

Prepared by the



**Sight-Loss Support Group of Central PA, Inc.**  
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## **INTRODUCTION: ARE YOU NEW TO VISION LOSS?**

If you are new to vision loss, this booklet will get you started. Connecting with local services and support will help you navigate your new life with vision loss. Many individuals in the early stages of vision loss are unaware of the specialists, services, and resources available to help them. Only a small fraction of blind and low vision Americans receive vision rehabilitation services of any kind. Hopefully, the information in these pages will help change these statistics for central Pennsylvania.

This booklet provides an overview of organizations and resources that help individuals with vision loss in both central Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania. It also explains vision rehabilitation services and lists national organizations.

Vision loss doesn't have to mean the loss of independence or quality of life. With the right support, people who are blind or partially sighted can do almost anything.

# MOVING FORWARD WITH VISION LOSS

## Losing Vision, Gaining Insight

Losing vision is a daunting challenge. At first, the sense of loss may be overwhelming. But with proper training and support you will learn the skills and techniques that will allow you to live fully and independently once again. As you move forward, here are a few things to keep in mind.

**You are not alone.** Vision loss affects more than 6.5 million people in the United States aged 55 and over from all walks of life. Don't be afraid to reach out to others experiencing vision loss and to vision loss professionals for information, advice, and encouragement.

**You can continue to lead a full, rewarding life.** If you are willing to make adjustments, there is no reason you cannot continue to enjoy your favorite hobbies and activities, participate in family activities, do volunteer work, or travel. Indeed, the challenges of vision loss are consistently overcome each day by individuals who have simply chosen to participate fully in society.

**You don't have to stop working.** With technical assistance and a few basic adjustments, most people who develop vision loss can remain in the work force - many even continue in their current jobs. It's quite possible that the person who processed your recent electric bill, the person who upgraded your car transmission, or the person who oversaw your last stock trade all live with some degree of vision loss.

**You can remain independent.** Whether you are experiencing a modest vision decline or are facing total vision loss, affordable and accessible solutions and tools exist to help you cook your meals safely, navigate your home, pay your bills, and perform other essential tasks on your own. Better still, new advances in technology designed for people with vision loss are entering the marketplace almost daily, while mainstream products, such as computers and home appliances, can be adapted for your use with simple techniques.

## What is Vision Rehabilitation?

Vision rehabilitation includes a wide range of professional services that can restore functioning after vision loss, just as physical therapy restores function after a stroke or injury. Vision rehabilitation services help people live and work independently in a sighted world by teaching alternative or adapted techniques. Whether a person wants to return to work, maintain current employment or achieve independence, learning these adapted techniques is essential. A team of vision rehabilitation specialists helps individuals acquire the tools and training

needed to attain maximum function and achieve a sense of well-being, a personally satisfying level of independence, and optimum quality of life.

Vision rehabilitation services are provided by specially trained professionals, including low vision specialists, vision rehabilitation therapists, and orientation and mobility specialists.

**Low Vision Specialist:** Many optometrists and some ophthalmologists have an additional specialization in low vision testing, diagnosis and treatment, and are trained to conduct low vision examinations and prescribe special low vision devices. Low Vision Specialists help individuals make the best use of their remaining vision with optical and non-optical devices such as magnifiers, special reading glasses, telescopes, and high intensity lamps. Help with assistive technology and determining the need for environmental modifications in the home, workplace, or school is also provided.

**Low Vision Therapist:** A Low Vision Therapist instructs individuals in the efficient use of remaining vision with optical devices, non-optical devices, and assistive technology and can help determine the need for environmental modifications in the home, workplace or school.

**Vision Rehabilitation Therapist:** A Vision Rehabilitation Therapist teaches independent living and personal management skills. as well as adaptive techniques for reading, communicating, performing essential tasks at work, and enjoying leisure activities.

**Orientation and Mobility Specialist:** An Orientation and Mobility Specialist teaches blind and low vision individuals the skills and concepts needed to travel independently and safely in the home and in the community. Individuals learn to navigate their environment with the use of a white cane; walking safely through their neighborhood, crossing streets, navigating a college campus, and using a public transit system.

**Assistive Technology Training:** Assistive technology removes many barriers, allowing visually impaired individuals to read books, use a computer, identify denominations of money, pay bills, identify product information while shopping, and so much more.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluation and Training:** For individuals in the work-world, services are available for job training, job modification and restructuring, and job placement.

# **FINDING HELP IN CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA**

## **Vision Loss Services and Resources in Central Pennsylvania**

### **Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services**

The Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) is the state agency (within the Department of Labor and Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) that assists Pennsylvanians who are blind or visually impaired. BBVS provides specialized services to people of all ages, helping them acquire the skills necessary to live and work independently in their communities or to succeed in school.

After a comprehensive evaluation, a BBVS counselor works with each client to develop an individualized program based upon the client's needs and choices. Goals may include finding employment, acquiring independent living skills, learning to travel independently, or finding services for a visually impaired child. Services include counseling and guidance, vocational evaluation and training, mobility (travel) instruction, blindness skills training, instruction on performing daily living activities, and acquisition of assistive technology and adaptive equipment.

### **Specialized BBVS Programs**

#### **Summer Academy**

Summer Academy is a three-week summer program for blind or visually impaired students who are transitioning to post-secondary education. The program is offered by BBVS in partnership with Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) and Penn State University. Summer Academy focuses on enhancing skills that lead to independence including: daily living activities, travel skills, self-advocacy and networking, career awareness, social skills, access technology, and low vision rehabilitation.

