

OLDER BLIND PROGRAM, cont. . .

APPEALS PROCESS

1. Individuals who disagree with a VS Program decision are encouraged to contact the local Program Manager to attempt an effective resolution of the issue. In the event of a reduction, suspension or cessation of VS services, individuals have a right to a case review by an impartial hearing officer, mediation, and/or assistance from the Client Assistance Program (CAP).
2. A request for a fair hearing should be made in writing to your VS rehabilitation teacher within 30 days of DRS informing you of the decision with which you disagree. The fair hearing will be conducted by a hearing officer within 45 days of the written "Request for a Fair Hearing" by the consumer.
3. Individuals filing a "Request for a Fair Hearing" may request a confidential mediation session to resolve grievances. Mediation is voluntary and subject to the agreement of both parties. In the event mediation sessions do not resolve the grievance, individuals retain their right to a fair hearing.
4. After filing a "Request for a Fair Hearing," the administrative review must be conducted by the Program Manager and concluded within the same 45 days, with the results of the review provided in a written letter. If the review resolves the grievance, the Withdrawal of Request for Hearing Form must be completed; otherwise, the hearing will continue.
5. The written decision of the hearing officer including findings and grounds for the decision will be made to the consumer, hearings coordinator and the director of DRS within 30 days of the completion of the hearing.
6. Individuals may request a review of the hearing officer's decision by the Cabinet Secretary of Human Services within 20 days of the decision.
7. In the event an individual brings civil action regarding the decision, the final decision either by the hearing officer or the Cabinet Secretary will be implemented pending court review.

ASSISTANCE PROVIDED FOR APPEALS

- The Client Assistance Program (CAP) assists persons with disabilities who are seeking or receiving services from any program funded by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. CAP can:
 - advise clients of their rights and responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act;
 - assist clients in communicating their concerns to DRS; and
 - represent the individual in the fair hearing process when appropriate and/or needed.
- Additional information concerning vocational rehabilitation and the appeals process can be obtained from the CAP at (405) 521-3756 or (800) 522-8224 statewide.

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- The Older Blind Program can provide an individual with a screen reader or screen enlargement software to assist them in using their existing computer, but it does not purchase a computer.
- The Older Blind Program operates the Telephone Information Line, a free service that you can call 24/7, and hear daily recorded Tulsa World/The Oklahoman newspaper articles. In the Tulsa area, the number is (918) 743-3332. The statewide, toll free number is (800) 829-3255.
- Legal blindness occurs when visual acuity with best correction is 20/200 or less in the better eye or when side vision results in a field restriction of 20 degrees or less.