

# THE SOUTH DAKOTA REHABILITATION CENTER FOR THE BLIND

## **Mission Statement**

***The South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind provides assessment and training to individuals with disabilities so they may enhance their independence in their home, work, and community.***

The South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) is located in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. All programs are administered and staffed by the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, a division of the South Dakota Department of Human Services.

The purpose of SDRC is to provide learning opportunities through various programs to assist individuals with disabilities to overcome barriers to personal fulfillment. Whether these barriers are physical, vocational, attitudinal, or social, we teach independent living skills and preparations for employment.

For more information contact: SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, 2900 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street Ste. 101, Sioux Falls, SD 57104, (605) 367-5260 or 1-800-658-5441.

## ABOUT THE CENTER

The South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) is located in a neighborhood comprised of primarily retail businesses near I-29 and 12th street in western Sioux Falls.

Individuals who participate in training at SDRC are referred by a Rehabilitation Counselor or Rehabilitation Teacher from SD Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. SDRC also accepts out-of-state referrals for individuals interested in participating in training classes (non-state residents need an additional referral from a Rehabilitation Counselor from the state). Several apartments, as well as nearby hotels, are available for those who live outside of Sioux Falls.

## SKILLS OF BLINDNESS PROGRAM

The Skills of Blindness training at SDRC includes communications and braille, computers with assistive technology, home management, orientation and mobility, home mechanics, creative arts, individual counseling, peer support, diabetic education, community events, and other life skills activities.

This program consists of individualized training for persons whose visual impairment is creating functional limitations in their daily lives. Services are identified and provided via teaching and counseling in such a manner to assist the individual in achieving their highest level of independence.

Each person in training has regular progress meetings with staff and referring counselor or teacher to report progress, set goals, and project further training needs. Upon completion of training, students return to their homes to utilize the skills they learned in their everyday lives.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Skills taught in communications are individualized to meet the needs of each student. Students have the opportunity to learn non-visual and low vision techniques for money identification, written communication techniques, time telling, accessible calendars, accessible calculators, and digital voice recorders. Information and training is also available for electronic readers, smart phones, and tablets. Students experience methods for adapting games so leisure activities are accessible. Additional skills include money management, organization, and labeling. Students are encouraged to work on projects in class for their personal use.

Students are introduced to braille and offered the opportunity to learn functional and advanced braille skills. Functional braille includes the alphabet, numbers, basic punctuation, and techniques for writing braille. Advanced braille adds contractions, rules, punctuation, and additional signs.

## COMPUTERS WITH ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

SDRC offers computer training, which enables individuals who are blind or visually impaired to efficiently operate a computer with assistive technology. A student's current level of computer and assistive technology knowledge is assessed and instruction begins there. Recommendations for specific assistive technology devices are determined and students are trained in the efficient use of screen readers, screen magnification programs, personal note takers, and refreshable Braille with the Duxbury Braille program.

We have the most up-to-date computer equipment including Mac and PC devices, iPhones and iPads, as well as the assistive technology associated with them.

Students are trained in the efficient use of assistive technology with an emphasis on specific programs they need to utilize. Individual needs and abilities are carefully considered in the development and implementation of individual training plans.

## HOME MANAGEMENT

Home management training increases independent living skills of individuals who are blind or visually impaired. Training is individualized to each student's needs and abilities. Skills taught in home management include meal preparation, eating skills, shopping, cleaning, sewing, clothing care, personal care, labeling, and much more.

Students practice various skills such as meal preparation, food handling, and housecleaning. Cleaning patterns are taught to ensure efficiency and thoroughness in cleaning all surfaces. Non-visual or low vision techniques are taught for doing laundry and hand sewing is taught so minor clothing repairs can be made.

## ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY

Orientation and mobility is training in skills needed to travel safely and independently with vision loss. Orientation is the skill to know where a person is in their environment and where they are going. Mobility includes the skills and tools used to travel safely and efficiently. Various ways of using canes are taught at SDRC. Crossing streets, using public transportation, using GPS devices, finding addresses, and rural and winter travel are all additional skills available to the student who can benefit from them.

