

VA Blind Rehabilitation Center

Caribbean Healthcare System
San Juan, Puerto Rico



Patient and Family Education and Orientation Manual



REQUIREMENTS FROM REGULATORY AGENCIES

For specific information concerning program/services contact our Quality Management Section at extension 18302.

Our programs and services are accredited by:

- The Joint Commission (TJC)
- The Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF).

For any information related to **TJC** you may contact them by phone or through their website:

Toll free number: 1-800-994-6610

Website: <http://www.jointcomission.org>.

For information on the most recent **CARF** Accreditation Report or accreditation requirements you may contact them by phone or through their website:

Toll free number: 1-888-281-6531

Website: <http://www.carf.org>

Disclaimer

The intent of this handbook is to provide you and your caregiver(s) with orientation regarding the services provided at the VA Caribbean HealthCare System **Blind Rehabilitation Center**. This manual is complementary to the Patient and Family Orientation Handbook provided to you at the time of admission to the Medical Center. You and your family members are responsible for requesting additional information of your interest, not included in this document.

Welcome to the Puerto Rico Blind Rehabilitation Center Veterans Administration Hospital

General Information

Welcome to the Blind Rehabilitation Center for the Visually Impaired at the Veteran's Hospital in Puerto Rico. Our program is designed to help veterans with visual impairments to acquire skills and attitudes that will help them adjust to their visual loss. This will be achieved by providing you with a continuum of care extending from your home environment to the local VA facility, to the appropriate community setting.

The benefit you may gain from your blind rehabilitation program will depend on your effort and commitment towards your rehabilitation. We can teach you skills and techniques that will assist you in enhancing your self-esteem and quality of life. Please keep in mind that your training will be designed according to your goals, needs, interests and abilities.

If you are considering attending our program, you are welcome to visit us. You may coordinate your visit through your VIST Coordinator or directly with us by calling (787) 641-7582, ext. 21140, 21141, and 21143.

If you are already admitted to our program, congratulations for your decision! You and your family will benefit from the services you will receive.

With the following information we will further help you prepare for your program.

1. OUR MISSION AND COMMITMENT TO YOU

We will provide you with the highest possible level and quality of rehabilitation. Our ultimate goal is to help you to successfully reorganize your life and learn to live with visual impairment, in order to improve your quality of life.

Your family will be very important in the process of rehabilitation. We are also committed to help your family develop tools to support you during and after your rehabilitation program.

2. YOUR COMMITMENT TO REHABILITATION

In your willingness and desire to receive this training and reach your goals, you are accepting the challenge of leaving your home for a short period of time and

become a member of our family. You will actively participate in your training program so you will obtain the greatest benefit from the program. You will be part of a team that will direct you and guide you to reach your goals.

Your responsibility with the rehabilitation program will be:

- A. Actively participate in your rehabilitation program by:
 - Providing the necessary information to develop a care plan targeted to your individual needs.
 - Participating in the identification of your rehabilitation goals and the design of your individual care plan.
 - Cooperating in the training activities with the interdisciplinary team, of which you are a member.
 - Expressing your needs and interests to the interdisciplinary team to diligently work on them.
 - Keeping a rehabilitation attitude that will allow you to acquire the skills needed to overcome your visual loss and continue performing the activities that interest you.
- B. Follow the established rules and regulations of the Center and the Hospital.
- C. Maintain your room clean and organized, taking into consideration your own safety and that of others.
- D. Practice good hygiene, including personal care and hand washing.
- E. Maintain and foster an environment of respect and camaraderie with your peers and the staff.
- F. Avoid noises that may bother other people.
- G. If you smoke, please do so only in the designated areas.
- H. Do not bring valuables or money to exceed the amount of \$20.00. If you do, please inform the nursing staff. They can orient you about the procedure to deposit the excess through the agent cashier in OPA.
- I. Notify nursing staff before leaving the Center.
- J. Abide by the training schedule.
- K. Abide by the established schedule for weekend passes.
- L. Coordinate special passes through your coordinator who will in turn coordinate with administration.

3. GOALS, EXPECTATIONS & LENGTH OF STAY

The question that most veterans want to know is, “how long will I be there?” There are many factors that will influence your length of stay in the training. Some of these factors depend on the amount of vision you have, your medical or emotional conditions, your age, strength, stamina, endurance, motivation and needs in general. Your goals and expectations will also play an important part in how long you will need to be at the Center. The average length of stay is four weeks.

Please keep in mind that every veteran who enters the program is an individual and your individual differences, needs and goals will determine the length of stay. Each week there will be some veterans entering the program and others leaving. Some will have been here only a short time and others may have needed more time to accomplish their goals. We will work with you to keep your time here as short as possible without sacrificing the quality of your training. We will help you reach your goals as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Since your program is based on your individual needs, it is important that you take some time during your first days at the Center to think about your goals and expectations of the blind rehabilitation program. We understand that it is often difficult to express goals and expectations, since you do not really know what the whole program consists of. Basically, we would like to know the things that you would like to be able to do and you cannot do, or are afraid to try now, because of your visual loss. For example; continue working, watching your favorite sports on TV, reading the newspaper, preparing your own meals, or paying your monthly bills, getting to the post office in your community, etc. These and others are the types of goals you might consider. We will help you in every possible way to accomplish your goals.

Your Team Coordinator will assist you in presenting your goals to your Interdisciplinary Care Team.

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PATIENTS' RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your healthcare. We want to improve your health and well-being. We will make your visit or stay as pleasant for you as possible. As part of our service to you, to other veterans and to the Nation, we are committed to improving healthcare quality. We also train future healthcare professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined in this document. Please talk with VA treatment team members or a patient advocate if you have any questions or would like more information about your rights.

