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**NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
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NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102**

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 1972 - JUNE 30, 1973

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

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To: *Acting Commissioner, Department of Institutions and Agencies*
Acting Director, Division of Public Welfare
Members, Board of Trustees, New Jersey State Commission for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

We respectfully submit, herewith, the Annual Report of the Commission's activities and accomplishments for the Fiscal Year 1973.

EDUCATION SERVICE

During the year 259 children were newly-referred, which when added to those on register, made a total of 1,993 youngsters in service. In the same period 288 children were closed so that as of June 30, 1973, there were 1,705 continuing on the register and at school.

The Education caseload has shown a slight decrease in the total number of children served as a result of the completion of services to a large number of retrolental fibroplasia cases that have reached graduation age. Numbers of students in integrated local school programs remained constant. However, the number in special classes for the visually handicapped in larger cities decreased from 201 in 1969 to 114 by 1973 which is in keeping with our recommendations. Percentagewise, just over 50% of the total number of children in the Education caseload have serious additional handicaps, one or more, along with blindness. This is particularly true among children born during the German Measles (Rubella) epidemic of 1964-65. In addition to vision loss, such children may have hearing loss, neurological impairment, cardiac and spleen

involvements.

The implications of this, for program, are more specialized facilities for evaluation and for the development of specialized programs for preschool and school-age youngsters to minimize the effects of disablement, develop the child's capacities, and prevent high-cost long-term institutionalization. To this end, the Commission continued to operate classes for preschool deaf-blind children in Cranford, Glassboro State College, and added a third class in Teaneck which received 100% Federal support. In addition, a three (3) week summer program was provided for 30 deaf-blind children in the Commission's Cranford and Glassboro locations following a two (2) week stay at Camp Marcella. More professional staff have been reassigned to the needs of the multi-handicapped and their efforts have made it possible for some of these children to be absorbed in existing day school specialized programs for the mentally retarded, cerebral palsy, etc. This has enabled the Commission to keep the numbers requiring high cost residential school training at a low relative plateau.

The classification of the 1,705 children continuing in service at year end by school needs is as follows:

<i>Preschool</i>	-	170
<i>Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)</i>	-	806
<i>Special Programs for Multiply Handicapped</i>	-	70
<i>Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools</i>	-	114
<i>Residential Schools and Training Centers</i>	-	119
<i>Multi-Handicapped Children at Home</i>	-	36
<i>College and University</i>	-	142
<i>In State Institutions or Not Educable</i>	-	243
<i>Unclassified</i>	-	<u>5</u>
<u><i>TOTAL</i></u>	-	<u>1,705</u>

A special olympics for handicapped children held its State meet in West Long Branch. A Commission Education client who had been specially coached by her gym teacher placed first in two events in the regional meet and participated in the finals. The agency's State-wide consultant in physical education was an advisor to public schools in the development of physical activities for visually handicapped children.

A staff Instructor has initiated a special recreational program for blind and partially-sighted students which is designed to provide greater participation in social areas and experiences for youngsters participating in activities usually available to their sighted peers. Youngsters have participated in roller skating, bowling, swimming, attendance at plays, etc.

Special Federal Grants and Summer Camp.

A substantial Title I Federal grant was developed and received this year making it possible to increase staff services; to provide adequate field supervision; and to supervise more adequately children at out-of-State residential centers.

A professional training program was extended to public school teachers with blind children assigned to their classrooms which provided useful information and assistance in working with visually handicapped children. Information included types of eye conditions, selection of educational programs for visually handicapped children, the role of the Educational Counselor, reporting, ordering of textbooks, processing equipment requests, mobility training, summer programs, demonstrations of various types of special education materials, etc. Of major importance, it was stressed, is the goal to foster independence in blind children and the teacher's role in instilling this. One hundred eighty-three (183) individuals participated in the course which included teachers, principals, school nurses, and guidance counselors. This special training

was held at six (6) different centers - Ridgewood, Glassboro, Trenton, Union, Morristown, Matawan. Two (2) sections were for teachers of partially sighted children and three for teachers with Braille students.

During the summer, 413 camper weeks were scheduled at Camp Marcella. The first two (2) weeks were geared again to programs for the most severely multi-handicapped children who require one-for-one supervision and who would otherwise have been unable to attend. Remedial instruction was provided campers by Commission instructional staff employed during the summer.

