



AER Membership Guidebook

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ABOUT AER

AER

The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) is a professional membership organization dedicated exclusively to professionals who provide services to persons with vision loss. Our aim is to promote and support the professions by advocating for evidence-based practices, high quality standards, value-added resources and giving voice to issues of critical importance. AER provides professional development via face-to-face conferences, virtual offerings and publications to strengthen the knowledge, skills and abilities of professionals within the field. AER provides networking, mentoring, connectivity, awards and scholarships for professionals to advance excellence within the field. Our aim is to ensure that persons with vision loss will have optimal gains and greater independence by giving timely, intentional, and value-added support to professionals in the field.

AER Chapters

An AER membership provides automatic membership in an AER Chapter at no additional cost. Chapters provide unique opportunities to connect with local professionals who provide services and resources that enable individuals who are blind or visually impaired to achieve their educational, employment and personal independence goals.

Why Membership Matters

When you join AER, you join a community of excellence. No matter your role or the number of years in the field, membership in AER places you among a group of elite professionals. AER is a member centered organization where members support each other; and for that reason and many others, AER is constantly evolving, growing and listening. Your goals and your needs are our purpose. Membership in AER is significant: it's the one place where likeminded professionals come together to make sure members have what they need to succeed.

Who Should Join AER?

Whether you are an emerging, new, veteran, retired or somewhere-in-between professional in the vision field, AER is right for you. AER offers several membership types that include Individual, Corporate, Retired, Transitional and Student. Our members include Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists, TVIs, Low Vision Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Optometrists, Ophthalmologists, Assistive Technology Professionals, Professors, Administrators, Students, Product and Service Businesses, and many other related professionals.

Mission

The mission of AER is to serve and empower professionals to deliver standards-based practices that lead to improved educational and rehabilitative outcomes for individuals with visual impairment and blindness.

Vision

The **Vision** of AER is to be a dynamic and thriving professional membership community with innovative practices and standards that result in responsiveness, recognized leadership, and improved outcomes for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

Core Values

COMPASSION

AER deeply and actively cares about the success of its members and those who are served and provides resources and support to help them exceed their own expectations.

DIVERSITY

AER respects the worth and uniqueness of each individual and embodies a culture where diverse backgrounds, experiences, approaches and ideas are revered.

INDEPENDENCE

AER is committed to ensuring that everyone, regardless of circumstances, will achieve the greatest level of independence and success.

INTEGRITY

AER adheres to the highest ethical standards and promotes an environment complete with honesty and transparency.

“Joining AER is the best gift I gave my career...and is a must for all professionals in the field...”

VALUABLE DISCOUNTS

From professional liability insurance, hotels, car rentals, trainings, books, you name it, AER members receive budget saving discounts! AER has partnered with top hotels, car rental companies, insurance carriers and many more to provide members the best savings. AER members also receive discounted conference registrations to the AER International Conference and local chapter conferences. Corporate members receive discounts too!

Individual Memberships

- AER International Conference Registration Fee - *Save \$175*
- Chapter Conference Registration Fee Discounts
- Chapter Events Fee Discounts
- Discounted Insurance, including Auto, Life, Health, Pet, Long Term Care, Dental, Property (Home) and Professional Liability.
- AER Publications offered through the AER Book Store
- Hotels: Hyatt, Marriott, Hilton, Holiday Inn, Omni, Drury, Westin and Choice Hotels Discounts
- Auto Rentals: Alamo, Auto Europe, Avis, Budget, Hertz, National and Payless Discounts
- Legal Shield
- ID Shield (protection against identity theft)

Corporate Memberships

- Discounted Job Exchange Postings
- Conference Program Book Ads - *50% off*
- Discounted Exhibit Booth(s) at Conference
- Conference Registrations at Member Rates for up to 3 Employees
- Discounted Website Ads
- The *Voice Ads* - *50% off*
- Savings on *AER ViewPoint Ads*

PROFESSIONAL EDGE

An AER membership gives you a professional edge and “is the best gift you can give your career.” Recognizing your existing skills and developing new ones will not only help prepare you for your current role, it will also give you an advantage. When you join a group of likeminded professionals, you gain access to a world of wisdom and experience. You create amazing relationships with people who can help you grow in ways you could never imagine. And, these same colleagues can help you tap new, exciting opportunities you might otherwise never know existed.



