

Throughout the history of blind rehabilitation, family education has played a key role in the reintegration of blinded Veterans back into the community. We have found that when we are able to address the expectations and needs of the family, the Veteran is more likely to make a smoother transition to the home environment and to use the skills that have been obtained during training. The family program provides an opportunity to discuss the many adjustments that are made following sight loss and to answer any questions or concerns that the family may have. For each family program, an individualized training schedule is designed to provide in-depth information about all aspects of the Veteran's Blind Rehabilitation Program.

We welcome your involvement in the rehabilitation process and hope that you find it to be a helpful and rewarding experience.



Orientation/Mobility teaches safe and independent travel skills using a long white cane. The cane is used for protection, identification and locating obstacles/drop-offs.

Living Skills teaches the Veteran organization, safety, and adaptive techniques to regain independence in the home environment.

Manual Skills helps the Veteran learn to use his hands and non-visual methods to compensate for sight loss in order to perform daily tasks.

Visual Skills teaches the Veteran to effectively use his remaining vision and appropriate assistive devices.

Independent Living Program (ILP) helps determine the Veteran's level of functioning in caring for his/her daily needs independently.

Psychology assists the Veteran with his/her emotional adjustment to sight loss.

Social Work provides individual and group counseling, referrals to VA and community based services and assistance with planning the Veteran's return home.

Assistive Technology provides training and equipment to address the Veteran's technology needs to include computers, reading machines, travel aids and iPhone/iPads.



**Hines VA Hospital
Blind Rehabilitation
Center**

Family Training Brochure

Do's and Don'ts

DO: Ask the person if they need help and how you can help.

DO: Encourage someone with a visual impairment to be as independent as possible.

DO: Identify yourself when you come up to a blind person. For example, "Hi Bill, this is Michelle."

DO: Encourage the person to socialize and engage in a wide variety of activities. (household chores, social events, etc)

DO: Allow the blind person to speak for himself; don't do the talking for him.

DO: Educate friends and family about visual impairment and blindness.

DON'T: Be overprotective or treat the blind person with pity.

DON'T: Avoid words such as "look" and "see" since they are words that are part of our everyday conversation.

DON'T: Leave a person without letting them know you are leaving.

DON'T: Forget to put things back where you found them, and don't rearrange things without discussing it first.

DON'T: Allow others to speak to the blind person through you (for example, if a waiter asks YOU what the blind person wants to order, you might respond "I'm not sure. You can ask him!")

DON'T: Take over when a blind person is trying to do something; give them time and space to do it on their own.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Does he need to carry his cane in public?** Yes. He should carry his cane at all times. It's his tool for independence and signifies a visually impaired person.
2. **Can he cross streets by himself?** Street crossing is part of the regular orientation and mobility program, but please check with O&M staff about any safety issues for your loved one.
3. **Can I leave him home alone?** After training, many blind individuals are capable of living independently in the community. Please check with the person's instructors to see if there are any exceptions for the person you are concerned about.
4. **Can he still drive?** NO! Persons who are legally blind are not legally able to operate a car.
5. **Can he still do work around the house?** Absolutely! Some of the traditional roles may need to change a bit, but he should still be expected to make whatever contributions he can.

More Questions? Please call 708-202-2272

Or visit

<http://www.hines.va.gov/services/blind/index.asp>

Helpful Hints

1. Change the size of objects/images. For example, use large print, large button phones, or optical devices.
2. Improve lighting; reduce glare.
3. Use contrasting colors for viewing objects: put a black piece of paper under a light colored object.
4. Use bright, clear colors, such as white, black or yellow; avoid pastels.
5. Decrease visual clutter by reducing busy patterns.
6. Use markings for reference (velcro or fabric paint): number 1 on the microwave, number 5 on the telephone, 350/450 degrees on the stove.
7. Be organized: a place for everything, and everything in its place.
8. Give simple verbal directions: avoid pointing or saying "over there". If the person needs more assistance, offer them your arm to guide them.
9. Try your best to give good visual descriptions of scenery, situations, or events.
10. Remember that a blind person is capable of doing many things; so be sure to share tasks, chores, and responsibilities.