

**BENEFITS AND RESOURCES FOR THE BLIND AND**

**VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

**AMERICANS with DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities concerning employment, public services, public accommodations and commercial facilities run by private entities, and telecommunications. ADA's objective is to ensure people with disabilities equal opportunity and access to jobs, goods and services. The ADA can be contacted at 202‑514‑0301.

**AGENCIES SERVING THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

**Tampa Lighthouse for the Blind** **dba Lighthouse for the Blind & Low Vision**

1106 West Platt Street 206 Avenue D NW

Tampa, FL 33606 Winter Haven, FL

(813) 251‑2407 863-299-3633

FAX (813) 254‑4305 Fax 863-299-3559

Email: tlh@lighthouseblv.org

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

The Lighthouse for the Blind provides rehabilitative services for persons who are partially sighted, blind, and multi-disabled blind at no charge. The Lighthouse services include: Social Services, instruction in Orientation and Mobility, Braille, Typing, Cooking, Phone Dialing, Money Identification and Personal Management, Vocational Evaluation, Job Placement, Rehabilitation Engineering, Supported Employment, Computer Training, and Transition teenage services. Limited transportation is available. Infant and children’s services in Winter Haven and at both locations our store.

**Magnifiers & More Store,** Various items to assist with daily activities.

## Division of Blind Services

415 South Armenia Avenue 402 S. Kentucky Ave. #310

Tampa, FL 33609 Lakeland, FL 33801

(813) 871‑7190 863-499-2698

FAX (813) 871‑7161

www.dbs.myflorida.com

The Division of Blind Services serves persons who are visually impaired, blind and multi-disabled blind of all ages who need Medical Services, Social Services and Vocational Rehabilitation for Employment.

**Veterans Administration Blind Rehabilitation Centers**

700 South 19th Street 7305 N. Military Trail

Birmingham, AL 35233 West Palm Beach, FL 33410

205-558-4706 ext.6997 561-422-8425

**Visual Impairment Services Coordinator**

**James Haley**

10770 N. 46th Street Building F

Tampa, FL 33617

(813) 903-2442

The Veterans Administration provides medical services and rehabilitation to veterans.

# BRAILLE PRINTING

**BRAILLE WORKS** Braille and Large Print

Lou Fioritto Transcription

941 Darby Lake Street

Seffner, FL 33584

(813) 654-4050

(800) 258-7544

**CONSUMER ORGANIZATIONS**

**Client Assistance Program (CAP)**

2671 Executive Center Circle, West

Suite 100

Tallahassee, Florida 32301

1‑800‑342‑0823

Client Assistance Program is a service provided by the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities, Inc. This service helps consumers in resolving problems with the Division of Blind Services.

**NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

Foundation Fighting Blindness American Diabetes

6925 Oakland Mills Rd. #701 Association

Columbus, MD 21045 [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)

(800) 683-5555 2451 Crystal Lake Dr. #900

 (800) 424-8666 Arlington, VA 22202

[www.fightingblindness.org](http://www.fightingblindness.org) (800) 342-2383

Florida Agencies American Printing House f/t Blind

Serving the Blind PO Box 6085, 1839 Frankfort Ave.

1641 NW 2nd Ave. Louisville, KY 40206-0085

Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33311 (800) 223-1839

(305)898-2636 [www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org)

[www.beyondvisionloss.org](http://www.beyondvisionloss.org)

Association for Macular Diseases, Inc VisionServe Alliance

5969 Cattle Ridge Rd #100 8760 Manchester Road

Sarasota, FL 34232 St. Louis, MO 63144

855-962-2852 (314)961-8235

[www.macularhope.org](http://www.macularhope.org) [www.visonservealliance.org](http://www.visonservealliance.org)

Assoc. f/t Education & Rehabilitation Blinded Veterans Assoc.

of the Blind and Visually Impaired 1101 King St. #300

5680 King Centre Dr. #600 Alexandria, VA 22314

Alexandria, VA 22315 (800) 669-7079

703-671-4500 [www.bva.org](http://www.bva.org)

