



**Commission
for the Blind**

HANDBOOK FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES



INTRODUCTION

The New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) *Handbook for Children's Services* will familiarize you with the NYSCB Children's Program. The goal of the children's program is to provide your child with the assistance necessary to achieve goals and become an independent, participating member of the community.

NYSCB administers programs for individuals who are blind. Please contact your local NYSCB district office for information on vocational programs, programs for older individuals and the independent living program.

NYSCB Mission Statement: NYSCB's mission is to enhance employability, to maximize independence, and to assist in the development of the capacities and strengths of people who are blind and visually impaired.

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WHAT IS THE NEW YORK STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND?

The New York State Commission for the Blind is part of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services. It provides direct services to persons who are blind through district offices located throughout the state. NYSCB provides vocational rehabilitation services for eligible individuals to achieve an employment goal. NYSCB also provides other necessary services to children and adults even when they are not pursuing a specific vocational/employment goal.

HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR SERVICES?

You can apply for services for your child by contacting one of the NYSCB district offices (see Appendix A for listings) and obtaining an application for services. Complete the application and submit it to the district office. An initial interview will then be scheduled with a NYSCB children's consultant. You can also be referred to NYSCB by a school, a doctor, a private agency serving individuals who are blind or other community, health or social service organizations.

Additional background information, such as medical records or school records may be needed in the application process. Recent medical reports that verify your child's disability can be useful and may be requested. If these are not available, NYSCB will assist you in obtaining this information.

The NYSCB Children's Program works with children who are between the ages of birth through 10. At age 10 your child will likely be referred to the NYSCB Vocational Rehabilitation Program. If your child will be in school until age 21, your child will be referred to the vocational rehabilitation program, if appropriate, at age 18.

In the provision of all services, NYSCB does not discriminate based on age, gender, disability, race, religion or ethnic origin.

To receive services, your child needs to be legally blind (or presumed legally blind) and a resident of New York State.

During the initial interview with the children's consultant, the consultant may discuss eligibility, advocacy services, assistance that may be given during the *Individualized Education Plan* (IEP) process, the degree of parent and

consultant involvement expected, assistance in the transition to the adult vocational rehabilitation program, the appeals process and participant's rights and responsibilities.

WHAT IS AN *INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE PLAN*?

The *Individualized Service Plan* (ISP) is a written record of the child's individualized services, developed through the mutual participation of the children's consultant and family/child. The ISP formalizes all the services that have been developed and agreed upon by the children's consultant and the family/child to promote reaching the child's goal(s). It also documents the responsibilities assumed by all parties. The ISP must be signed by both the children's consultant and the child's parent. A copy of the ISP will be provided to the parent.

WHAT SERVICES DOES NYSCB PROVIDE FOR CHILDREN?

The following rehabilitation services may be available to your child as part of his/her ISP to assist in reaching his/her goals:

- Orientation and mobility instruction
- Rehabilitation teaching
- Social casework
- Low vision examinations and provision of some low vision devices, including glasses
- Adaptive equipment
- Braille instruction
- Diagnostic evaluations
- Social skills activities

These services are contracted through private agencies for the blind, private vendors, physicians and low vision specialists. All services are subject to availability of funds. Other benefits or alternative sources of funding are used first, when available, to purchase many of the above services.

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THE BEST USE OF NYSCB CHILDREN'S SERVICES?

1. Make a commitment to participate fully in the planning and accomplishment of your child's goals.
2. Travel and communication skills are key to independence. Your commitment to training is fundamental to your child's acquisition of these critical skills.
3. Stay in touch with your NYSCB children's consultant. Keep your consultant posted on how things are going.

WHAT IS THE NYSCB RECORD OF SERVICES?

A record of services is kept for each individual involved with NYSCB so that information regarding services is accurately documented. It contains information about your child's application, consultant notes, medical reports, the ISP service plan and other types of related information.

All information is confidential and will not be shared with any individual or organization unless NYSCB has your written permission. Parents (or guardians) have access to their child's record of services, subject to certain procedures and restrictions. Your consultant can explain the procedure for obtaining information from your record of services.

To provide services, it is often necessary to obtain or release information about your child. Appendix B – Participant Confidentiality – explains why and how this is done.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND PARTICIPANT APPEALS

You might disagree with decisions made during your child's involvement with NYSCB. You have the right to appeal a consultant's action or decision in any area when you and the consultant cannot resolve the disagreement.

An appeals process has been developed to protect your child's rights and to review decisions in an impartial manner. NYSCB's objective is to reach a mutually agreeable solution as quickly and simply as possible. More

detailed information on the appeals process can be provided by your consultant.

When you disagree with a decision made by your consultant, attempt to clearly communicate your concerns in an effort to resolve the disagreement. If this proves unsuccessful, tell the consultant that you would like to appeal the decision.

