

# COMPREHENSIVE VOCATIONAL

# REHABILITATION PROGRAM (CVRP) OVERVIEW

HKNC is a leader in the field for vocational rehabilitation services for and among individuals who are DeafBlind.

HKNC is offering both virtual and in-person opportunities for assessment and training based on a person’s interests, schedule, and goals. Assessment in the core areas of employment services, adaptive technology, communication, independent living, and orientation and mobility with the clinical areas of audiology, low vision and mental health counseling are offered. For virtual classes, creative strategies are used to collect information during the 4-week assessment and support is offered to connect to classes remotely. Virtual instruction may be provided by telephone, iPhone, iPad, e-mail, computer, videophone, FaceTime, Zoom meetings and Google Classroom among other virtual options. The assessment and training are tailored to one’s goals and interests with a focus on practical application in one’s life. A person’s home and when available, community, are the natural training environments where strategies that will benefit them are discovered and practiced. The HKNC team of instructors will co-create a training program with each participant. An in-person assessment is 6-weeks with opportunities to work in settings that match a person’s interests and skills. There is a third option of starting one’s program virtually whether it is for assessment or training and then coming on-campus for the areas that are best instructed in-person. There is an array of training options available.

**Employment Services** – The HKNC employment services address an array of areas dedicated to preparing each person for success with a job commensurate with one’s abilities, talents, interests, and aspirations.

## VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

The virtual assessment will provide opportunities to identify specific goals so one may strengthen skills and knowledge and become work ready. The learning opportunities provide guidance with building a reference point for work and to enhance work skills and strategies for success. Strategies include learning adaptations to maximize job performance. The creation of a work portfolio with personalized information about work skills, strengths, accessibility needs, and adaptations for the specific tasks, related experiences and work objectives is developed.

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The community-based vocational program offers the opportunity for a comprehensive assessment of support needs and builds an individual’s self-esteem by offering the opportunity to make an informed choice after situational assessments at various work sites. Individuals receive feedback directly from employers and the experiences can be added to a resume. The most valuable part of the training program is to have all disciplines available to work with the participant in the work and community settings.

## Job Exploration

Each individual will begin identifying their interests by completing interest inventories which could include but are not limited to: verbal or pictorial editions; *O\*Net* Interest profiles; *mynextmove program*, <https://www.mynextmove.org/> or assessments included in the *virtualjobshadow* program <https://www.virtualjobshadow.com/>

Learning about jobs currently in demand, employers’ expectations and financial considerations of employment, workplace etiquette and culture are involved.

HKNC uses the *virtualjobshadow* program, a resource that provides opportunities for job shadowing and comprehensive career exploration. The program offers videos where an individual can job shadow professionals and get an understanding of the day-to-day life in a particular job. The section on job exploration offers a multitude of interest inventories that link to a full description of the career cluster chosen and a future look at employment opportunities. Each participant can also identify colleges in the home state that offer programs related to vocational interests. In addition, videos are provided to discuss soft skills. The program offers closed captioning and is accessible with JAWS. Assessment and training are provided utilizing the virtualjobshadow.com platform in combination with instruction by the HKNC transdisciplinary team.

## Work Readiness

HKNC provides opportunities for a person to gain work readiness skills through participation in collaborative peer learning groups. These groups offer opportunities to learn from others to build a reference for work and enhance one’s knowledge of work skills, including soft skills and strategies for success. Topics for work readiness include strategies for accessibility and understanding the tenets of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), practicing applications, both paper and online; developing interviewing skills; developing a resume; self-advocacy; time management; problem-solving skills and soft skills.

## Job Seeking Skills

Eachparticipant will explore the job market in relation to their identified career interests, engage in informational interviews, prepare a resume, experience mock or real time job interviews, and gain skills to utilize a variety of strategies and resources for job seeking. A transition plan is the key to successfully securing employment. HKNC’s DeafBlind Specialists are located throughout the country and if available in one’s state, can play a major role in assisting with the job search.