[www.aerbvi.org](http://www.aerbvi.org)

Council of Citizens with Low Vision Foundation for Glaucoma 6010 Lilywood Lane Research

Suite 1004 251 Post Street, Suite 600

Knoxville, TN 37921 San Francisco, CA 94108

(865) 766-0477 (415) 986-3162 [www.cclvi.org](http://www.cclvi.org) [www.glaucoma.org](http://www.glaucoma.org)

Nat'l Assoc. f/Parents of Visually Impaired

### Lighthouse Guild

### 15 W. 65th St.

### New York, New York 10023

(800) 562-6265

[www.Lighthouseguild.org/napvi](http://www.Lighthouseguild.org/napvi)

**Florida Council of the Blind American Council of the Blind**

Paul Edwards 1703 N. Beauregard St. Ste. 420

20330 NE 20th Ct. Alexandria, VA 22311

Miami, FL 33179 (800)424-8666

305-692-9206 [www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

[www.fcb.org](http://www.fcb.org)

The Florida Council of the Blind is a consumer organization that encourages and promotes the welfare of persons who are blind and visually impaired.

**National Federation of the Blind** **National Federation of the Blind**

Jernigan Place Tampa Bay Chapter Polk Chapter

200 E. Wells Street Miranda Kilby Joe King

Baltimore, MD 21230 Tampa FL 33609 Winter Haven, FL

(410) 659-9314 (352)942-0417 863-293-5648

www.nfb.org

National Federation of the Blind is a consumer organization that encourages and promotes the welfare of persons who are blind and visually impaired.

**DISABLED PARKING PERMIT**

A disabled parking certificate permits a driver transporting a person who is legally blind to park in disabled parking spaces. Applications for the permit can be obtained from the Auto Tag Agency/Tax Collector. A physician or a Division of Blind Services counselor must complete part of the application verifying the disability. The Tax Collector office number is (813) 635-5200 Hillsborough and Polk (863) 534-4700.

**EVACUATION**

Assistance in hurricane and emergency preparedness. (813) 272-5900- Hillsborough and (863) 298-7000.

**FINANCIAL BENEFITS**

**Social Security Administration**

3415 E Frontage Rd. 550 Commerce Dr. 11395 Havendale Blvd. NW

Tampa, Florida Lakeland, FL 33813 Winter Haven, FL 33881

1‑800‑772‑1213 (24 hours a day)

**Social Security Disability insurance (SSDI)**

SSDI is offered to persons who are legally blind, who have been employed for five of the previous ten years, and have paid into the Social Security fund. For more information, contact the Social Security Administration office.

**Supplemental Security income (SSI)**

SSI is a program of cash payments to persons who are legally blind and are in need of financial assistance. For more information, contact the Social Security Administration office.

**Social Security and SSI Benefits for Children with** **Disabilities**

Legally blind children are eligible for benefits under their parent's Social Security account. If the parents are retired, disabled, or deceased the child could receive their benefits provided the child becomes legally blind before reaching his or her twenty-second birthday. For more information, contact the Social Security Administration office.

**Income Tax Exemption**

Persons who are legally blind are entitled to an extra income tax exemption on their federal income tax form.

**Tax Credits for Disabled Homeowners**

Homeowners who are legally blind, may be eligible for tax credits against their property tax. Individuals who rent, lease property, or rent space in a licensed trailer park, may be eligible for a tax credit. For more information, contact your local Property Appraiser Hillsborough (813) 272‑6100 and Polk (863) 534-4777.

**FREE MAILING BENEFIT**

Pursuant to Postal Law 138, any person may mail personal correspondence embossed in braille, printed material 14 pt. or larger, or recorded material postage free to persons who are blind or visually impaired. Such mail must be unsealed so that it can be opened for postal inspection and should not exceed 15 lbs. The words **FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND** must be printed in the upper right‑hand corner of the envelope or container.

