

*NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
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ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 1975 - JUNE 30, 1976

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TO: *Honorable Ann Klein, Commissioner, Department of Institutions and Agencies
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 1976.*

*The Commission is a comprehensive agency serving blind and visually-impaired
individuals. Its service programs include vocational training and job placement; a
State-wide Education program for blind and near-blind children using itinerant teachers;
Home Teaching and special services to elderly homebound individuals; and a prevention
of blindness program. Its basic goal is to serve every blind or near-blind person
referred for service as well as to make every effort to reach more of the elderly and
poor; the severely disabled blind and the disadvantaged; and to integrate and develop
necessary services to meet these needs.*

*The agency, by law, maintains a register of all blind and visually-impaired
individuals. It is statistically estimated that there should be 15,000 blind people (one-
half per 1,000) in New Jersey. At least twice this number may be said to be seriously
visually impaired so that functionally they need substantial assistance either in education,
on-the-job, or in certain aspects of their life style. The National Society for the
Prevention of Blindness estimated some years ago that about 1,200 people lose their
sight annually in the State of New Jersey. However, in the past year the number of
new cases referred to the agency was 3,296. While not all of these individuals classify*

as blind most do and all have substantial vision problems. Some of the newly referred individuals are children, some are adults. The agency is aware of the fact that there are numbers of blind or seriously visually-impaired individuals who for a variety of reasons do not apply for services. It is a known fact that as service programs expand in their ability to meet specific needs, the number of referrals also increases. The agency register on June 30, 1975 reflects a known total of 14,852.

As reported in the past, the character of the blind population is changing. A major portion of the individuals coming to the agency for service have substantial handicaps in addition to blindness and require more intensive evaluation work-ups and specialized attention; the utilization of a wide array of training facilities; longer periods of adjustment services to overcome the severity of handicaps; highly trained staff with ongoing in-service training programs; more selective employment placements; and the development of a Residential Rehabilitation Center for specialized training.

In the agency's EDUCATION DEPARTMENT there were 495 new referrals for the year and 399 closures. The number continuing on the register and at school in this unit as of June 30, 1976 numbered 1,645. The classification of these children at year end by school needs is as follows:

Preschool		154
Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)	-	808
Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped	-	134
Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools	-	68
Residential Schools and Training Centers	-	100
Multi-Handicapped Children at Home	-	12
College and University	-	105
In State Institutions	-	<u>264</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	-	<u>1,645</u>

In comparison with previous years, the number of closures was unusually high in this program. This was the result of a review of institutional cases which were found to be over the age of 21 and, therefore, no longer eligible for services. In addition, a number of clients were found to have sufficient vision to function well independently.

The major causes of blindness in the preschool population are: cataracts, optic atrophy, retrolental fibroplasia, central nervous system affections, albinism, and retinal affections.

Some new innovations to the department this year included: an achievement test program for all children in local school programs; development of a goals-oriented program of services to students; a program of monitoring case services with an initial review of 25 cases.

An intensive study was conducted by this unit of individuals in institutions for the mentally retarded to seek out blind and deaf-blind children. As a result of the study, funds have been secured from Title VI-C to expand and centralize the Commission's program of services to the deaf-blind population at the Woodbridge State School. The children who had been in other facilities of the Division of Mental Retardation have been relocated to the Woodbridge State School.

In co-operation with the agency's Vocational Rehabilitation Department the Education Department conducted summer programs in specialized preparation areas for 30 college-bound students at Drew University. Students lived on campus; were counseled by Instructors and given training in special areas of need such as Freshman composition, mathematics, preparation of term papers, selection of courses, mobility, activities of daily living, etc.

An evaluation and training program for 21 noncollege bound students was

conducted at the Commission's Rehabilitation Center as a method of preparing these high school students for suitable employment. 22 multi-handicapped children attended a six (6) week vocationally oriented program at Perkins School for the Blind.

The Commission continued to operate classes for preschool deaf-blind children at Glassboro State College, in Cranford and Teaneck. A summer program was provided for 23 of the deaf-blind children and included parental participation.

240 children spent a total of 383 camper weeks at Camp Marcella. The first two (2) weeks were geared again to programs for the most severely multi-handicapped children who require one-to-one supervision and who would otherwise have been unable to attend. This year seven (7) of the deaf-blind children were integrated with regular campers. In addition to the summer program at Camp, special week end programs were conducted during the fall and winter season to provide personal experiences for young adults in areas of group activities i. e. winter sports, personal grooming, preparation of meals, group association, etc.