The program is free to eligible students enrolled in grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 who anticipate attending a two or four-year college or technical/trade school after graduation from high school. All students attending the program reside at Penn State University, University Park campus in a dormitory. They share rooms with other students, eat meals in a campus dining hall, and immerse themselves in activities that reflect college life. Summer Academy has received national recognition as an emerging best practice in Transition Services by the US Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. For more information, contact your local Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services office or call (717) 787-5735.

## **Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program**

The Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program (BEP) enables persons to operate food service businesses in commercial, industrial or government locations. Food service can range from a vending machine route to the management of a large cafeteria. BEP can also assist interested persons with entrepreneurial business ventures other than food service. These businesses might include: specialty product sales, franchise operations, gift shops, and kiosks. Eligible persons enter the program through the BBVS Vocational Rehabilitation program.

### **Altoona BBVS District Office**

Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services  
1130 12th Avenue, Suite 300  
Altoona, PA 16601  
Phone:(814) 946-7330, (866) 695-7673  
Website: [www.dli.state.pa.us/bbvs](http://www.dli.state.pa.us/bbvs)

### **Erie BBVS District Office (Serves Clearfield County)**

Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services  
420 Lovell Place  
Erie, PA 16503  
Phone: (814) 871-4401, (866) 521-5073

## **Pennsylvania Association for the Blind**

The Pennsylvania Association for the Blind (PAB), founded in 1910, is the nation's only statewide, private, non-profit organization that provides services for people who are blind or visually impaired. A network of 26 Member Agencies across the state serves over 132,000 Pennsylvanians annually. Services include life skills training, in-home daily supportive services, sighted-guide transportation for essential appointments, social and recreational support groups, low vision rehabilitation services, and referrals for additional community and regional resources. For the general public, PAB agencies provide prevention of blindness education and vision screenings for children and adults.

Central Pennsylvania is served by three PAB agencies:

- North Central Sight Services (Centre, Bradford, Clinton, Lycoming, Sullivan, and Tioga Counties)
- Blair/Clearfield Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (Blair and Clearfield Counties)
- Nu Visions Center (Huntingdon, Mifflin, and Juniata Counties)

Each PAB agency is quite different, thus the services provided vary from agency to agency. North Central Sight Services offers job opportunities for individuals with vision loss in an industry setting at their headquarters in Williamsport.

**North Central Sight Services, Inc.**

PO Box 3292  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Phone: (570) 323-9401, (866) 320-2580  
Website: [www.ncsight.org](http://www.ncsight.org)

**Nu Visions Center**

658 Valley Street  
Lewistown, PA 17044  
Phone: (717) 242-1444  
Website: [www.nu-visions.net](http://www.nu-visions.net)

**Blair/Clearfield Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

Altoona Office	Clearfield Office
300 Fifth Avenue	PO Box 747
Altoona, PA 16602	Clearfield, PA 16830
Phone: (814) 944-2021	Phone: (888) 91-BLIND
Website: <a href="http://www.bcabvi.org">www.bcabvi.org</a>	

**Veterans Health Administration**

The Veterans Health Administration provides a continuum of care for visually impaired veterans and service members ranging from mild visual impairment to total blindness. The Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) ensures early intervention for patients with progressive diseases such as age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma, as well as veterans and service members whose vision loss results from the wounds and trauma of war.

BRS is a tiered system of care that aligns closely with VA optometry, ophthalmology, and the Department of Defense Vision Center of Excellence. When basic low vision care provided in VA optometry and ophthalmology clinics is no longer sufficient, the patient may receive clinical rehabilitation care in BRS low vision clinics, outpatient blind rehabilitation clinics, and intensive inpatient blind rehabilitation centers. Outpatient rehabilitation services include functional assessments, visual skills training, daily living training, and orientation and mobility training. Services are offered in the most appropriate setting, including home, VA site, college or university, work site, stores, or long-term care or assisted living environments.

The inpatient blind rehabilitation centers provide comprehensive, individualized rehabilitation for severely disabled veterans and service members at VA Medical Centers. Severely disabled blind veterans receive life-long case management by Visual Impairment Service Team Coordinators.

The Veterans Affairs office provides transportation for veterans to the medical center. To schedule an appointment, call (814) 335-6812, ext. 2. Rides must be scheduled more than three working-days prior to a medical appointment.

### **James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center**

The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center in Altoona serves the medical needs of veterans in a 14 county area: Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Mifflin, and Somerset.

2907 Pleasant Valley Boulevard  
Altoona, PA 16602  
Phone: (814) 943-8164, (877) 626-2500  
Website: [www.altoona.va.gov](http://www.altoona.va.gov)

### **Dubois VA Outpatient Clinic (Clearfield County)**

5690 Shaffer Road  
Dubois, PA 15801  
Phone: (844) 698-2311

### **Huntingdon VA Community Based Outreach Clinic (Huntingdon County)**

13903 William Penn Highway  
Mapleton Depot, PA 17052  
Phone: (814) 542-2800

### **State College VA Outpatient Clinic (Centre County)**

2581 Clyde Avenue  
State College, PA 16801  
Phone: (877) 626-2500

### **Williamsport Community Based Outpatient Clinic (Lycoming County)**

1705 Warren Avenue, Werner Building, Suite 304  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Phone: (570) 322-4791

## **Low Vision Services**

**Dr. Marla Moon, O.D., F.A.A.O.**

**Dr. Matthew Trego, O.D.**

Nittany Eye Associates  
428 Windmere Drive  
State College, PA 16801  
Phone: (814) 234-2015  
Website: windmere@nittanyeye.com

**Dr. Tracy Sepich, O.D., M.S.**

Restore Eye Care, P.C.  
100 Oakwood Avenue, Suite 300  
State College, PA 16803  
Phone: (814) 272-0262  
Website: restoreeyecare.com

## **Penn State University Park Libraries: Adaptive Technology and Services**

The Penn State University Park library provides services to facilitate inclusive access for differing needs and disabilities. Services include alternative formats of books and journal articles, research assistance, and assistance retrieving materials. Many assistive technology devices are available within the library and short-term loan of assistive devices is possible. Assistance and training on how to operate assistive technology devices are also available.

