

WELCOME & INFORMATION

HANDBOOK



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VA Mission Statement

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans.

Central Iowa Blind Rehabilitation Mission Statement

To offer hope and encouragement for improved quality of life for our Veterans and active-duty Service Members with visual impairments through addressing the consequences of visual impairment, providing personalized education, training, and tools to the individual, their families, and providers in order to enable these Veterans and Service Members to function as independently as possible.

Vision Statement

To be a patient-centered, integrated health care organization for Veterans by providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a back-up for National emergencies.

Purpose, Goals and Objectives

Purpose: Provide exceptional health care services to visually impaired and legally blind Veterans.

Goals: To provide education, training, strategies, and devices to be more independent regardless of vision loss

Objectives: To Increase Veteran's confidence and quality of life.

Values

Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I CARE) define "who the VA is," VA's culture, and help guide the actions of staff across VA. Staff - at every level within VA - play a critical role to support VA's commitment to care and serve our Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

Our Website (under construction):

www.centraliowa.va.gov/Advanced_Low_Vision_Clinic_and.asp

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

In case of Emergency.....	CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY
Veterans Crisis Line.....	800-273-8255
VA Central Iowa HCS.....	515-699-5999
Toll Free VA Number.....	800-294-8387
VA Nurse (Afterhours, Weekends, Holidays).....	866-687-7382
Low Vision Clinic (7M Annex).....	515-699-5942
Bonnie Whitson (VIST).....	515-699-5410
Kandace McCue (BROS).....	EXT. 4843
Wes Hodgson (BRS/O&M).....	EXT. 4762
Kate Johnson (LVT).....	EXT. 4768
Eye Clinic (Bldg. 1, 2 nd Floor).....	EXT. 5815
Audiology.....	515-699-5609

Prosthetics.....	EXT. 4071
Pharmacy Assistance.....	515-699-5832
Travel Payment Reimbursement.....	EXT. 4149
DAV Transportation.....	EXT. 5876
VA Benefits Administration.....	800-827-1000
Eligibility.....	EXT. 5915 OR 5888
Patient Advocate.....	515-699-5421
Patient Advocate	515-699-5522
My HealtheVet.....	EXT. 3938

National Blind Consumer Organizations

Many of the organizations listed below offer local support groups.

Contact the specific organization for additional information.

American Council of the Blind **800-424-8666**
www.acb.org

American Foundation for the Blind **800-232-5463**
www.afb.org

Blinded Veterans Association **202-371-8880**
www.bva.org

National Federation of the Blind **410-659-9314**
www.nfb.org

WELCOME TO BLIND REHABILITATION

The staff of the Des Moines VA Blind Rehabilitation Service welcomes you to our special and comprehensive program. We will work together with you to make your experience and training both beneficial and life-changing. Our goal is to provide quality, comprehensive and compassionate care to you by utilizing an interdisciplinary team approach to achieve the highest level of function possible for you. We always place a positive emphasis on individual potential rather than limitations.

While in our program, using your input, an individualized treatment plan will be developed with emphasis on your personal goals. Your active participation in this process is essential in order for optimal results to be achieved. We desire and request participation of family members or caregivers in the rehabilitation process in order to attain a desired outcome for both you and the people closest to you.

Initially you will be seen by all of the clinic providers, the Low Vision Optometrist, the Low Vision therapist, the Blind Rehab Specialist, and the VIST Coordinator. These initial appointments will fill up most of a day or sometimes even two, so please plan for a full day the first time you visit. Services are individualized to each person's needs, so the average length of services provided will undoubtedly vary.

The Advanced Low Vision Clinic has been accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). This is a voluntary accreditation requiring strict adherence to policies, standards and quality patient care. This will ensure we achieve and maintain nationally accepted standards of practice and expected outcomes.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you and your family with basic information about the Blind Rehabilitation Program, our

staff, the services we provide, and our policies. Please let a staff member know if you have any questions, and again.... WELCOME!

VISION LOSS is considered one of the most devastating disabilities that can affect an individual. It can strike persons of all ages and walks of life. The range of "degrees" of vision loss is varied, and the same disease will manifest differently in each person. Low Vision means that you have trouble seeing and your eyesight cannot be corrected with regular glasses, contact lenses, surgery or medication. The term "legal blindness" is very deceiving, as most persons retain a good deal of usable, functional vision.

The VA Blind Rehabilitation Program is here to help you regain and maintain functional life skills, and to understand that life does continue with hope and dignity.