I. Respect and Non-Discrimination

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual. Your privacy will be protected. You will receive care in a safe environment. We will seek to honor your personal and religious values.
- You or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your money. You

- have the right to receive an accounting of any VA held funds.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms. In rare cases, the use of medication and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
 - As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you may wear your own clothes. You may keep personal items. This will depend on your medical condition.
 - As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to social interaction and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center.
 - As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately. You may have or refuse visitors. You will have access to public telephones. You may participate in civic rights, such as voting and free speech.
 - As a nursing home resident, you can organize and take part in resident groups in the facility. Your family also can meet with the families of other residents.
 - In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients or residents and staff, you are expected to respect other patients, residents and staff, and to follow the facility's rules. Avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Please immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.

II. Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will be given information about the health benefits you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care, if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying your portion of any costs associated with your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law (an example of this is State public health reporting). You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your medical records. This will be provided, except in rare situations when your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that case, you have the right to have this discussed with you by your VA provider.
- You will be informed of all outcomes of care, including any potential injuries.
- You will be informed about how to request compensation for any injuries.
- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

III. Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You, and any persons you choose, will be involved in all decisions about your care. You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse treatment. You will be told what is likely to happen to you if you refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care, but you take responsibility for the possible results to your health.
- Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over-the-counter and herbals), and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you do not understand something about your care. Being involved is very important for you to get the best possible results.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and title of the provider in charge of your care. As our partner in healthcare, you have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. You also have the right to know the names and titles of those who provide you care.
- This includes students, residents and trainees. Providers will properly introduce themselves when they take part in your care.
- You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient or resident. This includes your participation in decision-making and care at the end of life.
- If you believe you cannot follow the treatment plan, you have a responsibility to notify your provider or treatment team.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain, and if the treatment is working.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you will be provided any transportation necessary for your treatment plan.
- You have the right to choose whether you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified and there will be no pressure on you to participate.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the Medical Center's Ethics Consultation Service and/or other staff knowledgeable about healthcare ethics.
- If you or the Medical Center believes that you have been neglected, abused or exploited, you will receive help.

IV. Complaints

- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given

understandable information about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

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COMPLAINTS

You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team and/or patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

Following are the steps and timeframes for management of complaints. The Social Worker can provide you with additional information regarding this process, upon request.

Process and timeframes for the management of complaints

Step	Timeframe for resolution or referral to appropriate level
1. Person served shares concern with an employee, member of his/her treatment team or CARE partner of service where the issue began. If the employee to whom an issue is brought is not under the service where the issue began, he/she will refer the person served to the appropriate service CARE partner.	Immediately
2. If the concern is not addressed to a level of satisfaction, person served may request to contact a supervisor of the area.	Immediately after referral
3. If concern is still not addressed to a level of satisfaction, the person served may request a meeting with the service chief.	Within 5 days

<p>4. If person served understands the problem remains unresolved he/she may contact the Patient Representative Office. (Note: persons served can seek resolution to their issues directly with the patient representative). If needed, patient representatives will arrange meetings between the persons served and appropriate members of the executive team, depending on the type of concern/complaint. The Chief Patient and Community Relations can and will represent any member of the executive team in these meetings with persons served.</p>	<p>Within 7 days</p>
<p>5. Appeals: Persons served have the right to have access to a fair and impartial review of disputes regarding clinical determinations, health benefits or services that are not resolved at the facility level. This is done through the VISN appeals process. Appeals will be done according to VA/VHA directive and regulations (VHA Clinical Appeal Process Directive no. 2006-057). You may contact the Patient Representative or the Social Worker of your facility.</p>	<p>30 — 45 days</p>

Notification to Patients of Joint Commission Standards Modifying Patient and Nursing Home Resident Rights and Responsibilities

In accordance with requirements from the Joint Commission, the Department of Veterans Affairs has added the following statement to visitation policies for all hospitals throughout the system:

"The medical center respects the patient's right to make decisions about his or her care, treatment and services, and to involve the patient's family in care, services, and treatment decisions to the extent permitted by the patient or surrogate decision-maker. 'Family' is defined as a group of two or more persons united by blood, or adoptive, marital, domestic partnership, or other legal ties.

The family may also be a person or persons not legally related to the

individual (such as significant other, friend or caregiver) whom the individual considers to be family. A family member may be the surrogate decision-maker, as defined in VHA Handbook 1004.02, if authorized to make care decisions for the individual, should he or she lose decision-making capacity. The medical center allows a family member, friend or other individual to be present with the patient for emotional support during the course of a stay. The medical center allows for the presence of a support individual of the patient's choice, unless the individual's presence infringes on others' rights or safety, or is medically or therapeutically contraindicated. The individual may or may not be the patient's surrogate decision-maker or legally authorized representative. The hospital prohibits discrimination based on age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression. "

You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have any problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

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YOUR RIGHTS REGARDING ADVANCED DIRECTIVES

An Advanced Directive is a legal form you fill out and sign letting others know about your health care preferences. If you become too ill to make decisions about your care, an Advance Directive can help your doctors and family members understand what you want. It is up to you if you want an advance directive. Your decision must not affect your access to health care or other VA services. You may change your mind at any time about your decisions for treatment, but you have to let it be known.

There are two types of Advance Directives: (a) durable power of attorney for health care and, (b) living will. If you have an advance directive, it's important to give the VA a copy for your health care record. Advance Directives information will be given at the admission area. If not, your social worker can help you by providing the standard forms that you will need to state your decision.