The assistive technology software for the blind and visually impaired includes: JAWS, Kurzweil 3000, Omni Page, Dragon Naturally Speaking, and ZoomText. Assistive technology hardware includes: an electronic braille, CCTV, large computer monitors, scanners, and a tactile image enhancer. Interpretive for the hearing impaired is also available.

113 West Pattee Library  
University Park, PA 16802  
Phone (814) 865-0284  
Email: [ul-adaptive-tech-svcs@lists.psu.edu](mailto:ul-adaptive-tech-svcs@lists.psu.edu)  
Website: [www.libraries.psu.edu/services/adaptive-technology-services](http://www.libraries.psu.edu/services/adaptive-technology-services)

## **Lions Clubs**

The Lions clubs in central Pennsylvania are local chapters of **Lions International**, the world's largest service organization founded in 1917. In 1925, Helen Keller appealed to Lions International to become Knights of the Blind, which led to Lions Clubs adopting vision loss as its primary focus for community service.

Lions Clubs undertake projects in their local communities to improve sight and prevent blindness. Lions clubs in Centre County conduct vision screenings, collect used eyeglasses, and provide free eye exams and eye wear to financially needy individuals. The point of contact for Lions Clubs in Centre County is the **Centre Lions Foresight Committee**, a consortium of all Lions Clubs in Centre County.

Chairman, Centre Lions Foresight Committee  
Charles (Charlie) Poust, Ferguson Township Club  
P.O. Box 323  
Pine Grove Mills, PA 16868  
Phone: (814) 238-6695

## **Beacon Lodge Camp**

The Pennsylvania Lion's Beacon Lodge Camp is a 583-acre camp established in 1948 as a summer camp for blind residents of Pennsylvania. It is nestled in the woodlands along the Juniata River two miles west of Newton Hamilton, near Mount Union. Today, Beacon Lodge is a summer camp for children and adults with special needs including blindness, deafness, and other physical and mental challenges.

Pennsylvania Lion's Beacon Lodge Camp  
114 SR 103 South  
Mt. Union, PA 17066  
Phone: (814) 542-2511  
Website: [www.beaconlodge.com](http://www.beaconlodge.com)  
Email: [blcood@verizon.net](mailto:blcood@verizon.net)

## **Sight-Loss Support Group of Central PA**

The Sight-Loss Support Group of Central Pennsylvania, Inc. (SLSG) is a non-profit organization made up of people with varying degrees of sight loss and individuals who are sighted. Members share practical solutions to everyday problems through peer support and support group meetings. SLSG offers information and referral services, an outreach program, and an accessible arts program with audio-described performances\* and accessible tours of local arts festivals and sites of interest.

PO Box 782  
Lemont, PA 16851  
Phone: (814) 238-0132  
Email: [office@slsg.org](mailto:office@slsg.org)  
Website: [www.slsg.org](http://www.slsg.org)

\* Audio description is the descriptive narration of key visual elements of live theater, television, and movies. Trained describers interject brief explanations of the settings, characters, and actions taking place on the stage or screen.

## **National Federation of the Blind, Happy Valley Chapter**

The members of the National Federation of the Blind, Happy Valley Chapter are independent, self-reliant individuals who believe that blindness is not the tragedy it is generally thought to be. The chapter is part of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), the largest organization of blind and low vision people in the United States. Members are friends and mentors to one another, sharing experiences, offering support, and working together to promote the well-being of the blind in central Pennsylvania and throughout the state. Members are connected by the positive NFB philosophy that raises the expectations of blind people and instills the belief that with the proper training and opportunity, blind people can compete on terms of equality with their sighted peers. The chapter holds monthly meetings at varying locations.

232 South Corl Street  
State College, PA 16801  
Phone: (814) 769-3191  
Email: [happyvalleyafb@gmail.com](mailto:happyvalleyafb@gmail.com)

# Services for Persons With Disabilities in Central Pennsylvania

## Alternative Transportation Services

Pennsylvania offers alternative transportation programs for seniors and people with disabilities.

ADA Complementary Paratransit Service: In communities with fixed-route bus service, paratransit services required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provide door-to-door, shared-ride transport for people with disabilities. Paratransit services are available in the larger communities in Centre, Blair, Clearfield, and Lycoming counties.

Rural Transportation Program for Persons with Disabilities: In rural areas not served by fixed-route bus service, Pennsylvania offers the Persons with Disabilities Program. This door-to-door, shared-ride, advance reservation service is available in all counties in Pennsylvania.

### Centre County

#### ADA Complementary Paratransit Service

**CATA** (Centre Area Transportation Authority) provides **CATARIDE**, the shared-ride service for State College, Bellefonte, and Pleasant Gap. This curb-to-curb transportation service is available to persons with disabilities and persons 65 and over. Reservations must be made at least one day ahead before 7:00 pm; call (814) 238-6100. To register for CATARIDE call (814) 238-2282. Website: [www.catabus.com](http://www.catabus.com)

#### Persons with Disabilities Program

The **Centre County Office of Transportation** offers a shared-ride van service for trips within Centre County. This door-to-door service is free for seniors (60 years of age and older), persons with disabilities, and anyone on Medical Assistance. The public may use the service for a fee. Reservations are required; call (814) 355-6807. Website: [www.centrecountypa.gov](http://www.centrecountypa.gov)

### Blair County

#### ADA Complementary Paratransit Service

**AMTRAN**: The Altoona Metro Transit provides complementary paratransit service to the fixed-route bus service in Altoona for people with disabilities and seniors. Individuals with disabilities who can access the fixed-route transit service pay half-fare. For information call (814) 944-4074.

