

## **ACVREP announces it is developing an in- depth certification for licensed/registered Occupational Therapists in blindness/low vision**

**Why:** All people who are blind or low vision deserve to receive services from highly qualified professionals to ensure they have the skills needed to be independent and be engaged in family and community life, regardless of the age at which they lose their sight and where they live in the world.

**Why Now:** By 2030, 15 million Americans 65 and older will need access to quality services for blindness or low vision in order to live optimally full lives. Worldwide, the challenge is greater with an estimated population need by 2050 of 61 million people living with significant vision loss. Think about someone you know who is over 65—your mother, your grandmother, or a friend—who will need to learn how to live with blindness or low vision. If action is not taken now, most of these individuals will not be able to obtain vision rehabilitation services because there are not enough well-trained quality professionals who can help them maintain their independence. For services to be available to this growing population of individuals we must expand the number of quality service providers. **Action is needed now to meet the need.**

As of the end of September 2022, there are only 593 Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (CVRT) in the US and many are not currently practicing but are in administrative positions. Retirements have been offsetting new certificants. In the past 20 years the number of CVRTs has only grown 11% in total. The growth rate of Certified Low Vision Therapists is higher, but there are still only 456 CLVTs in the US.

Developing a new certification to embrace an expanded field of service providers to meet the growing need is not replacing any of the existing professionals or their certifications, but rather expanding the number of professionals qualified to provide vision rehabilitation.

**How:** ACVREP uses the tool of certification to advance professional competency. When a new certification is launched, ACVREP forms a subject matter expert committee to develop a scope of practice, establish quality standards through certification criteria, establish a Code of Ethics and develop a rigorous certification exam. Before certification criteria are finalized, they are posted for a 30-day public comment period that will include other vision rehabilitation and education professionals as well as consumers. This process takes 18-24 months.

**What:** **Expanding the number of people who have access to high quality services by launching a new certification for occupational therapists working with adults with blindness or low vision.**

**Blindness and** low vision can impact anyone. People with blindness or low vision often have other medical issues in addition to vision loss, requiring the services of an occupational therapist (OT). These may include traumatic brain injury, dementia, diabetes, stroke, arthritis and Parkinson's among other medical conditions.

An OT with in-depth specialty training in blindness and low vision builds on their OT Scope of Practice by using a holistic approach to evaluate and provide rehabilitation to adults with blindness or low vision, taking into consideration their other medical needs. OTs work within the medical system and therefore are much more likely to intersect with people who are blind or low vision, especially in the aging population. The new certification will provide a means of determining which OTs have the in-depth knowledge and training to provide quality services to effectively meet the rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness or low vision.

**ACVREP's commitment:** ACVREP remains committed to the growth of all certifications and will continue to work diligently with all subject matter expert committees and the field to promote recruitment and certification of those who provide services to individuals who are blind or low vision worldwide.