In co-operation with the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, Education staff helped sponsor two (2) summer evaluation and training programs - one for college-bound students and another for noncollege vocational students. Thirty-two (32) college-bound high school juniors and seniors spent four (4) weeks on campus at Seton Hall University where their interests, aptitudes and skills were evaluated. They attended selected classes and were given specialized training in mobility and assistance in the specifics of adjusting to college life. Eighteen (18) students were enrolled at the Commission's Rehabilitation Training Center where the major emphasis was on vocational aptitude testing, vocational guidance and the acquisition of practical work skills.
George F. Meyer Textbooks and Material Center.

The number of shipments from the Textbooks Center amounted to 48,376 units. While Braille and tape utilization decreased slightly, large print materials and specialized equipment increased this year.

Additional space has been acquired for the Education Department involving the addition of offices and more space for the Textbooks Center. Necessary construction and moving did not interrupt services to clients.

EYE HEALTH SERVICE

The function of the Eye Health Service is to prevent blindness and to help conserve the vision of New Jersey citizens through community-wide vision screening programs, through public information, as well as through direct assistance and counsel to individuals requiring surgery or treatment.

In the case service sphere, the number served totaled 732. This represents a small increase over 1972 despite increased use of Medicare and Medicaid. Sight was restored or improved for 136 individuals.

The Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia is beginning its eighth (8th) year of operation and is much in demand. During the year, 191 community-wide detection programs were conducted preceded by training sessions for volunteers in co-operation with Parent-Teacher Associations, Nurses, Lions Clubs, Women's Clubs, Junior Leaguers and similar groups. This was an increase of 27 programs or 17% more than in 1972. In all, 21,177 children were screened (as against 20,026 last year) using 2,518 volunteers trained by Commission staff, the largest number ever used in the program. These volunteers have made it possible to expand this program without increasing professional staff. Of the children examined, 1,363 were referred for complete eye examinations or treatment.

In the Glaucoma Control Program the 18th State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 86 hospitals. 12,654 adults (a slight increase over last year) were examined at these centers at no cost and 593 Glaucoma suspects were referred to the Commission and received individual follow-up. Glaucoma requires continuous follow-up and treatment to prevent serious vision loss. At year's end there were 4,254 on the Glaucoma Registry of the Commis-

sion.

The Traveling Eye Unit provided 195 days and 10 evenings of service and 6,286 eye examinations. The Mobile Unit screens "vulnerable populations." Among the "pocket of need" groups that were reached were: 5 centers for the handicapped which included centers and workshops for the mentally retarded, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis; seven (7) multi-service agencies serving poverty groups; 16 migrant locations; 16 nursing homes; three (3) correctional institutions; two (2) drug rehabilitation centers; nine (9) health departments; and seven (7) senior citizen centers.

Community Health Vision Screening Programs were instituted this year. Programs were conducted at various workshops, health fairs, correctional institutions, learning disabilities centers, special education centers, and mental retardation centers to reach disadvantaged populations. A total of 164 hours of service were provided by staff Ophthalmologists; 978 individuals were examined with appropriate follow-up.

HOME TEACHING AND HOME SERVICE

The Home Service program serves newly-blinded adults and elderly homebound individuals through an array of services which include training in personal adjustment, communication skills, handwork for leisure or occupation, and assistance with personal, family, and social problems. Working with clients chiefly in their home setting, workers traveled 130,623 miles and made 10,487 client visits. A total of 2,289 clients were served, a slight decrease over last year.

Some trends or major activities should be highlighted:

1. During the year 1,137 Talking Book machines were provided new readers or as replacements. The total number now in use State-wide is 5,926. Of this number, 774 are used by physically handicapped individuals unable to read print and 903

were placed in various institutions. In addition, 219 Cassette players were provided for tape users.