## **Persons with Disabilities Program**

**Blair Senior Services** provides an advance reservation, door-to-door, shared-ride service for seniors and persons with disabilities who pay approximately 15% of the public fare. For information call (814) 695-3500.

## **Clearfield County**

### **ADA Complementary Paratransit Service**

**ATA** (Area Transportation Authority of North Central PA) offers **Call-a-Bus (CAB)** in the town of Clearfield; a door-to-door, shared-ride transportation service for people with disabilities and seniors, 65 years of age and older. The service area of this complementary paratransit service is a three-quarter mile corridor of the fixed-route bus service. For information call (866) 743-3282.

### **Persons with Disabilities Program**

**ATA** also provides **County-Wide Services (CWS)**, the advanced reservation, door-to-door, shared-ride program for seniors and persons with disabilities in Clearfield County. Eligible passengers for Call-a-Bus and County-Wide Services pay 15% of the public fare. To register for these programs, call the ATA Customer Service department at (866) 282-4968. Reservations must be made at least one day in advance by calling the ATA Call Center at (866) 743-3282.

## **Lycoming County**

### **ADA Complementary Paratransit Service**

**River Valley Transit** provides **River Valley Transit Plus**, the paratransit service for persons with disabilities and seniors that complements the fixed-route bus service in Williamsport. River Valley Transit contracts out the paratransit service to Step, Inc. that operates a larger, shared-ride paratransit service in the area. To register for the program call (570) 326-2500.

### **Persons with Disabilities Program**

**Step, Inc.** offers the shared-ride, advance reservation transportation service for Clinton and Lycoming counties. Seniors, 65 years of age and older, and persons with disabilities pay 15% of the public fare. To register for the program call (570) 323-7575.

## **Clinton County**

### **Persons with Disabilities Program**

**Step, Inc.** offers the shared-ride, advance reservation transportation service for Clinton and Lycoming counties. Seniors, 65 years of age and older, and persons with disabilities pay 15% of the public fare. To register for the program call (570) 323-7575.

## **Huntingdon County**

### **Persons with Disabilities Program**

The **Huntingdon-Bedford-Fulton Area Agency on Aging** operates **CART**, the shared-ride program for persons with disabilities and seniors, 60 years of age and older. Eligible passengers pay 15% of the public fare. Service is available in contiguous counties; a higher fare applies for out-of-county travel. To register for the program, call the Huntingdon office at (814) 643-5115.

## **Mifflin and Juniata Counties**

### **Persons with Disabilities Program**

The **Mifflin-Juniata Area Agency on Aging** operates **Call a Ride (CARS)**, the shared-ride, door-to-door transportation service for Mifflin and Juniata counties. The standard fare is subsidized for seniors and persons with disabilities. To register for the program call (717) 242-2277.

## **Union and Snyder Counties**

### **Persons with Disabilities Program**

**Rabbittransit** operates the shared-ride program for seniors and persons with disabilities in Union and Snyder counties. Rabbittransit is a multi-county transportation authority serving south and south-central Pennsylvania. The shared-ride program crosses county lines, giving the ridership greater access and removing the arbitrary limitations of county boundaries. For more information contact the Rabbittransit Call Center at (800) 632-9063.

460 Market Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Phone: (570) 320-0590, (888) 837-4235  
Website: [www.udsservices.org](http://www.udsservices.org)

## **Centers for Independent Living**

Centers for Independent Living across Pennsylvania provide supportive services to persons with disabilities who wish to increase or maintain their level of independence in the community and at home. Each center offers individual and group advocacy, life skills training, peer support, information and referral, and service coordination. Central Pennsylvania is served by two centers: **Roads to Freedom Center for Independent Living** (Centre, Clinton and Lycoming counties) and the **Center for Independent Living of South Central PA** (Blair, Huntingdon and Bedford counties).

Roads to Freedom Center for Independent Living  
24 East 3rd Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Phone: (570) 327-9070  
Email: [office@cilncp.org](mailto:office@cilncp.org)  
Website: [www.cilncp.org](http://www.cilncp.org)

Center for Independent Living of South Central PA  
2900 Beale Avenue, Suite 118  
Altoona, PA 16601  
Phone: (814) 949-1905, (800) 237-9009  
Email: [cilscpa@cilscpa.org](mailto:cilscpa@cilscpa.org)  
Website: [www.cilscpa.org](http://www.cilscpa.org)

### **United Disability Services**

United Disability Services (UDS) is a non-profit organization that helps the elderly, veterans, and people with disabilities live more safely and independently throughout central Pennsylvania. UDS offers a range of services and programs including: case management, accessible home modifications, in-home personal care, social and educational opportunities, employment services, and a school-to-work transition program.

460 Market Street  
Williamsport, PA 17701  
Phone: (570) 320-0590, (888) 837-4235  
Website: [www.udsservices.org](http://www.udsservices.org)

# **PENNSYLVANIA RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

## **Vision Rehabilitation Centers**

### **Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh**

Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh (BVRS) provides the residential Personal Adjustment to Blindness Training program (PABT). The program teaches persons who are blind, vision impaired, or deaf-blind how to use their other senses, special equipment, and new techniques to live independently. Instruction is offered in daily living skills, communications, computer access technology, orientation and mobility, and sensory training. The PABT residential program averages 8-12 weeks and enrollment is open throughout the year. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) sponsors most individuals for training.

