

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND
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ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 1967 - JUNE 30, 1968

New Jersey State Library

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To: Members, Board of Managers
New Jersey State Commission for the Blind

We respectfully submit herewith the Annual Report of the Commission's activities and accomplishments for the Fiscal Year 1968.

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, public information, as well as through direct service and counsel to individuals requiring surgery or treatment.

In the case service sphere, the number served totaled 984. Sight was restored or improved for 277 individuals.

The Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia is now in its third (3rd) year of operation and has grown substantially. During the year 20 community-wide detection programs were conducted in cooperation with Women's Clubs, Lions Clubs, PTA's and local Boards of Health. In addition, three (3) "Head Start" groups - Paterson, Middlesex and Newark Preschool Council - conducted screenings under the Commission's supervision. In all 9,772 children were screened using 699 volunteers trained by Commission staff. 1,052 children were referred for follow-up and complete eye examinations. In June the total program was re-evaluated

with representatives of the Federal Public Health Service, the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc., the State Department of Health and the agency's staff and Medical Consultant in order to devise methods of meeting the demand for this service which now exceeds our capacity.

In the Glaucoma Control Program the 13th State-wide detection program was conducted in cooperation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 73 hospitals. 11,250 adults were examined at these centers (3,800 more than last year) at no cost and 578 Glaucoma suspects were referred to the Commission for individual follow-up. To control Glaucoma requires continuous treatment and follow-up. At year's end there were 3,039 on the Glaucoma Registry of the Commission.

Diabetes also requires continuous control and in about 12% of the Commission's caseload is a factor in vision loss. The department maintains a growing registry which at the end of the year totaled 925.

The Traveling Eye Unit provided 202 days of service and provided 4,440 examinations. Among special "need" groups that were reached were 17 nursing homes, a housing unit for the elderly with the State Division of Aging and the Monmouth County Medical Society cooperating, two (2) additional low-cost income projects, the Cerebral Palsy Center in Edison and the Multiple Sclerosis Home in Chester. The Unit is changing its emphasis in vision screening from school-age groups to groups identified as "pockets of need," where health services are

limited or nonexistent.

To inform the public as to prevention needs 20 lectures to schools, colleges and community groups were conducted. There were 84 showings of the Commission movie and a large variety of educational exhibits at Fairs, Conventions, etc.

EDUCATION SERVICE

During the year 236 new children were referred which when added to those on register made a total of 1,911 youngsters in service. In the same period 188 children were closed so that as of June 30, 1968, there were 1,723 remaining on the register.

The Education caseload has shown a net increase at the end of each of the past few years of 50 to 100 children. This is principally due to a Rubella (German Measles) epidemic in 1964-65 affecting all sections of the country, and to general population increases. The social and personal tragedy of Rubella is the frequency of other serious disabling conditions which occur in addition to vision loss. These include poor hearing, neurological impairment and cardiac involvement. These children when added to others with multiple problems reflect a trend of the past 10 years. At this time 50% of the total education caseload have serious additional handicaps along with blindness or substantial visual impairment. The implications of this for program are more specialized facilities for diagnostic evaluation and for schooling and more specialization for

professional staff working more intensely with smaller numbers of children.

The classification of the 1,723 children continuing in service at year end by school needs is as follows:

Preschool	-	147
Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)	-	875
Special Classes in Public Schools	-	175
Residential Schools and Treatment Centers	-	168
College and University	-	76
Multi-Handicapped - Not in School (Age 7 and up)	-	54
In State Institutions (M.R. and M.I.)	-	184
Unclassified (Recent Referrals)	-	<u>44</u>
TOTAL	-	<u>1,723</u>

Special Federal Grants and Summer Camp.

A Title I Federal grant for disadvantaged children was continued and made it possible to give supervision to children at out-of-State residential centers. Because of caseload increases a second Instructor was assigned to this area. During the year, two (2) Instructors worked almost exclusively with severely multi-handicapped preschool children - most of whom suffered from the Rubella syndrome. Small numbers of children were brought to the Commission's summer camp for intensive evaluation and attention. The gains which resulted were impressive and leads to the conclusion that this type of intensive work on a one to one basis is essential for the child's development and in preventing later institu-

tionalization.

During the summer of 1967, 560 camper weeks were made available to children at Camp Marcella. In addition to the regular program, a speech and language program for hard of hearing, visually handicapped children was provided by special teachers of the deaf-blind hired from the Perkins School for the Blind for the summer. A number of additional programs for specialized purposes were conducted at the Rogoff Building at the Camp. These included a home economics training session for older girls and sessions with a number of teen-age groups up for week ends. The objective of these was to observe and improve skills of daily living and social maturity. Staff Instructors gave their time for these week end group efforts. A highlight of the Camp season and for the agency was the meeting and picnic with delegates to the International Conference of Educators of the Blind.

Instructional Materials and Textbook Center.

The number of shipments at the Materials Center continued to rise. There were 41,854 shipments of texts and educational materials - the highest ever. While the number of braille volumes is going down, the number of tapes shipped is increasing considerably as are large print materials. This continued rise is placing a considerable strain among existing staff and available space.

HOME TEACHING AND SOCIAL SERVICES (HOME SERVICE)

The Home Service program serves newly-blinded adults and homebound individuals through an array of services which includes personal adjustment, training in communication skills, handwork training for leisure or occupation, and assistance with personal, family and social problems. Working with the blind person chiefly in his home setting, workers traveled 107,000 miles and made 4,600 client calls. The number served during the year was 1,767 individuals.