Your rights:

1. You have the right to accept or refuse any medical treatment.
2. You have the right to complete a durable power of attorney for health care.
3. You have the right to complete a living will.



COMPLIMENTS

If you like to formally praise the services you received, you may submit a compliment:

- in writing to the staff member(s) involved
- in writing to the ACOS for Rehabilitation
- verbally or in writing at the Patient Representative office

You may also express your compliments, or other comments or suggestions, using the “Tell the Director” Program sheet. This form is available through the Patient Representative office. (see sample below).

Tell the Director Program

As Director of the VA Caribbean Healthcare System, I am dedicated to serving veterans and providing quality services to those we serve. If you have a comment or suggestion, I would like you to tell me about it.

Thank you,
Wanda Mims, MBA
Director

Contact Information: (Optional)
NAME: _____
PHONE: _____
ADDRESS: _____


PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

We strive to provide you and other veterans with the highest quality of service. Throughout your stay, please, stop by the Program Outcomes Boards to see the latest results of our interventions and patient satisfaction.

In order to improve our services to better serve veterans, we invite you to provide us with information and recommendations. You may do so by filling out our patient satisfaction survey prior to your discharge. The Service will call you approximately 3 months after your discharge to gather information about your health and functional status. Also, you may be invited to participate in discussion groups to provide us with additional information to improve our services.

“GOLD STAR” PROGRAM

- This program recognizes the employee that offers excellence in service to the person served above and beyond what is expected of him/her, which made you feel special.
- Any patient, visitor, employee or supervisor may nominate an employee.
- For nominations, please fill out the card form “Nomination for Excellence in Customer Service” (see sample below). This card is available through the Patient representative Office and may also be available through the Blind Rehab. Service administration office.

	NOMINATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE
I nominate: _____	
Service: _____	Location: _____
Describe the specific behavior that displays excellence in care : Please print clearly. All information must be completed for nominations to be considered!	
_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	
Your Name: _____	Date: _____
Phone: _____	

To be completed by Patient Centered/Customer Service Committee: Approved: _____ Did not meet criteria: _____	



4. TEAM COORDINATOR

Each veteran will be assigned to two coordinators when admitted to the Blind Rehabilitation Center of the Puerto Rico Veterans Hospital. One of them will be one of your training instructors. The other one will be a nurse. The instructor team coordinator duties are to be a liaison between you and the administration, to make sure your program runs as smoothly as possible, and to collaborate in the discharge process. At the time of your admission your team coordinator will obtain your consent to participate in the rehabilitation program. Your coordinator will offer you the necessary education and orientation so you and your family know your rights and advocate for them. Your coordinator will also be your liaison with other members of your team. Your Team Coordinator is the person in charge of giving you the class schedules each week. Your Coordinator may not

excuse you from classes. He or she will coordinate this with the administration.

The assigned nurse or nurse coordinator will provide follow-up care for your nursing and medical services. He/She will also follow up on your medical education needed, and self medication training.

Your Team Coordinator and you will work closely together, as well as with other team members, to continually fine tune your program as it progresses and develops new goals. During the first week of your program you will go through an extensive evaluation and assessment process to determine the best course of instruction for you as an individual. An Interdisciplinary Care Plan (ICP) meeting, where you will participate designing your care plan, will be held during your second week. At this time we will predict your anticipated length of stay.

During your training your coordinator will stay in communication with the VIST Coordinator and, if necessary, with the Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS). These are the persons that referred you to the program, or to whom you may be referred after discharge.

The following information will provide you a general orientation about the program:

Discharge Criteria

The veteran will be discharged when:

- A maximum level of performance is acquired according to the goals in the treatment plan.
- An emergency occurs and the veteran is unable to continue with the rehabilitation program.
- The veteran doesn't follow BRC rules or regulations, as discussed during the admission process.
- When the veteran requests to be discharged for personal reasons.

Discharge Planning/Transition

- Once you are assessed in the different skill areas, you and your interdisciplinary team will meet. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the goals of your rehabilitation program and a tentative discharge date will be scheduled during the meeting, which is called the Interdisciplinary Care Plan Meeting.
- With your consent, our Social Worker will coordinate a family program to educate and orient the members of your family (or significant others) before your discharge date.

- Transition to the community will be established according to your needs and preferences, and those of your family.
- There will be an exit interview with the director of the Service and the VIST Coordinator, to program the follow-up once you are discharged from the program.
- Referrals to community resources, the Visual Impairment Services Team coordinator (VIST), and Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS), will be recommended according to the veteran's needs.

5. CLASS SCHEDULE

Classes are Monday thru Saturday. The schedule consists of seven class sessions with a 15 minute break between classes.

Monday thru Friday the class schedule is distributed as follows:

1. 7:45 – 8:30 AM
2. 8:45 – 9:30 AM
3. 9:45 – 10:30 AM
4. 10:45 – 11:30 AM

LUNCH

5. 12:30 – 1:15 PM
6. 1:30 – 2:15 PM
7. 2:30 – 3:15 PM

You will also participate in classes related to health and medication education.

The class schedule for Saturdays is as follows:

- 1) 8:00 – 8:45 AM
- 2) 9:00 – 9:45 AM
- 3) 10:00 – 10:45 AM
- 4) 11:00 – 11:45 AM

LUNCH

- 5) 12:30 – 1:15 PM
- 6) 1:30 – 2:15 PM

You may leave on weekend pass on Saturday after 2:30 PM, or you may stay the rest of the weekend.

