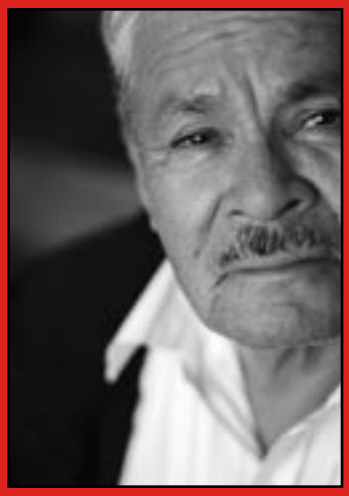
Educating Your Community
About
Vision Rehabilitation



Tips and Tools for Making Vision a Health Priority

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute

Healthy People 2010 Vision

Educating Your Community About Vision Rehabilitation

Tips and Tools for Making Vision a Health Priority

This Handbook is for people who want to help promote eye health education in their communities. It contains:

- Facts about vision rehabilitation
- Activity suggestions
- Promotional materials
- Reproducible brochure.

This Handbook is part of the Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit. See the inside back cover for more information about the toolkit.

This Handbook is from the National Eye Institute (NEI), the lead agency for Healthy Vision 2010. The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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Contents

Welcome to Healthy Vision 2010 1

Help Increase the Use of Vision Rehabilitation Services and Adaptive Devices 3

Facts About Vision Rehabilitation 11

Newspaper or Newsletter Article: "How Can People With Low Vision Get More Out of Life?" 15

Radio Public Service Announcements..... 17

Print Public Service Announcements 21

Brochure To Copy and Hand Out: "How Can People With Low Vision Get More Out of Life?" 23

Welcome to Healthy Vision 2010

Millions of Americans have a visual impairment that cannot be corrected with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. This visual impairment is called low vision.

Vision rehabilitation can help individuals live more safely and independently, even if they have a visual impairment that is not correctable with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. People should ask their eye care professional about how to make the most of their remaining vision and how to continue to perform everyday activities.

Increasing the use of vision rehabilitation services and adaptive devices is an objective of Healthy Vision 2010. Healthy Vision 2010 is one component of Healthy People 2010, a comprehensive framework for improving the health of our Nation sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Use the materials, articles, and suggestions in this booklet anywhere you meet people who need help.

Here are some ideas:

- Cut out, copy, and distribute the brochure, newsletter article, and print public service announcements (PSAs).
- Include the newsletter article and PSAs in your publications or on your intranet or Website.
- Record the radio PSAs and play them on your audio system, on-hold line, or station.

- Read the suggestions in the “Help Increase the Use of Vision Rehabilitation…” section. These tips can help your organization or business become part of a community-wide effort to increase the use of vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices by people with low vision.

Learn how others are helping. Get the most current information and materials, and report your activities at www.healthyvision2010.org. This Website is updated regularly.

Thank you for giving your time and talents to the important effort of contributing to the safety and independence of people with low vision. Best wishes for your success.

Help Increase the Use of Vision Rehabilitation Services and Adaptive Devices

Help is available for people who have a visual impairment that is not correctable with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery and that interferes with their ability to perform everyday activities. This visual impairment is called low vision.

Most people with low vision are not aware that numerous vision rehabilitation services are available to teach them new ways to perform everyday activities, and to help them change their environments to make it safer and easier to get around. They do not know that specialists in low vision can prescribe visual and adaptive devices and can teach people how to use them. These devices can make it easier to read, cook, work, travel independently, and engage in social and leisure activities.

Vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices can help people with low vision make the most of the vision they have to live more safely and independently:

- Orientation and mobility specialists can train people to move about more safely in the home and travel by themselves.
- Vision rehabilitation specialists can train people to use visual devices, adaptive techniques, and community resources, including support groups.

- Visual aids and adaptive devices can help people enhance their remaining vision. Some examples include magnifiers, large-print books, check-writing guides, and telescopic lenses.

- Specialists in low vision can prescribe visual devices and teach people how to use them.

Use the ideas in this section and the other materials in this Handbook to help people with low vision become more aware of where to find vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices, and how these services and devices can help. Use the suggestions individually or as part of a community-wide vision rehabilitation program. Whatever you do will help people with low vision learn that there is help for living more independently and for making social and leisure activities more enjoyable.

To learn how local chapters of national ophthalmological, optometric, professional, or voluntary organizations are already working to develop community-wide activities and programs in your area, and to get the latest information about vision rehabilitation, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org.

Answering the following questions will help you to identify your target audience and will help you plan and carry out activities that will promote the use of visual aids and adaptive devices.

