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Supporting Older Adults with Vision Loss

Overview



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- Prevalence of vision loss in older Texans
- Causes of vision loss, signs of decline in vision and the impact of vision loss on older adults
- Issues older Texans with vision loss may experience and ways you can help
- Resources for older adults with vision loss to remain independent

Texas Population

Texas population = 29.1 million

People over 65 = 3.8 million or
12.9%

Next 15 years = increase by 60%



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Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau - [census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/TX,US/POP010220](https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/TX,US/POP010220)

Texas Demographic Center -
demographics.texas.gov/data/tpepp/projections/Tool?fid=E27E2C7A549B4F0AB61596D824075D92

Prevalence of Visual Disability

Nearly 10% of, or 369,000, older adults age 65 and older experience some degree of vision loss.



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Source: VisionServe Alliance. (2022, August 4). Texas' Older Population and Vision Loss: A Briefing. Retrieved from <https://visionservealliance.org/reports/>

Nursing Homes and Visual Disability

2015-2019 = ~ **95,500** Texans

Sources: U.S. Census; doi.org/10.1177%2F2333721420934245



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Types of Eye Diseases that Can Cause Vision Loss

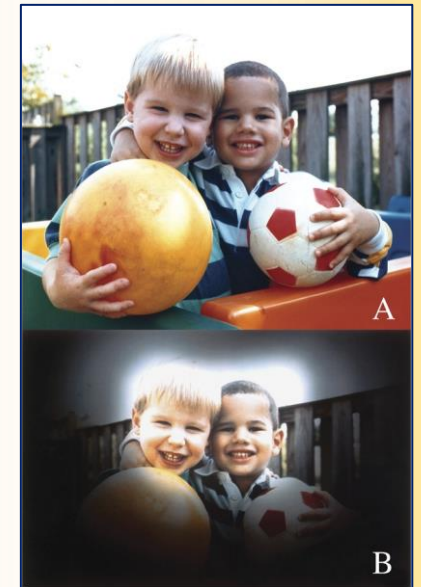
- Age-related macular degeneration
- Diabetic retinopathy
- Glaucoma



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Source:

[cdc.gov/visionhealth/basics/ced/index.html#:~:text=The%20leading%20causes%20of%20blindness,%2C%20diabetic%20retinopathy%2C%20and%20glaucoma](https://www.cdc.gov/visionhealth/basics/ced/index.html#:~:text=The%20leading%20causes%20of%20blindness,%2C%20diabetic%20retinopathy%2C%20and%20glaucoma)

Definition of Blindness and Low Vision

- **Blindness** – absence of sight
- **Low vision or partial vision**
 - **Central vision** – they see only a narrow field straight in front of them.
 - **Peripheral vision** – they see only what is to their left or right.



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Impact of Vision Loss

- Can cause feelings of fear, embarrassment or shame
- Some older adults feel like a burden on family and friends or like they are losing their independence
- Many do not know the array of services that may be available to them



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Indications of Vision Decline

- Bumping into things
- Tilting their heads and squinting
- Overreaching when trying to pick up objects



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What Assistance is Needed?

- Transportation
- Shopping
- Reading mail
- Homemaking chores
- Or none of these, depending on the person



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The Environment and Why it Matters

- Lighting
- Indoors vs. outdoors
- Daytime vs. nighttime
- Sunny vs. cloudy
- Color contrast
- Fatigue and general health



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Communicating with a Person with Vision Loss

- Identify yourself
- Speak to the older person
- Ask
- Verbalize
- Use large block letters
- Offer to guide



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Guiding a Person with Vision Loss

- Offer them to take your elbow or place their hand on your shoulder.
- Inform them about steps (going up or down).
- Describe the environment (people and objects).
- Advise them about doorways or narrow pathways.



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Resources to Remain Independent

- Relearning daily skills
- Assistive technology
- Family members
- Trained home health care workers
- Nursing home and long-term care staff
- Local community resources



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State Programs that Serve Older Adults with Vision Loss

- The Older Individuals who are Blind program: 512-936-3388 or oib.info@twc.texas.gov
- Talking Book Program: 800-252-9605 or tbp.services@tsl.texas.gov
- Blindness, Education, Screening and Treatment (BEST) program: BESTprogram@hhs.texas.gov
- Area agencies on aging: 800-252-9240
- Aging and Disability Resource Centers: 855-937-2372



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The best way to support older adults
with vision loss?

**Ask: "How can I
help?"**