

Vision Support Guide

Plus IrisVision for Veterans

**A resource guide for caregivers
and low vision individuals**



About Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing

Front Porch is a not-for-profit senior living provider that supports over 7,500 residents in 53 communities, mainly across California. The Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing (FPCIW) is a center of excellence within Front Porch that explores innovative uses of technology to empower individuals to thrive, particularly as we age. The FPCIW has been exploring technology solutions that can either assist with low vision challenges or even correct vision.

Table of Contents

Impact of Low Vision	2
Talking about Low Vision in Your Community	4
IrisVision Headset	6
FPCIW IrisVision Pilot	8
IrisVision for Veterans	10

For our full sound and vision impact story please visit
<https://fpciw.org/story/sound-vision/>

Vision

Impact of low vision



Vision impacts activities of daily living like walking and recognizing surroundings, preparing meals, and dressing oneself.

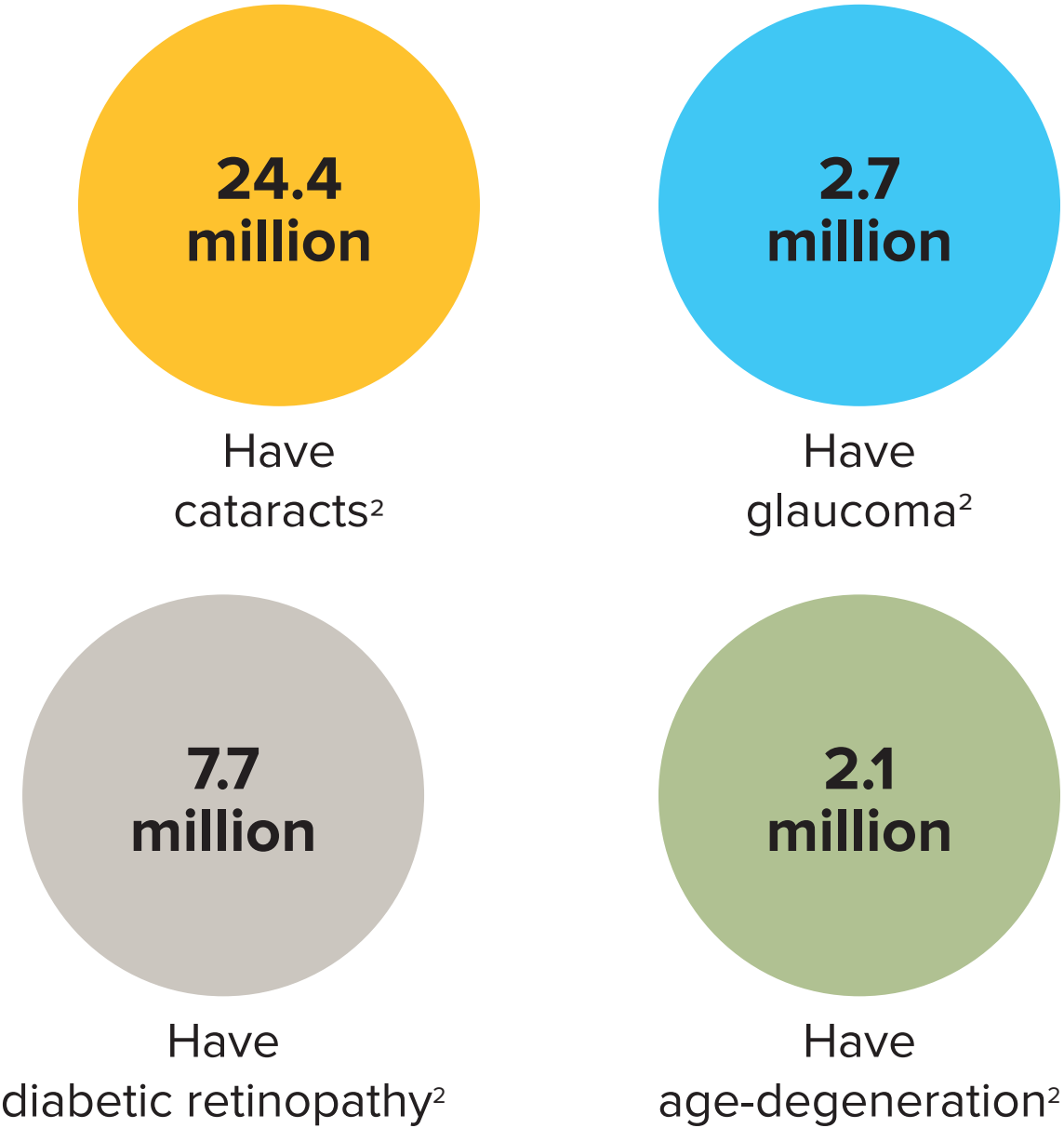
As eyesight worsens over time, hobbies can become more difficult to pursue, enjoying time with friends and relatives can be affected, and overall independence can be impacted.

Feeling connected to others can also be challenging when someone with low vision struggles with watching movies, reading or recognizing loved ones.

Low vision is a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by glasses, contact lenses, medication or surgery.¹

46.7% of people with severe vision impairment reported having fallen (compared to 27.7% without impairment).

