

Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired

Low Vision Manual

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Chapter 1

LOW VISION SERVICES

The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) Low Vision Services provides eligible individuals with services and supports to maximize their visual abilities through a community based full-service vision rehabilitation process. Case Managers including Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs), Rehabilitation Teachers (RTs), and Education Coordinators coordinate the delivery of low vision services that include counseling for the individual and their family, a functional vision assessment, a clinical low vision exam, training in the use of optical and non-optical low vision aids, and recommendations for environmental modifications if necessary. Low Vision services also provides on-site school, home, and job consultations to assist the individual to use his/her remaining vision.

Assisting the VRCs, RTs and Education Coordinators are Certified Low Vision Therapists who are Low Vision Consultants (Consultants) who provide training support to DBVI staff about low vision services that includes but is not limited to functional vision assessments, use of low vision aids, and answering low vision questions. The Consultants are responsible for training new low vision doctors to contract with DBVI. The Program Director for Low Vision is responsible for recruiting low vision examiners, arranging the signing of contracts with low vision examiners, and maintaining a current list of contracted low vision examiners.

DBVI will provide sufficient interpreter services to individuals who use American Sign Language or are non-English speaking when requested. The cost of interpreters will be covered by the agency.

DBVI and the Division of Motor Vehicles Relationship

According to the [Code of Virginia, §46.2-221](#), every state agency having knowledge of the blind or visually handicapped, maintaining any register of the blind, or administering either tax deductions or exemptions for or aid to the blind or visually handicapped shall report in January of each year to the Department of Motor Vehicles the names of all persons so known, registered or benefiting from such deductions or exemptions, for aid to the blind or visually handicapped. This information shall be used by the Department only for the purpose of determining qualifications of these persons for licensure under Chapter 3 (§ [46.2-300](#) et seq.). If any such state agency has knowledge that any person so reported continues to operate a motor vehicle, such agency **may** provide this information to appropriate law-enforcement agencies as otherwise permitted by law.

The Department of Motor Vehicles shall report to the DBVI and the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services at least annually the name and address of every person who has been refused a driver's license solely or partly because of failure to pass the Department of Motor Vehicle's visual examination.

If any employee of the DBVI makes a report to the Department of Motor Vehicles or provides information to an appropriate law-enforcement agency as required or permitted by this section concerning any client of the agency, it shall not be deemed to have been made in violation of the client-agency relationship.

DBVI and Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) Relationship

Individuals receiving services by DARS may access low vision services from DBVI including functional assessments, low vision exams, and training. The case manager in this instance is the DARS staff member serving the individual. DBVI will furnish the DARS case manager with the required paperwork and instruct them in how to access Low Vision Services. The DARS case manager must authorize payment for the low vision exam. DBVI staff will provide resources to DARS staff to facilitate the purchase of low vision aids for individuals receiving services from DARS.

Payment for Low Vision Exams and Aids

The allowable fee for a low vision exam is \$300 and \$125 for a follow up exam. Exams will be sponsored by the agency without regard to participation in the cost of services by the individual for as long as funds are available. However, if comparable benefits are available, case managers shall utilize those sources as the first payment source for low vision exams.

If an individual does not participate in the cost of services, DBVI will sponsor the cost of prescribed low vision aids as well as the exam.

If an individual participates in the cost of services, the individual will be responsible for purchasing his/her own low vision aids.

Payment for low vision aids will be determined based on the policies of DBVI programs and services.

Low Vision Examiners

The program director of Low Vision will be responsible for recruiting new Low Vision Examiners and will maintain a list of Low Vision Examiners who have current contracts with the agency. The list is available upon request.

Chapter 2

CASE MANAGEMENT

Eligible individuals receiving a low vision exam has a case-manager identified as the VR Counselor, Rehabilitation Teacher, or Education Coordinator who is making the referral for the individual to have a low vision exam. Whenever an individual is receiving services from more than one program, each program representative will have input into the individual's functional vision report and follow up.

Components of a Low Vision Exam

The Low Vision Exam consists of:

- A check of the individual's visual acuity distance and near.
- A check of functional visual fields by confrontation.
- A check of the individual's current prescription.
- A routine refraction without medication.
- A trial of appropriate lenses and aids to improve near vision with orientation.
- A trial of appropriate aids to improve distance vision with orientation.
- Prescription of aids.
- A discussion between the low vision examiner and case manager to determine whether the aid is to be prescribed or to be on loan before final prescription is made.
- A review of exam results with the individual, family, and case manager, including arrangements for training after the exam.
- A post-exam discussion between case manager, individual, and examiner after conclusion of the exam.

Chapter 3

ELIGIBILITY FOR LOW VISION SERVICES

Individuals may be eligible for low vision services if the individual meets the eligibility requirements of at least one of the following programs: education services, vocational rehabilitation, or rehabilitation teaching ([22VAC-45-110-30](#)).

An ophthalmological or optometric eye report shall be required before a low vision examination is scheduled and is used to document that an individual is eligible for low services. The required eye report shall be dated within one year from the date of the scheduled low vision examination ([22VAC45-110-40](#)).