BVRS also provides non-residential low vision services, services for seniors, and vocational and employment services. Employment opportunities for the blind and visually impaired exist through PBA Industries, the manufacturing division of BVRS that contracts with businesses and US government agencies.

Phone: (412) 368-4400

Website: [www.bvrspittsburgh.org](http://www.bvrspittsburgh.org)

### **Feinbloom Low Vision Center**

The Feinbloom Low Vision Center is a provider of low vision rehabilitation services at Salus University in Philadelphia. The Center is part of the Eye Institute, the main clinical facility for students at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University. The Feinbloom Center's interdisciplinary staff is made up of optometrists, certified low vision specialists, and social workers. Together with the patient and family members, the interdisciplinary team provides comprehensive low vision evaluation and management services. Depending upon the needs of the individual, the team may also include an ophthalmologist, a vision rehabilitation therapist, an orientation and mobility specialist, a teacher of the visually impaired, and an assistive technology specialist. Counseling and support services are also available for patients and their families.

Main Phone: (215) 276-6000, Appointments: (215) 276-6111

Website: [www.salus.edu/Life/Facilities/Feinbloom-Low-Vision-Center.aspx](http://www.salus.edu/Life/Facilities/Feinbloom-Low-Vision-Center.aspx)

## **Hiram G. Andrews Center**

The Hiram G. Andrews Center (HGAC) is a vocational rehabilitation facility operated by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry. It provides individualized educational and rehabilitation programs for resident and commuter students. An individual's program may include vocational evaluation, educational programming, and physical restoration. HGAC also houses the Commonwealth Technical Institute, a postsecondary school which offers six associate degree programs and ten diploma programs.

Phone: (814) 255-8200

Website: [www.dli.pa.gov/hgac](http://www.dli.pa.gov/hgac)

## **Libraries for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

### **National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: Cooperating Libraries in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia**

The National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS), Library of Congress, administers the Braille and Talking Book Library Service, a free program that loans recorded and braille books and magazines, music scores in braille and large print, and specially designed playback equipment. Any resident of the United States who is unable to read or use standard print materials because of visual or physical impairment is eligible for the service. NLS selects and produces full-length books and publications in braille and recorded formats. Reading materials are distributed to a cooperating network of regional libraries where they are circulated to eligible borrowers.

There are two regional, cooperating libraries in Pennsylvania: the **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped** and the **Free Library of Philadelphia's Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped**. Both libraries provide a wide range of lendable resources at no cost to qualified patrons. Free services via the mail include braille books and magazines, audio books and magazines, large print books, and descriptive videos. Books and magazines are also available through digital download using BARD (Braille and Audio Reading Download). Once enrolled, materials are sent to and from patrons through US mail in postage-free containers.

### **Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh**

Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped  
4724 Baum Boulevard  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
Phone: (412) 687-2440  
Email: lbph@carnegielibrary.org  
Website: www.carnegielibrary.org/lbph

### **Free Library of Philadelphia**

Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped  
910 Walnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Phone: (215) 683-3213, (800) 222-1754  
Email: flpblind@freelibrary.org  
Website: www.freelibrary.org/lbph

## **Assistive Technology**

### **Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT)**

Pennsylvania's Initiative on Assistive Technology (PIAT) at Temple University's Institute on Disabilities is the Commonwealth's "lead agency" on assistive technology. PIAT is dedicated to improving access to Assistive Technology (AT) for Pennsylvanians with disabilities and older Pennsylvanians and their families. This federally funded program has created a statewide infrastructure of Assistive Technology Resource Centers (ATRCs) that provides access to and acquisition of AT devices and services. PIAT offers access to information, training and technical assistance, acquisition of assistive technology services, equipment reutilization, device demonstrations, and assistance with funding sources for AT devices. Most services are provided at no cost to consumers with disabilities, their family members, and advocates. PIAT helps individuals searching for funding for assistive technology devices navigate the maze of health insurances, public programs, and non-governmental funding sources. Specific PIAT programs include:

**Assistive Technology Lending Library** loans assistive technology devices to Pennsylvanians of all ages. The program allows you to try a device for a limited time (typically two to eight weeks) to be sure it meets your needs at home, on the job, or in school. This allows the consumer to make an informed decision before purchasing a device.

**Telecommunications Device Distribution Program (TDDP)** provides specialized equipment, free of charge, to eligible Pennsylvanians with disabilities that impede them from independent access to telephone services. This includes people who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired.

**Reused and Exchanged Equipment Program (REEP)** helps Pennsylvanians with disabilities find previously owned assistive devices, either for free or at a lower cost. REEP includes a free Online Classifieds section with a wide variety of equipment listings. The REEP program also includes several centers that repair, refurbish, and then donate assistive devices.

**I Can Connect** is the national Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program that provides distance communication technology, including smartphones, computers, software, and braille readers, as well as training and support. Individuals with combined vision and hearing loss may be eligible to receive free communication equipment. Website: [www.icanconnect.org](http://www.icanconnect.org)

PIAT Information and Assistance Office  
Phone: (215) 204-1356, (800) 204-7428  
Email: [Atinfo@temple.edu](mailto:Atinfo@temple.edu)

PIAT collaborates with the following agencies to assist individuals and families obtain the assistive technology they need.

**Pennsylvania Assistive Technology Foundation (PATF)** is a statewide non-profit organization that offers 0% interest and low-interest cash loans with extended repayment terms. PATF also provides information about other potential funding sources for assistive technology.

