

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND REFERRAL BETWEEN
GENERAL AND BLIND UNITS OF THE OFFICE OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

I. LEGAL AUTHORITY:

Section 101(a)(1)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; 34 CFR 361.2(c) and 361.19(d).

II. POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE:

It is the intent of the Office of Rehabilitation Services that individuals with visual impairments receive the highest quality services based on levels of expertise and experience of the service providers. Consequently, individuals diagnosed with visual impairments will be referred to Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, a unit within ORS. The following definitions will be applied for determination of assignment:

A. Definitions

1. Definition of "legal blindness" -- "legal blindness is defined to mean any person whose visual acuity is no greater than 20/200 in the better eye, with best correction, or one whose field of vision is restricted to the extent that the widest diameter subtends an angle no greater than twenty degrees (20°)."
2. Definition of "visually impaired" -- "one whose visual acuity is better than 20/200 but not better than 20/60 in the best eye with best correction, or whose visual impairment is both progressive and permanent."
3. Definition of "deaf-blindness" -- The presence of both the following conditions:
 - a. Deafness - a physiological chronic hearing impairment so severe that most speech cannot be understood through the ear with optimum amplification. The speech discrimination score should be forty percent (40%) or less.
 - b. Blindness - Visual acuity does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with correcting lenses, or visual acuity greater than 20/200, but the field of vision is constricted to twenty degrees (20°) or less.
 - c. An exception to the foregoing definitions may be made for an individual with an auditory or visual condition that shows poor prognosis, or one whose ability to use hearing and/or vision is so limited, as a result of protracted, inadequate use of either or both of these senses, that the individual functions as a deaf/blind person.

4. All persons whose visual impairments conform to the definitions described above, whose visual acuity is either permanently deteriorating or constantly unstable, and have an additional disabling condition which in and of itself is a significant disability are to be referred to SBVI for vocational rehabilitation services.

III. PROCEDURES:

- A. Transfer and transmittal of cases between Vocational Rehabilitation and Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired Units:
 1. All persons whose visual impairments conform to the definitions described above, or whose visual acuity is progressive and permanent, whether or not an additional disabling condition exists, are to be referred to Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired.
 2. All individuals receiving services under an existing IPE from either unit (Vocational Rehabilitation or Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired) will continue to be served by that unit through the completion of the planned program. However, such individuals, by request, may be granted a transfer to the other unit if it is deemed in the best interest of the individual by all parties involved.
 3. If a condition such as visual impairment better than 20/60 in the better eye, monocular vision, diplopia, visual field loss less than twenty degrees (20°) to greater than twenty degrees (20°) exists which is not within the definitions of legally blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind as listed above, a referral will be made to the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit to determine eligibility.
- B. In the event that there is a difference of opinion as to the readiness, visual definition, or other associated matters relating to the transfer of a case between units, the matter shall be decided by the Administrator or her/his designee, in conjunction with written recommendations submitted by the Chief Ophthalmological Consultant and the Chief Medical Consultant of the Agency.