Who can benefit from information about vision rehabilitation services and adaptive devices?

- People aged 65 and older who have decreased visual function that interferes with their ability to perform everyday activities.

- People under age 65 who are particularly at risk for low vision, including Hispanics/Latinos and African Americans.
- People who may be aware of others who have symptoms of low vision.
- People who may think that nothing can be done to help their visual impairment.
- People who understand that they have low vision but are not aware of services and devices available to assist them.

What does your audience need to know?

Vision rehabilitation can help people live more safely and independently, even if they have a visual impairment that is not correctable with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. People should ask their eye care professional about how to make the most of their remaining vision and how to continue to perform everyday activities.

Community health and eye care professionals can take the lead.

- Print and distribute the brochure in this Handbook. Help inform people about vision rehabilitation services and devices. Include contact information for vision rehabilitation services.
- Encourage local health educators to incorporate information about vision rehabilitation services and devices into their existing programs, particularly those serving older people.
- Ask your state agency that serves the visually impaired or your local vision rehabilitation agency to suggest a spokesperson who can give a speech at civic, employee, cultural, faith, and fraternal group activities.

- Offer in-service training seminars for medical, health, and social service agencies.
- Record the PSAs to play for callers while on hold at health care centers, clinics, and hospitals.
- Enlarge the print PSAs in this booklet to use as posters and copy the other materials in this booklet to display in waiting areas at health care centers, clinics, hospitals, courtesy vans for older people, community centers, and libraries. Check the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org to find other vision rehabilitation materials.
- Provide copies of the materials in this booklet in places where older people and their families, friends, and caregivers gather.

Faith communities can get families involved.

- Include the enclosed PSAs and the newsletter article in the publications of your faith group.
- Display vision rehabilitation information and demonstrate visual and adaptive devices after faith services or social events.
- Host events that can raise awareness, like a walking tour, mini-golf tournament, car wash, bicycle ride, or a chess tournament.
- Arrange for the parks and recreation department to provide lighting for playing fields so that people with low vision can exercise safely. Have volunteers available to walk with people who need assistance.

Community leaders can raise awareness.

- Issue a proclamation about the importance of helping people with low vision. Proclaim "Vision Rehabilitation Outreach (Day, Week, or Month)."
- Be a spokesperson. Local community leaders, celebrities, performers, or elected officials can help raise awareness about vision rehabilitation.
- Include vision rehabilitation as a topic in press materials and speeches about health issues that concern older Americans and Hispanics/Latinos.
- Participate in events and activities sponsored by local vision rehabilitation organizations.

Special events can reach new people.

- Schedule events during health observances, especially during Healthy Vision Month in May, which was established by the National Eye Institute (NEI) in 2003.
- Invite local organizations that provide vision rehabilitation services to set up a booth and distribute information or free novelty items at your event.
- List your community events with the local chamber of commerce, police department, and other local organizations so that vision rehabilitation service providers can be aware of your event.
- Ask a high school shop class to volunteer to build a booth that vision rehabilitation service providers can use at community events such as health fairs, parades, festivals, sports events, and walk-for-health events.
- Set up a vision rehabilitation exhibit at your local library. Arrange with a vision rehabilitation service provider to demonstrate visual and adaptive devices.

- Set up a section at your local library for large-print books and periodicals.
- Host a large-print read-a-thon. Older adults with low vision can read to children. Invite community leaders to participate.

Employers can support employees and families.

- Establish a vision rehabilitation services information center in your workplace cafeteria or health center.
- Arrange for a specialist in vision rehabilitation to visit your worksite for a one-day onsite assessment and for referrals. Invite employees to bring family members who could benefit.
- Ask your personnel director to post the newsletter article in this booklet on your company intranet and Website.
- Work with your insurance coordinators to help employees understand what vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices are covered for employees and their families.
- Use the article in this booklet in your customer mailings and in employee newsletters.
- Select materials in this booklet to use as inserts in paychecks and other employee communications materials.

Businesses can support community-wide efforts.

- Offer coupons for evaluations by specialists in diagnosing low vision, or distribute coupons for vision rehabilitation services or visual and adaptive devices.

- Use inserts in utility bills, bank statements, and shopping circulars to remind customers to encourage people in their lives who may have low vision to talk to their eye care professional.
- Offer to create placemats, tray liners, or menus with large print for restaurants.
- Print large-print messages on receipts, placemats, take-out food containers, and napkins.
- Record the PSAs in this booklet to play on your public audio or on-hold systems.
- Invite local organizations that provide vision evaluation and vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices to participate in health fairs sponsored by your shopping center or business. You could start smaller by allowing service providers to set up a small exhibit of visual and adaptive devices and vision rehabilitation information at your store.
- Offer novelties such as a pocket-size magnifying glass imprinted with contact information for vision rehabilitation services.