Most of the lessons are taught outdoors in residential areas and later in commercial areas. Students need to dress for the weather, as lessons take place in all kinds of weather conditions. Orientation and mobility is taught in real environments where people would normally walk. Students are taught simple skills in the beginning, progressing to more complex skills as they continue training. Most students gain confidence in all areas of their life as they gain skills in orientation and mobility.

## HOME MECHANICS AND CREATIVE ARTS

Home mechanics includes learning the skills for simple indoor and outdoor home repairs, maintenance, and woodworking. Students gain hands-on experiences through simple repairs and projects.

The Rehabilitation Center also offers a complete creative arts area. Students work on craft projects using alternative techniques. Popular creative arts include: ceramics, leather crafts, card making, scrapbooking, knitting, and sewing. Therapeutic skills training is very important, in addition to learning leisure skills, group training provides an opportunity for socialization with other students.

## COMMUNITY TRAINING EVENTS

Community Training events are planned for students to apply the skills learned at the Center and promote integration within the community. Examples of events include, but are not limited to: descriptive movies at the local movie theater, eating at restaurants, and visits to local points of interest and events. In addition to socialization, these events provide the opportunity for continuous application of orientation and mobility skills of traveling in unfamiliar areas.

## COUNSELING AND PEER SUPPORT

One-on-one counseling addresses the emotional and social needs of those who are experiencing vision loss. This may include working through accepting and acknowledging feelings and emotions affected by vision loss. The SDRC counselor serves as the liaison with SDRC and the referring counselor or teacher.

Peer support is another tool that helps individuals with vision loss to develop coping skills related to their loss of vision. The peer support setting provides an environment for individuals to share their feelings regarding blindness or vision loss in addition to discussing coping mechanisms to help while they are going through the journey to acceptance.

## LENGTH OF TRAINING

The evaluation period allows staff to determine and evaluate your needs and together develop a plan of goals and objectives. Evaluations typically range from several days to two weeks. Individualized plans are written to include goals and objectives based on each person's unique needs. The goals and objectives demonstrate each individual's progression and duration of training.

## GUIDELINES

- Behavior that results in physical or verbal abuse or deliberate aggression toward yourself or others will not be tolerated.
- Infringement on anyone's rights, space, or property is not allowed.
- No alcohol or drugs are allowed on the property.
- **NO WEAPONS ALLOWED ON PREMISES.**
- Smoking is permitted outside the building only in designated areas.
- Breaks are to be taken in the multipurpose room or outside of the building. Computer usage is only allowed during your designated computer class time.
- Personal phone calls are made during breaks.

## ATTENDANCE

Attendance is mandatory during the duration of the training plan. Unexcused absences will be reported to the referring Rehabilitation Counselor or Rehabilitation

Teacher and may result in termination of training. If you are going to be late or absent, you need to call or notify the Center by 8:15 a.m. on the day of scheduled training.

## MEALS

Meals are not provided at SDRC. Individuals should bring sack lunches. A microwave, pop machine, and refrigerator are available in the multipurpose room for lunch and break times.

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation during training is available through local taxi, bus service, paratransit, or other private arrangements. Transportation costs will be addressed by the referring counselor or teacher.

## OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### **Diabetic Services**

Diabetes is a leading cause of blindness in adults. Training in the use of specialized equipment is available to assist with accurately and safely monitoring blood sugar levels. Specialized products and techniques are useful to prepare a person who is blind or visually impaired to accurately measure insulin and take medications as prescribed. Adaptive methods are taught to assist in the treatment of diabetes complications. With diabetic education, guidance, and support, a person can become confident in their diabetic management skills.

### **Low Vision Examinations**

The Low Vision Clinic at SDRC helps patients find adaptive equipment to continue working or living independently. We have the most up-to-date equipment for testing and prescribing magnifying devices to help optimize your vision for near and distance viewing.