FREE RESOURCES

AER members receive an online subscription at no cost to *JVIB*, the only peer reviewed journal dedicated 100% to the field! AER members receive an e-communication *The Voice* that provides a monthly connection to information; and division and chapter newsletters. Members can access critical topic position papers, AERODYNAMICS-Canada, FREE monthly AER Power-Ups! virtual educational sessions, leadership development resources, three FREE division memberships and so much more.

All Included with Your Membership at No Additional Cost!

- *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB)*- 6 issues per year
- *The Voice* - 12 issues per year
- AERODYNAMICS-Canada
- AER Power-Ups! Virtual Educational Sessions & CE Hours - Monthly
- AER Lift Leadership Development Program
- AER Lift Voyagers Mentorship Program
- Membership in three Divisions (professional learning communities)
- Professional Discussion Groups
- Position Papers
- *AER ViewPoint* - 26 issues per year

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Need to earn professional development hours for your certification or licensure? Or, simply want to remain current with the latest trends, practices and information? If so, AER can meet your needs. AER provides a wide variety professional development options including face-to-face conferences, special educational events, virtual sessions, online articles and other opportunities.

AER International Conferences

AER holds 2 types of conferences: the biennial International Conference held in even calendar years and subject-matter conferences, typically held during odd calendar years. The biennial International Conference is the largest gathering of AER members and other vision professionals and provides educational sessions, networking, meetings and special events. “Subject-matter” conferences are smaller in scope and provide an excellent opportunity to deeply explore central topics and areas related to serving individuals who are blind or visually impaired. *Members receive a \$175 discount.*

AER Chapter Conferences

Chapter conferences are held during the fall and spring; and offer a wonderful opportunity for chapter members to meet, interact, and socialize on a local level. These conferences offer workshops, technical sessions and other events designed to advance your knowledge, skills and abilities. To learn more about a chapter conference near you, visit www.aerbvi.org.

AER Power-Ups! Virtual Sessions

AER divisions offer virtual sessions to help broaden your knowledge, skills and abilities and excel in your job. With a variety of topics, these sessions are designed to help you gain the information, techniques and strategies needed to better serve your clients and earn continuing education (CE) hours with ease and flexibility—at no additional cost.

Water Cooler Sessions

Sponsored by AER divisions, these sessions offer a chance to gather with likeminded professionals to discuss current topics and relevant issues. Water Coolers are facilitated by leading authorities in the field and are offered FREE to AER members.

JVIB Articles

AER members can earn CE hours by reading two designated articles in the *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness (JVIB)*. *JVIB* is provided to members FREE and is issued 6 times per year.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

AER LIFT - Leadership Development Program

AER LIFT is premier leadership training offered to AER members who are current or emerging leaders. Drawing on the knowledge and experience of people who have led in diverse ways and settings, it embodies innovation, capacity building and results-oriented leadership as a means of developing modern day leadership skills in AER. It is designed to help chapter and division leaders and emerging leaders to “lead” with excellence.

AER LIFT Voyagers Program

Open to AER members, Voyagers is designed to grow impact and strengthen AER by partnering new professionals and emerging leaders with veteran AER leaders. Mentees will have an opportunity to learn and development with support from AER leaders. Whether the goal is chapter leadership, division leadership or something else, this program is aimed at helping people to reach career and professional goals.