**HADLEY SCHOOL for the BLIND**

700 Elm Street

Winnetka, Illinois 60093

(800) 323-4238

[www.hadley.edu](http://www.hadley.edu)

The Hadley School for the Blind is the world's only correspondence school offered to persons who are legally blind throughout the world. Correspondence courses are offered in braille, large print or cassette. Persons wishing to achieve their educational or vocational goals or learn about self-support to enrich and rebuild their lives should contact the school. Tuition is free.

**IDENTIFICATION**

A State of Florida Identification Card can be obtained from the Tax Collector’s Office. The Tax Collector office number is (813) 635-5200 Hillsborough and Polk (863) 534-4700. Identification required.

The Division of Blind Services identification Cards can be obtained at the local Division of Blind Services office. Proof of identification and proof of legal blindness are required at the time of application.

**LARGE PRINT MATERIALS**

There are a variety of reading materials available in large print for persons who are partially sighted. Large print books are available from most community libraries. Large print checks may be available from your bank.

 **LARGE PRINT RESOURCES**

Aurora Ministries Audio Bibles and readings

12108 10th Ave. E.

Bradenton, FL 34212

(941) 748-3031

[www.auroraministries.org](http://www.auroraministries.org)

American Printing House f/t Blind Textbooks and reading material

1839 Frankfort Avenue for grades 2-12; in Braille, large

Louisville, KY 40206-0085 print or cassette

 (502)-895-2405

[www.aph.org](http://www.aph.org)

Christian Record Services for the Blind Magazine

5900 S. 58th Street Ste. M

Lincoln, Nebraska 68516

[www.christianrecord.org](http://www.christianrecord.org)

402-488-7582

**LIBRARY AND RECORDED SERVICES**

**Talking Book Library**

421 Platt Street

Daytona Beach, FL 32114

(386) 239-6000

[www.dbs.myflorida.com/library](http://www.dbs.myflorida.com/library)

Talking books, braille books, and magazines are available to legally blind or visually impaired persons unable to read "normal-sized" print. The Talking Books Program is provided at no charge by the National Library Service through the state's regional library.

**Learning Ally**

20 Roszel Road

Princeton, New Jersey 08540

800-221-4792

[www.](http://www.rfbd.org) Learningally.org

Learning Ally formerly Recordings for the Blind, Inc. has a national volunteer tape recording service of educational books primarily at high school and college level. Learning Ally’s master Library contains more than 70,000 titles and duplicate copies are available on four-track cassettes at 15/16 ips. Learning Ally recording and Library service is free.

**LOW VISION READING SYSTEMS**

**Enhanced Vision** **Emerald Coast Vision Aids**

Cell (407) 730-1964 Mike Hage

David Christensen www.emeraldcoastvisionaids.com

Ev.dchristensen@gmail.com (877)473-8081

**Florida Reading & Vision Technology Inc.**

Lesa Kretschmer

lesa@floridareading.com

(954)462-4647

**LOW VISION SERVICE**

A LOW Vision Specialist employs special examination techniques and aids to help low vision patients use their remaining vision to their advantage. The low vision aids may be special optical lenses, filters, reading slits, magnifier stands, lamps, and large print.

**MEALS**

**Meals on Wheels**

(813) 238‑8410 Hillsborough, (863) 299-1616 Polk

Meals on Wheels provides home delivered meals to customers.

**Senior Citizens Nutrition Program**

(813) 272-5250 Hillsborough Only.

**MOBILITY**

Persons who are blind or visually impaired generally use long white canes, sighted guides, and/or guide dogs. Formal training in cane mobility and sighted guide is provided by the Orientation and Mobility Specialist at the Lighthouse for the Blind.

