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*NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND  
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED  
1100 RAYMOND BOULEVARD  
NEWARK, NEW JERSEY 07102*

*ANNUAL REPORT*

*JULY 1, 1974 - JUNE 30, 1975*

**New Jersey State Library**

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND  
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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 1975.*

*The Commission has set its goals and objectives toward meeting the compre-  
hensive needs of blind and visually-impaired individuals, to reach more of the  
elderly and the poor; to reach more of the multiply-disabled blind and the disadvan-  
taged; and to integrate and develop necessary services to meet these needs. These  
include vocational training and job placement, the education of blind and near-blind  
children throughout the State; home teaching and special services to elderly home-  
bound individuals; and prevention of blindness.*

*It is estimated that there are approximately two blind people per thousand  
of population in New Jersey. With a total State population of approximately seven  
and one-half million this would mean an estimate of 15,000 blind people residing  
in the State. At lease 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 2,600. 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. Obviously, there are numbers of people who are blind or seriously visually impaired who do not come to the agency for a variety of reasons. Nonetheless, as service programs increase in their ability to meet specific needs, the number of referrals also increases. The agency register on June 30, 1974 reflects a known total of 13,516.

As previously reported, the character of the blind population is changing. At least half the population coming to the agency for service has substantial 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; and the development of a Residential Rehabilitation Center for specialized training.

In the agency's EDUCATION DEPARTMENT there were 566 new referrals for the year and 272 closures. The number continuing on the register and at school in this unit as of June 30, 1975 numbered 1,735. The classification of these children at year end by school needs is as follows:

Preschool	-	157
Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)	-	818
Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped	-	134
Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools	-	81
Residential Schools and Training Centers	-	127
Multi-Handicapped Children at Home	-	6
College and University	-	121
In State Institutions	-	291
<u>TOTAL</u>	-	<u>1,735</u>

*The major causes of blindness in the preschool population are: cataracts, optic atrophy, retinal affections, retrolental fibroplasia, glaucoma, microphthalmos, and myopia.*

*A major change in the education service is in the provision of increased services at the preschool level because this is so vulnerable an age in the child's development. Parent seminars and workshops for training parents in developing daily living skills for their children were expanded to include the South Jersey area. More children are going to nursery schools.*

*Some new innovations to the department this year included: participation by braille reading students in the State Assessment Tests usually given to public school students to determine their level of achievement in math and reading; the achievement testing program was expanded with more students being tested in both braille and print; larger numbers of students took College Boards this year than in previous years with increasing numbers being tested at local high school settings. Training conferences were conducted for public school teachers with blind children in their classrooms to provide some direction in coping with the everyday needs of the blind children. A survey was in process during the year to determine the number of blind and deaf-blind residents under age 20 at each State institution. Appropriate educational services will be planned. In addition, at the suggestion of Commissioner Ann Klein, the Commission is planning to extend its specialized training services to blind adults in State institutions.*

*There has been a change in the college program policy which now permits any student interested in attending college such an opportunity if approved by a Review Team. This is a one year experimental program. The client must carry a full college schedule and must attain passing grades to continue.*

*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 19 of the deaf-blind children and included parental participation.*

*258 children spent a total of 408 camper weeks at Camp Marcella. The first two 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 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 co-operation with the agency's Vocational Rehabilitation Department, Education staff sponsored two (2) summer evaluation and training programs. 30 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.*

*25 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.*

*In the Textbooks and Materials Center 6,044 braille volumes, 1,638 reels of recorded material, and 1,459 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 1,106. Sight was restored or improved for 162 individuals.
2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 10th year, 237 community-wide detection programs were conducted. 23,573 children were screened. 1,638 required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.
3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 20th State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 97 hospitals. 11,447 adults were examined at no cost; 489 Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.
4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 214 days and 12 evenings of service and 7,161 examinations. Among the vulnerable population groups reached were: 10 special centers for the handicapped; 16 nursing homes; 3 institutions; 10 health departments; 15 senior citizen centers; and 18 migrant locations.
5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 626 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 3,129 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 nutrition 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 2,927 clients.

928 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 6,351.

The main thrust of this department is to seek out and meet the needs of the elderly or homebound blind population. To this end, staff have been involved in a variety of community programs that visually-handicapped individuals may be integrated into. Where appropriate, clients are counseled concerning low-cost meals in food service programs in the various communities; the opportunity to socialize with others in group activities; the availability of transportation; and ways of overcoming the isolation that blindness can cause.

A Radio Information Center was instituted this year in Philadelphia and provides specialized radio reader service to individuals in the Philadelphia area and the southern portion of New Jersey. The service includes reading of newspapers, magazines, and special interest material on a sub-carrier radio channel which requires a special radio provided by the Commission.

In-service training programs have been conducted for staff at nursing homes and residential centers for the elderly which include sessions concerning useful methods of assisting blind persons and teaching blind individuals to become self-reliant.