Phone: (484) 674-0506, (888) 744-1938  
Email: [patf@patf.us](mailto:patf@patf.us)  
Website: [www.patf.us](http://www.patf.us)

**Disability Rights Pennsylvania (DRP)** is a statewide public interest law firm that provides legal assistance and other services to individuals with disabilities and their families, advocates, and related organizations. DRP's main purpose is to advocate for the civil rights of persons with mental and physical disabilities, especially their right to live as integral parts of their communities. DRP has offices in Philadelphia, Harrisburg and Pittsburgh.

Phone: (800) 692-7443  
Email: [intake@drnpa.org](mailto:intake@drnpa.org)  
Website: [www.disabilityrightspa.org](http://www.disabilityrightspa.org)

**Client Assistance Program (CAP)** assists individuals having difficulty obtaining assistive technology from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), including the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRs) and the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS).

Phone: (888) 745-2357

Email: [info@equalemployment.org](mailto:info@equalemployment.org)

Website: [www.equalemployment.org](http://www.equalemployment.org)

## **Deaf-Blind Services and Resources**

### **Deaf-Blind Living Well Services: Support Service Providers Program**

Deaf-Blind Living Well Services (DBLW) is a statewide initiative designed to help individuals who are deaf-blind access information and achieve independence. The core of this initiative is the **Support Service Providers Program** that connects deaf-blind individuals with professionally trained Support Service Providers (SSPs). SSPs are the eyes and ears for deaf-blind people, providing them with visual and environmental information, sighted-guide services, and communication accessibility. SSPs are independent contractors who provide SSP services to an individual who is deaf-blind on a regular monthly schedule. Deaf-Blind Living Well Services also provides ongoing support coordination and training to program participants who are deaf-blind. The Center for Independent Living of Central Pennsylvania in Camp Hill is the manager of the DBLW program.

Phone: (717) 731-1900 (V/TTY), (800) 323-6060 (V/TTY)

Email: [DBLW@cilcp.org](mailto:DBLW@cilcp.org)

Website: [www.cilcp.org](http://www.cilcp.org)

### **Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project**

The mission of the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project is to improve the quality of life for children who are deaf-blind and their families. Combined vision and hearing loss present unique challenges for communication and education that require specific instructional strategies. The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project offers a variety of training, technical assistance, and resources to assist educators and families in the areas of assessment, instruction, and family involvement activities. The project is affiliated with the National Center on Deaf-Blindness and is administered in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN).

Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network  
(PaTTAN), King of Prussia  
200 Anderson Road  
King of Prussia, PA 19406  
Phone: (610) 265-7321, (800) 441-3215  
Website:  
[www.pattan.net/category/educational%20initiatives/deaf-blind](http://www.pattan.net/category/educational%20initiatives/deaf-blind)

## **Professional Medical Associations**

### **Pennsylvania Optometric Association**

The Pennsylvania Optometric Association (POA) offers several public health programs and works to prevent unnecessary vision loss in children and adults. The POA website provides a wealth of information on eye health and eye care.

218 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101  
Phone: (717) 233-6455  
Website: [www.pennsylvania.aoa.org](http://www.pennsylvania.aoa.org)

**VISION USA** helps low-income, uninsured people and their families by providing basic eye health and vision care services free of charge.

**InfantSEE** provides a one-time, comprehensive eye assessment to infants in their first year of life, offering early detection of potential eye and vision problems at no cost, regardless of income.

**Kids Welcome Here** is a multi-pronged education campaign designed by the Pennsylvania Optometric Association to increase the number of children who receive eye examinations from optometrists.

## **Consumer Organizations**

### **National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania**

The National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania (NFB of PA) is a state affiliate of the National Federation of the Blind. See the National Organizations section for an overview of the National Federation of the Blind.

Lynn Heitz, President  
1500 Walnut Street, Suite 200  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
Phone: (215) 988-0888  
Email: [president@nfbp.org](mailto:president@nfbp.org)  
Website: [www.nfbp.org](http://www.nfbp.org)

### **Pennsylvania Council of the Blind**

The Pennsylvania Council of the Blind (PCB) is a state affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. See the National Organizations section for an overview of the American Council of the Blind.

931 North Front Street #99  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
Phone: (717) 920-9999, (877) 617-7407  
Email: [pcb1@paonline.com](mailto:pcb1@paonline.com)  
Website: [www.pcb1.org](http://www.pcb1.org)

## **NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **National Associations for the Blind**

#### **American Foundation for the Blind**

The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) is a non-profit organization that has been working toward creating a more equitable world for people with vision loss since 1921. Helen Keller worked for the AFB for more than 40 years. The AFB's priorities are: expanding access to technology and guiding the creation of accessible products; connecting people with vision loss and their families to quality information, resources, and local services; advocating for legislative change; and providing publications and e-learning courses to educate professionals in the blindness field. AFB's award-winning family of websites offer a wealth of information: VisionAware, FamilyConnect, CareerConnect, AccessWorld, Center on Vision Loss, BrailleBug, DirectoryCenter, eLearning Center, and the Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness.

2 Penn Plaza, Suite 1102  
New York, NY 10121  
Phone: (212) 502-7600  
Website: [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

#### **National Federation of the Blind**

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) is an organization of blind people working together to improve both opportunities for the blind and the understanding of blindness by the public. Since its founding in 1940, the NFB has believed in the full capacity of blind people, raising expectations, and taking collective action to improve the lives of blind people. Members are bound together by the belief that blind people can achieve their dreams - blindness is not what holds you back. The NFB works to remove legal, economic, and social discrimination with the goal of complete integration of the blind into society on a basis of equality. The NFB believes, "You can live the life you want."

