

SECTION 405: ADJUSTMENT SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED PROCEDURES

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I. SERVICE PROVISION

Social Workers for the Blind are responsible for planning and providing Adjustment Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. As Case Manager, the Social Worker for the Blind is responsible for assessing each consumer's skills and abilities to determine his/her readiness for services. This Assessment will measure the consumer's emotional and physical adjustment to blindness or visual impairment.

The Social Worker for the Blind is responsible for the direct provision of basic services and basic skills training. A listing of these services and skill areas is located in item A.1 below. If the consumer requires extensive consumer-worker skills training over an extended period of time, the Social Worker for the Blind will refer the consumer to one or more Resource Specialists to expedite skills training to meet the demands of daily living. A comprehensive explanation of basic and extensive services, along with case illustrations, is contained in Section 300: Case Process for Social Workers for the Blind.

For Social Workers for the Blind, **Adjustment Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired** incorporate the planning and service delivery functions involved with the service as well as the overall responsibilities of their Case Manager role.

This service is provided to every consumer receiving Independent Living Services and is always given through direct provision by the Social Worker for the Blind. The service may be provided in conjunction with one or more other independent living services funded through Social Services Block Grant.

A. Service Areas

1. Skills Development to Meet Demands of Daily Living

The Social Worker for the Blind is responsible for providing basic services and basic skills training in areas such as, but not limited to:

a. **Grooming skills**, such as:

- Separation and matching of clothing
- Personal hygiene
- Organization of personal items
- Labeling of articles and clothing with Braille labels or other identification method

b. Homemaking skills, such as:

- Use of special cleaning techniques for home and clothing
- Use of laundry and cleaning equipment
- Cooking and service meals
- Care of yards and entry ways to promote general health and safety

c. Personal skills, such as:

- Time telling
- Money identification

d. Communication skills, such as:

- Telephone dialing and use of 4-track tape player
- Use of writing guides for signature, check writing and addressing envelopes
- Accessing services from agencies such as Radio Reading Service and Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped
- Braille instruction- given the shortage of qualified Braille instructors, either the SWB or ILRC may provide this service.

e. Orientation and Mobility Skills, such as

- Training in self-protection and pre-cane techniques
- Use of sighted guides

Referral to Orientation and Mobility Specialist for training in cane techniques and electronic travel aids (ETA'S)

2. Skills Development through Group Services

Adjustment Services that enhance skills development for the consumer's adjustment to and acceptance of his/her visual limitations through the participation in camping, recreational and/or group learning programs.

The following group services are available and are arranged for the consumer by the Social Worker for the Blind:

a. Camping Experiences at Camp Dogwood

The North Carolina Lions Association for the Blind offers a comprehensive group service program through its facilities at Camp Dogwood located in Sherrill's Ford in Catawba County.

Eligible consumers may be sponsored for a week at Camp Dogwood by a local Lion's organization. During the week-long session, activities such as bowling, dancing, games, team sports, swimming, fishing, and horseback riding provide opportunities for consumers to improve their skills in socialization, orientation and mobility and meeting the demands of daily living. The Social Worker for the Blind will assist consumers in completing the camp application and will contact local Lions to obtain sponsorship for consumers to attend Camp Dogwood.

b. Utilizing Local Recreation Programs

City and county recreational departments offer a variety of programs that provide supervised athletic activity and instruction in various arts and crafts activities. The Social Worker for the Blind will contact these departments to determine the availability of programs appropriate for consumers' needs.

No costs for participation in these programs are reimbursable by the by the Division of Services for the Blind. If the consumer is unable to pay any required program and/or registration costs, the Social Worker for the Blind will investigate all possible local sources of funding for these services.

c. Participation in group learning experiences and local support groups

The Social Worker for the Blind will encourage consumers to participate in these group activities.

II. RESOURCES FOR SKILLS TRAINING

The following resources may be provided, **as agency funds permit**, when necessary to enable a consumer to participate in Adjustment Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. When the consumer's Service Plan includes such items, the Social Worker for the Blind will investigate all community resources that may pay for or otherwise provide these services/resource items. These local resources include the consumer's and/or his family's ability to pay for such items.