Join thousands of other businesses, employers, health centers, medical professionals, and citizens across the country who are helping people learn about vision rehabilitation. Every effort helps people with low vision make the most of the vision they have.

Share in the Success of Healthy Vision 2010

Others can learn from the activities you develop. Report your activities to your local community organizer, and visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org to share your efforts and successes. Also use the Website to learn what others are doing to help more people use vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices. Thank you for your efforts.

Some Simple Steps

- Keep track of the following:
  - Number and type of materials distributed.
  - Number of people participating.
  - Number and type of inquiries received about vision rehabilitation.
  - Increase in the use of vision rehabilitation services.
  - Media coverage: Where the newsletter or stories about your event appeared.
- After the activity or event, answer the following questions:
  - What worked?
  - What challenges did you encounter?
  - What suggestions would you give others who might plan a similar activity or event?

Become a part of the national effort to improve the use of vision rehabilitation services and devices.

Facts About Vision Rehabilitation

Vision rehabilitation can help people live more safely and independently, even if they have a visual impairment that is not correctable with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. People should ask their eye care professionals about how to make the most of their remaining vision and how to continue to perform everyday activities.

Most people are not aware of the numerous vision rehabilitation services available to teach people with low vision new ways to perform everyday activities and to help them change their environment to make it safer and easier to get around. Specialists in low vision can diagnose visual impairments, prescribe visual and adaptive devices, and teach people to use these devices to make it easier to read, cook, work, travel independently, and enjoy social and leisure activities.

What is low vision?

A visual impairment, not corrected by standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery, that interferes with a person's ability to perform daily activities is called low vision. Low vision includes loss of visual acuity (blurred, obstructed, or spotty vision) and/or loss of visual field (narrow field of vision, or tunnel vision). An eye care professional can tell the difference between normal changes in the aging eye and low vision.

What Are the Symptoms of Low Vision?

Even with standard glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery to correct your vision, is it still difficult to:

- Recognize the faces of friends and relatives?
- Do things that require seeing well up close, like reading, cooking, sewing, or making repairs around the house?
- Match the color of clothes?
- Do things at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to?
- Read street and bus signs or the names of stores?

Who needs to know about vision rehabilitation?

- People aged 65 and older who have decreased visual function that interferes with their daily activities.
- People under age 65 who are particularly at risk for low vision, including Hispanics/Latinos and African Americans.
- People who may be aware of others who have symptoms of low vision.
- People who may think that nothing can be done to help their visual impairment.

- People who understand that they have low vision but are not aware of services and devices available to assist them.

How is low vision detected?

A specialist in low vision can determine the cause of low vision during a comprehensive dilated eye exam.

Can low vision be treated?

Yes. When vision cannot be restored, vision rehabilitation can help. Health care professionals work to detect low vision and recommend the appropriate treatment to prevent further vision loss, as well as vision rehabilitation services and visual and adaptive devices to help make the most of remaining vision.

A specialist in low vision can:

- Prescribe visual devices such as high-powered glasses, magnifiers, and telescopic lenses to help make it easier to read the mail, street and bus signs, prescription bottles, and money.
- Teach people how to use visual and adaptive devices to keep financial records, manage medications, and use household appliances.

Vision rehabilitation teachers can:

- Teach techniques to make it easier and safer to perform daily activities, such as cooking and organizing clothing and personal care products.
- Offer career counseling to make it easier to continue working.
- Recommend ways to use better lighting and reflective tape to make it easier and safer to move about at home.

- Locate resources for large-print books; computers with large print or speech output; and appliances such as talking clocks, timers, and calculators that can make everyday tasks easier and more enjoyable.
- Teach people to use raised markings on household items to help identify settings, such as those on a stove, coffeepot, or other appliances.

Orientation and mobility specialists can:

- Train people to move about more safely in the home and travel by themselves.
- Suggest community resources and devices that can make it possible to get around more safely and independently.
- Recommend ways to continue leisure activities, hobbies, and sports.

Can low vision be cured?

No. Generally, sight that is lost cannot be restored. With early diagnosis and treatment, many causes of low vision can be slowed or stopped. Regular comprehensive dilated eye exams are essential to early diagnosis. If you believe that your vision has recently changed, you should see your eye care professional as soon as possible.