A low vision evaluation can determine distance and clarity of vision, the size of readable print, the existence of reduced visual fields, lack of contrast sensitivity, and lighting requirements for optimal vision. The exam includes a patient history, assessing of patient goals, testing for refractive error, evaluation of the eye, and exploring the magnification needs and goals of the patient.

### **Dual Sensory Loss (Vision and Hearing)**

With limited or no access to the sights, sounds, conversations, and interactions of the environment, people experiencing vision and hearing loss receive training to address traveling, completing everyday tasks, working, and interacting with others. The Center program specialist works as a liaison to assist with improving the quality of life for people who are deaf-blind. Assistance may include, but is not limited to; exploring devices compatible with the dual sensory loss, access to a variety of resources to address barriers caused by vision and hearing loss and training others about the unique needs of individuals who are deaf-blind.

# WHAT TO BRING WITH YOU

Items below are needed if you are staying in one of the SD Rehabilitation Center's apartments:

- Backpack or carrying bag
- Seasonal clothing
  - Winter (heavy coat, boots, gloves/mittens, hat, scarf, and walking shoes for outdoors)
  - Summer (shorts, lightweight shirts, sun visors, water bottle, walking shoes, insect repellent and sun screen)
- Emergency contact information
- Medical insurance card(s), Medicaid, Medicare, or other
- Complete list of doctors' names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Complete list of medications (doses and times)
- Medications if needed during the day
- Low vision devices (e.g. magnifiers, sunshades)
- Personal hygiene items (bath soap, toothbrush, deodorant, etc.)
- Laundry soap
- Tissues
- Pillows
- Food for 2-3 days until a visit to the grocery store with staff can occur
- Lunch tote to bring your lunch daily
- Coffee, tea, or soft drinks
- Mug with spill-proof lid
- Spices (salt, pepper, seasonings)

Provided:

- Vacuum cleaner and bags
- Bath towels and washcloths
- Kitchen towels and dishcloths
- Cleaning supplies
- At least one roll of toilet paper
- Cable TV and DVD player
- Bedding (sheets, blanket, and comforter)
- Drinking glasses, silverware, dishes
- Pots and pans
- Telephone with local calls only
- Wi-Fi (laptops available for student checkout)

# SOUTH DAKOTA VOCATIONAL RESOURCES

South Dakota Vocational Resources is a specialized employment program at SDRC. This unit works closely with counselors from the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Division of Rehabilitation Services to help individuals with disabilities find and engage in gainful employment. Although this unit specializes in working with people who are blind or visually impaired, we also provide employment services to individuals with other disabilities.

## EMPLOYMENT SKILLS TRAINING

Employment Skills Training (EST) provides individualized services to people with a variety of abilities. Individuals are referred from Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, and Rehabilitation Services. A qualified instructor evaluates the individual's work habits and vocational skills so appropriate job matches can be made in the future. Emphasis is placed on having the individual meet employer expectations of dependability, punctuality, following directions, getting along with coworkers, stamina, motivation, and proper grooming. This program helps to identify strengths and limitations which may be factors in obtaining and retaining employment.

Job search strategies, job retention skills, and self-esteem building exercises are included in individualized instruction and group discussions. Specialized accommodations are available to evaluate computer skills, as well as various work tasks to prepare individuals for employment.

## JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES

Placement and support services are also available through South Dakota Vocational Resources. Job placement services include assisting with finding employment, orienting the client to the job demands and informing the employer about the client's abilities and special needs. The Employment Specialist may provide employer contact, job restructuring, instruction in job seeking skills, interviewing practice, and resume development. Once employment is obtained, job coaching may also be offered. The Employment Specialist can provide on-site training for specific job duties to build confidence and establish natural supports in the work place. Finally, work place follow-along services enable the Employment Specialist to maintain regular contact with the employer and client to reinforce and stabilize the job placement.