There are two avenues available to you in the appeals process:

- **INITIAL REVIEW** - An initial review is a review conducted by the district manager or senior counselor with a family member and the children's consultant in an effort to resolve a participant's dissatisfaction;
- **ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW** - An administrative review is a review of an agency action or decision that is available to a participant at a higher level of agency management.

An initial review can be obtained through a request to the NYSCB children's consultant, district manager or senior counselor. An administrative review can be initiated by contacting the NYSCB district office manager by telephone or in writing. A written request is preferred.

When preparing a written request, you should include the following information:

1. Your child's name and address (including mailing address)
2. A phone number at which you can be reached
3. The name, address and telephone number of any individual you will have representing you at the hearing (such as your attorney or other advocate)
4. The name and district office and telephone number of the NYSCB staff member(s) involved in the issue being disputed
5. A description of the decision or action you are appealing (Be as specific as possible.)
6. Copies of any written notice from NYSCB relative to your appeal
7. An indication of your preferred mode of communication, i.e., Braille, large print, electronic, voice, etc.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS IN THE APPEALS PROCESS?

You have the right to be accompanied or represented by an authorized representative such as legal counsel, lay advocate, relative, or other spokesperson. NYSCB is not responsible for the costs of your representative.

You also have the right to examine and introduce pertinent information from your record of services. There are restrictions regarding the release of some record of service information. Your consultant can explain the procedure for obtaining information from the record of services and any restrictions that may apply.

APPENDICES

Appendix A *NYSCB District Offices*

Appendix B *Family Rights and Responsibilities*

Appendix C *Participant Confidentiality – Personal Privacy Law*

**APPENDIX A
NYSCB DISTRICT OFFICES**

Buffalo District Office
295 Main Street
Room 545
Buffalo, NY 14203
(716) 847-3516

White Plains District Office
445 Hamilton Avenue
Room 503
White Plains, NY 10601
(914) 993-5370

Rochester Outstation
259 Monroe Square
Room 303
Rochester, NY 14607
(585) 238-8110

New York City District Office
80 Maiden Lane
23rd Floor
New York, NY 10038
(212) 825-5710

Syracuse District Office
100 South Salina Street
Suite 105
Syracuse, NY 13202
(315) 423-5417

Hempstead District Office
50 Clinton Street
Suite 210
Hempstead, NY 11550
(516) 564-4311

Garden City Outstation
711 Stewart Avenue
Suite 4
Garden City, NY 11530
(516) 564-4311

Harlem District Office
163 West 125th Street
Room 209
New York, NY 10027
(212) 961-4440

Albany District Office
52 Washington Street
South Building, Room 201
Rensselaer, NY 12144
(518) 473-1675

APPENDIX B FAMILY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

NYSCB will ensure that your child's rights are protected in the provision of services. You have an obligation to assist your child in making progress towards his/her goals. The ISP is not a contract but a plan for services. The plan will be carried out provided that your child remains eligible for services, funding is available to support the plan, and the plan is consistent with current NYSCB policy and procedures. Your child's ISP will be reviewed by you and your children's consultant at least every 18 months.

Your rights and responsibilities are listed below:

RIGHTS

- It is your right to be fully involved in the development of your child's plan.
- It is your right to be consulted before your child's case is closed.
- If your child's case is closed on the basis on ineligibility, you will have the opportunity to be involved in the decision.
- If you are dissatisfied about your child receiving or being denied services under this plan, you are encouraged to discuss this with the children's consultant.
- If you are still dissatisfied, you may pursue an appeal.
- All personal information furnished for your child's rehabilitation will be held confidential. You may, however, be asked to waive confidentiality in accordance with established policy and procedure.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- To participate in carrying out this plan.
- To keep the children's consultant advised of any changes that affect your child's plan such as changes in health, address, medical insurance, telephone number, other benefits available.

**APPENDIX C
PARTICIPANT CONFIDENTIALITY –
PERSONAL PRIVACY LAW**

All information secured by NYSCB will be maintained as strictly confidential.

NYSCB will always ask for your written permission to obtain or release information about your child. Your cooperation is necessary for us to provide services that may benefit your child.

NYSCB will use select information to determine if your child is eligible for services and, if so, to determine which services will enable your child to reach his/her goals.

Sections 8701-8714 of the Unconsolidated Laws of New York give NYSCB the right to collect select information about your child.

To plan for services, we may communicate with other persons to learn more about your child. For example, we may

- obtain medical, educational and social information, as necessary;
- arrange necessary assessments and services; or
- contact the Committee on Special Education, a teacher of the visually impaired, a social worker, or other school personnel.

In addition to using the information you give us in this way, New York State may also use the information to develop statistics about people receiving services to assist in the management of these programs.

If you refuse to provide us with the information we need, it may prevent us from finding out if you are eligible for services, and we will not be able to act on your application for services.

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services will make this material available in an appropriate format upon request.

NYSCB Children's Handbook
Commission for the Blind
Capital View Office Park
South Building, Room 201
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, NY 12144
Phone: 518-474-6812
Fax: 518-486-5819

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