Investigate and learn.

Be persistent. Remember that you are your own best health advocate. Investigate and learn as much as you can, especially if you have been told that you may lose more vision. It is important to ask questions about vision rehabilitation and get answers. Find out where to get more information about services and devices that can help you. It's your vision. Make the most of it.

Here is an article you can put in your company or organizational newsletter or post on your company bulletin board or Intranet.

How Can People With Low Vision Get More Out of Life?

Vision rehabilitation can help individuals live more safely and independently, even if they have a visual impairment that is not correctable with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. People should ask their eye care professional about how to make the most of their remaining vision and how to continue to perform everyday activities.

Many Americans with low vision have difficulty reading mail, shopping, cooking, and watching TV. The challenges associated with vision loss can seem overwhelming at times and may result in feelings of anxiety, frustration, or depression.

Vision rehabilitation cannot restore vision to the normal range, but it can help people make the most of remaining vision.

Eye care and vision rehabilitation professionals can help people find information and support for coping with low vision. Vision rehabilitation services—programs, devices, and technology—help people adapt to their environments and learn new ways of doing things to improve their safety, independence, and confidence. Most importantly, vision rehabilitation services can help people with low vision maintain their everyday activities and to continue to enjoy life.

Vision rehabilitation combines training, counseling, and visual and adaptive devices to teach skills that can give people with low vision the confidence to function as independently as possible by maximizing their remaining sight. Vision rehabilitation provides people with support and skills to deal with vision loss, advice on how to travel safely, tips for taking care of their homes and themselves, methods for continuing to work, and ways to enjoy leisure activities.

The positive impact of vision rehabilitation can be enormous. Visual devices such as high-powered glasses, magnifiers, and telescopic lenses can make it possible for people to once again read street and bus signs, books, magazines, and medicine labels, and to cook, shop, watch TV, and more.

Adaptive devices such as audio and large-print clocks, timers, calculators, remote controls, watches, and reading material make it easier to relax and enjoy recreational activities. A support group of other people with low vision can also be a source of practical solutions, support, and friendship.

It's your vision. Make the most of it.

For more information on vision rehabilitation, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org, sponsored by the National Eye Institute (NEI) and the Healthy Vision Consortium.

The NEI conducts and supports research that leads to sight-saving treatment and plays a key role in reducing visual impairment and blindness. The NEI is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Radio Public Service Announcements

Vision Rehabilitation
Radio PSA: 15-second spot

“Make the Most of Your Sight”

Station announcer:

As you age, your vision can fail because of eye disease, leaving you with what is called low vision.

But there are many vision rehabilitation programs, services, and devices that can help you lead a full and productive life.

Ask your eye care professional. It’s your vision. Make the most of it.

For more information, contact [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

15-second spot

"It's Your Vision"

Station announcer:

Does your vision make it hard to read, shop, cook, or see the TV or street signs?

If your vision can’t be corrected even with standard glasses, contact lenses, surgery, or medicine, you may have low vision. Ask your eye care professional if vision rehabilitation can help you live more safely and independently.

It’s your vision. Make the most of it.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

Vision Rehabilitation
Radio PSA: 30-second spot

“Make the Most of Your Sight”

Station announcer:

As you age, your vision can fail because of eye disease, leaving you with what is called low vision.

Standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery may not help.

But there are many vision rehabilitation programs, services, and devices that can help you continue to lead a full and productive life.

Vision rehabilitation can help you learn new ways of doing things, at home and on the job.

You can learn to use assistive devices to adapt to your low vision.

Ask your eye care professional. It’s your vision. Make the most of it.

For more information, contact [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

30-second spot

"Live More Safely and Independently"

Station announcer:

Does your vision make it hard to read, shop, cook, or see the TV or street signs?

If your vision can't be corrected, even with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery, you may have low vision.

Vision rehabilitation can help you live more safely and independently. It combines training, career counseling, support, and adaptive and visual devices to make the most of your remaining vision.

Ask your eye care professional. It's your vision. Make the most of it.

A message from [insert the name of the sponsoring organization].

Print Public Service Announcements

This booklet will help people make the most of their vision.

Call for a free booklet from the National Eye Institute:
1-877-LOW VISION
(1-877-569-8474)
or visit NEI at:
www.nei.nih.gov.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute

When regular eyeglasses don't help, other things might.

There are services and devices that can help people make the most of the vision they have.
Call for a free booklet:
1-877-LOW VISION
(1-877-569-8474)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute

Add your logo and copy this brochure to hand out at your events, or add an address on the back and mail it out.

