



Our Mission

To provide the highest quality blind rehabilitation services through a broad range of rehabilitation, education and research programs.

“A Blind Center is where faith is strongest; that blind people deserve hope, respect and freedom. These are accorded first, followed by the means of achieving them. Our civilization permits wholesome living when blind, and here, one learns how.”

Russell C. Williams Central Blind Rehabilitation Center Chief,
1948-1959



Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



Who We Are

The Central Blind Rehabilitation Center (CBRC) is a 34-bed residential facility at Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital. We receive applicants from over 50 VA hospitals in 14 Mid-west states. The CBRC is one of ten VA Blind Centers located across the US and Puerto Rico. Professional staff include; teachers (blind rehab specialists), medical and support staff that allow us to offer a very comprehensive rehabilitation program. The Hines Blind Rehabilitation Center was the first opened by the Department of Veterans Affairs and has a rich history dating back to 1948. Hines VA Hospital is located just west of Chicago. Our 147-acre campus provides a safe, supportive environment where veterans can develop the skills and attitudes needed for dealing with vision loss.

Our Goal

The goal of the CBRC is to help each veteran become as independent as possible in all aspects of daily life. Our hope is also that our veterans and their families gain the exposure through training to form a healthy attitude towards blindness.

Who We Serve

We serve veterans that are legally blind due to a variety of reasons, ranging from traumatic injury during armed conflict to age or health related issues. Currently, most of the veterans served are still from the WWII and Korea era. Those that have served in Vietnam and Post Vietnam also make up a good portion of our patient population. We do provide priority services to active duty personnel who are injured in the line of duty. Most veterans who come to the Blind Center today have lost vision due to eye diseases. At this time nearly 45% of our patients have macular degeneration. Other common eye conditions include diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and trauma.

Accommodations

Each veteran stays in a spacious private room with a full bath, satellite TV, phone, talking book player, and radio. A private court yard and dining facilities are available for all veterans participating in the program. Our current building was dedicated in the year 2005 making it the newest building for Blind Rehabilitation.

Eligibility

Every veteran who is legally blind is eligible for services at the CBRC.

Family Education Program

The CBRC provides a two or three day educational program for a veteran's family member or care provider. The family member or care provider observes classes, receives training and consults with professional staff. This helps the family understand the veteran's blindness, what the veteran is able to do, and how they can help to continue encourage independence at home. Family conference calls are also offered. These calls provide education and the opportunity to ask questions for those who do not attend an on-site program.

Typical Day

The typical day at the CBRC starts with class sessions beginning at 8:00 AM. Most veterans participate in 6 classes each day. Classes end at 3:45 PM. Each person's length of stay at the Center is determined by individual goals, needs and progress. Each veteran is assigned a Team Coordinator. The Team Coordinator works with the veteran and the entire team to personalize the veteran's program.

During evenings and on weekends, a number of recreational activities are offered. These activities give veterans a chance to use the skills they've learned in a supportive environment. These may include anything from BINGO and VFW parties, to golf outings, baseball games and theater events. In addition, shopping trips are scheduled for every Saturday.

Patient Satisfaction

Time and again the CBRC has received excellent satisfaction ratings. Over 98% of those who attended the program say they would "Highly Recommend" our services to any other veteran with a vision loss. It is always our goal to do what ever we can to improve the quality of our patients' lives.

How can a Veteran with poor vision find help?

The best way for a veteran who is visually impaired to get help is to contact a VIST coordinator. VIST stands for “Visual Impairment Services Team.” A VIST Coordinator will help a visually impaired veteran obtain all of the services he or she may need. They will help educate the veteran and complete any needed applications for them. Contact us at (708) 202-2272 to find out where the closest VIST coordinator is in your area.

The Blinded Veterans’ Association (BVA) is another excellent source of information and assistance. They can also direct you to a VIST coordinator. The BVA’s phone number is (202) 371-8880.

What if I am not a veteran?

There are many sources for blind rehabilitation. These include public schools (for children), private and state agencies. You may contact us for a list of agencies in your state or call one of the following national organizations for information:

- American Council of the Blind (800) 424-8666
- American Foundation for the Blind (800) 232-5463
- National Federation of the Blind (410) 659-9314

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www.visn12.med.va.gov/hines/pat/blind

