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NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND  
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED  
JULY 1, 1979 - JUNE 30, 1980  
1100 RAYMOND BOULEVARD  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102

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ANNUAL REPORT

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TO: *Honorable Timothy Carden, Commissioner, Department of Human Services  
Members, Board of Trustees, New Jersey State Commission for the Blind  
and Visually Impaired*

*We submit herewith the Annual Report of the Commission's activities and  
accomplishments for the Fiscal Year 1980.*

*The primary objective of the Commission has been to provide an array of services  
to blind and visually-impaired persons - one goal of which has been appropriate eye health  
care to prevent blindness and restore vision - over half of all blindness is preventable.  
The spiraling costs of health care and the present economy have placed restrictions on  
our service delivery making it difficult to achieve these goals.*

*The fiscal crunch has played havoc with a number of the programs which provide  
an income for marginal clients whose only earned income was derived from work settings  
in our Contract Shops and Home Industries programs, thereby making them more self-  
sufficient. It is hopeful that the political and economic climate will improve in the next  
fiscal year and programs which have had to be relinquished for the present will be  
reinstated.*

*The Commission is undergoing a complete reorganization of programs and staffing  
and suffice it to say this has had a major impact on program activities. We anticipate  
that the major thrust of the changes will be beneficial to the Commission and will be  
especially advantageous in the procurement and better utilization of additional dollars  
to support those programs which are currently in need of improvements. Included in the*

*reorganization plans is the combining of programs into three (3) major units - Fiscal and Management (which includes Personnel and Training), Educational Services (which includes Community and Health Services), and Rehabilitation (which includes Home Service and Rehabilitation Health) - for greater efficiency and an assessment and implementation of new modes of functioning in the fiscal operations area to provide for a more efficient management of the Commission's very complex business operations. A newly organized Department of Intake/Social Services will serve both program units.*

*The agency is mandated, by law, to maintain a register of all legally blind and visually-impaired persons which as of June 30, 1980 is estimated at 24,060 persons. Of this total, the Commission's register reflected that there is an estimated 18,547 who are legally blind. The number of new cases referred to the Commission this past year is estimated at 4,981. Although not all of these persons are classified as blind, they all have substantial vision problems. It is also a fact that there are a substantial number of blind or seriously visually-impaired persons who for a variety of reasons do not apply for services. The Commission constantly strives to locate these persons and make its services available to them. During this past Fiscal Year an estimated total of 26,272 persons were listed on the Commission's register. Of that number one-half received agency services.*

*In the agency's EDUCATION DEPARTMENT there were 348 new referrals for the year and 291 closures. The number continuing on the register and in school programs in this unit as of June 30, 1980 numbered 1,702. The classifications of these children at year end by school needs is as follows:*

<i>Preschool</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>159</i>
<i>Local and School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>771</i>
<i>Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>185</i>
<i>Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>50</i>

<i>Residential Schools and Training Centers</i>	-	78
<i>Multi-Handicapped Children at Home</i>	-	4
<i>College and University</i>	-	153
<i>In State Institutions</i>	-	302
<i>Inactive</i>	-	--
<u><i>TOTAL</i></u>	-	<u>1,702</u>

*The majority of the children registered in the preschool program are six (6) years of age or younger and have not entered an organized program of education beyond nursery school nor have they been placed in institutions. Staff Education Counselors evaluate developmental levels and visual problems and arrange for necessary testing and other services special to the needs of the individual child.*

*An in-service training program was conducted for 341 public and private school teachers with blind and partially-sighted students in their classes. The purpose of the training program was to acquaint them with methods and materials for inclusion in their curriculum for visually-impaired children.*

*Residential school attendance declined considerably. Programs have been developed in New Jersey to accommodate other handicapping conditions into which the Commission has been able to place some of these children and provide for their special educational needs. The majority of children in these programs continues to be so severely multi-handicapped that they cannot be accommodated in local programs or come from home situations which are so damaging, thereby making it necessary for other living arrangements.*

*Many children are unable to attend regular school programs because of severely multi-handicapping conditions. However, the nature of their handicapping conditions does not indicate placement in schools for the blind. Although the majority of multi-handicapped*