For the Regular component of the program, your Blind Rehabilitation classes will consist of training in the following skill areas:

Orientation and Mobility - this training will involve the development of skills and techniques you will use to move around safely, confidently and with a determined purpose. You will use your other senses to orient yourself in the environment, combined with the long cane as an assistive device.

Vision Rehab (also known as Living Skills or Activities of Daily Living) - classes will show you how to continue performing the same tasks you have always done in a more efficient and safe manner. Some examples of the skills covered are: organizing your personal belongings more efficiently, so that you can select your clothing, identifying money, how to cut your food safely, how to pour hot and cold liquids, handwriting, typing, audio recording, Braille reading and writing, how to mark and use appliances (washing machine, dish washer, etc), how to attend to your personal grooming, and how to safely prepare food - from sandwiches to full meals.

Manual Skills - will teach you to use your hand dexterities and sense of touch to gain information from your surroundings. Through a wide range of projects and exercises you will develop organizational skills and problem solving techniques. Such activities as basic and advanced woodworking, ceramics, crafts and leather work, use of power tools and a variety of practical home mechanics projects may be part of your experience.

Low Vision or Visual Skills - After a complete Optometric examination, a Visual Skills Specialist, along with you, will plan your Low Vision training program. Using the various devices, aids and situations suggested by the Optometrist, your Visual Skills Specialist will teach you how to get the most out of your remaining vision, if any. Even if you are totally blind, you will be examined by the Optometrist, and the Visual Skills Specialist will help you understand your eye condition and offer you suggestions for your eye health and safety.

If you are attending the **Computer Access Training (CAT) Program**, you will be receiving adapted computer classes by one of our computer instructors. Depending on your degree of functional vision and needs, you will receive training using a screen magnification or reading application that will provide access to the information on your computer's monitor.



Self-Advocacy

As part of your training you will be provided with information and training related to self-advocacy. You will also be exposed to situations where you will have the opportunity to practice your self-advocacy skills.

When people lose their vision, they can also lose their self-confidence as well as their feelings of self-worth, self-esteem, autonomy, and independence. It can also affect their personal relationships. Learning ways to keep doing everyday activities and taking care of yourself, basic skills for getting around safely and efficiently in your environment (called mobility), and communication skills can help you regain your confidence. So can training in the skills of self-advocacy. It will help you to develop self-confidence and learn skills to speak up for yourself in dealing with situations you encounter every day.

Self-advocacy, in this context, means “to speak up or to advocate for oneself; to speak up for personal rights or against personal discrimination”. Speaking up for oneself in an assertive, nonthreatening manner can be difficult for anyone. Being assertive can be particularly hard for older adults who have just lost some or all of their vision and who now feel dependent on family members, friends, and even strangers to carry out tasks for them that they have done independently all of their lives.

Skills and attributes for self-advocacy

To become an effective self-advocate, you need the following skills and attributes:

- Confidence in yourself.
- Ability to communicate your needs effectively.
- Ability to listen to what others are saying.
- Awareness of your own feelings and reactions to stress and frustration and ability to deal with them.
- Ability to respond using appropriate and effective strategies for the situation, as in the following:

Assertiveness: Always respond assertively, not aggressively or passively.

Humor: Sometimes using humor to get a point across is the best strategy.

Directness: Be straightforward rather than “beating around the bush” in explaining your needs.

Diplomacy or tactfulness: Be sensitive to other people’s feelings and avoid giving offense; putting someone on the defensive will not resolve a situation in most cases.

Respect: Treat others as you would like to be treated; being polite and considerate will often help you get your needs met.

Tolerance: Try to understand the other person’s viewpoint; there may be cultural differences and you may not understand what the other person is trying to say.

Forcefulness: Make sure the person knows you mean what you say.

Self advocacy skills are extremely important for the person experiencing vision loss:

- To acquire needed information
- To make informed choices
- To get one’s needs met
- To take charge of the situation
- To feel a sense of autonomy and self-reliance

To be a good self-advocate, the person needs to learn to be assertive, not aggressive. Being assertive means speaking up for oneself to get needs met in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration the rights and needs of others. Assertiveness means one is forthright and direct. Assertiveness is very positive because it is respectful of both the individual and others, and it works better to get one’s need met.

Examples of assertive behaviors include the following:

- Stating clearly, but politely, what one needs; not being afraid to ask direct questions.
- Listening to others respectfully.
- Gathering the information one needs to make decisions for oneself.
- Offering one’s own opinion.
- Asking for help when one needs it
- Admitting when one makes a mistake

Family Members

Family members play a critical role in the adjustment process and in the vision rehabilitation process. They can be facilitating or inhibiting forces for the older person.

Staff Members

Staff members in assisted living facilities and other residential settings also play a critical role in the adjustment process.

Peers

Like family members, peers can play a critical role in the adjustment process and in the vision rehabilitation process. Like the family, they can be facilitating or inhibiting forces for the older person. Peers may be sighted or visually impaired friends. Peers can be positive role models.

Role of Community Support Systems

Community support systems include organizations and services in the community that can provide general support, such as aging network programs, transportation services, and consumer groups.

These organizations, along with vision rehabilitation services, can help an older person who is visually impaired remain at home or in an independent setting.

This information on self-advocacy has been taken from the book "Self-Advocacy Skills Training for Older Individuals Who Are Visually Impaired", by Alberto L. Orr and Priscilla Rogers, AFB Press.

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All veterans admitted to the blind rehabilitation program will receive the following, according to their need:

Nursing and Medical Education may be as simple as ensuring that you know how to safely organize and take your medications. If you are diabetic you will be scheduled for comprehensive diabetic education classes given by nursing staff. If you have high blood pressure you will benefit from hypertension classes. The nursing staff will educate and orient you about the subjects associated with your health, medications and doses.