In the Textbooks and Materials Center 7,733 braille volumes, 1,280 reels of recorded material, and 1,641 large-type volumes were distributed to students attending schools throughout the State.

The EYE HEALTH DEPARTMENT function is to prevent blindness and help conserve the vision of New Jersey citizens through community-wide vision screening programs, through program demonstrations; as well as through direct assistance to individuals requiring surgery and treatment as follows:

1. Case Service - The number of individuals served totaled 1,275. Sight was restored or improved for 197 individuals.
2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 11th year, 251

community-wide detection programs were conducted. 23,408 children were screened. 1,645 required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.

3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 21st State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 91 hospitals. 10,522 adults were examined at no cost; 581 Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.
4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 218 days and 12 evenings of service and 7,054 examinations. Among the vulnerable population groups reached were: 8 special centers for the handicapped; 13 nursing homes; 2 institutions; 20 health departments; 20 senior citizen centers; 11 migrant locations; 6 community centers; 2 housing projects and 3 drug programs. Despite the fiscal crisis, this unit has increased its services and will continue to do so in the coming year.
5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 623 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 3,920 disadvantaged individuals being examined and appropriately followed. Programs were conducted at various workshops, correctional institutions, learning disabilities and low income centers, drug abuse centers, mental retardation centers, and senior citizens centers.

The HOME SERVICE DEPARTMENT serves newly-blinded adults and elderly homebound individuals through an array of services which include training in personal adjustment, braille and communication skills, handwork for leisure or occupation, and assistance with personal, family, and social problems. Working with clients chiefly in their home setting, workers reached a total of 3,519 clients.

1,013 Talking Book Machines were provided to blind residents in the State who thus are able to listen to recorded books. The total number now in use State-wide is 6,810.

The major thrust of this unit is to seek out and meet the needs of the elderly or homebound blind population. To accomplish this, staff are involved in various community programs that visually-handicapped individuals may be integrated into.

A Social Service grant was allotted to the Commission under Title XX of the Social Security Act Amendments and a Purchase of Service Agreement entered into between the Commission and the Division of Youth and Family Services. This grant was utilized to improve and expand the homemaker training program provided by the Home Service section and made it possible to reach greater numbers of visually-handicapped individuals and deliver more immediate, regular and intensive homemaking instruction to newly-blinded and visually-impaired residents of New Jersey. Further, with the implementation of this grant additional staff was recruited to enable the unit to reach its goals of serving those in institutions, the elderly isolated, those on public welfare programs, increase instruction visits, etc. As a result, service was provided to 680 individuals.

A Para-Professional Training Project was developed enabling the unit to recruit several older citizens who were assigned to provide ancillary services to clients including escort services and participation in senior citizen services and day care programs, thereby eliminating isolation for these individuals. This was made possible through a grant from the Division on Aging. As a result, these clients were provided with opportunities for socialization, transportation, and guide service for professional appointments, services of an interpreter, mobility training, and instruction in crafts

and homemaking.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) established a rent assistance program to improve and lower the costs of housing for elderly and handicapped individuals. HUD also allows for rent adjustment funds for visually-handicapped heads of households forced to pay an extraordinary portion of their limited income for nonsubsidized rental housing. Several Commission clients have been assisted in completing applications and are currently receiving up to 75% of rental funds.

Surveys were conducted at the various State mental institutions to identify the blind population at these facilities. This was in accordance with directive from the Commissioner of the Department of Institutions and Agencies and was geared towards provision of appropriate services to the blind residents which would lead eventually to a goal of deinstitutionalization. With special funding through a grant from Title XX of the Social Security Act additional staff was recruited in the Home Service section to provide individualized services to develop independent skills which included mobility instruction, personal hygiene, and self-care.

A Radio Information Center for the Blind was established in 1974 in Philadelphia and New Jersey residents were invited to participate. This service provides specialized service to individuals in the Philadelphia area and the southern portion of New Jersey and includes reading of newspapers, magazines, and special interest material on a sub-carrier radio channel with a special radio provided by the Commission. To date 115 of these units are currently in use and 57 of this number are utilized by blind individuals over the age of 60 years.