Visual and adaptive devices include the following:

- Magnifying devices that can help you see print on letters, bills, reading materials, and street signs more clearly.
- Closed-circuit TVs that enlarge the appearance of print.
- Large-print and audio books.
- Writing guides to help you write clear notes, memos, and checks.
- Raised markings to help you safely use household appliances.

Be persistent. Learn as much as you can, especially if you have been told that you may lose more vision. Remember that you are your best health advocate.

It's your vision. Make the most of it.

For more information about vision rehabilitation, visit the Healthy Vision 2010 Website at www.healthyvision2010.org.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
National Institutes of Health
National Eye Institute

Healthy People 2010 Vision

How Can People With Low Vision Get More Out of Life?

If you have low vision, vision rehabilitation can help you live more safely and independently. Low vision means that, even with standard glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery, your vision interferes with your ability to perform everyday activities. Reading, shopping, cooking, seeing the TV, and writing can seem challenging. Ask your eye care professional how you can make the most of your remaining vision and continue to enjoy important daily activities.

What is vision rehabilitation?

Vision rehabilitation teaches you new ways to perform everyday activities, even if you have low vision. It can help you change your environment to make it safer and easier to get around. Specialists in low vision can prescribe visual and adaptive devices and can teach you how to use them to make it easier to read, cook, work, travel independently, and enjoy social and leisure activities.

What are the symptoms of low vision?

Even with your glasses, do you have difficulty:

- Recognizing faces of friends and relatives?
- Doing things at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to?
- Reading street and bus signs or the names of stores?

How is low vision detected?

Your eye care professional can tell whether your vision can or cannot be corrected with standard glasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery.

Can low vision be cured?

No. Generally, sight that is lost cannot be restored. With early diagnosis and treatment, many causes of low vision can be slowed or stopped. Regular comprehensive dilated eye exams are essential to early diagnosis. If you believe that your vision has recently changed, you should see your eye care professional as soon as possible.

Can low vision be treated?

Yes. Eye care professionals and vision rehabilitation specialists work with you to help you make the most of your remaining vision. They can prescribe visual and adaptive devices and can teach you how to use them. They can also teach you how to travel independently, make your home safer, and continue working.

What can vision rehabilitation do for me?

A specialist in vision rehabilitation can help you:

- Decide which visual devices are best for you, prescribe them, and teach you how to use them.
- Find new ways to perform your normal, routine activities and maintain your independence.
- Adapt your environment to live more safely.
- Continue working at your job.
- Find individual or group support to offer practical solutions and friendship.

Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit

The Healthy Vision 2010 Toolkit is an interactive CD-ROM that includes Handbooks, the Community Action Guide, and the Speaker's Guide. These resources also are available on the Web at www.healthyvision2010.org/, and are targeted to those who want to make vision a health priority in their communities.

- **The Handbooks** each focus on a different Healthy Vision 2010 objective. They include community-based activity suggestions, newspaper/newsletter articles, public service announcements, and brochures to copy and to hand out.

- **The Community Action Guide** includes a planning timeline, media materials, tips for involving your community, and more.

- **The Speaker's Guide** contains presentations to engage and inform communities about eye health. PowerPoint, Word, and Acrobat versions of each presentation, along with speaker's notes, are included. Topics include injury and safety, eye disease, vision rehabilitation, and others.

Healthy Vision 2010 Objectives

Healthy People 2010, the prevention framework of the Nation, challenges individuals, communities, and professionals to take specific steps to ensure that good health and long life are enjoyed by all. Healthy Vision 2010 refers to the vision objectives in Focus Area 28 of Healthy People 2010.

Following are the 10 vision objectives:

28-1 Increase the proportion of persons who have a dilated eye examination at appropriate intervals.
28-2 Increase the proportion of preschool children aged 5 years and under who receive vision screening.
28-3 Reduce uncorrected visual impairment due to refractive errors.
28-4 Reduce blindness and visual impairment in children and adolescents aged 17 years and under.
28-5 Reduce visual impairment due to diabetic retinopathy.
28-6 Reduce visual impairment due to glaucoma.
28-7 Reduce visual impairment due to cataract.
28-8 Reduce occupational eye injury.
28-9 Increase the use of appropriate personal protective eyewear in recreational activities and hazardous situations around the home.
28-10 Increase vision rehabilitation.
28-10a Increase the use of rehabilitation services by persons with visual impairments.
28-10b Increase the use of visual and adaptive devices by persons with visual impairments.

For copies and information, please visit www.healthyvision2010.org.