BLIND REHABILITATION STAFF

Low Vision Optometrist – evaluates your vision through a specialized exam, helps you to understand your condition, and places orders for helpful optical and non-optical devices.

Low Vision Therapist – teaches you new ways to read and write, including adaptive strategies for using devices and other tactics for utilizing your remaining vision.

Blind Rehabilitation Specialist – teaches you safe travel, protective techniques, and works with devices to enhance independent travel. Additionally, they will assist with development of skills and use of adaptive devices for kitchen safety, medication management, personal grooming, communication skills and leisure activities.

Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS) – provides lessons in your home, community environment, or at a local VA facility. BROS

broad-based knowledge includes: O&M, ADLs, low vision therapy, and basic computer access.

Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator – Serves as case manager for all legally blind Veterans and is responsible for coordinating all services for those Veterans and their families. Services include provision of general VA information, adjustment counseling, support groups and benefits counseling.

Advanced Low Vision Clinic (ALVC) Scope of Service

Our Customers: Any Veteran or active duty Service Member who is 18 years and older, has been identified as being legally blind or having excess disability, and is eligible for VA medical center care and services. The diagnostic categories of patients who may be served in the ALVC include but are not limited to those with the following conditions: Macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, traumatic brain injury, stroke, and etc.

Services/Hours of Operation/Access

The ALVC provides interdisciplinary, collaborative, outpatient blind rehabilitation through direct service via specialty referral to Veterans and Active Duty Service Members. Input is encouraged from the persons served, their families, and other internal and external stakeholders (input about what? What does this mean?). The ALVC is

located in the Northeast end of Building 7M on the VA Central Iowa HCS Des Moines campus. Services are offered on Monday from 7:00AM to 3:30PM and from Tuesday through Friday from 7:00AM to 5:30PM. Services may, in some situations, be offered outside of VA grounds (e.g. home, apartment, or grocery store). Currently services may be provided at no cost in either the home or VA. However there may be \$15.00 co-pay associated with BROS appointments.

Inpatient and outpatient VA providers can refer into Blind Rehabilitation Services via an internal consult. The ALVC also accepts referrals from the surrounding community. A current dilated eye exam is requested with all referrals. The estimated number of appointments and duration of initial care is based on visual acuity, motivation, and goals. Prospective patients are called and informed of the available services, and are offered the opportunity to visit to the ALVC in person to learn more about the services offered.

Transitional services

Transitional services occur during the months leading up to and following a change of residence or life situation (attending Hines BRC, exiting the Community Living Center, moving into nursing home etc.). The goals of the transitional services are defined on an individual basis. The ALVC works in collaboration with the BRC, PAC team, CLC staff, and even nursing home staff provide information to one another about Veteran care throughout the process.

Discharge from services

In certain circumstances, you may be discharged from the ALVC. This would occur when policies of the Medical Center are disregarded or the safety of others is put in jeopardy. However, you are not typically discharged from the program. You are followed on an as

needed basis which will be determined by your identified goals, training needs, and progression of device skills.

Collaboration with Other Departments and Services

Collaboration with Physicians, Advanced Level Practitioners, and other disciplines and services all play an integral role in maintaining the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being for all Veterans who receive care in the ALVC.

PATIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your healthcare. We want to improve your health and well-being. We will make your visit as pleasant for you as possible. As part of our service to you, to other Veterans and to the Nation, we are committed to improving healthcare quality. We also train future healthcare professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities,

our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined below:

You have a right to:

- **Be cared for and treated with dignity, compassion, humility, and respect.**
- **Your privacy and it will be protected.**
- **Confidentiality of information pertaining to you.**
- **Receive care in a safe environment.**
- **Information about your healthcare communicated to you in a manner that you can understand.**
- **Questions and concerns will be readily addressed. Your vision problems, and implications, as well as recommended solutions will be explained so you can understand.**
- **Have your rights communicated to you prior to receiving services and at least yearly thereafter.**
- **Have your rights available for review or clarification at anytime.**

- **Receive your care without being subjected to any abuse, neglect, humiliation, retaliation, or financial or other exploitation.**
- **Express spiritual beliefs and cultural practices.**
- **Have your personal and religious values honored.**
- **Prompt and appropriate treatment.**
- **Know each provider and the services they provide in the Advanced Low Vision Clinic, VIST, and/or BROS. Information pertaining to immediate, pending and potential future services will be provided and you will have ample time to make decisions about treatment.**
- **Be involved in developing your treatment plan.**
- **Agree or refuse treatment offered.**
- **Access to legal assistance, self-help, and advocacy assistance.**
- **Information regarding resources related to your legal status, when this is appropriate.**
- **Make a complaint if you feel your rights have been denied.**