In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT a total of 3, 559 clients were served; 269 individuals were placed in competitive employment and 101 were

rehabilitated as homemakers for a total of 370. Aggregate annual earnings for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,291,108. Earnings for the same group at the time of referral was \$261,786. The continuing downturn in the economy has hit New Jersey particularly hard and this has reduced job placements substantially. It is hoped this downward trend will be reversed in 1977.

Since blind people are considered, and rightly so, severely disabled, the Commission will be rehabilitating at least 85% severely disabled individuals which is considerably above the national average. However, because of many complexities we lack an over-all definition of "severely disabled." This is well-known to the field. What is not so well known is the large number of severely disabled, particularly among the young and the elderly who are blind. New systems of employment need to be developed for this group.

Despite serious New Jersey State level budget problems we have been able to maintain adequate budgetary support for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. However the State freezes on new positions had a retardant effect on the program.

The summer developmental experience program has proven to be beneficial in assisting students who have difficulties in breaking into the job market. The program is in its fifth (5th) year and is designed to provide blind high school and college students with actual work and life experiences which they are frequently unable to secure because of their blindness and which are generally available to their sighted peers. 72 young clients were placed in appropriate work activity in diverse areas including rehabilitation facilities, hospital settings, day camps, pharmacy, etc. 31 additional individuals secured their own positions in equally varied areas. A major portion of the success of this program is due to the efforts of the Rehabilitation Counselor assigned to the program who was able to arrange for placements through contacts with CETA, Manpower, and community programs in municipalities and Counties throughout the State.

592 multi-handicapped blind adults were served by the agency's Multi-Handicapped Unit of which 43 were placed in employment. The Hayes Unit at the Johnstone Training Center, a special co-operative project with the State Division of Mental Retardation served 31 retarded blind clients who can benefit from vocational training. Of this number eight (8) individuals were placed in sheltered workshop employment.

Currently, the Commission operates a day Rehabilitation Center in Newark which served 90 clients during the year for a total of 3,750 man days. 52% of these individuals were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of severe added handicapping conditions which included diabetes, emotional disorders, cardiovascular involvements, orthopedic, cerebral palsy, etc. The agency has convinced the Commissioner of the Department of Institutions and Agencies as well as the State Capital Construction Commission of its need to include a new Residential Rehabilitation Center into its priority listing. This is essential to replace the present Day Center in order to meet the needs of the more severely disabled clients. Unfortunately, State budgetary problems have prevented implementation.

To prepare blind people for the independence of competitive employment, specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 747 clients. This is a critical element in successful job placement.

In the Vending Stand Program 54 vending stands were in operation at year end. This program provides the most lucrative source of employment for blind individuals in New Jersey. Average annual earnings for operators increased to \$12,300 as against \$12,108 last year. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$2,829,007 with a total net income to operators of \$647,914. In accordance with the amended Randolph-Sheppard

Act of 1973 and as mandated a committee of vending stand operators was appointed by an ad hoc committee of their peers. The purpose of this committee is to have input in policy and procedure in the operation of the Business Enterprise program. Three (3) meetings were held but very little was accomplished in a definitive way, since the Office for the Blind in Washington has been unable to complete and approve the regulations necessary for the implementation of the Act which concerns itself primarily with vending machine income on Federal property.

In the Trust Fund Beneficiary Rehabilitation Program disincentives continue and include the problem of higher cash benefits through the Trust Fund than low level employment income for so many low ability people as well as feelings of security with a pension and not with employment. 1,275 beneficiaries were referred for service. Of this number 305 were assigned to the Trust Fund program with 47 rehabilitated.

The Supplemental Security Income Program reached its projected rehabilitation level. This program has as its goal the rehabilitation into employment of blind individuals who have been receiving public support. A program administrative review of the SSI and Trust Fund programs was conducted by staff of the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Social Security Administration who found that the agency program is in full compliance and properly conducted. 180 individuals were served with SSI funds with 31 closed in employment.

The specific responsibility of each Counselor is the placement of blind clients in appropriate positions. A limited number of clients find their own jobs and referral to other agencies is not practical. Using other agencies with job placement capacity is practical and is part of the Counselor's technique in job recruitment. The Counselor acts as interpreter and advocate for the blind person. Many resources are used including the Employment Service, individual industries and businesses, hospitals,

health centers, workshops, CETA, and other governmental bodies. During the last three (3) years, New Jersey has had one of the highest unemployment rates in the nation and this has had a retarding effect on placement efforts. In addition, many of the blind population served by the Commission have multiple handicaps which require specialized placement in homebound, workshop or subsidized employment.