A. Adaptive Aids and Equipment

Various supplies and equipment are available to assist a blind or visually impaired individual to develop skills in meeting the demands of daily living. These items generally use sound or touch to replace vision in housekeeping, communication and personal skills.

1. Examples of Adaptive Aids and Equipment

a. Items for homemaking, communication and sewing, such as long sleeve mitts for handling hot dishes and cooking utensils, lock-lid saucepans, measuring cups and

spoons, timers, liquid level indicators, signature guides, check-writing guides, self-threading needles, talking clocks and large-print telephone dials.

b. Health and safety-related items, such as:

(1) Talking scales

(2) Pre-set insulin devices for blind or visually impaired diabetics that enable them to self-administer daily insulin. These items contain measuring devices that are pre-set to measure the amount of the injection and must be prescribed by a health care professional to ensure that the consumer can use the device properly.

c. Other Adaptive Aids and Equipment:

Equipment such as typewriters, Braille Writers and microwave ovens may be purchased for a consumer (**based on availability of funds**). To purchase such equipment, the Social Worker for the Blind will prepare a written justification and submit it to the Chief of Independent Living Services for consideration. If approved, the justification is submitted with the authorization form.

2. Sources of Adaptive Aids and Equipment

a. DSB State Office:

The State Office maintains a supply of the most frequently requested items in its Aids and Appliances Section. Contact Donna Wiggins in the Aids & Appliances Section at (919) 715-0249 for information on item availability and current costs. Items consistent with and complementary to the consumer's Service Plan may be purchased from the A&A Section using regular Authorization procedures, **as funds permit. Consumers may use the toll-free number (866-222-1546) and request to be transferred to the Aids & Appliances Section.**

b. State Purchase and Contract:

Some adaptive aids and equipment may be purchased only from certain vendors who, through competitive bidding, may sell their products to the State of North Carolina. For a listing of these items and procedures for ordering, contact your Area Supervisor of Social Services. The requested items must play an instrumental part in the consumer's attainment of more adaptability and independence in his/her environment and may be purchased **as funds permit.**

c. Other Sources:

Catalogues issued by vendors of specialty products contain a wide assortment of adaptive aids and equipment for blind and visually impaired persons of all ages.

Adaptive aids and equipment consistent with and complementary to the consumer's Service Plan may be purchased through regular Authorization procedures **as funds permit**.

3. Payment for Adaptive Aids and Equipment

The Social Worker for the Blind will determine if the consumer is able to pay for any, or all, items of adaptive aids and equipment purchased on his/her behalf. If the consumer is unable to purchase needed items, the Social Worker for the Blind will investigate all possible sources of payment for adaptive aids and equipment. All potential sources of payment are to be investigated such as Medicaid, Medicare, local Lions Associations, fraternal organizations, church groups and other community programs.

If no resources are available, the Division of Services for the Blind will purchase the adaptive aids and equipment in accordance with the consumer's Service Plan **as funds permit**.

4. Mobility Canes Purchasing – effective April 2018

Mobility canes are considered a vital part of safe ambulation for many individuals who are visually impaired, blind or deaf-blind. Social Workers for the Blind refer to Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) who assess the need for a mobility cane, provide instruction in its use and make recommended cane purchases, including cane tips.

DSB Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists are authorized to immediately provide a cane to a current DSB client from existing stock and have the item restocked by the referring Social Worker for the Blind when the below procedures are followed. This process will allow individuals to immediately increase their independence, increase retention of skills learned during the assessment and initial instruction and alleviate concerns with immediate hazards encountered when ambulating without the cane. Additionally, COMS will always have access to new equipment for assessing individuals on what cane is needed and be able to provide canes to individuals at the time of instruction.

Programs will purchase canes without regard to income. Purchases are contingent on the availability of program funds.

