

## **Department of Veterans Affairs NY Harbor Healthcare System, Brooklyn Campus Advanced Low Vision Clinic**

The Advanced Low Vision Clinic's goal is to provide optical devices to help with specific tasks of daily living.

On the day of your visit, you will have a low vision exam with Dr. Lisa Chan O'Connell, our low vision optometrist, who will recommend devices based on the exam and your own goals.

For example: If shopping is difficult because you can't read prices, a hand magnifier may be prescribed.

Following the low vision exam, the Low Vision Therapist will work with you to assure that any devices prescribed are effective. We may suggest other services such as orientation and mobility instruction.

For example: If you report tripping on curbs, we may recommend instruction to help you locate curbs before you trip over them.

Please think of particular tasks that are difficult and discuss them with us during your appointment. Depending on your goals, you may need to come to the clinic several times to allow for adequate time to address all your needs.

Each person's needs and goals are unique but, in general, prescription glasses and most devices need to be ordered through our prosthetics department. Turn-around time is about 30 days. We will call you as soon as your items arrive.

Please continue with your regular eye appointments in the VA Eye Clinic or private ophthalmologist. Once you are a patient in our clinic, we will follow up with you at regular intervals to assure your optical devices are the most effective available. Your physician at the Eye Clinic will monitor the overall health of your eye and offer any medical intervention when necessary.

The Advanced Low Vision Clinic is an outpatient clinic located on the first floor of the Brooklyn Campus of the VA New York Harbor Health Care System. Dr. Lisa Chan O'Connell schedules appointments on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Michelle Beck and Sara Barnard are available from Monday through Friday by appointment.

### **Contact Us**

**Advanced Low Vision Clinic, Room 1-605**

**VA New York Harbor Health Care System Brooklyn Campus, 800 Poly Place, Brooklyn, NY 11209  
718-836-6600 x8912**

### **Our Team**

- Dr. Lisa Chan-O'Connell, Optometrist
- Michelle Beck, Certified Low Vision Therapist, 718-836-6600 x 3869
- Sara Barnard, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist, 718-836-6600 x 6275

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## **Referrals**

Patients are referred through inter-facility consults. The clinic staff will contact the patients and schedule them in accordance with VHA Outpatient Scheduling Processes and Procedures (VAH Directive 2006-055). Patients are required to have an examination in a VA Eye Clinic, not more than one year prior to their referral.

Low vision patients generally have less than 20/70 in the better eye. Legally blind patients have less than 20/200 in the better eye or less than a 20 degree field in the better eye. We use these standards for referral but also recognize the functional set of standards listed below.

We look for patients who:

- Have vision loss that is not correctable with a pair of prescription eyeglasses. (Typically, nearsightedness, farsightedness, presbyopia, and astigmatism are all conditions corrected with a prescription eye glass). While patients at our clinic may be prescribed glasses to correct any of the above conditions, they typically need other devices to use with the prescription to aid with reading and other tasks.
- Have a functional vision loss or visual disturbance. For example, extreme photophobia (an abnormal intolerance of light), or other visual disturbances that can be caused by brain injuries or cerebral vascular accidents and effect a patient's ability to carry out daily activities.
- Have a vision loss and fall under the category of excess disability. In this case the patient may have co-morbidities that cause the loss of ability to function to be out of proportion to the degree of visual impairment. For example, onset of a memory loss with a visual impairment.
- Have a functional vision loss that may cause the patient to avoid traveling to and in unfamiliar places due to the challenge of remaining oriented. For example, the thought of traveling a new route or go to a new place makes them uneasy and prefer to avoid the situation.
- Have vision loss that make them feel insecure or unsafe when crossing streets or utilizing public transportation.

## **Blind Rehabilitation Center Continuum of Care**

Patients at the Advanced Low Vision Clinic are scheduled for three appointments as listed below.

**The Low Vision Optometrist** evaluates the physical health of the visual system, prescribes devices and equipment based on your goals and needs and recommends follow up with the Low Vision Therapist and Orientation and Mobility.

**The Low Vision Therapist** trains in the correct and safe use of prescribed visual aids and instructs in therapy designed to improve use of remaining vision.

**The Orientation and Mobility Specialist** evaluates and trains veterans to travel safely in all environments and offers a training plan to meet individual goals.

Veterans may need to schedule additional appointments to pick up devices and equipment and/or for additional training. All patients are offered instruction in use of their devices.

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**Optical Low Vision Devices**

Devices are dispensed in accordance with VA policy as found in the VHA Handbook 1173.12 and Blind Rehabilitation Handbooks, MOUS, Directives and Clinical Practice Recommendations at <http://www.va.gov/blindrehab.org>. An optical low vision device will be prescribed by the Low Vision Optometrist based on exam results and the patient's goals. Devices are dispensed once a patient has demonstrated effective use of the device. A full range of devices are available that alter the size, contrast, color or directionality of an object. Examples include hand-held and stand illuminated magnifiers, telescopes, prisms and electronic optical enhancement devices.

Patients are expected to provide their own transportation to the clinic. The VA offers free daily shuttle service between Brooklyn, St. Albans, Manhattan and the Bronx VA Hospitals. Patients who are eligible for Access-a-Ride but have not applied will be encouraged and aided in doing so by the clinic.

The program is accredited by CARF, the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

**Veterans Access to VA Printed Information by those with Visual Disabilities (Vision Impairment)**

The Advanced Low Vision Clinic (ALVC) at the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System is planning to hold a series of **Work Groups** that will:

- Examine printed material offered by the Veterans Health Administration and the VA NY Harbor Healthcare System;
- Identify important information that should be available in an alternative format; and
- Which alternative format will help the most Veterans.

**When:** We anticipate holding the Work Groups in early Fall.

**Where:** VA New York Harbor Health Care System Brooklyn Campus, 800 Poly Place, Brooklyn, NY 11209

**Who can participate?**

- Veterans with any disability that effects the ability to use printed material.
- Family members and/or caregivers of effected Veterans.
- Direct Service Providers from PM&R, Geriatrics, Amputation Clinic and Social Work.
- Professionals from Benefits, Library Services and other Services.

**If you need additional information or are interested in participating in the work group, please call Michelle Beck at 718-836-6600 x3869 or email [michelle.beck@va.gov](mailto:michelle.beck@va.gov).**