Monitoring and management of your medication – Pharmacy and nursing staff will perform assessments to determine your needs related to the monitoring and management of your medications. You will receive classes geared towards increasing your knowledge regarding medications. To accomplish this you will receive training with evolving techniques and assistive technology. With your consent, your family will also participate of this process.

Psychosocial Group – There are also group activities where the participants will receive orientation and discuss a variety of subjects of interest. The group activities are led by our Psychologist and our Social Worker. The participants of this group are usually the patients admitted to the regular component of our program. However, if the subject to be discussed is one that has not been discussed on another occasion or is a crucial subject, the patients admitted to the CATS program may be invited to attend as well.

Veterans Administration and Community Group – as part of the regular component of the program, you will also participate of presentations geared to assisting you to know the resources available in the VA and the community. Knowing about these resources will help you to advocate for your rights and benefit from the different programs available.

Social Work - our Social Worker will interview you and schedule meetings as needed to help you and your family with social issues as needed.

A **Family Program** will take place with your consent, focusing on assisting you and your family with the adjustment to your visual loss. The social worker will coordinate the date of the family program with your family member or significant other. Your family members will be invited by correspondence and/or phone call. The scheduled time is from 9:00am. - 4:00pm. One or more days can be scheduled depending on the needs and concerns of the veteran or family member.

The Social Worker will also coordinate presentations by community resources (ex: Blinded Vets. Assoc., Social Sec. Adm., etc.) geared to inform you and others about services available and as part of our advocacy training.

Psychology Our program psychologist will schedule individual interviews to help you adjust to your visual impairment. Once a week you will participate from group dynamics.

Recreation provides an introduction to active and passive recreational activities you can do during your leisure time. This is a very important component of your

rehab. program. There is usually a wide range of organized activities. At the beginning of each week you will be given the schedule of activities that you will be able to participate in. If there is any reason for which you cannot participate, the Physician Assistant will inform the Administration and faculty. Some of these activities may take place away from the Blind Center. These activities run the gamut from walks, bowling, picnics, visiting the Regional Library for the Blind, educational and cultural outings.

Nutrition – The nutritionist will meet with you to discuss the importance of following your particular dietary needs.

6. BLIND CENTER FACILITIES

Upon your arrival to the Blind Center, you will be assigned a single room or a room with a roommate. Each room has a night table, dresser, a desk and sink. Most rooms share a bathroom with another room

Please bring hearing aids (if you use them), prescription glasses, sunglasses, magnifiers or other low vision aids that you are currently using.

Things such as books, audio players, typewriters (regular or Braille), etc., can be borrowed from your instructors to be used during the evenings, the weekend in the Center and/or at your home while you are admitted to the program. You must return your equipment to the teacher that loaned it to you during the next working day in the morning.

If you bring electric or electronic appliances from your home, such as a radio, etc., notify your team coordinator so the equipment can be inspected related to safety by the Facility Management Service of the Veterans Hospital.

The dining room where you will eat your meals is equipped with a large screen TV. It is located on the second floor as well as the rooms.

All rooms have an emergency call system linked to the Nursing Station on the floor. Nursing personnel are on duty in the Blind Rehab Service around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

7. WHAT YOU SHOULD BRING TO YOUR TRAINING

The style of dress is casual and comfortable. We suggest bringing enough clothing for six days and comfortable walking shoes. You should also bring a

sufficient supply of personal hygiene items such as: shampoo, tooth paste, hand lotion etc. Informal clothing is permitted. You should use closed shoes during classes, except if there is a medical contraindication. This is to protect your feet. It is also recommended that you bring a comforter, blanket and a jacket just in case you get cold during your stay. Please also bring a swimsuit in case there are pool or beach activities.

8. LOCATION

The Blind Rehabilitation Center at the Veterans Hospital, is located at the VA Caribbean Health Care System San Juan, Puerto Rico at the south-east section, in building #10. We share this building with the Community Living Center (formerly Nursing Home). The offices, classrooms, and the Conference Room are all located on the first floor. The bedrooms, dining room, nursing and medical services are located on the second floor.

9. MAILING ADDRESS

(Veteran's Name)
Blind Rehabilitation Center (124)
VA Caribbean Health Care System
Casia St #10
San Juan, PR 00921

Any letters received will be distributed daily during the afternoon (Monday – Friday).

Mail Box Veterans can deposit their letters in the mailbox located in the lobby of the Community Living Center/ Blind Rehabilitation Building or at the exit by the emergency room. Mail is picked up daily at 9:30 am.

10. TELEPHONES

- A. Each room has a phone. During the orientation you will be given your room extension number. You can make local calls without charge or long distance collect calls. To make a call you must dial 9 first and then the desired number. If you encounter any difficulty, you can call the operator by dialing 0. From any office or room extension you can directly dial any room extension to contact any veteran. Except in emergency cases, please make or receive your calls after 3:15pm.
- B. There is a public telephone for your convenience located outside on the hallway leading to the bathrooms of the main lobby area of the hospital.

- C. You may also use your private cellular phone. The phone charger also needs to be inspected by the electrical department of the FMS service. Please inform nursing staff.

Unless it is an emergency, please make or receive your call after 3:30pm. Using a cellular phone is not permitted during class sessions.

- D. During the day, in case of an emergency, family members can contact you at the following BRC telephone number: (787)641-7582 ext. 22118, 21141, 21143 and 21144 from 7:30am – 4:00pm. After 4:00pm or weekends you can be contacted at (787) 641-7582 ex 22117 or 22118 or they can dial the extension for your room.