Procedures: When the referral to the COMS is made, the referring Social Worker for the Blind must have the applicable service on the plan for the purchase of canes. The referring Social Worker for the Blind is responsible for ensuring the service is on the Plan at or before the time the referral to the COMS is made. The referring Social Worker for the Blind should always plan to budget for the purchase of a cane and tip at the time of the referral.

The COMS determines what, if any, cane and cane tip is needed.

The COMS dispenses the cane/cane tip and has the consumer sign a Verification of Items Received form. The form should contain the consumer name, name of staff member who provided the cane, consumer signature, description of the cane, item # and cost. The date on the form should have "loan" written next to it.

The COMS must promptly provide ordering information to the referring Social Worker for the Blind in the case management system and provide the signed Verification of Items Received form to the Social Worker for the Blind.

The referring Social Worker for the Blind must promptly order the recommended cane/cane tip so the COMS can continue to provide timely services to DSB clients.

When the cane/cane tip arrives, the Social Worker for the Blind must **promptly** route the purchased item to the COMS to replenish stock available for other clients.

The case manager dates the previously received Verification of Items Received form and writes "assigned" next to the date. The case manager processes payment for the purchase. The assigned date is entered in BEAM.

Replacements: A client with an open case can receive a replacement cane if a previously purchased cane has been broken, lost or otherwise deemed by DSB to be defective or unable to be used effectively or safely. Replacements may not be purchased more than once a year. Any requests for exceptions must be submitted to the supervisor for review and approval. Case managers will advise consumers of replacement policies when issuing a cane.

5. Assistive Technology Instructor Vendors – effective Jan 2020

The Division of Services for the Blind recognizes that the need for assistive technology instruction for people in North Carolina who are visually impaired, blind or deafblind has grown significantly and is expected to continue to grow. The types of technologies available which enable this population to more fully engage in the community, educational and vocational pursuits as well as to live more independently in their daily lives constantly increases. The Division recognizes that due to the rapid pace of change with assistive technology, the Division may not always have the capacity with current staffing to meet this expanding need. Therefore, Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors, Social Workers for the Blind and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors may, under the conditions outlined below, hire vendors to help fill gaps in available services. Hiring of vendors rather than utilizing existing staff positions may occur when the wait time to receive services will pose an unnecessary hardship on the consumer's ability to achieve their goals, when a vendor possesses a specific skill set to enable an eligible individual to achieve their goals or according to consumer choice.

Vendors who provide one-on-one assistive technology instruction for DSB consumers are paid according to standard rates which apply to eligible individuals served by Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Older Blind, Independent Living Rehabilitation, Independent Living Services. Rates are paid according to the type of assistive technology and skill level taught. The skill levels are beginner, intermediate and advanced. Vendors who teach technology as part of a teaching team are paid at their regular Daily Living Skills Instructor rate.

The Division also recognizes the need to hire qualified vendors to provide assistive technology services. Therefore, vendors are screened according to standard criteria per type of assistive technology to determine what levels of skill they may be hired to teach, as the chart below demonstrates. All rates are hourly rates. Vendors may also be reimbursed for mileage at the current State rates. Time for travel is not compensated.

	PC's	Mac	iOS mobile	Android	Braille Technology
Beginner	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25	\$25
Intermediate	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$35	\$35
Advanced	\$60	\$60	\$60	\$60	\$60

A list of vendors and the rates they qualify per category will be maintained in the State office by the Deaf Blind and Assistive Technology Program Specialist.

Skill testing may be conducted in the district offices by Division Assistive Technology Instructors, Assistive Technology Consultants, the Rehabilitation Engineer and Assistive Technology Teachers at the DSB Career and Training Center. All testing must be conducted utilizing standardized criteria. Vendors or potential vendors who do not meet the criteria for any area or skill level may be retested no sooner than 60 days after the initial test was administered. Vendors may elect to only be tested in specific types of technology and only at specific levels. Individuals who elected not to be tested in a specific category or level of technology may be evaluated in that area at any time regardless of when they were evaluated in other areas.

