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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, 1978 - JUNE 30, 1979

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TO: *Honorable Ann Klein, Commissioner, Department of Human Services
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 1979.*

*The primary objective of the Commission is the immediate and appropriate
delivery of services to blind and visually-impaired persons. Within the past year, as
in most public agencies, the Commission was faced with changes which could have become
critical. The unexpected retirement of two (2) key senior staff members created a void
which was difficult to fill. To cope with the situation it became necessary to institute a
complete restructuring of staff in the Vocational Rehabilitation Department which, at the
same time, would project more efficient and effective delivery of services. This consti-
tuted the beginning of a total reorganization of the agency staff-wise and program-wise.
Additionally, much concern prevailed with the almost limbo effect of the status of the
Federal Vocational Rehabilitation legislation because of its potential impact on the agency
and its programs. The concept of independent living has a tremendous meaning for a
large segment of the blind and visually-impaired population, because it will provide
Federally funded programs to evaluate and train persons who may have no immediate
vocational goal in skills which will enable them to live more independent lives. This
legislation will increase the effectiveness of services in the four (4) major departments
of the Commission.*

The agency is mandated, by law, to maintain a register of all legally blind and visually-impaired persons which as of June 30, 1979 is estimated at 22,486 persons. Of this total, the Commission's register reflected that there is an estimated 17,334 who are legally blind. The number of new cases referred to the Commission this past year is estimated at 4,655. Although not all of these persons are classified as blind, they all have substantial vision problems. It is also a fact that there are a number of blind or seriously visually-impaired persons who for a variety of reasons do not apply for services. During this past Fiscal Year an estimated total of 24,553 persons were registered with the Commission. Of that number one-half received agency services.

In the agency's EDUCATION DEPARTMENT there were 375 new referrals for the year and 212 closures. The number continuing on the register and in school programs in this unit as of June 30, 1979 numbered 1,734. The classifications of these children at year end by school needs is as follows:

<i>Preschool</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>155</i>
<i>Local and School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>765</i>
<i>Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>196</i>
<i>Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>Residential Schools and Training Centers</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>93</i>
<i>Multi-Handicapped Children at Home</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>College and University</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>156</i>
<i>In State Institutions</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>310</i>
<i>Inactive</i>	<i>-</i>	<i><u>3</u></i>
<i><u>TOTAL</u></i>	<i>-</i>	<i><u>1,734</u></i>

The major causes of blindness in the preschool population are: optic atrophy, cerebral blindness, cataracts, albinism, and retrolental fibroplasia.

310 blind and deaf-blind children in institutions for the mentally-retarded are registered with the Education Service. Efforts were made to expand services to children in State institutions and in day care programs. The division of the population of retarded persons under 21 into three (3) sections enabled this unit to provide materials and consultative services to the vastly increased instructional staff of the Division of Mental Retardation. The extension of Thorough and Efficient educational services to all children in State schools for the retarded resulted in a vast increase in the number of retarded children registered with the American Printing House for the Blind. This resulted in an increase in the availability of educational materials supplied by the Commission to children in Division of Mental Retardation facilities.

A co-operative agreement was entered into between the Vocational Rehabilitation and Education Departments of the Commission with the Department of Education to establish a residential program for deaf-blind clients at the Marie H. Katzenbach School with special emphasis on vocational training. This is in compliance with an agreement at the Federal level between the Departments of Special Education and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The program will enable the Commission to provide long-range training for a very severely-disabled population who have not been adequately served heretofore. Many of these students attended residential facilities outside the State. As a result of this agreement many clients will be returned to New Jersey and receive service more appropriate to their needs at less cost to the State.

20 deaf-blind students attended a special evaluative and training program this summer at Perkins School for the Blind geared primarily to independent living and vocational skills.

In conjunction with the Vocational Rehabilitation Department, summer programs were conducted for 27 college-bound students at Drew University preparatory to college

entrance. Students lived on campus; were counseled by Instructors and given training in special areas of need such as Freshman composition, mathematics, preparing term papers, selection of courses, mobility, activities of daily living, etc. An evaluation and training program for noncollege-bound students was conducted at the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center as a method for preparing these high school students for suitable employment.

188 children participated in summer camp activities at Camp Marcella. The first two (2) weeks were geared again to programs for the most severely multi-handicapped blind children who require one-to-one supervision and who would otherwise have been unable to attend. This year 54 multi-handicapped children including 17 deaf-blind participated in this program.

In the Textbooks and Material Center 6, 566 braille volumes, 128 reels of recorded material, and 1, 697 large-type volumes were distributed to students attending schools throughout the State.

The EYE HEALTH DEPARTMENT function is to restore sight, 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 persons requiring surgery and treatment as follows:

1. Case Service - the number of persons served totaled 1, 582. Sight was restored or improved for 331 persons.
2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 14th year, 349 detection programs were conducted. 25, 124 children were screened. 2, 701 required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.
3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 24th State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 97

hospitals. Over 8,992 adults were examined at no cost to them; 495 Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.

