

## **INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROGRAM**

### **GOAL**

The goal of the Independent Living Services Program is to provide opportunities and resources which enable blind and visually impaired persons to reach their potential to be self-sufficient and self-reliant, possessing the capabilities and means for meeting daily living demands.

### **DEFINITION**

Independent living is defined as an individual having control over his/her own life in a manner such that he/she is not unnecessarily reliant upon others in making decisions and performing everyday activities. Independent living entails teaching the blind or visually impaired person the techniques and methods for exercising control over his/her daily living activities and/or needs. At a minimum, Independent Living Services include such basic skills as communication, orientation and mobility, personal skills, home management, assertiveness training and self-advocacy, leisure and recreation, and technology utilization.

The traditional definition of independent living for the blind and visually impaired specifically refers to those services provided in any combination, as needed and appropriate, to enable such persons to attain and/or maintain the highest level of functioning possible, to promote their well-being, and to prevent or reduce dependency.

By definition, the major emphasis of the Independent Living Services Program will be upon the cognitive and motor performance of the consumer so that he/she develops decision-making abilities and techniques appropriate to the accomplishment of independence in daily living. Compensating for the loss of vision demands the acquisition, utilization, and retention of daily living skills as the blind or visually impaired person learns to live and work as an independent and contributing member of society.

### **LEGAL BASIS**

The Division of Services for the Blind has statutory authority and responsibility to provide Independent Living Services in every county of North Carolina so that each citizen of the state with a vision problem may have an opportunity and the resources sufficient to adjust to loss of sight in accordance with the provisions of North Carolina General Statutes 111-28 143B, 157, as mandated by the State Legislature to the Commission for the Blind. Such rules and regulations are enacted by the Commission for the Blind and include the necessary and appropriate policies and procedures developed by the Division of Services for the Blind and approved by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The United States Congress enacted Public Law 95-602, amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Title VII of the Act established the first national commitment to a non-vocational rehabilitative service for persons who are not or cannot become viable candidates for job placement. The comprehensive services for independent living provisions of the Act make it possible for a national concentrated effort to move the disabled from dependence to independence.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the declared regulations thereto focused their attention on non-discrimination against the handicapped in employment, education, physical facilities, and other programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. The achievement of access by the handicapped to such activities goes parallel with the ability of the blind and visually impaired to adjust and compensate for the loss of sight.

The 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act made equality of access and opportunity a civil right. The Act guarantees that persons with disabilities are assured of equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency.

## **PHILOSOPHY**

The philosophy of the Independent Living Services Program of the Division of Services for the Blind is that the person who is blind or visually impaired has the right to be taught skills to enable him or her to function adequately in daily living. Persons who are blind or visually impaired also have the right to be able to function at the highest possible level of independence. It is imperative that blind and visually impaired persons be involved in the decision making process which determines the nature and scope of Independent Living Services in the agency. Consequently, the agency believes in providing opportunities and resources to facilitate self-determination, both in the design and the development of independent living programs and the requirements of daily living for blind and visually impaired consumers in North Carolina.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **GOALS OF THE PROGRAM**

Social Services Block Grant established five goals toward which service provision is to be directed. The NC Division of Services for the Blind has chosen to use three of these goals in providing independent living services. Any independent living service provided to a blind or visually impaired consumer under Social Services Block Grant must be directed toward one of the following three goals:

1. Achieving or maintaining self-sufficiency, including reduction or prevention of dependency, or
2. Preventing or reducing inappropriate institutional care by providing for community-based care, home-based care, or other forms of less intensive care, or
3. Preventing and remedying neglect, abuse, or exploitation of persons unable to protect their own interests, or preserving, rehabilitating or reuniting families.

### **SERVICES AVAILABLE THROUGH THE INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES PROGRAM**

The Division of Services for the Blind will provide the five services listed below to enable eligible persons to achieve one of the three SSBG goals stated above:

- Adjustment Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Health Support Services
- Individual and Family Adjustment Services
- In-Home Aide Services: Level I-Home Management
- Information and Referral

### **SERVICE COMPONENTS AND REPORTING CODES**

Refer to Appendix B for a summary of independent living services, service components, and reporting codes used by the Social Worker for the Blind for consumer service planning and reporting.