11. VALUED ITEMS AND MONEY (CASH OR CHECK)

It is recommended that the veterans do not have more than \$20.00 in cash or valuables in their rooms. Money in excess of \$20.00 can be deposited at the “Agent Cashier’s Office” located in OPA Outpatient Clinic. The office is open from 8:00am to 4:30pm., from Monday to Friday. Until you know the area, you may be assisted by your team coordinator, teachers and/or nurses.

12. SMOKING AREAS

The VA Healthcare System is a smoke-free facility. Smoking is permitted only in designated areas such as:

- A. The terrace of the first floor in our building facing north (Monacillo Road). This terrace is located to the left when you come out of the elevators on the first floor of our building.
- B. At the VA Hospital there is an assigned smoking area outside the lobby area.

13. VISITING HOURS

4:00 PM	-	8:00 PM Monday to Friday
2:30 PM	-	8:00 PM Saturday
10:30 AM	-	8 PM Sunday and holidays

You can receive visitors in your room. In order to avoid affecting your length of stay we do not allow visitors during training hours, except in case of an emergency. You may receive children in your room as long as they are accompanied by adults.

14. RELIGIOUS SERVICES

If during your stay in the program you wish to talk to a Catholic Priest or a Protestant Minister, you can contact them by calling extension 12167 or 12166.

Catholic or Protestant services are offered in the chapel, located in the second floor at the hospital, office A 269.

Protestant services are on Wednesdays at the chapel

Catholic Mass

Sunday 10:30am – Chapel
2:30pm – Community Living Center (dinning room)

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 12:00pm – chapel

Wednesday – 12:00 pm – Eucharistic Room (in front of the chapel)

15. CAFETERIA/ RETAIL STORE

The cafeteria operating hours are:

Monday – Friday 6:00am – 3:00pm (cafeteria and deli)
Saturdays 9:15am – 3:00pm (Deli only)
Sundays and Holidays – closed

The retail store operating hours are:

Monday – Friday 6:00am – 4:00pm
Saturdays 9:15am – 3:30pm
Sundays and Holidays – closed

Until you know how to get to the cafeteria or the retail store, located in the basement of the hospital, your mobility or living skills instructors will be able to help you purchase any items in the store during your class.

16. VENDING MACHINES

There are machines that sell sodas, candies and snack products in the first floor near the Blind Center. Your instructor can orient you to the location of these machines and their contents.

There are other vending machines located on the first floor of the hospital, which are at the end of the hall, at the breeze way, or in the basement close to the cafeteria.

17. MEALS AND DIETS

Nutritionists are available to offer general information and to clarify any doubts to customers and/or their family. If you wish to talk to the nutritionist you may make an appointment through your nurse coordinator or through your vision rehab. (living skills) instructor. It is important to remember that your diet was ordered by the doctor, not the nutritionist.

The usual eating hours are:

Breakfast	6:45am.
Lunch	11:30am.
Dinner	4:30pm.

Nursing staff has a small refrigerator where they can keep for you a fruit or a drink for later consumption.

18. NOTIFICATION IF YOU LEAVE THE CENTER

We expect you to inform nursing personnel on duty when you leave the Center and where you will be in case there is an emergency, a call or a visitor for you.

PASSES

If you decide to go home after classes on Saturday, you may do so after 2:30 PM. Nursing staff will give you your medication for the weekend and will remove the identification band from your wrist. You may return on Sunday from your pass before 8:00 PM, or on Monday early before classes.

You may also stay in the Center over the weekend.

It is important that you inform nursing staff if you decide to stay in the weekend. If you decide to leave on Saturday, then you also have to inform nursing staff so

they can document your pass.

If you need to leave the Center during training hours due to an emergency, you must first inform administration, then your Coordinator and Nursing staff. When you return you must inform the nurse on duty.

19. MEDICAL SERVICES

If you feel ill during class, you must inform your instructor, who will inform the nursing personnel. If you get ill after classes, please notify your symptoms to the nursing staff. They will make arrangements so a Doctor or our Physician Assistant sees you.

20. ROOM CLEANING

The veterans of the Center must keep their rooms always clean and organized, including the bathroom. To each veteran we will give bedding, towels and pajamas. We expect that you keep them clean during your stay. The room should be organized each morning before the first class. Your personal effects must be organized and the trash placed in the trashcan.

The tables and desk must be clean. Your valuables and medications should stay locked in the wardrobe. You will be given the keys of the wardrobe and room during your admission date. You will leave them when you go on weekend pass and will get them back when you return. You will leave them the day of your discharge. These keys are your responsibility. When you leave your room please lock your door.

21. CLOTHES AND BED ARTICLES / LAUNDRY

There is a hamper under the sink where you can put the clothing that you need to wash. There is one washing machine and one automatic dryer available on the first floor of the Blind Center. There are also machines available on the second floor near the elevators. Your vision rehab. (living skills) teacher will orient you about how to use the equipment.

You can buy your own detergent and softener. You can buy the detergent in the hospital store; it can be liquid or powder.

NOTE: Each room has a red container attached to the wall of the cabinet under the sink. This red box is to discard sharp objects and gloves such as: knives, needles, syringes, broken light bulbs, used gloves, etc.

22. BREAK AREA

The break area is located on the first floor of the Center, close to the administration offices. It is for breaks between classes

23. OTHER RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN THE HOSPITAL

PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER (PERC, FORMERLY KNOWN AS PATIENT'S LIBRARY). It is located on the second floor of the hospital, next to the main elevators, Room A-261; and opens from Monday to Friday from 8:00AM to 4:30PM. Their mission is to empower veterans, families, and caregivers to manage their health, improve education, and promote recreational and therapeutic activities.