*students are in local school programs, 185 were placed in special programs.*

*Service was expanded to children in State institutions and in day care programs. The constant increase in numbers of children in institutions which saw its first decline in recent years in 1979 continued to decline in 1980. The number was reduced from 310 to 302.*

*In fiscal year 1979, the Commission and the State Department of Education combined their resources and developed a program at Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf with special emphasis on vocational training. Of the original 14 children enrolled in this program four (4) have been main-streamed in the regular high school programs for deaf children. Interestingly, these students had previously been enrolled in a private residential school and were not progressing satisfactorily and would have remained in an institutional setting until they reached age 21. However, with this new program at Katzenbach their progress has exceeded all expectations.*

*Two (2) preschool classes for deaf-blind children are conducted and funded by the Commission's Education service. These programs were operated in isolated conditions in church facilities in the past. This past year the State Department of Education utilizing Bond funds developed regional schools for the handicapped. As a result one of the Commission's preschool programs for deaf-blind children was absorbed by the State Department of Education in a regional school for the handicapped. It is hopeful that in the near future the other will be considered for inclusion in its South Jersey program.*

*23 multi-handicapped students attended a special evaluative and training program this summer at Perkins School for the Blind geared primarily to independent living and vocational skills.*

*In conjunction with the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, summer programs were conducted for 30 college-bound students at Drew University preparatory to college entrance. Students lived on campus; were counseled by Instructors and given training*

*in special areas of need such as Freshman composition, mathematics, preparing term papers, selection of courses, mobility, activities of daily living, etc. An evaluation and training program for noncollege bound students was conducted at the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center as a method for preparing these high school students for suitable employment.*

*233 children participated in summer camp activities at Camp Marcella. The first week was geared again to programs for the most severely multi-handicapped blind children who require one-to-one supervision and who would otherwise have been unable to attend.*

*In the Textbooks and Material Center 7,224 braille volumes, 323 reels of recorded material were distributed to students attending schools throughout the State.*

*In the Large Print Section there has been a significant change with the increased availability of Closed Circuit Television Read/Write Systems. 33 students are availing themselves of this system whereas in the past they either had to learn braille or use books which were as large as a foot and a half by two feet. The largest books now are more manageable with an upper limit of 15 inches by 18 inches.*

*The EYE HEALTH DEPARTMENT function is to prevent blindness, help conserve the vision of New Jersey citizens, and restore sight through community-wide vision screening programs, through program demonstrations; as well as through direct assistance to persons requiring surgery and treatment. In addition, this department is charged with major responsibility for the agency's public education programs. These include:*

- 1. Case Service - the number of persons served totaled 1,740. Sight was restored or improved for 332 persons.*
- 2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 15th year, 372 detection programs were conducted. 25,007 children were screened. 2,328*

*required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.*

- 3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 25th State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 91 hospitals. Over 6,950 adults were examined at no cost to them; 349 Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.*
- 4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 220 days of service and 6,651 examinations. Among the "high risk" population groups reached were: 38 senior citizen centers, 15 health service agencies, 9 boarding and nursing homes and hospital facilities, 19 agencies for the handicapped or the retarded, 4 narcotic rehabilitation programs, 10 social service and residential centers, 4 special schools for children, 4 residential programs for children and 5 senior housing projects. Highlights of this year's activities include service to the 1,320 residents of the Essex County Hospital facility in Cedar Grove.*
- 5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 254 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 1,648 disadvantaged persons being examined and appropriately followed. Programs were conducted at such centers as those serving senior citizens, learning disabled children, retarded children, special education preschool trainable handicapped, mentally-handicapped trainables, as well as at nutrition centers, health centers, severely handicapped, etc.*

*In Fiscal 1979 the Commission embarked upon the development of a Low Vision Program to serve partially-sighted persons. Public information played a major role in the success of the program. This was done through speaking engagements and lectures to acquaint visually-impaired persons with this new program. As a result the Commission*



*received a substantial number of referrals. An overwhelming majority successfully benefited from the use of their special aids.*