NETWORKING

Network, network, network! Ever had a question, wondered what to do, needed to hear from an expert or were simply looking for a new job? AER allows members to make the right connections. Whether it’s connecting via one of the many members-only professional Listservs discussion groups, attending chapter or international conferences, or simply connecting for a specific reason via telephone, AER connects you to your colleagues, thought leaders and experts like no other organization. AER is the one place that gives you a chance to network locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. AER networking is a career booster and can help you achieve! Follow AER on social media and make “social” connections that change lives!



AER PROFESSIONAL ONLINE DISCUSSION GROUPS- LISTSERV LISTS

AER Net (General Membership Discussion Group)

AER Board Members Discussion Group

AER Chapters Discussion Group

BANA Chapter Reps Discussion Group

AER Divisions Discussion Group

AER Student Members Discussion Groups

AER Canada Discussion Group

Legislative/Advocacy Workgroup

AER Michigan Chapter Discussion Group

Division on Aging Discussion Group

Administration and Leadership Division Discussion Group

Education Curriculum Division Discussion Group

Information and Technology Division Discussion Group

International Services & Global Issues Division Discussion Group

Low Vision Division Discussion Group

Neurological Visual Impairment (NVI) Division Discussion Group

Orientation & Mobility Division Discussion Group

Personnel Preparation Division Discussion Group

Psychosocial Division Discussion Group

Rehabilitation Counseling & Employment Division Discussion Group

DIVISIONS

AER has 16 divisions which are professional learning communities. This “exclusive” member benefit helps members sharpen their skills, practices and capabilities across many domains. Each division provides practice-based learning and focuses on a specific area. As an AER member, you can join 3 divisions FREE; and can join more for as low as \$10 each.

Orientation & Mobility

Are you a certified Orientation and Mobility specialist, or interested in independent movement and travel? The AER O&M Division is a must for you! With resources, discussions, and information on an array of topics, including accessible pedestrian signals, rural wayfinding, scope of practice, tools to support the growing field of O&M, and so much more. This is where O&M specialists convene to learn, grow, and develop.

Education Curriculum

From resources on adapting general education assignments to best practices for teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) to tools to support K-12 students, this division provides educators with the latest research and guidance.

Vision Rehabilitation Therapy

Membership in this division is a must for anyone who works with or on behalf of adults who are blind or visually impaired to attain adaptive techniques and to master daily living skills. The scope of topics covered by this division is limitless.

Division on Aging

Working with the older adult population? This AER division is for you! From fall prevention to reducing isolation to gaining tools to better support older adults with dual sensory loss, this action-forward division provides resources, educational sessions, and support to help you to better support older adults with vision loss.

Administration and Leadership

Join this division for current hot topics, regulatory and management issues and fostering effective leadership skills. Ideal for administrators, principals, superintendents, executive directors, and emerging leaders.

Rehabilitation Counseling & Employment

Interested in information, resources and building competencies related to helping clients gain economic independence through pre-vocational and employment strategies? Then, this is a division for you!

Multiple Disabilities & Deafblind

Want the most current information and resources when working with clients and children who have additional disabilities, such as hearing, developmental, cognitive, or mobility impairments? This division is for you! Address topics such as sensory processing, adapting physical activities, access to information and so much more.

Psychosocial Services

Tools for mental health counseling, social skills training, and educational assessment and other content areas are explored within this division. It's a valuable division for anyone who works with or on behalf of persons with vision loss.

Low Vision Rehabilitation

The division provides growth and development opportunities for professionals serving in a wide continuum of low vision services. It is perfect for teachers, rehabilitation specialists, low vision therapists, occupational therapists, optometrists, ophthalmologists, researchers, university personnel, administrators, and many others with an interest in low vision rehabilitation. It is a one stop portal for evidence-based literature and information on the latest low vision tech and devices, media assessment, visual efficiency trends and more.

Information & Technology

The division is aimed at making sure you are knowledgeable about trends and advances in technology, have the skills to match particular assistive technologies to needs, and are able to evaluate standards that guide developers and manufacturers who provide products for those who are blind or visually impaired.