Some trends or major activities should be highlighted:

1. During the year nearly 600 Talking Book machines were sent to clients with the total number in use exceeding 2,600. Of this number 143 were physically handicapped individuals unable to read and, therefore, now eligible under a change in Federal law. Mail delivery of machines are at present the basic distribution method, and this has released valuable professional staff time.
2. Staff have participated in the orientation programs for County Welfare Board workers sponsored by the Division of Public Welfare. This has improved substantially mutual understanding and the ability to work jointly in the interest of blind clients on welfare.
3. Nearly 200 volunteers are working actively with the Home Teaching Department as Braillists, tape transcribers, as personal visitors,

in Talking Book repairs, etc. An awards luncheon and meeting for volunteers is now an annual event.

4. The departmental Supervisor has been assigned to head a staff committee to study and evaluate the special or unmet needs of older blind people in the State and to make appropriate recommendations. A similar staff committee is working on the needs of disadvantaged individuals.
5. Of particular difficulty to the Home Teaching Department has been the large turnover in professional staff and the lack of adequate recognition in salary levels of trained Rehabilitation (Home) Teachers. This has caused serious dislocations at times in meeting service needs. The situation has been aggravated by the small number of training facilities for such teachers and the limited inducement for individuals to enter this profession. At the same time the number of clients requiring service and the degree of seriousness of the social problems confronting newly-blinded individuals has been intensifying along with other factors of social change in our communities.
6. Progress has been made in the development of evaluation tools and instructional manuals for meeting increased demands for home-making. Lacking still is the ability to give quickly intensive instruction and specialized home care during a transition period for the recently blinded individuals.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

During the year 236 employment placements were made. This was a 40% increase over the previous year and is the highest of any year of operating this program. On an annual basis, the aggregate earnings of those placed in employment amounted to \$650,000. This exceeded by far the State's share in the cost of the Vocational Rehabilitation program for the period.

This year saw much of the earlier planning and seeding of needed programs, come to fruition thereby enabling the Commission to keep pace with service requests and changes in Federal law which have led to more seriously handicapped, or more seriously disadvantaged blind individuals to be eligible for and to benefit from rehabilitation.

Some of the highlights include:

1. A Contract Workshop was opened in the Camden area to better serve South Jersey.
2. A new Contract Workshop - twice the size of the old one was opened and dedicated by His Excellency, Governor Richard J. Hughes, with members of the State Board of Control and other dignitaries and business associates in attendance at an impressive ceremony.
3. 1,880 clients were served by the department - a 24% increase over the year before. During the past two (2) years - the case-load increase was 52%.

4. The Rehabilitation Training Center operated by the Commission had 5,170 student days of training as against a past average of 3,500. It served 87 clients this year as against 55 in 1967. As is the case in the children's program increasingly and for a substantial percentage we are dealing not just with blindness but with multiple other disabilities added to blindness. This increases the ratio of staff to clients.
5. The special counseling unit dealing with the Multi-Handicapped continues to develop additional training opportunities around the State in special centers for other handicaps that will also accept blind people with secondary problems. Needed still are solutions for the extended or terminal employment of such individuals after training, and enough facilities able to deal with the increased number requesting service.

To this end, plans are under way for encouraging the Mt. Carmel Guild to develop a sheltered workshop. Other employment resources will be needed.

6. Members of the Board, the staff, and the Director have participated very actively on the Governor's Advisory Committee and Task Forces for Statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Planning in an effort to come to grips with Statewide needs and particularly the needs of visually handicapped people.

7. During the summer, the Rehabilitation Department and the Education Department jointly sponsored a special course of preparatory training at the Rehabilitation Center for college-bound blind students. Twenty-five (25) students attended and received personal counseling, mobility training, training in communication skills, use of specialized equipment, social dancing and English composition. The program is very effective in preparing students for the transition to college. The only improvement would be to have the same type of program on the college campus.

Vending Stand Program

At year end there were 54 vending stands in operation as against 50 in 1967. However, six (6) were new as a number of marginal stands have been closed. Average annual earnings for operators is now \$4,436. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$1,295,000 with net income to operators of \$240,000. Chief problems are delays in construction; the lack of additional interested blind operators because of other opportunities, and the need for improved legislation still pending.

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 decreased by 9% to \$302,000. The number of blind people employed totaled 87 about the same as last year with \$106,000 paid out in wages. The Federal minimum

wage of \$1.60 per hour or better is paid at the Shop and in order to be flexible and secure high income, complex contracts sighted individuals and those with other handicaps are employed for those portions of work requiring vision. The decrease in gross sales was partly due to a cut back by one of our principal contractors at New Brunswick and a decrease at the Newark Shop due to a combination of preparing to move to new quarters during the last quarter, and the loss of a large contract to automation.

Home Industries

In 1968 total sales through the Home Industries craft program amounted to \$112,000. This gave employment to 67 consignors on average with earnings of \$56,400, a small increase over the previous year. The department has been faced over the past several years by shrinking sales due to fewer sales people being available to our distributors because of economic conditions and a lessening public interest in craft articles. To adapt to this a new commercial program in machine sewing has been developed successfully with Federal support. Twenty-two (22) individuals have been trained and 360 dozen of a standardized clothing item produced. These will be sold by September 1 and represent an additional gross sale of about \$27,000. The Home Industry Unit is also experimenting with several new sales methods designed to increase the number of more seriously disabled

blind people who can work and benefit from this type of program.

Respectfully submitted,

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph Kohn".

Joseph Kohn
Executive Director

August 1, 1968