*In the Diabetic Services Unit it is significant to note that the smooth functioning of this Unit was made possible as a result of the implementation of an appropriate format to seek out persons with Diabetic Retinopathy. Medical groups were notified of the program; a procedure was developed for inter-agency referral to assure that all diabetics are registered with the Unit; plans were coordinated for a screening program to detect retinopathy among juvenile onset diabetes; and assistance was given to State institutions in the development of ophthalmological care and follow-up for diabetic persons in these institutions.*

*Diabetes is the leading cause of new cases of blindness and at the same time opportunities now exist in medical eye care to arrest or retard visual loss in significant numbers of patients affected with diabetic retinopathy.*

*The focus of our program is upon the detection of retinopathy and related ocular pathology particularly in early stages. We have developed our programs in such areas as regional screenings, the monitoring of individual diabetics with ocular changes and patient and professional education.*

*The Migrant Program continued to be productive. It provided children and adults with appropriate follow-up in those cases where pathological conditions were identified. The number of persons screened totaled 1,494.*

*The HOME SERVICE DEPARTMENT serves blind adults and elderly homebound persons through an array of services including instruction in personal adjustment, self-care, homemaking, handwork for leisure or occupation, braille reading, typing and other communication skills, assistance with personal, family, and social problems. Working with clients chiefly in their home setting, workers reached a total of 5,796 clients.*

10, 715 Talking Book Machines and cassettes were assigned to blind residents in the State who thus are able to listen to recorded books. The total number now in use State-wide is 13,926. An audit mandated by the Government Accounting Office elicited commendation for the security maintained in the storage of equipment and maintenance and handling of replacement machines and recommended that equipment, records and reader files be computerized.

This department continued its efforts to provide service to blind and visually-impaired adults in State mental hospitals and institutions for the mentally retarded. 50 persons received direct service which included activities of daily living, leisure-time activities and communication skills. As part of institutional staff training this unit's staff participated in the development of a videotape providing effective methods of teaching and assisting visually-impaired persons.

The housing problem continues to be especially acute for older blind persons. Many have benefited from the HUD Rental Assistance Program which is in a phase-out status at this time. This unit has been assured by the Federal Housing Finance Authority that a State-wide program is under way to develop additional apartment units for handicapped persons. Funds will be available for the renovation and modification of existing buildings in exchange for the allocation of 15% of the space for handicapped people.

Administration of the Title XX contract has become increasingly difficult in each of the five (5) years of its existence. Inflation, working against unadjusted funding has diminished contract benefits to salary maintenance only for part of the Home Service staff. Decentralized Intake procedures have had a negative effect on Title XX referrals, principally because of lack of general understanding of its relationship to service to income eligible clients. An 85% level of service has been maintained.

*The Social Service Unit which was initially instituted as a pilot project has been extended indefinitely and proven successful. It has assumed responsibility for all the Social Security Administration referrals in the project Counties (Bergen, Essex, and Union Counties). By year's end Intake interviews and follow-up Social Service was provided to 69 SSA clients. The project staff served a total of 784 clients during the year. Services have been hampered by several problems including lack of staff, inadequate space and lack of equipment.*

*In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT a total of 3,023 clients was served; 252 persons were placed in competitive employment; 120 were rehabilitated as homemakers, and one unpaid family worker for a total of 373.*

*Projected annual earnings for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,539,727. Earnings for the same group at time of referral were \$4,050.00.*

*The economic situation has not improved in the past year. Rampant inflation, with a double digit unemployment rate for the greatest part of the year have all added to decreases in placements across the country. With increased mechanization of industry, numerical sales have increased tenfold over the past two decades with no marked increase in the work force. A period of soaring interest rates with the prime interest rate reaching 20% during this period causes diminished inventories and growth with the greatest impact on the lowest economic groupings.*

*The Social Security Beneficiary Program (which is a combination of the SSI and and Trust Fund) rehabilitated 31 Social Security Disability Income Trust Fund clients and 11 Supplemental Security Income clients into suitable employment.*

*The Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in Newark, which is a day center, served 80 clients during the year for a total of 4,625 man days. 84% of these persons were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of added handicapping*

conditions which included hearing loss, orthopedic, multiple sclerosis, etc. 33% were totally blind.

A new program for deaf-blind individuals was instituted. 22 clients received service. Of this number, 14 are attending the Katzenbach School for the Deaf, Deaf-Blind Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The two "Deaf-Blind Specialists" have also developed a program of instruction in sign language for staff of the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center which will make it possible to better serve this population.