The NFB achieves its mission by providing public education about blindness, information and referral services, and literature and publications about blindness. The NFB offers advocacy services and protection of civil rights, employment assistance and support services, and scholarships. The development of new products, new technology, and new initiatives that are changing what it means to be blind, is an important part of the NFB's mission.

## **NFB Blindness Training Centers**

NFB training centers in Minnesota, Colorado, and Louisiana provide extensive and rigorous training that can take up to nine months. By mastering blindness skills students achieve a level of independence and self-sufficiency that allows them to live and work alongside their sighted neighbors and colleagues. The three NFB training centers are: BLIND, Inc. in Minneapolis, Minnesota; the Colorado Center for the Blind in Littleton, Colorado; and the Louisiana Center for the Blind in Ruston, Louisiana.

## **NFB BELL Academy: Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning**

The NFB BELL Academy is a two-week summer program that provides intensive braille instruction to blind and low vision children. The program serves students who are not receiving enough braille instruction in school or who could benefit from braille enrichment over the summer. Children, ages four through twelve, learn braille through fun, hands-on activities and independent living skills. BELL students participate in field trips and benefit from peer learning and mentoring from blind adults. For more information on the BELL Academy in Pennsylvania, contact the NFB of Pennsylvania.

National Federation of the Blind  
200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: (410) 659-9314  
Website: [www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)

National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania  
Lynn Heitz, President  
1500 Walnut Street, Suite 200  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
Phone: (215) 988-0888  
Email: [president@nfbp.org](mailto:president@nfbp.org)  
Website: [www.nfbp.org](http://www.nfbp.org)

## **American Council of the Blind**

The American Council of the Blind (ACB) is an organization of blind, visually impaired and sighted people dedicated to increasing the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people. The ACB was formed in 1961 as an alternative to the National Federation of the Blind. While promoting independence, self-sufficiency, and the inclusion of the blind in society, the ACB believes that people who are blind must be accepted where they are in life and be valued for their accomplishments.

Working in tandem with vision rehabilitation service providers, the ACB has been instrumental in developing the principles and policies that shape the services, training, and opportunities available to blind and visually impaired people. The ACB promotes public awareness of blindness and vision loss, and advocates for accessibility, equal opportunity, and disability rights. The Audio Description Project is an initiative of the ACB that supports the use of high quality audio description in television, movies, the performing arts, museums and educational materials.

American Council of the Blind  
1703 North Beauregard Street, Suite 420  
Alexandria, VA 22201  
Phone: (202) 467-5081, (800) 424-8666  
Website: [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

Pennsylvania Council of the Blind  
931 North Front Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
Phone: (717) 920-9999, (877) 617-7407  
Email: [pcb1@paonline.com](mailto:pcb1@paonline.com)  
Website: [www.pcb1.org](http://www.pcb1.org)

## **Lighthouse Guild**

The Lighthouse Guild has a longstanding heritage of addressing the needs of people who are blind or visually impaired, including those with multiple disabilities and chronic medical conditions. The Lighthouse Guild provides a full spectrum of integrated vision and healthcare services. The organization works to expand accessibility through education, community outreach, and advocacy at the local, state and federal levels.

This comprehensive and innovative approach supports a multitude of programs: the Lighthouse Guild Store of assistive products; the Print Access Center that produces braille, electronic, audio and large print materials; assistive technology training; independent living skills training; a multidisciplinary psychiatric, counseling and social services clinic; vision rehabilitation services; low vision services; support for parents of visually impaired children; education services and specialized training for children; and training for healthcare professionals.

15 West 65th Street  
New York, NY 10023  
Phone: (212) 769-6200, (800) 284-4422  
Email: [info@lighthouseguild.org](mailto:info@lighthouseguild.org)  
Website: [www.lighthouseguild.org](http://www.lighthouseguild.org)

## **National Associations for the Deaf-Blind**

### **American Association of the Deaf-Blind**

The American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) is a national consumer organization of deaf-blind Americans, as well as family members, professionals, interpreters, and other interested supporters. The AADB is an information clearinghouse providing information and referral services, and technical assistance on topics related to deaf-blindness. The organization advocates for support services, interpreters, and accessible and affordable assistive technology for deaf-blind people. For its members, the AADB provides a newsletter and sponsors a listserv that allows people to discuss important issues in the deaf-blind community.

PO Box 24493  
Federal Way, WA 98093  
Phone: (301) 495-4403, (301) 495-4402 (TDD/TTY)  
Email: [aadb-info@aadb.org](mailto:aadb-info@aadb.org)  
Website: [www.aadb.org](http://www.aadb.org)

### **Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults**

The Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Adults (HKNC) is the only comprehensive national program that provides vocational and rehabilitation services exclusively to youth and adults who are deaf-blind. A residential training program in Sands Point, NY provides evaluation, short-term vocational and rehabilitation training, and assistance in locating employment, housing, and community resources in client's home states. Field offices include 11 regional offices and over 40 affiliated agencies and Senior Adult Services. These regional offices are the gateway to consultation, advocacy, assessment, training, and referral. A National Training Team (NTT) conducts professional training seminars both on campus and in the community. Pennsylvania is served by Region 3, the East Central Region.