Of Americans over age 40



1 NEHEP. (2021). Helping older adults see well for a lifetime[Pamphlet]. National Eye Institute. https://www.nei.nih.gov/sites/default/files/health-pdfs/V_A_Factsheet_Health_Care_Providers.pdf

2 NEHEP. (2021). Help prevent eye diseases as you get older [Pamphlet]. https://www.nei.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2020-10/Help-Prevent-Eye-Disease-as-You-Get-Older_508.pd

Talking about Low Vision in Your Community

It's important that low vision residents at your community feel valued, included and supported. Here are three steps you can begin to take to start the necessary conversations and education needed to build a vision friendly community.



1.

Establish a Vision Club

Organizing a resident or senior group that meets regularly to discuss challenges and solutions that address the needs of people living with low vision. Offer discussion topics about what your community could do better to address their needs, new/emerging technology solutions and the sharing of personal experiences to overcome vision barriers.

2.

Develop Partnerships

Your local Braille Institute is an important organization that could support your community through workshops and trainings, advice on assistive technologies and connecting you with other resources. Additionally, explore the optometry departments of local universities and colleges that could conduct workshops with your community and maybe even conduct vision assessments.

3.

Pilot Test a Low Vision Technology

Whether it's a device that a person wears, a large screen TV monitor with speech-to-text display for group meetings or Voice First technologies like the Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant and Siri, consider conducting a small test with your community. Assign a staff or resident champion to organize the project, develop some feedback measures and share your success story with members throughout your community and beyond.

The IrisVision Headset

IrisVision is a wearable smart device for people who live with low vision. It restores vision instantly through the connection to functional areas of a person's eyes by allowing blurs and spots to disappear and show the viewer a crystal clear image of the environment. It can be used to make the environment smaller on screen and fit the wear's line of sight.



Similar to a virtual reality headset, the IrisVision headset is designed to adjust to a number of vision impairments such as ...

**macular
degeneration**

**optic nerve
damage**

**diabetic
retinopathy**



Reading

Read a magazine, menu,
recipe, book or newspaper.
IrisVision scans the text and
reads it aloud while displaying
the text in large, high-contrast
text.

Smart Voice Commands

IrisVision uses smart voice commands with Amazon Alexa. Through IrisVision, use smart voice commands, such as “take a photo”, “reduce brightness”, or “zoom in”.



Software Lens Modes

IrisVision includes eight software lens modes from a 70 degree field of view, 14x magnification, virtual telescope, to a flashlight feature for poorly lit rooms.



Source: <https://irisvision.com/irisvision-live>

Front Porch does not receive incentive from the solutions we are presenting. These are simply solutions we've found worthy of further consideration and research based on independence and social engagement for older adults.

FPCIW IrisVision Pilot

The FPCIW has been exploring technology solutions that can either assist with low vision challenges or even correct vision. We tested the IrisVision headset which aims to help people with low vision to regain as much of their sight as possible.

Why We Liked It

The headset has voice components to give commands, or to use as a voice-first assistant

IrisVison offers remote trainings and remote tech support for the headsets.

The device is portable and can be used in many different settings and for different purposes.

How We Did It

There were 8 residents who participated in the pilot. Each was provided an orientation training with support from staff on how the headset worked. IrisVision trainers called the participant once a week for 8 weeks to provide additional training. Onsite staff also checked in with residents bi-weekly to offer support, while FPCIW team members offered weekly office hours. The pilot was conducted at our Wesley Palms location, which currently holds a vision friendly community status from the Braille Institute.

Results

4 of 5 post surveys collected indicated a 3 or higher on a scale of 1-5 of usefulness (5=most useful)

4 of 8 volunteers dropped out before the end of their two month test

3 of 5 were able to watch more TV because of the headset.

"I hadn't seen my wife's face in 5 years."

"(The headset) is too cumbersome for me."

"I messed up some of my trainings — I couldn't get things right."

"It feels comforting being able to see things clearer"

Conclusions

IrisVision can be a valuable tool for the right person with the following qualities:

Has low vision conditions, but is not completely blind.

Is patient and open to learning new technology.

Has enough cognitive and hearing abilities to hear the instruction given by IrisVision over the phone.

IrisVision for Veterans

The Department of Veteran Affairs offers coverage for head-mounted visual assistive devices for qualifying veterans.

If you or someone you know is a service member with low vision conditions, you may qualify for a free IrisVision headset!

This process requires being registered in the VA system and includes being examined by an optometrist to determine what kind of vision device best suits the individual’s needs and goals.

The Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing recognizes this great opportunity and has done outreach to the veterans in seven of our own communities to guide



interested participants through the process.

If you or someone you know is interested in seeing if you qualify for this offer, please contact your local VA VIST Coordinator for more information.

What to Expect

An interested low vision veteran can expect to first be examined by an optometrist to achieve best visual abilities with glasses, contact lenses or optical low vision devices if needed.

1.

A Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Service (BROS)* must evaluate and train you to use head mounted low-vision device effectively to meet your goals.
2.

They may partner with the Visual Impaired Services Team (VIST) or Blind Rehabilitation Center (BRC) program if needed.
3.

Based on your goals, a vision device that best suits your needs is determined.

*Your BROS or VIST will want to understand what you will want to do and the types of activities you will use them for. With new technology, the options are far greater than they ever have been.



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