rights under the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998, please contact your

counselor, regional manager or Director of Consumer Services.

19. Confidentiality

Will personal information about me that is in possession of the Office for the Blind be held confidential?

Yes. Personal information about you will be used only in the direct administration of your rehabilitation program, which includes releases to other agencies, such as the Client Assistance Program, where it is necessary to administer your program. We cannot release personal information about you for other purposes unless we have your written consent, we are required by law, or unless we must release it to protect your safety or the safety of others.

Electronic Communication is not a secured method of communication and may unintentionally be transmitted to an unknown individual. Therefore, if you prefer to communicate with your counselor or any

other staff person within the agency electronically (i.e. Email) you are at risk of confidential information being disclosed.

20. Rights to Case Record

May I obtain personal information about me that is in possession of the Office for the Blind?

Yes. Information purchased by the Office shall be available to you. Information which the agency believes may be harmful to you or is provided by another source shall not be released directly to you. You will be referred to the appropriate source to obtain this information.

21. Case Closure

When and under what conditions does my vocational rehabilitation end?

The determination of a closure can only be made by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor when:

Successful Closure

Your case will be closed successful when:

- The provision of services under your Individualized Plan for Employment has contributed to the achievement of a positive employment outcome and you have maintained the employment for a period of at least 90 days.
- The counselor verifies you are satisfied with the outcome and are not in need of additional services at that time.

Unsuccessful Closure

Your case will be closed unsuccessful when:

- It has been determined that you no longer wish to achieve or are not capable of achieving your vocational goal.
- Your whereabouts are unknown to us.

You will receive written notice when services are completed or ended. Our goal is to close your case with you successfully employed. We are required by federal law

to follow-up with a consumer satisfaction survey and you will be contacted 6 and 12 months after your case is successfully closed regarding your satisfaction with the services you were provided. This survey will be confidential. Its purpose is for program improvement and we appreciate your honesty.

22. Post-employment Services

May I receive additional services after I have achieved my employment goal?

Yes. However, the services must be necessary for you to maintain, regain, or advance in employment. Post-employment services are intended to be simple services provided in a short period of time and they must be related to your previous employment outcome.

23. Reapplying for Services

May I reapply for a new program or service?

Yes. You may reapply for services at any time after your case is closed. Eligibility for services must be re-evaluated by a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor at any time you apply for services.

24. Independent Living Services

Does the Office for the Blind provide any other services that do not come under the requirements described in this booklet?

Yes. If you wish to have services that are not necessarily connected to an employment goal, you may ask your counselor about a referral to an Independent Living Counselor. The program offers a broad range of services to assist individuals that are blind or visually impaired to improve and/or maintain their ability to function independently in their home and community.

**Kentucky Office for the Blind
Vocational Rehabilitation Field Offices**

<p>Ashland 411 19th Street Ashland, KY 41101 Toll free: 1-800-334-6881 Phone: (606) 920-2000 Fax: (606) 920-2001</p>	<p>Bowling Green 400 East Main St., Suite 302 Bowling Green, KY 42101 Toll free: 1-800-222-1215 Phone: (270) 746-7479 Fax: (270) 746-7481</p>
<p>Elizabethtown 409 North Miles St. Elizabethtown, KY 42701 Toll free: 1-800-760-6891 Phone: (270) 766-5126 Fax (270) 766-5125</p>	<p>Florence 8020 Veterans Memorial Dr. Suite 100 Florence, KY 41042 Toll free: 1-800-334-6895 Phone: (859) 371-3380 Fax (859) 371-0379</p>

<p>Frankfort (Central Office) 275 East Main Street Mail Stop 2-EJ Frankfort, KY 40621 Toll free: 1-800-321-6668 Phone: (502) 564-4754 Fax: (502) 564-2951</p>	<p>Lexington 153 Patchen Dr. #17 Lexington, KY 40517 Toll free: 1-800-291-8424 Phone: (859) 246-2111 Fax: (859) 246-2112</p>
<p>Louisville 8412 Westport Rd. Louisville, KY 40242 Toll free: 1-800-346-2115 Phone: (502) 429-4460 Fax: (502) 429-7101</p>	<p>Owensboro 121 E 2nd Street Owensboro, KY 42303 Toll free: 1-800-334-6929 Phone: (270) 687-7306 Fax: (270) 687-7526</p>

Somerset 650 N. Main St. Gateway Center, Suite 240 Somerset, KY 42501 Toll free: 1-800-895- 3863 Phone: (606) 677-4042 Fax: (606) 677-4043	Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center 8412 Westport Road Louisville, KY 40242 Toll free: 1-800-346- 2115 Phone: (502) 429-4460 Fax: (502) 429-7110
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The Kentucky Office for the Blind does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion or marital status in employment, or provision of services and provides, upon request, reasonable accommodation including auxiliary aids and services necessary to afford individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in all program activities.

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