

Introduction

This section outlines procedures for service coordination, sharing of resources, and services available to meet the needs of individuals who are both visually impaired and hearing impaired.

Deaf-Blind Definition and Components

Deaf-blind is a condition in which an individual has both a severe hearing impairment and a severe visual impairment, as defined below, in which the combination causes extreme difficulty in communicating with others, attaining independence in daily life activities, achieving psychosocial adjustment or obtaining and maintaining competitive integrated employment.

Severe Vision Impairment - Legal blindness, a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less in the better eye, or having a progressive visual loss with a diagnosis leading to legal blindness or; visual impairment, a visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye with best correction or a visual field of 140 degrees or less in the better eye.

Severe Hearing Impairment - Deafness, an inability to hear and understand speech through the ear alone with or without amplification or a hearing impairment, which is a hearing loss of at least 40 dB in the better ear, with or without audiological aids as measured by Pure Tone Audiometry or Speech Recognition Threshold with either speech discrimination less than 50% or progressive loss.

This definition also includes individuals who despite the inability to be measured accurately for hearing and vision loss due to cognitive or behavioral constraints, or both, can be determined through functional and performance assessment to have a combination of significant hearing and visual disabilities.

Guide to Determine Which VR Agency Will Provide Services

Blind-Hearing Impaired - Services Provided by NYSCB

Persons who are legally blind and who have a severe hearing impairment which is not deafness.

Deaf-Blind Services Provided by NYSCB or ACCES-VR

Persons who are unable to understand most speech with optimum amplification and who meet the criteria for legal blindness.

Deaf-Visually Impaired - Services Provided by ACCES-VR

Persons who are not able to understand most speech with optimum amplification and who have a severe visual impairment which does not constitute legal blindness.

Hearing Impaired-Visually Impaired - Services Provided by ACCES-VR

Persons who have a severe hearing impairment which is not deafness and who have a severe visual impairment which is not legal blindness.

Deaf-Blind Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NYSCB and ACCES-VR

NYSCB and ACCES-VR have an MOU regarding the provision of services to individuals who are deaf-blind. The MOU provides guidelines for interagency transfer of an individual's case and sharing resources. In accordance with the MOU, communication between agencies will need to occur when an individual's case will be transferred from NYSCB to ACCES-VR or from ACCES-VR to NYSCB. The VR counselor should inform the individual of this process. After the individual signs a release of confidential information form, documentation will be reviewed by NYSCB and ACCES-VR to determine which agency should serve the individual. The decision will be discussed with the individual once agreed upon by both VR agencies.

An individual being served by ACCES-VR who has been diagnosed severely visually impaired or diagnosed legally blind and has decided to continue to be served by ACCES-VR, may require special services related to his/her visual loss. In accordance with the MOU, NYSCB can share the following information:

1. Information about services from private agencies for the blind
2. Listings of vendors approved to provide services such as
 - a. orientation and mobility,
 - b. rehabilitation teaching,
 - c. communications instruction,
 - d. social casework,

- e. psychological assessment,
- f. deaf-blind specific services, and
- g. interpreter services.

ACCES-VR can share the following information:

1. A list of contract services with community rehabilitation agencies, especially those with experience serving individuals who are hearing-impaired
2. A list of vendors approved to provide interpreter services for individuals who are hearing-impaired
3. Service agreements with private agencies specifically serving individuals who are deaf and hearing impaired

Referral to NYSCB for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) and/or Vision Rehabilitation Therapy (VRT)

Whenever possible, ACCES-VR counselors should purchase O&M and VRT services from private agencies for the blind or private vendors. When these services are not available through a private agency or private vendor, the ACCES-VR counselor can request the services be provided by NYSCB direct service staff.

NYSCB Receipt of Referral for O&M and/or VRT Services

Upon receipt of a request to provide O&M and/or VRT services the NYSCB district manager will forward the request to appropriate NYSCB direct service staff. The NYSCB direct service staff person will contact the individual to provide assessment and/or training and submit report(s) assessment and/or training reports to the ACCES-VR counselor.