**Southeastern Guide Dog School**

4210 77TH St. East

Palmetto, Florida 34221

(941)-729-5665

[www.guidedogs.org](http://www.guidedogs.org)

The Southeastern Guide Dog School provides instruction on the safe and effective way of traveling with guide dogs. The school provides leader dogs free of charge. In the four week course, the students learn how to travel safely with guide dogs. For more information, contact the Southeastern Guide Dog School. First, must have received cane skills training with an Orientation and Mobility Instructor at the Lighthouse.

**SOCIAL ACTIVITIES**

**City of Tampa Senior Centers Hillsborough County Lakeland**

(813) 274‑8211 (813) 744-5595 (863)687-2988

Call for the center nearest to you. **Winter Haven**

(Arts and crafts, exercise, dance) (863)291-5870

**Safe Link**

Safe Link Wireless is a government supported program that provides a free cell phone and airtime each month for income-eligible customers.

1-800-723-3546

How to Qualify

The process to qualify for Lifeline Service depends on the State you live in. In general, you may qualify if...

1. You already participate in other State or Federal assistance program such as Federal Public Housing Assistance, Food Stamps and Medicaid.

OR

1. Your total household income is at or below of the poverty guidelines set by your State and/or the Federal Government.

AND

1. No one in your household currently receives Lifeline Service through another phone carrier.
2. You have a valid United States Postal Address. In order for us to ship you your free phone you must live at a residence that can receive mail from the US Post Office. Sorry, but P.O. Boxes cannot be accepted.

In addition to meeting the guidelines above you will also be required to provide proof of your participation in an assistance program, or proof of your income level.

**TRANSPORTATION SERVICE**

Most interstate and intrastate bus lines offer a two-for-one reduced fare for persons who are legally blind accompanied by a sighted companion.

**AMTRAK**

 (800) 872-7245

 [www.amtrak.com](http://www.amtrak.com)

Amtrak offers a 10% discount for disabled and senior citizens. This discount is offered no matter the holiday, trip, or length of stay.

**LOCAL BUS SERVICE FIXED ROUTE**

Hart – Hillsborough Citrus Connection - Polk

(813) 254‑4278 (855)765-5287

[www.gohart.org](http://www.gohart.org) [www.Ridecitrus.com](http://www.Ridecitrus.com)

**PARATRANSIT – DOOR TO DOOR**

Paratransit bus service is available to persons unable to use regular bus service because of an impairment related to their disability. The person must have a Paratransit photo I.D. card and have be determined eligible. Paratransit is available to individuals within a 3/4 mile radius of a regular fixed route.

HART Hillsborough Citrus Connection - Polk

(813) 384-6305 (855)765-5287

**County Coordinated Transportation Disadvantaged**

For individuals who are disabled or elderly or economically disadvantaged, transportation is provided for medical appointments. Cost varies per trip dependent on household income. Doctor’s statement must certify that you are unable to ride the bus.

Sunshine Line – Hillsborough Citrus Connection – Polk

(813)272-7272 (855)765-5287

**VOTING**

Persons who are legally blind and wishing to vote may vote by absentee ballot or by asking an election official for assistance at the polls.

**Absentee Ballot**

An absentee ballot may be obtained from the Supervisor of Elections office.

Hillsborough – (813)612-4180 Polk – (863)534-5888

 [www.Votehillsborough.org](http://www.Votehillsborough.org) [www.polkelections.com](http://www.polkelections.com)

**Assistance at the Polls**

Voters who are legally blind may be helped in the polling booth by any member of their immediate family or any person age 18 years or older. A legally blind voter may also choose to be helped by an election official at the polling place.

**Register to Vote**

The Case Manager at the Lighthouse for the Blind & Low Vision can register you to vote and assist with absentee voting.

 **WHITE CANE LAW**

The "*WHITE CANE LAW*", Section 316.1301, Florida Statutes, gives blind individuals both rights and responsibilities.