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In addition, HKNC’s National Employment & Business Relations Specialist focuses on developing relationships with national companies. The Specialist will work closely with the individual and their team to provide job leads and introductions to companies. The Specialist is also a resource for developing and providing training with the employer.

The key to vocational success is to enroll in a program that specializes in assessing skills and support needs while in a functional work setting. The HKNC on-campus vocational training program has provided the opportunity for internships with nationally known companies and large corporations such as: PALL Corporation, Adecco, Best Buy, PETCO, 1-800-Flowers. Internships offered at Adecco have led to full time employment as a Computer Programmer.

## TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

Orientation and mobility skills, skills of independent living, communication skills training, adaptive technology, audiology and low vision are incorporated into each individualized training plan. In addition, a technology instructor will work with each individual to assess adaptive technology skills to determine the optimal instructional modality prior to the beginning of a virtual assessment.

## COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS TRAINING

Training is provided on communication methods in the work environment for face-to-face communication including communication cards, apps, text messaging and how to access group interpreting. This includes accessing ASL interpreting and captioning during group meetings, telecommunications and accessing group video platforms such as Zoom. Instruction on banking and budgeting, time management, college exploration, sign language and fingerspelling, and academics provide opportunities to develop and enhance communication skills for optimal participation at work, home, college and in one’s community. Distance braille classes are offered to anyone from beginners to someone who is interested in further refining skills and/or continuing to gain proficiency.

## ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY SKILLS TRAINING

Training is provided in computer and portable device access via magnification and/or high contrast, speech and braille. Training is provided on assistive technology related to screen magnifiers, screen readers, braille displays, text to speech, braille note takers, Dolphin Guide Connect, OCR software/hardware, digital book services, relay services and accessible keyboards. Training on technology for the Apple iPhone, Apple iPad, and iOS apps such as Object Recognition, GPS, Proloquo2go, Face-to-Face Communication, Zoom Meeting and Social Media is the gateway for accessible, effective and efficient communication in all domains of life. Computer and related skills including e-mail, internet, word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, Google docs, typing, operating systems, webcams/camera, scanners, drawing, readers, removable storage devices and video editing are areas of training available to match the needs of the learner for work, home, school and in the community.

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Remote programs such as JAWS Tandem and TeamViewer are used to remotely access your computer for troubleshooting support if needed.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING

The independent living virtual assessment will be completed through a combination of interview, self-report and video observation. The assessment may also include assignments to be completed and discussed with the evaluator. When possible, equipment will be demonstrated through video. Based on assessment in the areas listed below, appropriate training and equipment recommendations will be made. Independent Living training focuses on food preparation for simple and advanced meal preparation which incorporates menu planning, following recipes, food shopping, and safe tactile cooking techniques for the stove, oven, alternate cooking equipment and adaptive appliances. Training on organization, labeling, wardrobe management, personal care, alerting devices and housekeeping skills provide the foundation for success at work, school, in the community and at home. Participants who come on-campus are able to use the adaptive kitchen to discover equipment, organization and labeling systems that work for them as well as receive training in the two apartment programs. One is an on-campus apartment program which has support on-site and the more advance program is the AIM (Apartment in the Mainstream) apartment program. The AIM apartment is located 5 minutes from HKNC in town.

## ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY SKILLS TRAINING

When performing a virtual orientation and mobility (O&M) assessment, certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) will collect data in a variety of formats to determine training goals that will benefit one’s unique abilities and home travel environments. Data will be collected via interview, video submission, and information provided (if needed) by virtual assistants, which may include blind rehabilitation professionals (COMS, CVRT, and/or TVI) and/or family and friends. HKNC Instructors will pay specific attention to associated risk for all categories of assessment. The Orientation and Mobility services include assessment and training on orientation to indoor and outdoor environments, human guide skills, protective techniques and recovering dropped objects, cane knowledge and techniques, stair travel, indoor and outdoor travel, communication when traveling, street crossings, public transportation, night travel, preparedness for community travel and dog guides.