2. The small corps of Instructional Aides developed in Fiscal 1972 continued to assist the Home Teacher because of extremely high caseloads among the eight (8) professional Home Teachers.
3. An Aids and Appliance Stock Room has been centralized and managed by the Home Service Department for all units of the agency. This has considerably reduced delays and paper work. This year 1,124 items were provided to 597 clients.
4. Departmental staff participated with staff of the agency's Rehabilitation Center in the planning and initiation of an experimental evaluation program for older visually handicapped persons at the Center. The program was designed to include evaluation of the older blind person's medical and training needs with appropriate follow-up.
5. Staff participated in planning meetings concerning the advisability of the establishment of a substation radio program for the blind which would emanate from Philadelphia and serve listeners within a 50 mile radius of Philadelphia using special receivers provided to eligible individuals. Individuals in Pennsylvania will receive the service free and there will be a yearly subscription charge of \$15.00 for each user. The service will include programs to homemakers, informational programs on legislation, agency and community service programs, sports, recreation, etc.
6. Staff members have participated as members of in-service training teams in a number of nursing homes and other care facilities providing lectures and demonstrations to illustrate appropriate techniques utilized in care for visually handicapped residents. Staff Case Workers and Rehabilitation Teachers have been active in

community organizations and programs. As a result the agency is represented on many health, housing, recreation, senior citizen and community planning boards, councils and committees. The primary objective of these activities is the integration of visually handicapped persons into community life and improvement in living standards for visually handicapped persons. Staff have experimented with group instruction with clients on crafts and other leisure-time activities in private homes and institutional centers. A group project is under way with a State psychiatric hospital on activities of daily living with a selected group of patients. It is intended to demonstrate the need for a full-time specialist on the hospital staff to assure that visually handicapped patients are afforded skilled help in developing independence and, therefore, enhancing their chances of successful readjustment.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

During the year 524 employment placements were made of which 185 were homemakers. This was a 10% increase over the previous year and is the highest of any year for this program. On an annual basis, the aggregate earnings projected for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,414,923. This exceeded by far the State's share of \$560,000 in the cost of the Vocational Rehabilitation program for the year. Earnings for 481 employment placements last year totaled \$1,397,000.

Some of the year's highlights include:

1. 3,227 clients were served by the department - a 9% increase over the year before. During the past five (5) years, the caseload increase has averaged 10% to 12% per year.
2. The special counseling unit dealing with multi-handicapped blind adults continued the difficult effort to develop new training opportunities throughout

the State in special centers for other handicapped individuals that will accept blind people with secondary problems. This is still a difficult area. Approximately 346 individuals were served by this unit with 63 rehabilitated into employment. The special Hayes Unit at the Johnstone Training Center served 39 retarded blind clients during the year with five (5) placed in employment with the help of the Commission.

- 3. In its third (3rd) and final Federal grant year the Model Cities program with a staff of four (4) indigenous Aides successfully contacted numerous community agencies in an effort to develop a base line for referrals to the Commission. In addition, the staff Aides visited homes in the Inner Cities of Newark, Paterson, Trenton, and Jersey City to find black and Spanish-speaking residents in need of service. 186 new cases were found and served. Over the three (3) year period of the client's referred by this Unit to the Vocational Rehabilitation section of the agency 18 were rehabilitated. Although this number is not quite significant it substantiates the fact that there are numbers of severely handicapped individuals throughout the State who are not aware of the Commission's services, or reluctant to apply for such services since they do not fully understand that blind and visually impaired individuals are trainable, employable and able to function independently. With State support, program staff have been reassigned in budgeted positions and will continue the program.*
- 4. A summer work experience program was initiated in 1972 designed to offer blind students actual work and life experiences which they are frequently unable to secure because of poor vision but which are generally available to*

their sighted peers. Thirty-seven (37) youngsters participated in the 1972 program and were placed in employment in summer camps, private industry, offices, social agencies, etc. The program was extremely successful and is being continued in 1973.

5. *At the Rehabilitation Center operated by the Commission in Newark, 76 adult clients were served during the year for a total man days of 4,355. 53 of the 76 were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of multiple handicaps which in addition to blindness included: diabetes, hypertension, seizure disorders, neurological and psychiatric involvements, mental retardation, etc. Extensive psychotherapeutic counseling and special conferences with families were required to meet the emerging needs of these clients.*

After more than a year of planning, recommendation was made to the Commissioner of the Department of Institutions and Agencies to include funds in the 1975 Capital Construction Budget for a residential Rehabilitation Center designed to evaluate, train and prepare clients with multiple physical and health problems for employment. A number of specialized training areas not now readily available would be incorporated in the Center. It is to be noted that this would not be a permanent residence but a training and rehabilitation center.

6. *An In-Service Training Course in Vocational Rehabilitation for members of agency staff was conducted in co-operation with the Civil Service Training Office for which participants received three (3) credits from Newark State*

College.

