

SECTION 100: MEDICAL EYE CARE PROGRAM POLICY

REVISED: 09/20/2010

I. PHILOSOPHY

To fulfill its mandate of providing services to restore sight and to prevent blindness, the Division of Services for the Blind provides medical eye care services to individuals with limited incomes. These services, which are available in all counties may include complete eye examinations and treatment and may include low vision aids, corrective lenses, and/or surgery. Additionally, low vision evaluations, vision screenings, as well as education in eye care may be provided to individuals regardless of their income.

II. LEGAL BASE

On the basis of its authority in N.C. General Statute 111-8, the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind is given the legal mandate to administer the Medical Eye Care Program. Administration of the program includes the following general areas:

- development and maintenance of a program manual containing written policies and procedures to implement service delivery.
- development and implementation of program standards to ensure program integrity.
- provision of training to appropriate staff relating to certification for medical eye care services, and
- consultation with appropriate staff of county departments of social services.

III. DESCRIPTION OF MEDICAL/EYE CARE SERVICES

In North Carolina the major causes of blindness are retinal disorders, cataracts, and glaucoma. The Medical Eye Care Program uses every available resource to prevent blindness from these and all other causes, and where possible to restore vision in individuals who have suffered loss of sight. As mechanisms for prevention and restoration, the Division of Service for the Blind offers the following services subject to the availability of funds:

- eye examinations, treatment, and surgery,
- vision screenings for preschool and school-age children,
- low vision evaluations,
- correction of limited vision with low-vision aids, or corrective lenses, and
- eye care education

These services are available in all counties of North Carolina through a staff of Nursing Eye Care Consultants (NECC's) headquartered in the agency's district offices.

IV. REQUEST FOR A CONFERENCE

All services of the Medical Eye Care Program are available to any eligible resident of North Carolina as determined by eligibility criteria of the Program. No one will be denied services on the basis of race, sex, color, age, or national origin; nor be subjected to any discrimination in the delivery of services or

excluded in participation otherwise available to any other eligible resident in North Carolina.

Any applicant/recipient who is dissatisfied with an action or service delivered under the Medical Eye Care Program has the right to request a conference using the following procedures:

A. The applicant/recipient must submit a written request for a conference with the Program Chief for the Medical Eye Care Program. A DSB-7219 Application for Conference may be used. In this communication, the applicant/recipient should identify those items that represent a source of complaint. A telephone conversation placed to the Program Chief will suffice if the applicant/recipient is unable to file a written request. However, the Nursing Eye Care Consultant, Social Worker for the Blind, or other interested party may assist the recipient in formulating his/her request. The Nursing Eye Care Consultant or Social Worker for the Blind will furnish the name, address, and telephone number of the Program Chief of the Medical Eye Care Program to the applicant/recipient.

B. The Program Chief of the Medical Eye Care Program will inform the Area Supervisor of Social Services for the Blind of the request. The Program Chief will then acknowledge receipt of the request for a conference, will schedule the date, time, and location for the conference, and will advise the applicant/recipient and all other parties of such. The conference will be held within reasonable proximity to the applicant/recipient and will take place no later than 15 working days from receipt of the original request. The applicant/recipient will be notified that he/she may bring counsel or a representative (at his/her own expense).

C. At the conference the applicant/recipient or his/her representative will have an opportunity to present evidence on his/her behalf or other factors or circumstances pertinent to his/her complaint. He/she will also have adequate opportunity to question the Program Chief or members of the staff and may review any agency records or other written information pertinent to his/her complaint.

The Program Chief of the Medical Eye Care Program will make a decision and forward a summary to the applicant/recipient within 15 working days of the conference. A copy of the summary of the conference will also be sent to the DSB Area Supervisor of Social Services for the Blind and the Director of the Division of Services for the Blind along with any recommendations or conclusions. If the applicant/recipient is satisfied with the interpretation of the policy, a signed statement must be secured from him/her stating that he/she is satisfied and no further hearing is desired.

D. When the conference summary is sent to the applicant/recipient, he/she must also be notified in writing that he/she has the right to appeal the agency's decision by way of a fair hearing, and he/she must be advised of the procedure to follow. The applicant or recipient should be advised to contact the Office of Administrative Hearings and request the specific forms which he/she must complete. These forms must be returned by the applicant or recipient directly to OAH. In the same written notice the applicant/recipient must be instructed that he/she has **60 calendar days from the date he/she receives the agency notice** to request a Fair Hearing through the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) at the address below:

Office of Administrative Hearings
6714 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-6714
919-431-3000
Email: OAH.Postmaster@oah.nc.gov