The O&M curriculum at HKNC is distinctly modified to meet the unique travel needs of individuals with dual sensory losses. Close attention is paid to equipment, communication and travel tools. Additionally, for individuals who are hard of hearing and use hearing aids, the Orientation and Mobility instructors collaborate regularly with our in-house audiologist to ensure the person’s equipment is up-to-date helping to detect traffic surges and environmental noises.

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## LOW VISION TRAINING

The low vision specialist works with each participant virtually to learn about current vision capabilities and functional visual difficulties using interviews and by reviewing vision reports. Assistive tools such as distance and near magnifiers, telescopes, and Artificial Intelligence (wearable device) may be discussed with a focus on exploring the benefits and concerns for each low vision tool. Corresponding implications based on shared visual diagnosis will be discussed to bring clarity and understanding on how to maximize each person’s current functional vision.

While in trainingon-campus, a participant can gain an understanding of vision loss and methods of coping with changing vision through discussion and hands on demonstration of aids and devices. The low vision specialist provides support, assessment and training to individuals at the work site, home environment and classroom setting introducing strategies, low vision aids and equipment and strategies to enhance environmental conditions and maximize use of one’s vision.

The HKNC Low Vision Department is affiliated with the New York College of Ophthalmology Queens Division, where participants may receive consultations with other doctors with specialty in glaucoma and retinal issues.

## AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

The audiologistprovides information regarding hearing loss, hearing function and what options are for managing the hearing loss. Whether a person would do best with in-the-ear, behind-the-ear or receiver-in-the-ear hearing aids and what assistive listening devices would work with those hearing aids are some of the topics that can be covered in a virtual consultation with the HKNC audiologist. Other considerations may include the use of cochlear implants or the BAHA Hearing Implant System and identifying situations where a person may still struggle with communication. Perhaps the addition of a remote microphone is needed. Is an FM system needed or will a remote microphone system be sufficient? Would Bluetooth connectivity be sufficient or would your individual also need direct audio input to access some of their auditory devices such as talking book players? Knowing the options and understanding listening needs is critical to making an informed decision. The audiologist can provide personalized consultations to assist each individual with navigating the options.

The audiologist provides individualized services to each person recognizing how vision loss and hearing loss impacts communication. A person who has a combined vision and hearing loss will present different needs when seeking services of an audiologist for a hearing aid. The rehabilitation aspect of audiological services are stressed and integrated during your training experiences. HKNC has the capacity for participants to actually try out different hearing aids and other amplification devices and use them in their program to have adjustments made on the spot. This enhances the assessment and training experience making it more comfortable, relevant and incorporating real time situations, challenges and solutions.

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## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Helen Keller National Center recognizes the need for emotional support as an integral part of a person’s journey through the transitional stage of life regarding vocational rehabilitation training. HKNC continues to offer mental health services remotely and in-person in the capacity of individual supportive counseling and support groups. These services are provided by a Certified Licensed Clinical Social Worker. The supports provided vary from psychotherapy, to confidence building and self-advocacy. Mental health counseling plays a crucial role in a successful rehabilitation journey for people who struggle with isolation, depression, anxiety, grief, and loss. In addition, there are several support groups offered. With the support of the facilitators and the other members of the group, coping mechanisms and barriers are explored and identified and advocacy issues will be addressed. The group focus is to allow the participants to work through their adjustment in anticipation to bringing them closer to adapting to everyday life with a dual sensory loss, which can facilitate more productive training in addition to providing coping skills for the future. In addition, it provides people with a connection to others, renews friendships and develops new ones. These groups are constantly evolving based upon the needs of the current consumers.

For more information, please contact your:

HKNC Regional Representative, <https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc/nationwide-services> or HKNC Admissions Coordinator, Dora Carney dcarney@helenkeller.org

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