The White Cane Law, (Section 316.1301, Florida Statutes), specifically states that whenever a pedestrian carrying a white cane or using a dog guide is crossing or attempting to cross a public street, the driver of every vehicle approaching that person must come to a full stop before proceeding and must take every precaution to avoid injuring the blind or visually impaired person. A driver convicted of a violation of this section of the law is guilty of a moving violation. Previously, as a misdemeanor, this law was difficult to enforce. Now, as a traffic violation, it will be easier to obtain convictions and, as a result, raise public awareness.

There is another new provision to the White Cane Law. In the past, some blind person who were using neither a cane nor a dog guide were considered negligent in court cases if they were hit by a motorist. Now, legally blind persons are not required to have a cane or dog to have motorists yield to them.

It must be noted that all persons are encouraged to use caution and cross streets only at intersections in the proper manner. Blind and visually impaired persons do, therefore, have the same responsibility to cross properly as do all pedestrians.

NOTE: *Paraphrasing of this statute as expressed in the Executive Summary should not be considered a legal interpretation. It is advisable to consult an attorney for legal opinions of specific sections of this law.*

**316.1301 TRAFFIC REGULATIONS TO ASSIST BLIND PERSONS**

(1) It is unlawful for any person, unless totally or partially blind or otherwise incapacitated, while on any public street or highway, to carry in a raised or extended position a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white tipped with red. A person who is convicted of a violation of this subsection is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. 775.082 or 775.083.

(2) Whenever a pedestrian is crossing, or attempting to cross, a public street or highway, guided by a dog guide or carrying in a raised or extended position a cane or walking stick which is white in color or white tipped with red, the driver of every vehicle approaching the intersection or place where the pedestrian is attempting to cross shall bring his or her vehicle to a full stop before arriving at such intersection or place of crossing and, before proceeding, shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid injuring such pedestrian. A person who is convicted of a violation of this subsection is guilty of a moving violation punishable as provided in chapter 318.

(3) Nothing contained in this section shall be construed to deprive any totally or partially blind or otherwise incapacitated person not carrying such a cane or walking stick, or not being guided by a dog, of the rights and privileges conferred by law upon pedestrians crossing streets or highways. The failure of any such person to carry a cane or walking stick or to be guided by a dog shall not be considered comparative negligence, nor shall such failure be admissible as evidence in the trial of any civil action with regard to negligence.

(Chgs. by L. 1992, chap. 296(1); L.1995, chaps. 148(307, 327(6); L.1996, chap. 350(16), eff. 10/1/96.)

**SUGGESTED SIGHTED GUIDE TECHNIQUES**

The guiding of a person who is blind or visually impaired is a personal service that you may want to provide. To assist in this area, please read the following:

1. Always ask an individual if assistance is needed. If so, make contact so they can grip your arm just above the elbow. By holding onto your arm, the person can be guided as opposed to being pushed and pulled from one place to another. You can keep your arm relaxed, this should not hinder your movement, however keep this arm by your side.

2. If you come to an area that is too narrow for both of you to pass through, shift your guiding arm behind your back. This movement indicates to the individual that they need to move behind you (single-file like). Tell them what is happening and visually check to make sure they are behind you and clearing the confined area without bumping into anything/anyone.

3. When using stairs, simply tell the individual you are approaching stairs. Stop before ascending or descending the stairs, make sure that the individual has found the handrail and the first step. Proceed naturally. There is not a need to announce every step while traveling the stairs. Once finished with the stairs, pause and let the individual know that you are done with the stairs.

1. When approaching doors, shift your guiding arm behind you (like for narrow passageways) and tell the person whether it is a push or pull door and whether it opens to the left or the right. The individual should catch the door as they walk through the doorway after you. Visually check as you are passing through, that they have caught the door and will not be hit by it.

Support Group Contact Info

National Federation of the Blind Hillsborough

(352) 942-0417 Miranda Kilby

Florida Council of the Blind Hillsborough

(813) 885-2288 Diane Bobrowski

Yes of America Hillsborough

(813) 795-2208 Craig Forsell

Barksdale Senior Citizen Center Hillsborough

(813) 348-1180

National Federation of the Blind Polk

(863)293-5648 Joe King