

Independent Living Older Blind

The Michigan Bureau of Services for Blind Persons (BSBP) Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program is designed for customers age 55 or older, who no longer seek employment, but require rehabilitation consultation and instruction to maximize their ability to maintain their independence in the home and community.

BSBP employs Blind Rehabilitation Instructors trained in helping blind or visually impaired individuals achieve independence. BSBP instructors will complete a comprehensive assessment of the individual's independent living needs to identify areas of difficulty and resources. Instructors and customers will collaboratively work together to design a training plan tailored to maintain or achieve independence in the home and community.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for the ILOB program, you must meet at least one of these criteria:

- + Visual acuity with the best correction must be 20/200 or worse in the better eye, or
- + Visual fields must subtend an angle of less than 20 degrees in each eye, or
- + Visual acuity with the best correction must be 20/100 or worse in the better eye with a prognosis of rapid deterioration, or
- + The individual must have visual fields that subtend an angle of less than 40 degrees in each eye with a prognosis of rapid deterioration.

BSBP or a local eye doctor can assist in determining if you meet at least one of the above criteria for eligibility.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Training may include learning to use some or all the skills and resources listed below.

ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

Getting around your home, your community and beyond by using a cane or dog, public transportation and other effective techniques for keeping track of where you are in relation to your environment and learning how to walk with a sighted person.

ADAPTIVE KITCHEN SKILLS

Preparing meals using adaptive devices and methods for labeling foods; measuring; pouring; preparing ingredients; keeping, organizing and following your recipes without vision; using utensils and appliances safely; using large-print, Braille and talking timers; and determining when food is done.

PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

Labeling medications, toiletries and clothing; learning tips for personal grooming without vision; managing medical conditions such as diabetes using devices like talking glucose meters.

LOW-VISION DEVICES

Learning about useful low-vision devices for reading, enlarging, distance and/or glare control and how to use these devices.

COMMUNICATIONS

Writing by hand, check writing, checkbook management, using the telephone and organizing phone numbers, using smartphones and other devices, using voice recorders for note-taking, using Braille and other labeling techniques for identifying and organizing items, and using a computer keyboard, iPad or tablet to manage email and other web-based programs.

TIME AND MONEY

Keeping track of time using large-print, Braille or talking clocks, watches and timers; learning to fold money to keep track of bills of different values; and using online banking and bill paying services.

HOME MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Plugging in electrical cords, using keys and locks, using home appliances (washer, dryer, etc.) and electronics (TV, DVD player, smart devices, [i.e., Alexa]).

PEER SUPPORT

Meeting other people who are also visually impaired or blind to share experiences, frustrations, success stories and information and learning about support groups and organizations of people who are blind and visually impaired.

HOW TO REFER

If you are interested in learning more about the Independent Living Older Blind program, or other BSBP programs and services, contact BSBP's main office at the number noted below.

GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Michigan Department of Labor and Economic
Opportunity Bureau of Services for Blind Persons
702 West Kalamazoo Street
PO BOX 30652, Lansing, MI 48909
www.michigan.gov/BSBP
800-292-4200



MISSION

The mission of the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons is to provide opportunities to individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve employment and/or achieve maximum and meaningful independence in life through comprehensive rehabilitative services.

VISION STATEMENT

It is the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons' vision to help Michigan become a better state for blind and visually impaired persons to be equal contributing citizens that enjoy all the advantages of a full, independent life.

DISABILITY DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

BSBP will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs, or disability. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to request any assistance you need with reading, writing, or hearing by contacting your local BSBP office.

LEISURE ACTIVITIES

Reading books, newspapers and magazines using talking books, radio reading services and other audio reading services available via telephone, radio, internet access and digital cartridges through U.S. mail and learning new ways of doing things you've always enjoyed or want to learn for the first time; including crafts, sewing, knitting, crocheting, board games, bingo, playing cards and accessing recreational resources in the community.

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Getting information about other programs and resources such as transportation systems, Lions Clubs, telephone services, the Assistive Technology Loan Fund and other resources.

ACHIEVEMENT

The ILOB program has successfully assisted seniors who are blind or visually impaired to remain in their home and maintain their independence.

The program serves approximately 500 Michigan residents a year, providing skills of blindness training to eliminate the need of a more restrictive environment.

ADDITIONAL DISABILITIES

If you have other disabilities in addition to vision loss, BSBP will work with you to accommodate your needs using our resources and those of other organizations.

BSBP has a DeafBlind professional who specializes in providing services to both deaf and blind individuals. These services may include hearing evaluations, assistive hearing devices and other DeafBlind services available to you.



"After returning home from the BSBP School for the Blind, my Field Teacher, Jenny Doane continued to help and support me in my home, where she taught me how to be safe in my kitchen, gave me instructions on how to use my iphone and computer, and how to use my cane effectively. I owe my in-home independence to her!"
- Jean Reynolds-Provencal

The program described in this brochure are funded as follows: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funded 78.7% through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) and 21.3% through State funding; Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) funded 90% through a grant from the USDOE and 10% through State funding; Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) funded 100 percent through the USDOE VR grant. For the federal fiscal year 2022, federal grant funds were as follows: VR \$17,993,738; Pre-ETS reserve included in VR \$2,699,061; ILOB \$988,139.