VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

TEXAS CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

TEXAS WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS
Texas Workforce Solutions is comprised of the Texas Workforce Commission, 28 local workforce development boards and our service-providing partners. Together we provide workforce education, training and support services, including vocational rehabilitation assistance for the people of Texas.

TEXAS CONFIDENCE BUILDERS

is a technique used by the Texas Workforce Solutions-Vocational Rehabilitation Services (TWS-VRS) to help vocational rehabilitation consumers accept and adjust to blindness, become independent, find meaningful work and live lives that are productive and happy.

“People become really quite remarkable when they start thinking that they can do things. When they believe in themselves they have the first secret of success.”

Norman Vincent Peale
Breaking the Barriers

TWS-VRS staff has worked with thousands of people who are blind. Experience has taught us that people can lead full, productive and independent lives by building confidence and receiving proper training.

Using a variety of skills, alternative techniques and available technologies, people who are blind are fully capable of leading the lives they choose. Education, career, family, hobbies, recreation, travel — all these (and more!) are easily within the reach of everyone who learns and masters these skills and has the confidence to use them.

The more a person who is blind begins to realize all that he or she can do successfully, the more he or she will do independently.

Committing to Confidence

Through Texas Confidence Builders, TWS-VRS wants to instill real and lasting confidence in everyone we serve. Confidence that lets a person who is blind go anyplace, do anything
and be exactly who and what he or she wants to be, without hesitation or insecurity. Confidence that welcomes any new option, circumstance or challenge!

A break with tradition

In the past, people who were blind learned a set of skills and techniques designed for a particular set of activities, goals and circumstances. The problem with that approach is that conditions rarely stay the same. Change is a part of life.

Confidence works better and lasts a lifetime

A strong foundation of basic skills and confidence helps people who are blind adapt to different situations. This means people won't be easily overwhelmed or left behind by change. Confidence helps people break with traditional ways.
Dedicated to independence

TWS-VRS is dedicated to helping people who are blind achieve independence, and that includes achieving independence on our services. The mission of Texas Confidence Builders is to serve consumers one time — teaching them a full set of core skills and confidence that they can rely on throughout their lives.

Building Confidence

Texas Confidence Builders focuses on three main areas to help consumers feel empowered and develop confidence in themselves: learning, thinking positively and building skills.

Learning

One of the first issues Texas Confidence Builders addresses is helping consumers learn the truth about blindness — beginning with the facts about their own vision loss and medical conditions. Armed with facts, consumers are better able to analyze their own situations realistically and plan for the future accordingly.

Thinking positively

Developing healthy attitudes is the key to using acquired skills to maximum benefit. If consumers do not develop confidence and believe in themselves, they are not as likely to
practice the skills they have learned. They may continue to believe blindness skills are inferior to sighted techniques, and they may feel embarrassment, shame or fear when using them. Attitudes and skills must work together for consumers to achieve their vocational and personal goals.

**Take chances.**

**Building skills**

Texas Confidence Builders recognizes that family, home life, hobbies, travel and many other areas bring richness and meaning to daily life.

With that in mind, TWS-VRS works with the whole person, not just one part of his or her life. In the course of completing services, all consumers are expected to achieve basic abilities in several core Texas Confidence Builders skills. Texas Confidence Builders activities are built into all programs and services offered to consumers with visual impairments.

In our field offices, rehabilitation counselors arrange the required training for consumers over an extended period of time. The Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center (CCRC) offers comprehensive training in a shorter period. CCRC students live on campus, attend classes and work intensively to learn skills and positive attitudes about blindness to increase competence, independence and confidence.
In all Texas Confidence Builders activities, consumers learn a variety of alternative nonvisual techniques. As a person begins to realize how much he or she can do successfully without vision, the fear, self-pity and dependence begin to fall away, and the consumer’s focus moves from being blind to being independent, productive and happy.

**Living with Confidence**

Confidence Builders focuses on six core skills.

**Communication skills**

Reading and writing Braille is important because, regardless of the consumer’s future circumstances, Braille provides a dependable method of receiving, organizing and sharing information.
Technology is another big part of communication. Through Texas Confidence Builders, consumers develop the skills to use computers, calculators, adaptive aids and other high-tech devices that are increasingly important in everyday life.

Routine activities, such as using the phone, telling the time or signing a document, are important elements of communication. Texas Confidence Builders helps consumers develop the skills to do these tasks independently.

**Organizational skills**

We all have methods for organizing the things and activities that are meaningful to us — such as meetings, addresses, music collections, recipes and tools. Consumers learn a
variety of nonvisual ways to organize and access what they need, and these skills help them become more confident, more self-reliant and more in control of their lives.

**Daily living skills**

Building on basic organizational skills, consumers gain the confidence to manage dozens of day-to-day tasks — from personal skills to fixing a meal, cleaning up at home and handling money and finances. Through Texas Confidence Builders, consumers learn to be self-sufficient in managing their own medications, accessing health-related services and dealing with doctors and other professionals. Consumers learn tips for keeping house, doing laundry and coordinating clothing. All of these activities are vitally important to people who want to be independent, make their own choices and lead their own lives.

**Travel skills**

Many people who are blind are confined to idle lives at home because they haven’t learned reliable travel skills or don’t have the confidence to use the skills they’ve learned.

Texas Confidence Builders helps consumers meet this challenge head-on by teaching a variety of travel techniques. All consumers
go through white-cane training as part of developing their travel skills. With a white cane in hand, consumers learn how to negotiate city sidewalks, cross busy intersections, ride the bus, maneuver through a bustling airport or take a quiet walk on a country road. They develop the confidence to travel where and when they want, even when others doubt they can!

**Live to the fullest.**

**Career exploration**

TWS-VRS offers a full array of employment services designed to help people who are blind achieve their employment goals.

Employment services are customized to the needs of each consumer and may include self-evaluation (determining personal strengths, limitations, interest, likes and dislikes), exploring various occupations or developing job-seeking skills. Some consumers participate in job shadowing, observing somebody who is already working to see what it’s really like; other consumers do volunteer work to find out if a particular occupation suits them.

Consumers who have mastered the Confidence Builders core skills have outstanding prospects in the job market — whether it’s landing a first job or moving up the organizational ladder.
Not only have they learned employment-related skills, they’ve developed a level of confidence, self-sufficiency and independence that will serve them quite well in their chosen careers and the working world.

**Recreation**

A surprising number of consumers come to us believing they are limited in the social activities and hobbies they can engage in. That is simply not true. TWS-VRS encourages consumers to explore their interests and helps them develop techniques and resources to do what they love — whether it’s gardening, golfing, waterskiing or climbing mountains!