MY HEALTHEVET (MHV)

It is a web-based application that creates a new, online environment where veterans, family and clinicians may come together to optimize veterans' health care. Web technology will combine essential health record information enhanced by online health resources to enable and encourage patient/clinician collaboration.

The implications of My HealtheVet are far-reaching. Clinicians will be able to communicate and collaborate with veterans much easier. The new online environment will map closely to existing clinical business practices, while extending the way care is delivered and managed. As veterans build up their lifelong health records, they will be able to choose to share all or part of the information in their account with all their health care providers, inside and outside the VA. This has the potential to dramatically improve the quality of care available to our nation's veterans. You can access My HealtheVet through:

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

What does My HealtheVet allows you to do?

- Get VA information and services online.
 - Benefits and services
 - Most request forms

- Access three trusted sources of health information available in the Health Info section.

- VA - developed Health Information
 - MEDLINE/Plus – a government resource
 - Healthwise - a consumer health education resource
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- Record personal demographic information, military health history, treatment locations, over-the-counter medications, herbals and supplements, medical events, tests, immunization, and allergies as part of your **Personal Health Journal**
 - Use the **Health eLogs** to record and track personal health readings of blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, heart rate, body temperature, weight and pain.
 - Order **Prescription Refills** online with ease and convenience, and check on the status of your refills anytime.
 - Print a personal **Wallet Id Card** that is automatically filled out using the personal information you entered in your Personal Health Journal
 - Keep an **Activity** and **Food Journal**.
 - Access **Online Help** tools.
 - Access **Learn About** – feature that allows you to select topics form A-Z, such as online computer training resources, and subject matter health education.

Remember:

You can request information and training on how to access My Health_e_Vet visiting the Patient Information Center Library, located in the 2nd floor of the Hospital, ext 12165, open from Monday to Friday, from 8:00AM to 4:30PM.

REQUESTING MEDICATION REFILLS There are several ways to request refills for your medications:

- Sending your refill documents via the US Postal Service or dropping them off at your VA pharmacy
- Using the internet at: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
- Calling toll free 1-800-449-8729 ext. 13200 and following the instructions on the automated answering system.

You will need to know the number of the prescription when you call.

Remember:

* You may request Information and assistance to access My Health_eVet by visiting the **PATIENT EDUCATION RESOURCE CENTER**. Furthermore, the outpatient pharmacy can also help you order your medication electronically.

*No one has Access to your Information in MHV unless you share your ID and password. **Protect your Information**. Doctors do not have access either, since your official record and the record you create in MHV are separate entities. They only speak to each other to verify your demographic information (name, address, social security number, date of birth, etc). **If you wish your doctor to read the Information you have in MHV, you will need to print it and bring it to your appointments**. Bringing a printout will help you to remember all the important Information you want your doctor to know.

24. SAFETY AND PRIVACY

Release of Information (HIPAA)

According to the new HIPAA statute (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act.), the VHA is providing you with the VA Notice of Privacy Practice. The San Juan VAMC has implemented appropriate administrative, technical and physical safeguard measures to protect your individual information against any anticipated threats or hazards to their security or integrity. VHA employees can use the health information contained in your records, only while officially performing health care or administrative services. The VACHS may disclose information from your official VHA records only with your written authorization, or when a Federal law allows it.

By law, no employee is permitted to give you copies of documents from your record.

The information the VACHS may use and disclose about your health without your permission is for:

- Treatment
- Eligibility and enrollment for VA health care benefits
- Public health
- Research (with strict limitations)
- Abuse reporting
- Workers' compensation
- Payment
- Health care reimbursement
- Law enforcement

- Judicial or administrative proceedings
- Services
- Correctional facilities
- When required by law
- Family members or other involved with your care
- Health operations
- Coroner or funeral activities (with limitations)
- national security
- Health care oversight
- Military activities
- Health or safety activities

Any request for disclosure of information needed from your record is performed only by the Release of Information (ROI) Unit at HIMS.

You have the right to:

- Review your health information
- Obtain a copy of your health information
- Request that your health information be amended or corrected
- Request that we not use or disclose your health information
- Request that we provide your health information to you in an alternative way or at an alternative location in a confidential manner.
- Request an accounting or list of disclosure of your health information
- Receive our VA Notice of the Privacy Practices upon request.
- File a complaint regarding VHA privacy practices.

All requests must be in writing and must be signed. If you need to have someone to clarify any question regarding your rights to your health information or the existing privacy practice our center maintains, you may contact the Release of Information Unit or the privacy Officer at the Medical Center.

HIPAA Facility Directory Opt-Out Information

[Request to appear or not in the hospital directory]

- As a patient, you may request exclusion from the Facility Directory during your inpatient stay.
- VHA must not provide any information to the public about a patient who has opted-out of the directory.
- You may change your selection at any time during your inpatient stay by notifying the Health Unit Coordinator (Nurse Manager).

Security of Information Policy

The VHA Directive 6210 defines the policies and responsibilities for the establishment, implementation, maintenance and oversight of the Automated Information System (AIS) security program within VHA. The VA has in the facility an Information Security Officer (ISO), to manage the AIS security program. The ISO must assure that AIS operates effectively and accurately, using appropriate technical, personnel, administrative, environmental and telecommunications safeguards. One of the responsibilities of the ISO is to assure that all your data is confidentially safeguarded, available when needed, and accurate at all times. For any additional information on the AIS Security Programs or the safeguarding of your data, you can communicate with your facility ISO.