A Consumer Advisory Committee was appointed of representatives of the blind community throughout the State. The composition of this Committee is mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The agency operates three (3) Contract Workshops - one in Newark, one in Somerset, and one in Westmont. The Shops provide short-term evaluation as well as extended employment for less able clients. 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 - \$369,020; Number of Blind People Employed - 84; Total Wages to Blind People - \$128,553. There is a continuing need for a Transitional Workshop to accommodate numbers of blind individuals by providing actual work experience on-the-job to develop their potential with eventual placement in competitive workshops.

The Commission's Supervisor of Facilities and Workshops works closely with the Federal government, State Rehabilitation Commission and other agencies on problems of State-wide planning for facilities and on programs designed to meet the needs of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department. As an official agent, the Commission must approve and supervise Federal grant requests to other rehabilitation facilities in the State that work with blind people. During the year \$86,501 was authorized. All of these grants are matched by the Federal government on a 90-10 basis.

1. *The second year of a grant for developing New Careers for the blind.*
2. *The second year of a grant for providing Rehabilitation Services to Older Blind Clients.*
3. *The second year of a grant for a satellite Home Industries sewing unit to expand employment opportunities for blind people using facilities at Camp Happiness, the New Jersey Blind Men's Association in Leonardo, New Jersey.*
4. *The second year of a grant for a satellite Home Industries sewing unit to expand employment opportunities for blind people using facilities at Diamond Spring Lodge, the New Jersey Foundation for the Blind in Denville, New Jersey.*

As mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Commission operates a specialized unit which is responsible for Program Evaluation. The Rehabilitation Services Administration promulgated a set of standards to be used in the evaluation of the Vocational Rehabilitation program which include data elements for measuring program efficiency and effectiveness. To this end, the unit conducted several studies including a review of placements made in 1975 and isolated the positions in competitive business and industry. The study revealed that placements in service occupations continued to rise and placements in more lucrative industrial and business situations continued to decline. The functions of agency Counselors were reviewed and recommendations submitted for methods of improving and increasing placement opportunities for clients. There is an urgent need to increase the number of business and industrial employment contacts in order to strengthen the placement program. Recommendations were also made for an in-service training program in placement skills. The intake

procedure for the four (4) major units of the agency was studied and recommendations made to eliminate duplication of services and improve communication between departments.

The agency, in co-operation with the Social Security Administration, ran two (2) specialized training programs for Teleservice Representatives. All graduates of the program which covered New York and New Jersey have been employed by the Social Security Administration at excellent starting salaries. To date there are 23 individuals employed as Teleservice Representatives.

The Commission was the host agency for a short-term training conference on the aging blind provided by a grant to the Commission by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Rehabilitation Services Administration. The conference included participants from the Regional area and included special topics and workshops relevant to directing services to the aged blind, social participation need, and the reaction of actual consumers of service in attendance at the conference. Its major emphasis was the desirability of integrating the elderly blind with their sighted peers.

Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$191,134 - \$16,348 increase over 1975. 285 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$63,731. In the department's marketing program of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets, sales to chains increased in 1976 to \$49,476.

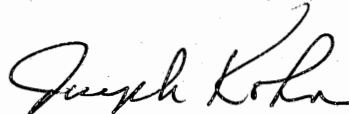
The Supervisor of Volunteers' principal role is to co-ordinate the activities of volunteers associated with the agency; arrange for recruitment, training, evaluation, and awards programs. Annual State-wide Awards Day and Luncheons were held to give recognition to volunteers for their many hours of service to the Commission in its various programs. To accommodate volunteers in the North Jersey and South Jersey areas

two (2) separate luncheons were held - one in Denville and one in Point Pleasant. 221 volunteer organizations and 3,483 volunteers provided 34,367 hours of service to the agency.

The past year's accomplishments and program delivery have been most effective. We attribute this effectiveness to the dedication and competency of a highly motivated staff and Board who committed themselves unstintingly to the task of serving blind and visually-handicapped individuals.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMISSION F/T BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Joseph Kohn".

*Joseph Kohn
Executive Director*

JK:ac

August 27, 1976