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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, 1973 - JUNE 30, 1974

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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 1974.*

*The Commission has set its goals and objectives toward meeting the
comprehensive needs of blind and near-blind individuals and of integrating and
developing necessary services to meet these needs. Included in the services of
the agency are the education of blind and visually-impaired children throughout
the State; home teaching and special services to elderly homebound blind indi-
viduals, vocational training and job placement, and programs to prevent blind-
ness. At least half the population coming to the agency for service has substan-
tial handicaps in addition to blindness which 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. It is estimated that there are approximately
two blind people per thousand of population in New Jersey. This would mean
an estimated 15,000 blind people residing in the State. The agency's register
on June 30, 1973 reflects a known total of 12, 600.*

There is continuous program assessment and evaluation of results carried on by an Evaluation Unit and by the Director as part of the service delivery program, its practices and procedures. Findings are translated into staff training and program modification.

In the agency's EDUCATION SERVICE there were 255 new referrals for the year and 247 closures. The number continuing on the register and at school in this Unit as of June 30, 1974 numbered 1,713. The classification of these children at year end by school needs is as follows:

<i>Preschool</i>	-	<i>144</i>
<i>Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)</i>	-	<i>785</i>
<i>Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped</i>	-	<i>142</i>
<i>Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools</i>	-	<i>104</i>
<i>Residential Schools and Training Centers</i>	-	<i>103</i>
<i>Multi-Handicapped Children at Home</i>	-	<i>26</i>
<i>College and University</i>	-	<i>135</i>
<i>In State Institutions</i>	-	<i><u>274</u></i>
<i><u>TOTAL</u></i>	-	<i><u>1,713</u></i>

The greatest single cause of blindness in the preschool population in our caseload is now Optic Atrophy. Preschool services were expanded during the year to include mobility instruction and workshops for training parents in developing daily living skills for their children.

The Commission continued to operate classes for preschool deaf-blind children at Bloomfield College and Glassboro State College, in Cranford and

in Teaneck. A three (3) week summer program was provided for 30 of the deaf-blind children.

251 children spent a total of 402 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.

In co-operation with the agency's Vocational Rehabilitation Department, Education staff sponsored two (2) summer evaluation and training programs. 32 college-bound high school juniors and seniors spent four (4) weeks on campus at Drew University in Madison 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 preparing for college life.

14 vocational students were enrolled at the Commission's Rehabilitation Training Center where the major emphasis was on personal adjustment, job tryout, aptitude testing, vocational guidance and the acquisition of practical self-care and work skills.

The EYE HEALTH SERVICE 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 875. Sight was restored or improved for 154 individuals.*
- 2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 9th year, 91 community-wide detection programs were conducted.*

23,600 children were screened. 1,506 required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.

3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 19th State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 90 hospitals. 10,883 adults were examined at no cost; 579 Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.
4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 231 days and 8 evenings of service and 7,075 examinations. Among the vulnerable population groups reached were: 18 special centers for the handicapped; 14 migrant locations; 16 nursing homes; 6 institutions; 10 health departments; 16 senior citizen centers; and 16 health centers.
5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 358 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 1,535 individuals being examined and appropriately followed. Programs were conducted at various workshops, health fairs, correctional institutions, learning disabilities, and mental retardation centers to reach disadvantaged populations.

The HOME SERVICE PROGRAM 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 2,444 clients.

924 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 6,236.

An increasing number of aged visually-handicapped persons are being housed in care facilities of a variety of types. One of the problems confronting numbers of elderly residents is isolation; the desire of such centers to emphasize safety is sometimes overzealous and keeps blind residents from participating in programs available to other residents. Home Service staff are assisting residential centers in identifying those residents who might benefit from recreational and activity programs. In planning for clients, emphasis is placed on integration of visually-impaired individuals with other residents. Staff of the facilities working with the visually handicapped are encouraged to aid the individual in developing skills which will allow him to function independently. Stress is placed on assisting local staff to understand and carry on programming after the Commission worker terminates services. Administrators of care facilities have been encouraged to include in-service training plans, lectures and demonstration sessions devoted to inform staff on ways to assist visually-handicapped residents in adjusting to institutional life and caring for their own needs.

This year, a group project has been conducted at a State psychiatric hospital on activities of daily living with a select group of patients. This has resulted in the transfer of just two (2) clients back into community living.