Infant & Preschool

Resources, discussions and workshops related to school-based and in-home early intervention services for birth-five, parent engagement and appropriate interventions for emerging diagnoses are provided in this division.

Itinerant Personnel

The AER Itinerant Personnel division connects you to Itinerant Personnel in your community and across the globe. It provides resources and evidence-based practices related to travel and caseloads, DYI literacy kits and other

educational supports useful to itinerant teachers of children who are visually impaired.

Personnel Prep

The division focuses on college and university programs; best practices for program design and curriculum; and brings together university faculty members, professors, graduate students and other professionals interested in the preparation of qualified personnel.

International Services & Global Issues

Connect, grow and explore with colleagues about services and trends impacting people with vision loss from around the globe.

Physical Activity and Recreation

Physical activity and recreation extend across many disciplines and domains. Learn, collaborate and share ways to make physical activity and recreation accessible. Learn how to help influence behaviors that lead to active and healthy lifestyles. The division provides an unmatched opportunity to join professionals working to enhance physical activity and recreational experiences for individuals who are blind and visually impaired.

Neurological Vision Impairment

Connect with the latest resources, strategies and information related to increasing the knowledge base of care providers and improving interventions for children and adults with vision loss due to brain injury or disease.

PUBLICATIONS

AER offers several critical publications to its members. From discounted flagship publications to free digitally accessed publications that provide the latest trends, research, opinions, strategies and news, AER provides publications for every stage of your career.

- *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (JVIB)* - Free for Members
- Bill of Rights for All Children with Visual Impairment and their Families
- Low Vision Position Papers
- Orientation & Mobility Position Papers
- Itinerant Personnel Position Papers
- *AER ViewPoint* - Free for Members

- The *Voice* - Free for Members
- AERODYNAMICS- Canada - Free for Members
- *Orientation & Mobility: Techniques for Independence 2nd Edition*
- *Strategies for Developing Mathematics Skills in Students Who Use Braille*
- *Study Guide for the Low Vision Therapist Examination*
- *An Illustrated Guide to Cane Repair and More*
- *Preschool Orientation and Mobility Screening*

ADVOCACY

AER works to advance and promote the field by advocating for professionals and those who are served by our members. Our aim is to champion and move forward your needs so that you can perform your job under the best conditions and are able to help those with vision loss achieve their goals and have the greatest chance to live independently. Like with most advocacy, there is power in numbers. Working together, we make a difference! The totality of our membership makes it possible for AER to:

- Give a sound voice to relevant issues that lead to support at the local, state and national level.
- Strengthen relationships between the vision-related professions and “neighboring” fields and disciplines.
- Support relevant and timely research that advances the field and associated disciplines.
- Educate policymakers on critical issues impacting the vision field and children and clients served.
- Establish high standards and code of ethics for professionals in the field.
- Make sure our needs are heard via effective representation locally, nationally and globally.

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Alfred Allen Award

The Alfred Allen Award was established by the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB), one of AER's two predecessor organizations, to honor professionals who have spent their careers in direct service to people with visual impairments. Through the extent and quality of the services that they have provided, these professionals exemplify the character, dedication, insight, and sharing that epitomize the spirit of and commitment to direct service.

Mary Bauman Award

The Mary K. Bauman Award was established in 1982 in order to honor an individual who has made significant and outstanding contributions to the education of children and youth who are blind or visually impaired.

Warren Bledsoe Award

The C. Warren Bledsoe Award is given in recognition of a particularly noteworthy piece of literature in the field of blindness.

Douglas MacFarland Award

The Douglas C. MacFarland Award was established to honor an individual who has provided leadership in the field of blindness and visual impairment and who made innovative, significant or outstanding contributions to the education or rehabilitation of people who are visually impaired through either direct service, professional organizations, research, literature and/or preparation of professionals and is retired from the field. These contributions should have had an impact on a national or international level.

