



Terry E. Branstad
Governor

Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Q. What does the Iowa Department for the Blind do/provide?

A. The Iowa Department for the Blind believes all Iowans, including about 54,000 who are blind or visually impaired, can lead fulfilling lives. With offices in Des Moines and field staff statewide, the Department is a ready resource to educate, train, and empower blind and visually impaired individuals so they can live independently, work productively, and fully participate in life at home, work and in their communities.

Q. What is the definition of legal blindness in Iowa? Visually impaired?

A. A legally blind individual has central visual acuity (vision that allows a person to see straight ahead) of 20/200 or less in their better eye with best possible correction or a visual field (peripheral vision) of 20 degrees or less. With 20/200 visual acuity, a person can see at 20 feet what a person with 20/20 vision sees at 200 feet. A person who is visually impaired has difficulty performing ordinary tasks with sight – even with the best glasses or contact lenses.

Q. Who qualifies for the Department's services?

A. The Department provides services to blind and visually impaired Iowans. Depending on the program, eligibility will vary. To find out if you or someone you know would qualify, contact the Department at 515-281-1333, toll free at 800-362-2587, or email us at information@blind.state.ia.us

Q. What types of services and programs does the Iowa Department for the Blind offer?

A. The Department is nationally recognized as a leading provider of services to people who are blind or visually impaired. It

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www.IDBonline.org

offers a comprehensive array of options to build confidence and independence in all aspects of life.

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Program: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program helps blind or visually impaired Iowans to prepare for, obtain, and retain competitive employment.**
- **Orientation Center: The Orientation Center is a residential blindness training program. It provides in-depth, individualized blindness training to adults so that they can return to their home communities, imbued with confidence and equipped to live independently.**
- **Independent Living Rehabilitation Services: The Independent Living Program provides a range of services designed to help blind or visually impaired Iowans to live independently in their own homes and remain active in their families and communities. Teachers travel throughout the state to provide services in a person's home or in small group settings.**
- **Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped: The Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has the largest collection of books, magazines, and other materials in Braille, audio, and large print formats in the U.S. All materials are available by mail, free of charge to Iowans who cannot use standard print.**
- **Business Enterprises Program: The Business Enterprises Program provides opportunities for legally blind clients of the Vocational Rehabilitation Program to manage their own businesses. These blind and visually impaired entrepreneurs manage a wide variety of food-service operations that can be found at federal, state, county, municipal and private locations throughout Iowa.**
- **The Aids & Devices Store: There are a wide array of tools and devices available to help make common, everyday tasks easier for someone adjusting to vision loss. The Iowa Department for the Blinds sells many of these useful assistive devices at cost to Iowans in our Aids & Devices Store. The store is conveniently located off the main reception area on the first floor of our headquarters building in Des Moines.**

Visit the store's webpage at <http://www.idbonline.org/living/store>, or call (800) 362-2587 or (515) 281-1357.

Q. How do I refer someone to the Department?

A. To make a referral, contact the Department by phone at 515-281-1333, toll free at 800-362-2587, or or make a referral online.

Q. Are these services available in my community – outside Des Moines?

A. The Iowa Department for the Blind serves the entire state. With field staff statewide, we routinely bring services to your local community.

Q. Are in-home services offered?

A. Yes. Through the Independent Living Program, teachers travel throughout the state to provide services to individuals within their homes and communities.

Q. What is the cost of the services offered by the Department?

A. The Department is primarily funded through state and federal tax dollars. Therefore, most of the services are provided at little or no cost to eligible individuals and their families.

Q. Can the blind work? What types of jobs are appropriate for the blind and visually impaired?

A. Yes. Blind people work across the state in a broad variety of jobs and professions – ranging from law and information technology to manufacturing and mechanics. The benefits of hiring a blind individual typically include quality work, high productivity, longevity on the job, low absenteeism, and an all-around successful and productive employee. The Iowa Department for the Blind is ready to work with businesses in Iowa to solve any accommodation issues that may arise.

Q. Does the Department help blind or visually impaired people find jobs?

A. Yes. The Department's Vocational Rehabilitation Program

helps job seekers develop a job-search plan, write a résumé, practice interviewing, and locate job-search and placement resources. The program also provides blindness and attitude counseling, career counseling, technology assessment and training, work site assessment and follow up, adaptive devices for training and employment, supported employment assistance (including job coaching, self-employment planning and follow along) and post-employment follow up.

Q. Does the Department assist businesses and employers with placing people who are blind or visually impaired in their companies? What types of accommodations are necessary for this?

A. The Department facilitates matching a person's skills and abilities with an employer's needs. We seek productive partnerships with Iowa's businesses and employers to train and place qualified applicants.

The Department works closely with businesses and employers to determine whether accommodations are needed and may also be able to provide financial support for these accommodations. The Department can also provide employee manuals or materials in Braille, audio or electronic text.

Q. As a business, if I'm interested in speaking with someone about hiring a blind or visually impaired person, who should I contact?

A. Contact our Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Specialists:

**Shannon Myers
Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Specialist
(515) 242-5746
shannon.myers@blind.state.ia.us**

**Ashley West
Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Specialist
(515) 250-8177 or (800) 362-2587
ashley.west@blind.state.ia.us**

Q. I'm interested in taking a tour, who should I contact?

A. The Iowa Department for the Blind welcomes all prospective clients and guests to visit our office. Tours are provided by Orientation Center students. The tour typically begins with a short film. The students take guests through the Business Enterprises Program, field operations, the Library and the Orientation Center. The tour of the Orientation Center includes a visit to the industrial arts workshop, the home economics floor and the communications lab.

If you would like to arrange a tour of the Department, contact Tiffany Bickell at (515) 281-1336 or in Iowa (800) 362-2587, ext. 1-1336. You can also e-mail Tiffany at tiffany.bickell@blind.state.ia.us.

If you are not able to travel to Des Moines to tour the Department, Tiffany can schedule a representative to come and speak in your community.

Q. Are there opportunities to volunteer at the Department? Who should I contact if I'm interested?

A. The Department relies on volunteers for a variety of tasks including:

- Transcribing print to Braille**
- Narrating/recording print texts**
- Proofreading Braille**
- Audio editing**
- Providing clerical support**

For more information about volunteering, contact the Department at 515-281-1333, toll free at 800-362-2587, or visit our web site at www.IDBOnline.org