Helen Keller National Center Headquarters and  
Residential Training Facility  
141 Middle Neck Road  
Sands Point, NY 11050  
Phone: (516) 944-8900 ext. 253, VP (516) 570-3246  
Email: [hkncinfo@hknc.org](mailto:hkncinfo@hknc.org)  
Website: [www.helenkeller.org](http://www.helenkeller.org)

Helen Keller National Center  
Region 3: East Central Region  
14440 Cherry Lane Court, Suite 214  
Laurel, MD 20707  
Phone: (240) 786-6534, TTY (240) 786-6847, VP (240) 667-7295

## **National Center on Deaf-Blindness**

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) is a national technical assistance center funded by the federal Department of Education. NCDB works to improve the quality of life for children who are deaf-blind and their families. The combination of losses faced by deaf-blind children limits their access to auditory and visual information and creates unique challenges for communication and education. NCDB helps families secure the knowledge and resources needed to ensure that their child has access to the special teaching methods and accommodations necessary to succeed in learning.

NCDB offers a rich repository of knowledge and encourages innovation in national policy and practice. The organization focuses on early identification and referral, family engagement, and literacy. NCDB supports a national infrastructure of state Deaf-Blind Projects that channels the organization's initiatives to state and local levels. This network facilitates the provision of specialized professional teachers and service providers in each state.

345 North Monmouth Avenue  
Monmouth, OR 97361  
Phone: (503) 838-8754  
Website: [www.nationaldb.org](http://www.nationaldb.org)

## **National Associations for Parents of Visually Impaired Children**

### **National Organization of Parents of Blind Children**

The National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC), a division of the National Federation of the Blind, is a membership organization of families and educators of blind and low vision children. The organization develops resources for parents and teachers and connects families with blind adults to help them gain understanding and perspective. Members have access to an annual national conference, a quarterly magazine, monthly information calls and podcasts, and the NFB Scholarship Program. The NOPBC sponsors braille, orientation and mobility, and STEM programs to help children of all ages gain skills and confidence.

200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place  
Baltimore, MD 21230  
Phone: (410) 659-9314  
Email: [president@nopbc.org](mailto:president@nopbc.org)  
Website: [www.nopbc.org](http://www.nopbc.org)

### **National Association of Parents of Children With Visual Impairments**

The National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI), a division of the Lighthouse Guild, is a national membership organization that supports parents through parent education, emotional support, outreach programs, and access to a broad network of parents. In collaboration with the American Foundation for the Blind, NAPVI created FamilyConnect ([www.FamilyConnect.org](http://www.FamilyConnect.org)) an online, multimedia community that gives parents of visually impaired children a place to support each other, share stories and concerns, and link to local resources. Members have access to a quarterly magazine, conferences, workshops, and publications. Parents become part of a national advocacy group that fosters communication and coordination of services among federal, state, and local agencies and raises awareness of the special needs of children who are visually impaired.

15 West 65th Street  
New York, NY 10023  
Phone: (212) 769-7819, (800) 562 6265  
Email: [napvi@lighthouseguild.org](mailto:napvi@lighthouseguild.org)  
Website: [www.napvi.org](http://www.napvi.org)

## GENERAL RESOURCES

### Adjustment to Vision Loss

**VisionAware** is a website offering a wealth of self-help information. The site provides links to a wide range of information that enhances quality of life and promotes independence for adults with vision loss and their families.

Website: [www.visionaware.org](http://www.visionaware.org)

**American Foundation for the Blind Senior Site** covers many topics: Understanding Vision Loss, Finding Help and Support, Changing Your Home, Daily Living Skills, and Fitness and Fun. Find this self-help center at the American Foundation for the Blind's (AFB) website: [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org).

### Eye Disorder Information

**National Eye Institute (NEI)** provides information on eye diseases and eye disorders, as well as education programs on diabetes, glaucoma, low vision, and vision and aging. Website: [www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov)

**American Macular Degeneration Foundation** is a clearinghouse for research on macular degeneration and promotes a support system for individuals living with macular degeneration. Website: [www.macular.org](http://www.macular.org)

**Glaucoma Research Foundation** provides information on the causes, care, and treatment of glaucoma and current research on glaucoma. Website: [www.glaucoma.org](http://www.glaucoma.org)

**Foundation Fighting Blindness** drives research that supports prevention, treatment, and cures for people affected by retinal diseases such as retinitis pigmentosa. The organization's website is a gateway to news and research, publications, and resources and support. Website: [www.blindness.org](http://www.blindness.org)

## **Access to Print and Media**

**NFB-NEWSLINE**, a service of the National Federation of the Blind, is free and available to anyone who is blind, visually impaired or print-disabled. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing access to over 400 publications including national newspapers like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal; international newspapers such as the London Telegraph and Japan Times; breaking news sources like CNN, BBC and ESPN Online; countless state newspapers; and a diverse selection of magazines. NFB-NEWSLINE also has TV listings and localized weather alerts. The service can be accessed via cell phone, a touch-tone telephone, email, a secure website, or portable devices such as the NLS Talking Book Player and Victor Reader Stream 2nd Generation.

Phone: (866) 504-7300

Website: [www.nfbnewsline.org](http://www.nfbnewsline.org)

**Bookshare, a Benetech Initiative**, is the world's largest accessible digital library for individuals with visual impairments and other print disabilities. The library has well over 500,000 titles with a wide range of content from current popular books to reference information, classics, nonfiction, and newspapers. Books and newspapers are downloaded from the Bookshare website and can be read in the format that best suits the user, from assistive devices such as braille readers and the Victor Reader Stream to mainstream technologies like computers and mobile devices. Users may also use tools built by Benetech, such as accessible readers for the iPhone and Android operating systems. Bookshare International serves members in more than 70 countries, currently delivering over 460,000 titles to people with print disabilities around the world.

Phone: (650) 644-3400

Email: [info@bookshare.org](mailto:info@bookshare.org)

Website: [www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org)