Security / Practices not allowed

An electronic surveillance system has been installed in the VA Hospital to prevent removing VA property. Infractions carry serious penalties. The VA may inspect all packages and bags brought in or out of the hospital.

Cellular Phones

The use of cellular phones is prohibited in certain areas inside of the building because they may interfere with medical equipment. Please ask if you have doubts.

Weapons

Firearms, clubs, etc. are prohibited in the hospital. If you have any weapons, they must be deposited with the Police Service Office, 1st floor.

Drugs and Alcohol

Possession, sale or use of illicit drugs, narcotics or alcohol is prohibited on the VA property. This carries serious penalties.

Gambling and Commercial Transactions

Gambling, selling or engaging in commercial transaction of any kind is prohibited in the hospital grounds.

Property Damages

Anyone deliberately damaging VA property will be required to pay for the

damages. The removal of hospital property such as pajamas, sheets, covers, pillows, pillowcases and towels is not allowed.

Other Practices

- Gift giving or tips to any of our employees is not allowed. Remind your family not to give gifts or tips. It is our privilege to serve you.
- Do not tape or record any conversation with healthcare team members or other patients without their permission. Please direct any questions about your health care to your doctor or other members of your health care team.
- Photos are not allowed in any areas of the Hospital, unless authorized by official personnel.

25. PATIENT REPRESENTATIVE'S OFFICE

The VACHS strives to provide the best care available in the most courteous and efficient manner possible to our patients. The Patient Representative's Office is here to represent you and your family, and to process any concerns, complaints or compliments that you may have. If you have any concern, you should first discuss it with your TC, the nursing staff or the physician. If you are still worried or you feel an issue is not resolved to your satisfaction you may ask to speak with the Blind Rehab. Center Administration. If you are still not satisfied then you may ask to speak with a patient representative. Their working hours, location and extensions are:

Monday through Friday 7:30AM – 5:00PM

Their office is located on the 1st floor, in front of the Voluntary Services-Office (D1119B).

After working hours or if you wish to contact by phone, please leave a message in the answering machine. Please leave your name and telephone number where they can reach you.

Switchboard: 787-641-7582 ext. 11486, 11725 or 1-800-449-8729 (Toll Free)

26. RACE AND SAFETY

In case of fire our Center implements a response plan involving all staff and patients. We follow the RACE acronym:

R – Rescue – A staff member will rescue any person who might be in danger.
From you, the veterans, we expect that you stay calm and follow

the instructions you will be given by the staff assigned. Veterans are not expected to rescue anyone.

A – Alarm – There are several alarm bottoms throughout the Center. You will be oriented about their location during the first week or so of your admission.

C – Contain – Staff members assigned will follow a procedure established to contain the fire and to keep all staff and patients safe. Please follow their instructions.

E – Extinguish – Staff assigned will take care of this. They receive training regarding the Procedure to follow to extinguish a fire.

Remember – From you, we expect to remain calm and follow the instructions given to you by the staff assigned at the moment of emergency.

27. BEFORE YOUR DISCHARGE...

Before your discharge date, you must hand-in the equipment and keys to your assigned nurse. Prosthetic equipment available in stock at the Center will be issued by your skill area instructor. Otherwise, Prosthetic Service will process your equipment and send it to you as a request.

If you have not received the pending equipment in 30 days after your discharge, please call at 787-641-7582 ext.:

30545 (Mrs. Claribel Alvarez, Assistant Chief Prosthetics Service)
30535 (Mr. Manuel Serer, Prosthetics Chief)
30505 (Mrs. Myrian Baez, Prosthetics Rep)

to let them know you have not received the equipment recommended.

In case you want to return the equipment given by the Veterans Hospital call the same numbers and extensions as above.

In case you need further information you can call the phone number 787-641-7582 ext. 21140 or 21143.

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AGENCIES IN THE COMMUNITY

Some of the agencies in the community that you may contact for orientation and assistance are:

- **Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (San Juan) – 787-723-2519**
- **“Movimiento para el Alcance de Vida Independiente” (MAVI)
1-800-549-6284 or 787-758-7901**
- **Ombudsman for Persons with Handicaps (OPPI)
787-725-2333 or 1-800-987-4125
TDD – 787-725-4014**
- **Veterans Ombudsman – 787-758-5760**
- **Blinded Veterans Association – 787-641-7582, ext. 21128**

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Contact us in case of questions or doubts:

787-641-7582

Mrs. Maria Nevárez, Chief – ext 21141, 21143, 21144

Ms. Zulma Acevedo, Assistant Chief/ Supervisor - ext 21141, 21143, 21144

Mr. Luis Vázquez, coordinates admission dates – ext. 21140

Mr. Manuel Guzmán, Assistant Physician – ext. 22114, 22118

Dr. Irma Molina – ext. 22114, 22118

Dr. Laura Dalmasy, optometrist – ext. 21136

Mrs. Magdalis Ríos, BROS Specialist – ext. 21132, 21143

Mrs. Victoria García, BROS Specialist - ext. 21131, 21143

Mrs. Grace Cruz, BROS Specialist and Polytrauma - ext. 21168, 11032

Mrs. Aileen Durán, Social Worker – ext. 21137

Dr. Cibel Hilerio, Psychologist, ext. 21122

Thank you, for your attention to this information.

References

“Self-Advocacy Skills Training for Older Individuals Who Are Visually Impaired”,
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CARF standards for Comprehensive Blind Rehabilitation Programs, 2012

VHA Handbook 1174.04 “Blind Rehabilitation Center Program Procedures”,
dated 12/02/2009

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Prepared by BRS staff

Approved by the CHS Patient and Family Education Committee