In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE a total of 3,349 clients

were served; 356 individuals were placed in suitable employment and 175 were rehabilitated as homemakers for a total of 531. Aggregate earnings for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,485,936.00. Earnings for the same group at the time of referral was \$430,000.00.

331 multi-handicapped blind adults were served by the agency's Multi-Handicapped Unit. At the Johnstone Training Center a special co-operative project with the State Division of Mental Retardation served 38 retarded blind clients with 10 placed in employment.

The department operated a summer employment experience program for high school and college students who lack work experience and, therefore, have difficulties in breaking into the job market. 81 young people were placed in appropriate employment. The community acceptance of this program has been excellent. The Commission has subsidized half the cost of employment for completely inexperienced people with no background and has found employers willing to pay the full cost in the case of clients with previous experience.

Currently, the Commission operates a day Rehabilitation Center in Newark which served 101 clients during the year for a total of 4,070 man days. 48 of these individuals were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of severe added handicapping conditions which included diabetes, hypertension, epilepsy, neurological and psychiatric involvements, mental retardation, etc. The development of a residential Rehabilitation Center is considered essential to replace the present day Center in order to better meet the needs of the increasing number of more severely disabled clients.

To prepare blind people for the independence of competitive employment,

specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 444 clients. This is a critical element in successful job placement.

In the Vending Stand Program 54 vending stands were in operation at year end. Average annual earnings for operators increased to \$11,772.00 as against \$10,752.00 last year. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$2,396,694.00 with a total net income to operators of \$639,740.00. Much time has been spent in upgrading existing stands. However, the program suffers from severe construction delays because of the limitations inherent in State Purchase procedures.

This year saw the inception of the Trust Fund Beneficiary Rehabilitation Program. This program which is 100% Federally supported provides for the retraining and re-employment of any blind Disability Insurance beneficiary.

The Supplemental Security Income Program was also new. It became effective on January 1, 1974 to provide cash benefits for the needy aged, blind, and totally disabled. The Commission's function is to rehabilitate those blind individuals currently receiving public support into productive and gainful situations. Despite the usual delays in starting a new program, during this period 229 individuals were served with 26 closed in employment.

A special training program for Social Security Information Representatives was successfully conducted in co-operation with the Social Security Administration which resulted in the employment of 9 blind people in professional Federal positions - 7 at the Jersey City Teleservice Center and 2 New York residents at the Jamaica New York Center.

An Optacon Training Program was instituted this past year. The Optacon is a reading instrument which converts print to tactual letters and enables a totally

blind individual to read personal letters, memoranda, books, etc. Since it is a valuable tool for employment, the Commission makes it available in selective situations.

The agency operates three (3) Contract Workshops - one in Newark, one in Somerset, and one in the Camden area. 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 - \$385,279.00; Number of Blind People Employed - 102; Total Wages to Blind People - \$126,023.00.

The Commission's Planning and Evaluation Specialist 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 Unit. 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 \$309,000 was authorized to other agencies; \$89,300 to special programs operated by the Commission; for a total of \$398,300. All of these grants are matched by the Federal Government on an 80-20 or 90-10 basis. These included:

- 1. The second year of a Manpower Development Program to expand work opportunities for homebound individuals.*
- 2. The second year of an Expansion Grant to rehabilitate Public Assistance clients.*
- 3. The third year of an Expansion Grant for providing rehabilitation*

services to Spanish-speaking clients at the Commission's Rehabilitation Center.

- 4. An Expansion Grant for the purchase of a highly automated piece of specialized packaging equipment for the Somerset Contract Shop to expand work opportunities for individuals employed at the Shop.*
- 5. The fourth year of a "Third Party" grant for developing a Vocational Rehabilitation Program under the Commission's supervision for mentally retarded blind youngsters at the Hayes Unit of the Johnstone Training Center.*
- 6. The third year of a training services grant to Mount Carmel Guild for specific job training for less able blind people in locksmithing, building maintenance and certain clerical operations. This included stipends for trainees.*


Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$140,766.00 - \$11,860.00 increase over 1973. About 238 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$50,230.00. In the department's marketing program of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets, sales to chains increased in 1974 to \$25,559.00.

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. The second 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. 192 volunteer organizations and 3,295 volunteers provided 20,477 hours of service.

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,

COMMISSION F/T BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED



**Joseph Kohn
Executive Director**

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September 20, 1974**