Chapter 4

BIOPTICS

DBVI will provide training to individuals receiving or having bioptics to help will consist of familiarization to the device, learning how to locate an object, fixate, scan, and track stationary and moving objects regardless of the program under which the individual is being served.

Biopic For Driving

For individuals receiving services through the Vocational Rehabilitation program who want to pursue using the bioptic device for driving, the following steps and forms are required:

1. Low vision exam in which Low Vision Examiner recommends bioptic, the examiner completes the DMV MED 40 and MED 41 forms, and sends the forms to the DMV.
 - a. If the Low Vision Examiner feels that training is needed before they fill out the DMV MED 41 form, an O&M instructor will provide training on the devices as described in this section.
 - b. After the Low Vision Examiner completes and sends the DMV MED 41 form to the DMV, proceed to step 2.
 - c. If the Low Vision Examiner cannot fill out the MED 41 form after training provided by DBVI staff, no further support from DBVI is indicated.
2. Once the DMV receives the MED 40 and MED 41 forms, the forms will be reviewed by medical review services to determine if the individual is eligible to be tested for driving. DMV has 30 days to do make the determination.
3. Individuals determined eligible for testing must take and pass a knowledge exam and pre skills exam provided by the DMV. When these two exams are passed, the individual is given an instruction permit by the DMV.
4. The final test to be taken by the student is a road skills exam conducted by the license examiner from the DMV. Individuals who pass the road skills exam are issued a driver's license immediately following the exam (MED 44 form provides the requirements for bioptic driving). The individual is then responsible for maintaining their certification and license according to DMV requirements which includes having the MED 41 form completed annually by the Low Vision Examiner and further testing if the DMV determines it necessary.
5. If the individual does not pass the road skills exam, the VR counselor may be able to provide further training through a Certified Rehabilitation Driving program with a Certified Driving Rehabilitation Specialist (CDRS) such as the one at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center.

- a. If an individual is not able to get a driver's license after further training from a CDRS, the individual will have to pursue driving at their own expense with no further support or training from DBVI.

Throughout the individual's training process, consultation between the case manager, Low Vision Consultant, and the Low Vision Examiner is expected.

Chapter 5

EDUCATION SERVICES

The Education Coordinator may purchase low vision exams, aids, and/or adaptive equipment for students when it is determined that these services are necessary to support the student's Education Services (ES) plan goal. No comparable benefit search is required for this service however, if the Education Coordinator is aware of other sources of funding for these services (e.g., family's insurance) those funds must be used first. DBVI Education Services is not responsible for the purchase of electronic adaptive aids (e.g., assistive technology) and will not purchase bioptics.

The Education Coordinator in each of the DBVI Regional Offices is responsible for processing requests for low vision exams and aids for students that are being served by Education Services. For student's being served in a public school, the student's Teacher for the Vision Impaired (TVI) is responsible for completing the Functional Vision Assessment (FVA), scheduling, and attending the low vision exam. If the student is not served by a TVI, the Education Coordinator will perform the FVA and schedule the low vision exam. If the student is not being served by a TVI or if the TVI is not available, then the Education Coordinator should try to attend the low vision exam with the student and their family.

The TVI attending the low vision exam is responsible for:

- Identifying the DBVI contracted Low Vision Examiner the student will be seeing and scheduling the appointment prior to submitting information to the Education Coordinator. Providing the request for a low vision exam to the Education Coordinator which includes the student's name (first initial/last name), date and time of the exam, name of the Low Vision Examiner, address of appointment, the Comprehensive Eye Report conducted within the past 12 months, and the Functional Vision Assessment (FVA).

Once the Education Coordinator has received the low vision exam request, they will complete a Low Vision Exam Packet that will contain the following information and send it to the TVI:

- Authorization for payment
- DBVI Low Vision Exam Form
- DBVI Low Vision Aids Order Form

At the completion of the low vision exam, the TVI must deliver, mail, or email the invoice for the exam, the DBVI Low Vision Exam Form, and the DBVI Low Vision Aids Order Form (if aids are recommended) to the Education Coordinator.

The DBVI Regional Office Administrative Assistant will then process the invoice and as per policy, order the recommended aids (or similar aids after consulting with the Low Vision Consultants).

The low vision aids will be delivered or mailed to the TVI who will deliver aids to the student and provide training on the prescribed aids. The TVI will communicate with the Education Coordinator the preferred method of receiving the low vision aids. The low vision aids may also be picked up at the DBVI Regional Office by the TVI if that is preferable. Aids may be mailed directly to the student's home if necessary.

For Teachers of the Vision Impaired:

- a. Aids will be sent directly to the TVIs at the address on the Low Vision Aids Order Form (student's home, school, Regional Office).
- b. The original Low Vision Exam Form and Low Vision Aids Order Form will be filed in the student's Education Services file at the Regional Office out of which the student is being served.
- c. Aids that students will not use will be given or sent back to the relevant Education Coordinator's office.