Criteria for the skill levels is maintained by the Deaf Blind and Assistive Technology Program Specialist and will be reviewed and updated annually as needed according to changes in technology.

Application Process

The process for potential vendors to apply to be an assistive technology instructor vendor with the Division of Services for the Blind is:

1. Complete the Assistive Technology Instructor Vendor Application, Assistive Technology Instruction Vendor Application, dsb-8001-ia, and provide it to the Deaf

Blind and Assistive Technology Program Specialist. A copy of a photo id must be submitted with the application.

2. If the potential vendor's application is approved, the Deaf Blind and Assistive Technology Program Specialist will assign the potential vendor to the closest DSB assistive technology staff member who is able to test the specific area(s) requested. The vendor will come to a DSB office to be tested.

3. The DSB AT staff member will schedule a mutually agreeable test time with the potential vendor.

4. The results of testing will determine the training skill levels for which the vendor is eligible to be hired. The Deaf Blind and Assistive Technology Program Specialist will keep a listing of vendors according to what skill levels they are eligible to teach per type of assistive technology.

Vendors who qualify for one or more categories will be required to complete a criminal background check and drug screening. Prior to working with DSB consumers, vendors must sign a confidentiality statement.

Hiring and Evaluating Vendors

The hiring case manager (Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor/Social Worker for the Blind/Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor) will request that a DSB assistive technology staff member assess the individual's AT training needs. The AT staff member will determine what level of skill training is needed (beginner, intermediate or advanced) and set an approximate number of hours of instruction needed.

The case manager will determine what amount, if any, of the recommended training hours can be provided and complete an authorization for the maximum number of training hours to be sponsored by the program.

The vendor is responsible for submitting written progress reports along with invoices on at least a monthly basis. At a minimum, the invoice must include the consumer name, the vendor name, each date of service and the hours of instruction provided on each date. At a minimum, reports must include the consumer name, vendor name, dates of service, content taught, training outcomes met as well as any additional training needs and suggested hours, as applicable.

If the vendor utilizes all authorized training hours but believes additional training hours are needed, the vendor must document the number of instruction hours requested, the specific skills to be taught and why the skills have not yet been acquired. To approve additional training hours, the initial process is repeated with the AT staff member determining needs and recommended hours and the case manager determining if the program can provide any recommended hours of instruction.

Evaluation Process

Individuals receiving services will be surveyed for feedback on vendor services.

B. Low Vision Evaluation by Nursing Eye Care Consultant

A low vision evaluation will assess the consumer's vision strengths and weaknesses and determine his/her potential to use low vision aids. Consumers with visual acuity of 20/70 or less, best corrected, in the better eye, the presence of chronic eye pathology and/or a functional handicap may be referred for a low vision evaluation. To make referral, use DSB-2205: Referral for Low Vision Evaluation (Section 500, F-3). The SWB will forward all referral documents including an eye report no more than one year old to the Nursing Eye Care Consultant before the NECC conducts the low vision evaluation.

The Nursing Eye Care Consultant will schedule an appointment with the consumer at the earliest possible date. If the evaluation indicates that one or more low vision aids can benefit the consumer in meeting the demands of daily living, the Nursing Eye Care Consultant will forward a recommendation to the Social Worker for the Blind on the type of aid, price and source. The SWB will authorize the purchase of the low vision aid(s) and will deliver the item(s) to the consumer upon receipt.

C. Braille Production

The Communications Unit of the Division of Services for the Blind converts regular print materials into Braille. The service is provided to agency staff and consumers without charge. If other agencies or consumer groups need materials converted to Braille, they may contact the Communications Unit at the State Office to receive a cost estimate.

The phone number for the Unit is (919) 733-9700.

III. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

A. Case Recording Requirements

The worker will use Code 360 to document consumer's receipt of Adjustment Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Refer to section 320 in this Manual for case recording requirements.

B. Documentation in Electronic Services System

Refer to ESS Manual and computer terminal screens for electronic reporting requirements.