I. AUTHORITY

The Commissioner of Corrections adopts this policy pursuant to the authority contained in 34-A M.R.S.A. Section 1403.

II. APPLICABILITY

Entire Maine Department of Corrections

III. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department of Corrections to provide equal access to programs and services for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

IV. CONTENTS:

Procedure A: Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired, General
Procedure B: Services Related to Clients
Procedure C: Translation of Documents Related to Clients

V. ATTACHMENTS

None

VI. PROCEDURES

Procedure A: Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired, General

1. The Associate Commissioners, or designees, shall ensure that, within the areas of their respective responsibilities, persons who are blind or visually impaired are provided Braille documents, large print documents, and/or other communication services for the blind and visually impaired, as necessary.
2. A person who is blind or visually impaired is a person who has a functional vision deficit and, in the case of a person who is blind, has a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye or a field of view of 20 degrees or less in the better eye.

3. Each facility Chief Administrative Officer and each community corrections Regional Correctional Administrator, as well as the Associate Commissioner for Legislative and Program Services, shall designate staff who are responsible to ensure the provision of communication services for the blind or visually impaired.

4. Designated staff shall be trained in the following:
   a. This policy and procedures; and
   b. Accessing communication services for the blind or visually impaired.

5. Communication services for the blind or visually impaired may include providing documents translated into Braille, large print documents, or audio versions of documents, whether pre-recorded or read out loud at the time.

6. When a member of the public requests or otherwise indicates to staff the need for communication services for the blind or visually impaired, staff shall make the arrangements, with a preference for staff reading pertinent documents out loud at the time of the request.

7. Complaints of discrimination against persons who are blind or visually impaired, including complaints of failure to comply with this policy and procedures, shall be handled in accordance with Department Policy 1.6, Prohibition on Discrimination. If the complaint is by a person who is blind or visually impaired, the staff attempting to resolve the complaint shall provide communication services for the blind or visually impaired as needed during the complaint process.

Procedure B: Services Related to Clients

1. At initial contact with staff, if a prisoner, resident, community corrections client, parent, legal guardian, family member, or other person involved with a client appears to have a guide dog, a white cane, or especially thick eye glasses or appears to be having trouble avoiding physical obstacles, staff shall consider the possibility that the person may be blind or visually impaired.

2. In addition, a Juvenile Community Corrections Officer who has received a referral from a law enforcement officer for preliminary investigation of a juvenile shall, if there is any indication that the juvenile is blind or visually impaired, take

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appropriate steps to determine if this is true, if possible prior to the initial contact with the juvenile.

3. Once it has been determined that a person is blind or visually impaired, staff shall verbally inform the person and, if the person has not attained the age of 18 years or is an adult with a guardian, the person’s parent or guardian, that the person has the right to have communication services for the blind or visually impaired, at no cost to the person.

4. In addition, at this time, if the person who is blind or visually impaired is a client, a notation shall be made by staff in CORIS to reflect the fact of the person’s status and, if applicable, the person’s communication services needs.

5. When a client or parent, legal guardian, family member, or other person involved with a client who has been identified as blind or visually impaired accepts an offer of communication services or requests or otherwise indicates to staff the need for communications services, staff shall make arrangements for the services, with a preference for staff reading pertinent documents out loud at the time of the request.

6. The staff shall document in CORIS the type of communications services provided (e.g., Braille documents, large print documents, or audio versions of documents), the name of any staff reading documents out loud, if applicable, and the situation that required the provision of the communications services.

7. The staff shall document in CORIS if a client or person involved with a client declines an offer of communication services provided by the Department or if no service was provided for another reason and why.

8. Staff shall inform a person who has declined communication services provided by the Department that he or she has the right to request communication services provided by the Department at any subsequent time.

Procedure C: Translation of Documents Related to Clients

1. The Commissioner shall designate staff to determine which documents used by the Department must be translated into Braille or be available in a large print version. Translation is the process of conveying a document in Braille accurately and without changing its meaning by a neutral, trained and qualified translator.

2. The determination whether to have a document translated into Braille or made available in a large print version shall depend on the number of clients who are blind or visually impaired, the ability of the clients to read and understand the original document, and whether the document is considered essential. Pre-recorded audio versions of documents may be used in lieu of Braille or large print documents.
VII. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

ACA:

ACI – 4-4277  Written policy, procedure, and practice prohibit discrimination based on an inmate’s race, religion, national origin, sex, disability, or political views in making administrative decisions and in providing access to programs.

4-JCF-3A-03  Juveniles are not subjected to discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or political views.

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