

## **Eligibility for individual service**

Any resident of the United States or American citizen living abroad who is unable to read or use regular print materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical limitations may receive service through NLS. This includes those who are blind or have a visual, physical, perceptual, or reading disability that prevents them from reading or handling print materials.

## **Who can qualify?**

NLS provides service to individuals who fall into any of the following categories:

1. Blind persons whose visual acuity, as determined by competent authority, is 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses, or whose widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees.
2. Persons whose visual disability, with correction and regardless of optical measurement, is certified by competent authority as preventing the reading of standard printed material
3. Persons certified by [competent authority](#) as unable to read or unable to use standard printed material as a result of physical limitations.
4. Persons certified by competent authority as having a perceptual or reading disability and unable to read printed works to substantially the same degree as a person without an impairment or disability.
5. Persons eligible for service (falling into any of the above categories) who are now living as residents of the United States (including its territories, insular possessions, and the District of Columbia), or are American citizens eligible for service who are now living abroad, or dependents of active military personnel or diplomats.

This includes individuals who have had a qualifying disability from birth, individuals who are disabled because of medical conditions or trauma, and individuals who become disabled as they age. Individuals who have a temporary disability may qualify for service on a temporary basis. Individuals who are blind or have a print disability and who have been honorably discharged from the armed forces of the United States receive special priority.

## **Who is a “competent authority”?**

Regarding NLS eligibility, "competent authority" is defined to include:

- Doctors of medicine
- Doctors of osteopathy
- Ophthalmologists
- Optometrists
- Registered nurses
- Therapists
- Professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or private welfare agencies, such as an educator, social worker, case worker, counselor, rehabilitation teacher, certified reading specialist, school psychologist, superintendent, or librarian.

In the absence of any of these, certification may be made by professional librarians or by any person whose competence under specific circumstances is acceptable to the Library of Congress.

