

Eligibility and Application

Policy Summary

The Vision Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS) determines if the applicant is eligible for services provided by the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program. Once the client has been deemed eligible for OIB services, the VRS assists the client to complete the necessary application to open an OIB case.

Eligibility for the OIB Program

The OIB program provides independent living services to individuals age 55 or older who are blind or have a significant visual impairment.

- To ensure an applicant is at least 55 years old, the VRS must request to see a state-issued identification to confirm the client meets the federal age requirement of the program.
- If the client is employed and refuses to open a VR employment 110 case, they can still be seen if they meet OIB criteria (VRS should document the refusal in a case note).
- If the individual has a significant visual impairment that is impeding work, they must be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). A client cannot have a VR case and an OIB case open at the same time.

There is not a residency restriction for the program.

- If a client is a “snowbird” and resides six months in one state and six months in another state; whichever state, they reside in at the time services are needed must provide the service. If a client has an open case in another state, the VRS must contact the other state (with an Authorization to Disclose Information SFN 1059) to determine what services have been provided so there is no duplication of services.

To help determine eligibility, the VRS may need to obtain the applicant’s latest eye report. This will help to determine eligibility requirements as well as the severity of visual impairment.

- To request medical records, the VRS must get an Authorization to Disclose Information from the client and file upload it to AWARE ND.

The applicant cannot reside in a skilled nursing facility, nursing home, or basic care facility and be served by the OIB program.

- If the applicant resides in a skilled nursing facility, nursing home, or basic care facility, refer the applicant to the North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB). If the applicant prefers the VRS to contact NDVS/SB, then an Authorization to Disclose Information (SFN 1059) must be completed prior to the referral being made.
- In the event the applicant resides in a skilled nursing facility or nursing home for rehabilitation and will return to their home within 30 days, the VRS can put the individual into the referral module until they are discharged home. Enter an anticipated date of discharge in the comments section. A case for the client should be opened after they are discharged from the skilled nursing facility or nursing home.
- The client will complete an application when they are home.
- If a current client is moving into a skilled nursing facility or a nursing home, the VRS should give the client contact information for NDVS/SB. If the client prefers the VRS to contact NDVS/SB, then an Authorization to Disclose Information (SFN 1059) is completed and uploaded into AWARE ND.
- The VRS must follow the [Case Closure.docx](#).

Assisted Living Facility

The applicant can reside in an assisted living facility and receive services from the OIB program. Most assisted living facilities have a kitchenette in the apartment. If unsure if the client is in an assisted living facility, contact the Central Office.

Application for Services

The VRS must complete the Application for Older Blind Program (SFN 186). The client must sign and date the application. The VRS must upload SFN 186 in the case file in AWARE ND.

- Electronic signatures should be used as an exception. Best practice is to get a physical signature. There must be documentation to justify why an electronic signature was preferred versus a physical signature in the case note.
- Verbal authorization should only be used as a last resort. There must be thorough documentation explaining when and how the consent was given and by whom.

When to Complete an Application

- The application must be signed prior to the distribution of any equipment. The date the client signs the application is the date the client becomes a participant in the OIB program.
- The application can be accepted using a physical signature, electronic signature, or verbal authorization from the client.
- If the signature is electronic or a verbal authorization this must be thoroughly documented.
- If a case was closed in the OIB program and the client is seeking services again, a new application, signature, and a new assessment must be completed.

Inputting Application Information into AWARE ND

The VRS must input the application information into AWARE ND within 14 days of client signature and date. Once the information has been entered into AWARE ND, an office support staff, or designated staff member will review the information entered into AWARE ND to verify the accuracy of the information entered.

Summary of Changes

9-2023 – Took out that client cannot be working for pay and added that client can be seen in OIB program if they refuse to open an OIB case.

6-2026 – Updated for accessibility. Updated so documents were uploaded to AWARE instead of hard copy files.