A grant was received from the Division of Aging for training and utilizing

*Instructor Assistants for blind and visually-handicapped elderly people. The grant provides for the recruitment of 19 older citizens to serve as Senior Aides providing ancillary services to clients under supervision.*

*Staff members assisted in the development of the New Jersey Plan for Social Service which will be funded under Title XX of the Federal Social Security Act. The Commission has received a grant for services under this Act.*

*In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT a total of 3,669 clients were served; 280 individuals were placed in competitive employment and 106 were rehabilitated as homemakers for a total of 386. Aggregate annual earnings for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,289,340. Earnings for the same group at the time of referral was \$329,732. The downturn in the economy has hit New Jersey particularly hard so that we have had a considerable amount of unemployment in the State and this has reduced job placements substantially. It is hoped this downward trend will be reversed in 1976.*

*A staff Counselor has been assigned as the contact individual in the implementation of the Federal Affirmative Action program with industry. As a result, she has been developing effective relationships with top level management in private industry. A number of professional and nonprofessional employment opportunities have been expanded, particularly in the State through the co-operation of the New Jersey Department of Civil Service for providing a reader for a blind person to take an examination and not ruling out individuals who cannot drive but leaving this for the Appointing Authority to determine.*

*Agencies for the blind have been aware for many years now that in dealing with the severely disabled there is a necessity for continuing interaction with the*



client. The severely disabled individual is easily dislocated by seemingly simple changes in the work requirement or by health factors or by age or by other elements. As a result, we have indicated to clients that the Commission is a resource even after job placement. This now has been formally recognized as a need by the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1974.

331 multi-handicapped blind adults were served by the agency's Multi-Handicapped Unit of which 48 were placed in employment. At the Johnstone Training Center a special co-operative project with the State Division of Mental Retardation served 40 retarded blind clients who can benefit from vocational training.

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. In spite of the economy, it was possible to place 72 young people in appropriate work activity. 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. Career days and vocational information seminars for these young people and their parents were conducted and well-attended. Included were guest speakers who were blind and actively employed in a variety of settings.

Currently, the Commission operates a day Rehabilitation Center in Newark which served 105 clients during the year for a total of 4,992 man days. 53% of these individuals were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of severe added handicapping conditions which included diabetes, hearing loss, cardiovascular involvements, orthopedic, mental retardation, emotional disorders, etc. The development of a Residential Rehabilitation Center is

essential to replace the present day Center in order to better meet the needs of the more severely disabled client. This has been approved for inclusion in the State's Capital Construction Bond Issue now under consideration by the Legislature.

To prepare blind people for the independence of competitive employment, specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 661 clients. This is a critical element in successful job placement.

In the Vending Stand Program 56 vending stands were in operation at year end. Despite the poor economy average annual earnings for operators increased to \$12,108 as against \$11,772 last year. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$2,684,738 with a total net income to operators of \$636,143. The Randolph-Sheppard Act which was amended in 1973 has opened up employment and income opportunities for blind individuals on Federal properties not previously available. The amended Act has also mandated that a committee of vending stand operators in the State be appointed to have input in policy and procedure in the operation of the Business Enterprise Program. An ad hoc committee met with agency staff and ballots were sent to vending stand operators providing them with the opportunity of selecting five (5) of their peers to serve as a permanent committee.

The Trust Fund Beneficiary Rehabilitation Program's major function is to attempt to rehabilitate disabled Social Security Disability recipients back into employment. Gains have been made in the organization and operation of this program by earlier identification and verification of eligible clients and by continuous follow-up. Statistically, there were 1,555 beneficiaries referred for service with 146 rehabilitated.

The Supplemental Security Income Program became effective on January 1,

1974 to provide cash benefits for the needy aged, blind, and totally disabled. The Commission's function as a Federal requirement is to rehabilitate into employment those blind individuals currently receiving public support. It is anticipated that the essential number served will remain at a plateau or grow only slightly because the number of blind in New Jersey on SSI continues to be only about 1,000 clients - the pattern of the past several years.

Application standards in Social Security Administration offices are a problem because staff are not uniformly and in some instances not at all familiar with requirements in the blind program such as special work allowances, etc. The agency Supervisor spends considerable time training and interpreting to SS staff corrections in grants. 702 individuals were served with 30 closed in employment.

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 - \$419,650; Number of Blind People Employed - 92; Total Wages to Blind People - \$131,776.

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 \$103,187 was authorized. All of these grants are matched by the Federal Government on an

80-20 or 90-10 basis.

1. A grant for developing New Careers for the blind.
2. A grant for Providing Rehabilitation Services to Older Blind Clients.
3. 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. 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.

In accordance with regulations mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Commission has for more than a year operated a specialized unit consisting of two (2) individuals responsible for Program Evaluation. This group has been active in the development of evaluation objectives which the Act requires the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare's office to develop. In addition, at the beginning of each year the Evaluation Unit meets with the staff of Vocational Rehabilitation and with the agency Director and sets written goals and areas to be evaluated during the year. This past year, a major undertaking was an evaluation of the Commission's Rehabilitation Center. As a result, a number of program modifications have been instituted and plans are going forward to develop a Residential Rehabilitation Center in order to better reach out and serve the more severely disabled among the blind. The employment of blind people in the Social Security Representative program initiated last year has proven successful and to alleviate problems with information retrieval for agency clients employed as Service Representatives special equipment was purchased. This was developed by Triformation Systems and provides technical information feedback in

*braille off a computer thus enabling the blind individual to function on an equal basis with his sighted peers.*

*Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$174, 786 - \$34, 020 increase over 1974. About 258 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$57, 523. In the department's marketing program of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets, sales to chains increased in 1975 to \$34, 803.*

*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 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 Cherry Hill. 233 volunteer organizations and 3, 768 volunteers provided 38, 049 hours of service to the agency.*

*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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August 29, 1975