You have a responsibility to:

- **Treat all staff with courtesy and respect.**
- **Provide accurate information regarding your health, and financial issues.**
- **Ask questions and receive answers about your care, services, needs, and expectations.**
- **Report any changes in your eye condition or medical condition that may affect your rehabilitation.**
- **Actively participate in an agreed treatment plan. Please inform staff if you are having problems following instructions, or decide not to follow any part of outlined service/treatment plan.**
- **Maintain appropriate personal behavior.**
- **Respect the property of the VA and its service providers.**
- **Understand and accept consequences for the outcomes if you do not follow the care, services, or treatment plan.**
- **Inform staff of any unsafe activity in the area, when you are receiving care in your home.**

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Veterans are encouraged to contact the Release of Information (ROI) if you want any of your medical information released to a specific agency or person, you may contact ROI at 515-699-5802.

INFORMED CONSENT

The Veteran participated fully in all decisions involving his or her health care. Staff provided sufficient information so that the patient could make informed decisions concerning risks, benefits, and potential problems related to therapy, likelihood of success, and other treatment alternatives.

COMPLAINTS

You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

- **If you have concerns about patient care or safety, you are encouraged to contact a patient advocate in: Des Moines, Bldg 1, room 189, ext. 5421 or ext. 5522**
- **Attached is the written complaint form**

Complaint Form

Dear _____:

This is how to register a complaint concerning services being provided to you or your family member.

- 1. You may speak any of the staff at the Advanced Low Vision Clinic, BROS, or VIST.
- 2. You may write out your complaint that may be addressed to any member of the Extended Care/Rehabilitation Service Line.
- 3. You may voice your complaints during any appointments with the Blind Rehabilitation Staff.
- 4. You may contact the Patient advocate.
- 5. You may voice or write your complaints to Medical Center Administration (Director or Chief of Staff). Complaint:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Complainant's

Signature: _____

(To be completed by Supervisor)

Complaint reported to: _____ Date: _____

Review of Complaint:

Date complaint acknowledged with complainant and time frame established for action to be taken: _____

Action Taken:

Supervisor's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Complainant Evaluation of Action Taken:

Complainant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

WHEN COMPLETED, A COPY OF THIS FORM IS TO BE GIVEN TO THE PATIENT AND A COPY TO THE FAMILY MEMBER. THE ORIGINAL TO BE SENT TO EXTENDED CARE & REHABILITATION SERVICE LINE OFFICE (117).

ADVANCED DIRECTIVES

A legal document for permitting your designated persons to make medical decisions pertaining to your preferences for health care treatment should you become not able to do so yourself. There are two types of Advanced Directives:

- 1. Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – names an adult as your “Health Care Agent” to make health care decisions for you if you are not able to do so.**
- 2. Living Will – contains the treatments you want or do not want when you are ill and cannot make those decisions for yourself. It informs the people who will be making your health care decisions. You can talk about options with your treatment team and those close to you while you can make those important decisions yourself.**

If you would like to complete the VA Advance Directive form, please contact your health care team, can assist you. More details can be explained to you at that time.

COPAY INFORMATION

The Low Vision Clinic, is pleased to report that all the appointments for low vision clinic – except for BROS – have NO COPAYS! While you may still have a copay for other services in the Hospital, you will not have a copay for you appointments with Dr. Meeks, Kate, Bonnie or Wes. Additionally, all the devices issued to you from the Low Vision Clinic staff will be at no cost to you. BROS services may have a \$15 copay per appointment. If you should have a question about a VA copay or bills, please call Health Recourse Center at 1-866-347-2352.

My HealtheVet

Get more from VA with My HealtheVet! Refill VA prescriptions online 24/7. Send and receive non-urgent health related message with your VA health care team. Input, store, and track Personal Health Information. Use VA Blue Button to download currently available VA Health Record Information. Get reliable health information and resources. Get started! All you need is a computer with internet access and a My HealtheVet Account.

Register for a basic My HealtheVet Account at www.MyHealth.va.gov. Learn more by contacting your My HealtheVet Coordinator, Susan Solinger, at 515-699-5999, x3938.

How Are We Doing?

We want to know how we are doing in the Blind Rehabilitation and Low Vision Clinic. Following your appointment in our clinic you will be given an opportunity to provide comments pertaining to the services

you received. We encourage you to provide your honest feedback in order that we may better serve you and improve the quality of services for you.