7. *The department's High School Counseling Unit served 206 clients who were provided with occupational information, vocational counseling, medical diagnostic evaluations, and appropriate services as required. This included 13 students who were in residential schools.*
8. *The Mobility Training staff with all positions filled extended orientation and mobility training to some 346 clients. This is a "must" service to prepare blind people for the independence of competitive employment.*

Vending Stand Program.

At year end, there were 56 vending stands in operation. Average annual earnings for operators increased substantially and is now \$10,752 as against \$9,072 last year. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$2,245,000 with total net income to operators of \$602,300.

Contract Workshop Program.

This program is for marginal blind workers not, as yet, ready or able to take competitive employment. Gross sales for the year at the three (3) Shops increased to \$355,213. The number of blind people employed during the year totaled 85. Total wage payouts to blind people amounted to \$97,428. The Federal minimum wage or better is paid and the present average for all blind employees is just over \$1.85 per hour. A reflection of the growth of the Shop programs is the inclusion of fringe benefits of vacation time, sick leave, and Social Security to Shop employees - all from program income.

The evaluation and training program in the three (3) Workshops served a total of 33 clients with 22 completing the program. Of the remaining 11, six (6) did not complete the program, four (4) left for medical reasons and one (1) was dismissed. Of the 33,

22 were given employment at the Contract Shop, the Home Industries sewing program, or were continued in other training programs.

Planning and Grants.

The Commission's planning specialist works closely with the Federal government and the State Rehabilitation Commission and local agencies on problems of State-wide planning for facilities and on programs designed to meet the needs of the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit. As an official agent, the Commission must approve and supervise Federal grant requests to other rehabilitation facilities in the State that will work with blind people. During the year \$110,000 was authorized to other agencies and \$433,094 to special programs operated by the Commission for a total of \$543,094. All of these grants are matched by the Federal government on an 80-20 or 90-10 basis. These included:

1. The first (1st) year of a Manpower Development Program to expand work opportunities for homebound individuals.
2. The first (1st) year of an Expansion Grant to rehabilitate Public Assistance Vocational Rehabilitation clients.
3. The third (3rd) and final year of a grant to develop a Model Cities project using black and Spanish-speaking Aides as part of an outreach program to find people with vision problems in the Inner Cities.
4. The second (2nd) year of an expansion grant for providing rehabilitation services to Spanish-speaking clients at the Commission's Rehabilitation Center.
5. The second (2nd) year of a large training services grant to the Mount Carmel Guild for specific vocational training for less able blind people in lock-

smithing, building maintenance and certain clerical operations.

Home Industries.

In 1973, total sales through the Home Industries and craft program amounted to \$128,906 - a \$12,547 decrease over 1972 reflecting a drop-off in department store sales. About 243 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$54,000. Income-wise this represents an 8% over-all increase compared to 1972. Shrinking sales outlets and the increased cost of raw materials have been a considerable problem. The department's marketing program of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets has been a difficult area to break into and sales to chains decreased in 1973 to \$14,309. The attitudes of uninformed individuals concerning blindness are major factors to be overcome in the development of suitable sales outlets for the Business Enterprise program. A goal of \$160,000 in sales for 1974 has been set. One of the greatest needs in this program is expansion of the therapeutic program for elderly blind citizens which will also serve to supplement their income. The program is under current study for developing additional handcraft items; additional sales outlets; as well as ways of processing items to and from individuals in isolated areas of the State.

Supervisor of Volunteers.

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. Guidelines were set for the selection of volunteers for awards in various categories of volunteer service - braille and taping, transportation, group service for screening programs, service to individuals and one-to-one volunteers. The first State-wide awards day and luncheon was held to give recognition to volunteers for

their many hours of service to the Commission in its various programs and also to serve as an educational and informational program, 79 individual volunteers and volunteer organizations received recognition for outstanding service. A post card system was formulated and provides informational statistics on the activities of volunteers. Volunteers were utilized in all of the service programs of the agency at eye screenings, mobile craft bus sales, direct personal services to clients i. e. friendly visits, transportation, etc. In addition, training sessions were held in braille, tape transcribing and direct personal services.

The effectiveness of the Commission's program is clearly due to the dedication and competency of a highly-motivated staff and Board who committed themselves without stint to the task of serving blind and visually-handicapped people.

Respectfully submitted,

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



**Joseph Kohn
Executive Director**

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August 28, 1973