John McAulay Award

The John H. McAulay Award was established to honor professionals who have contributed outstanding efforts and achievements leading to the placement of people with visual impairments in productive employment.

Outstanding Chapter Award

The AER Outstanding Chapter Award recognizes a chapter whose membership efforts have been exceptional. Criteria: increase in the number of members; number and quality of services and/or programs offered by the chapter; and legislative activity significantly affecting the lives of people who are blind.

Ambrose Shotwell Award

The Ambrose M. Shotwell Memorial Award was established to honor an individual who has made significant outstanding contributions to the personal

adjustment or rehabilitation of adults who are blind or visually impaired. These leadership contributions have had an impact on a national or international level through their direct effect on people with visual impairments through the insight or inspiration that they provided to rehabilitation personnel in other states or nations.

Richard Welsh Chapter Leadership Award

The Richard L. Welsh Chapter Leadership Award was established to recognize professionals who have contributed outstanding efforts in AER chapter leadership. Nominees will demonstrate activity and achievement, either past or current, in the role of AER President-Elect, President, Past-President, Secretary, or Treasurer at the chapter level in the following areas: 1) Overall recognition as a leader who embodies and models the qualities of honesty, common sense, good decision making, communication, commitment to the field of visual impairment and blindness, and respect for diverse opinions; 2) embracing, inspiring, and motivating new membership and leadership at the Chapter level and beyond; 3) inviting collaboration to promote: leadership, membership recruitment, and member retention; and 4) Leadership that inspires joy and passion in the mentoring of new professionals in the field of visual impairment.

International Student Scholarship

Scholarship is awarded to a student originating from areas outside the mainland United States and Canada that is obtaining post-secondary education to serve students with visual impairments in their region. The scholarship is open to students in cultural and geographical locations around the world; however, it is not open to American or Canadian students studying in or outside of their home country. *Award \$500.*

William and Dorothy Ferrell Scholarship

Awarded biennially to students pursuing a professional career in the vision field where services will be provided to children or adults who are blind or visually impaired. Two applicants are selected. *Award \$1000 each.*

Donald Blasch Scholarship

AER's Orientation & Mobility Division awards an annual scholarship to students enrolled in an AER accredited university Orientation & Mobility program. The scholarship recognizes the vital contributions of the late Donald Blasch to the profession of O&M during his long tenure at Western Michigan University. Two scholarships are awarded. *Award \$1000 each.*

For information about other awards and scholarships available through AER divisions, please visit: <https://aerbvi.org/about/divisions/>

TYPES OF AER MEMBERSHIPS

Regular Membership: \$175/year

Regular level members are individuals in an educational, rehabilitation, and/or professional field working with or on behalf of those who are blind or visually impaired.

International Member: \$175 US/year

International level members are individuals living outside of the United States, who work in an educational, rehabilitation, and/or professional field working with or on behalf of those who are blind or visually impaired.

Same Household Residential Members: \$148/year

Same Residential Household members are individuals residing in the same household as a current AER Regular member.

Retired Member: \$98/year

Retired level AER members are individuals who have reached the age of 65 and are eligible to retire under the current Social Security regulations and are officially retired from their primary professional activities.

Support/Clerical Member: \$98/year

Support/Clerical members are individuals working in positions that provide paraprofessional or clerical support.

Student Member: \$98/year

A Student level membership is open to students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate programs of higher learning. This member category is available for a maximum of six cumulative years.

Transition Member: \$144/year

Transition members are individuals who have completed their education and are newly entering their career. Upon graduation, current student members are eligible for a one-year Transition Member category

Associate Member: \$98/year

Associate level members are non-voting members, eligible to anyone who is not employed in the field, such as a parent or caregiver; or is someone preparing for employment in the field but does not qualify for a student membership.

Corporate Member: \$605-\$755/year

A Corporate level member is a non-voting membership category for companies, state/provincial agencies, school systems, non-profit agencies, and other entities that serve those who are blind and visually impaired, provide products or services; and support the mission of AER.

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