Planning and development of the Joseph Kohn Residential Rehabilitation Center is moving at a rapid pace. Target date for completion of the renovations and occupancy of the Center is September, 1982. This facility will endeavor to promote a greater level of independence for blind and visually-impaired persons and provide a greater array of services to achieve these goals which are not possible in a day center.

The Commission's Supervisor of Facilities and Workshops' activities were varied and devoted to specialized areas of concern. Included were position papers supporting various legislation including the 12 month waiting period for eligibility for sheltered workshop support funds; preparation of supportive information on the enactment of the State Use Law in New Jersey; special assignment on a task force to resolve funding of services for clients of the agencies Home Industries Unit; special studies for improving information systems of the agency. In addition, he assisted in the preparation of two (2) grant proposals in collaboration with supervisory staff of the Commission's Education Department. These dealt with provision for early childhood intervention services for multiply-handicapped children of preschool age, and a program for intensive services to severely and profoundly retarded multiply-handicapped clients of the Commission in the 23 day training centers operated by the Division of Mental Retardation. Unfortunately, neither program was approved for funding.

In grants management one (1) Innovation and Expansion Grant was continued - Expanding and Improving Work Horizons for the Blind in New Jersey. The importance of this grant is evident, since it deals with the problem of the decline in placements in recent years of Commission clients. The Career Development Unit created through this grant has proven to be effective in developing new work opportunities.

The Career Development Unit served 110 persons. There were two (2) Job Seeking Skills Programs - one for 16 persons who were evaluated in preparation for entering competitive employment; and 20 high school students who were planning to enter college. The program was designed to prepare the individual in job seeking skills and work goal planning. A Job Awareness Program was conducted at the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center and served 40 persons. This program's goal is to have clients reflect on their vocational futures, to pursue job information surveys and job interviews. Job Clubs have been established in the Freehold and Camden District Offices with future clubs planned for Newark, Paterson and Atlantic City District Offices. The purpose of these clubs is to have job ready clients coming together on a regular basis, under supervision, where they follow-up on job leads and arrange their own job interviews. Clients work in groups of 4, 6, or 8 and utilize a buddy system working in teams of 2. Interviewing behavior and techniques are also dealt with during the club meetings.

To prepare blind people for independence and to cope with the mobility demands in employment situations, specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 896 clients. This unit continues to offer a most crucial service to both blind and partially-sighted persons. This past year this unit has extended its involvement to the Deaf-Blind program at the Katzenbach School for the Deaf as well as providing limited instruction and evaluation to several State institutions and special programs throughout the State.

*In the Vending Stand Program 58 vending stands were in operation at year end. This program provides one of the most lucrative sources of employment for blind persons in New Jersey. Average net annual earnings for operators increased to approximately \$17,000 as against \$15,117 last year.*

*Of all the units in the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the staff of the Multi-Handicapped Unit provides service to the most severely disabled blind persons. Because, in the majority of cases served by this unit, blindness is not necessarily the most disabling factor, this staff must possess knowledge of all disabilities to a greater extent than the other Counselors in the department. They must also possess skills and patience in working with these persons above and beyond the usual if they are to provide appropriate, comprehensive services. Because of their special needs which cannot yet be met in the State, suitable facilities located outside New Jersey continue to be used pending the proposed Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in Westfield. 537 individuals received service this year - 60 of whom were placed in appropriate employment.*

*During the year, the Hayes Unit served a total of 44 persons. Vocational services to 39 of these were charged to the Federal grant monitored by the Commission.*

*The agency operates three (3) Contract Workshops - one in Newark, one in Somerset and one in Westmont. These Shops provide short-term evaluation as well as extended employment for clients not ready for outside competitive employment. Minimum wage or better is paid at the Workshops and every effort is made to graduate clients into competitive industry. For the year, the following is of interest: Gross sales - \$540,366; Number of Blind Workers Employed - 67; Total Wages to Blind Workers - \$179,217. In the Transitional Workshop Program 10 persons have been provided with work/training opportunity. Contracts included Braille Copy and shrink packing. The Braille Copy contract has been*

increased by two (2) Therm machines for a total of five (5) and a very large increase in the Braille work being ordered from out-of-State. The physical space of this Shop has been increased almost one-third and includes the Library of Braille Masters which has been estimated at over \$900,000 in value.

Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$355,418 - a \$31,174 increase over 1979. 568 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$111,220. Blind consignors in this program are homebound blind persons who are provided with instruction in handcrafts, caning, sewing and the like as a leisure outlet as well as a source of supplemental income. Many of these articles are sold through local sales. In the department's marketing programs of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets, sales to chains increased in 1980 by 30.3 per cent for a total of \$131,437.

In the Staff Development and Training Section training programs for staff included management development, professional/technical skills, general training programs, clerical training programs and tuition aid and career development. Future goals and objectives of this program include increase in in-house training resources; in co-operation with the Training Advisory Committee assess pertinent needs of staff in training areas; and monitor the changing and growing needs of the agency.

The Program Evaluation Unit had a very productive year. The long overdue computerization of Vocational Rehabilitation caseload statistics was instituted. A training program was conducted for Counselors, Supervisors, and clerical staff and liaisons established with data center staff.

Considerable time and effort were expended on the collection of data for the Annual Report on the General Standards for Evaluation of Vocational Rehabilitation Programs.

Follow-up surveys were sent to clients closed as rehabilitated in order to obtain information on clients satisfaction with services and retention of Vocational Rehabilitation benefits. 542 surveys were mailed with a 64% return rate. 60% of the respondents were still employed. Salaries increased by 16% from an average of \$134.00 per week to \$155.00 per week. 70% indicated satisfaction with services received.

Special assignments included participation in the co-ordination of the publication of rules and regulations of the Commission in the New Jersey Register. Participation in a study of the individual information systems of the four (4) major service departments of the Commission to provide information to the central office of the Department of Human Services to be used in the preparation for placing those information systems on computer where appropriate. A time-line study was conducted to determine if the pilot Intake Unit was processing referrals at a faster rate than where the offices whose own staff were conducting Intakes. Results indicated that, in general, the Intake Unit was reaching persons more quickly.

The principal role of the Supervisor of Volunteers is to coordinate the activities of volunteers associated with the agency, arrange for recruitment, training, evaluation, and awards programs. Annual State-wide Awards Day and Luncheons were held to give recognition to volunteers in the various sectors of the State. Three (3) separate luncheons were held - one in Manahawkin, one in Somerset, and one in Mountain Lakes. 238 organizations and 3,111 volunteers provided 75,058 hours of service to the agency. In the Education Department 392 volunteers provided 66,998 hours of service in brailleing, thermoforming, taping, proofreading, binding of textbooks, duplication of books and the making of educational aids. 1,897 volunteers assisted the Eye Health Service in the preschool screening program and with the Mobile Eye Unit at screenings. Other volunteers assisted in sales



conducted by the Home Industries Department, while some provided direct personal service for homebound blind persons in a program sponsored by the Home Service Department. It has been estimated that the monetary value of the services of these volunteers approximates \$354,719 for 75,058 hours of service. The responsibilities of this Supervisor also included educating the public on the various service programs of the Commission which includes the preparation of detailed agency exhibits for presentation at special meetings and conferences. All methods are employed to make the public aware of the variety of programs available within the agency. With the increase in public relations activities the Supervisor of Volunteers has represented the Commission at special workshops, conferences and centers. As a result a better line of communications has been developed between the agency and community.

Despite fiscal constraints, reorganization and the low employee morale which has resulted from confusion and rumors that are prevalent in any development process, service to clients has not been hampered. Every effort has been made to alleviate fears prevalent among both staff and consumers of service. The Board and staff of the Commission has always been characterized by a high level of competence and commitment. Without this dedication and caring it would have indeed been difficult to maintain the high level of service to our consumers. The Director, Board and staff of the Commission are grateful to its consumers of service as well as its State and Federal associates for their co-operation, patience and diligence during this period of reorganization, growth, and change.

*Respectfully submitted,*

Mrs. Norma F. Krajczar  
Executive Director

*Angelina M. Chimento*

By: Angelina M. Chimento  
Administrative Assistant

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March 16, 1981

