



Iowa Department for the Blind

Education Appropriation Sub-Committee Report February 16, 2021

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What does the Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) do?

- We help blind Iowans gain the skills, self-confidence, and positive attitude they need to gain employment and advance in their careers.
- We help employers find the highly qualified and motivated employees they are looking for and help them to break down their misconceptions about hiring blind people.
- We provide tools and training to older individuals who are losing their vision to allow them to continue to live independently in their homes and communities.
- We provide braille, audio, and large print educational materials to K–12 students across the state and library books and magazines to Iowans of all ages.

Our Core Functions:

Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling & Guidance

- Providing counseling and guidance to help clients work through fears and frustrations regarding their vision loss.
- Helping clients find blind people who work in the fields they are interested in working in.
- Encouraging the development of peer supports.
- Arranging for the provision of disability related skills training.
- Assisting with labor market research, researching post-secondary education, work-based learning, and other career exploration activities.
- Facilitating job shadows, mock interviews, resume reviews and other job readiness and job search activities.

Comprehensive Blindness Skills Training Center

- Comprehensive adjustment to blindness training.
- Intensive, deliberate practice in non-visual skills using structured discovery methodology.
- Building self-confidence and a positive attitude toward blindness.
- Classes include: braille, assistive technology, cane travel, home management, life skills, careers, industrial arts.

Vocational Rehabilitation Teaching & Access Technology

- Vocational Rehabilitation Teachers (VRTs) work with clients in their communities, schools, homes, and worksites teaching braille, assistive technology, home and personal management, and cane travel.
- Rehabilitation Technology Specialists (RTSs) teach more advanced access technology, work with clients to find the best access technology to meet their needs, and work with employers to make their computer and information systems accessible for blind employees.

Independent Living Services

- Independent Living Rehabilitation Teachers (ILRTs) travel the state to serve individuals who have experienced severe vision loss and are not interested in returning to work.
- IDB provides IL services to individuals in their homes and through small group trainings at IDB and throughout the state.
- Teachers work with clients on marking appliances, cooking, cleaning, cane travel, braille, self-advocacy, obtaining peer supports, using cell phones and basic computer usage, signing up for library and reading services.
- IDB provides non-visual assistive devices including talking and braille watches, talking clocks, bump dots, letter and check writing guides, long white canes, braille textbooks and writing materials, and other sustainable equipment to clients as part of their training.

Library Services

- Circulates books and magazines, braille, large print, and other alternative formats to those who cannot read standard print.
- Provides access to local and national newspapers and magazines through NFB Newsline and Iowa Reading Information Services.
- Provides educational materials in alternative formats to blind and low vision pre-K12 and college students.
- Encourages literacy and STEM engagement through Youth Library activities.

Business Enterprise Program

- The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) offers the opportunity for blind individuals to own and operate their own vending business.
- The BEP has priority under the Randolph Sheppard Act to set up locations in state, federal, county, and city office buildings and rest areas. IDB provides the locations and equipment. The operators sell food and beverages and provide customer service.