- 4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 233 days of service and 7,278 examinations. Among the "high risk" population groups reached were: 65 senior citizen centers, 25 health departments, 1 State institution, 4 schools for the deaf, 1 community college, 8 nursing homes, 1 drug rehabilitation program, and 15 centers for the handicapped or retarded. Highlights of this year's activities include examinations to over 400 residents of the North Jersey Training School and examinations to over 700 hearing-impaired children, including those at the Katzenbach School for the Deaf.*
- 5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 310 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 2220 disadvantaged persons being examined and appropriately followed. Programs were conducted at such centers as those serving learning disabled children, senior citizens, nursing home residents, multi-handicapped persons, etc.*

The problems of persons with low vision have become increasingly evident in the ophthalmological and optometric professions; the trend has been to move away from the lone practitioner towards the interdisciplinary team approach. This new approach makes it possible for persons suffering from visual loss to receive not only ophthalmological and optometric care but also mobility, low vision aids, as well as home teaching, counseling, and rehabilitation services, etc. It is also recognized that a person with residual vision no matter how low can maximize his visual performance and function with a multiplicity of optical aids. With this in mind, the Commission embarked upon the development of a Low Vision Program to serve partially-sighted persons. A panel of specialists in

ophthalmology and optometry was assembled to provide Commission clients with thorough and competent low vision care. Guidelines and procedures for the referral of persons for evaluation and low vision aids were compiled. The professional staff participated in a Low Vision Training Seminar to become more thoroughly knowledgeable with the procedures and methods necessary for the provision of this new service. Hopefully, this new program will meet the needs of a vast number of visually-impaired clients and make a tremendous difference in their lifestyles.

It is a known fact that diabetes mellitus is today's leading cause of blindness. Because of the Commission's continuing concern in the preservation of vision, a special Diabetic Services Unit was developed. Its program is designed to prevent blindness caused by diabetic retinopathy as well as to serve the over-all needs of known diabetics. Specialized report forms were developed, education materials, appliances and aids were assembled to assist and enable visually-impaired diabetic persons to cope with their new visual problem and enable them to function more comfortably with their daily needs.

The Migrant Program continued to be very productive. It provided children and adults with appropriate follow-up in those cases where pathological conditions were identified.

The HOME SERVICE DEPARTMENT serves blind adults and elderly homebound persons through an array of services including instruction in personal adjustment, self-care, homemaking, handwork for leisure or occupation, braille reading, typing, and other communication skills, assistance with personal, family, and social problems. Working with clients chiefly in their home setting, workers reached a total of 5,050 clients.

9,130 Talking Book Machines and cassettes were assigned to blind residents in the State who thus are able to listen to recorded books. The total number now in use State-

wide is 11,863. The agency received special commendation from the Federal government for the security maintained in the storage of equipment and maintenance and handling of replacement machines, as well as in the assignment of the Talking Book machines and maintenance of records.

20 New Jersey residents are benefiting from the Rental Assistance Program of the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This program pays 75% of the person's rent and is operational in 10 Counties.

Despite many obstacles encountered, the department was able to maintain 87% of the assigned level of service in its Title XX contract.

The Commission initiated a pilot project to study within a limited geographical area (Bergen, Essex, and Union Counties) its Intake and referral procedures for new clients regardless of the program areas in which they would be served. It is hopeful that this Intake service will accelerate the time of the initial contact with a client as well as provide for more timely and appropriate referral and servicing of clients.

This department concentrated its efforts on the provision of adequate and suitable service to blind and visually-impaired adults in the State mental hospitals and institutions for the mentally retarded. To achieve this goal, plans include identification of visually-handicapped patients, annual screening of all patients by the Commission's Mobile Eye Unit with follow-up by the Eye Health Service where eye care is indicated. In addition, there will be assessment of the patient's capacity to benefit from adjustment or rehabilitation training; provision of rehabilitation teaching service or group activity in day care centers within each institution and where feasible referral to the agency's rehabilitation service and/or community placement. Staff at some institutions were provided with demonstrations of methods of teaching and support instruction of visually-handicapped patients, familiarization of institution personnel with services and equipment available

to meet special patient needs; preparation of videotapes by Home Service staff to be used in hospitals in ongoing in-service training programs.

With the advent of interest in the use of the Optacon, an electronic print-reading device, an evaluation and training program in the use of the Optacon was initiated by Rehabilitation Teachers in the Home Service Department to replace the service which had previously been provided at the Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center. The program change will extend the service to clients residing in all parts of the State and will be made available to interested persons who are unable to travel to Newark. By the close of the year, 18 persons were evaluated, 16 of whom demonstrated potential. Two (2) of these persons completed 50 hours of training and are successfully using an Optacon in employment related activity.

In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT a total of 3,431 clients was served; 225 persons were placed in competitive employment, 130 were rehabilitated as homemakers, for a total of 355.

Projected annual earnings for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,282,375. Earnings for the same group at the time of referral were \$180,184. The continuing unfavorable economic atmosphere and high unemployment rates made the task of rehabilitating blind and handicapped persons increasingly difficult. The Comprehensive Employment Training Program (CETA) continued to be of no measurable support in locating employment for capable blind people. The Workshop picture does not provide adequate employment opportunities for multi-handicapped persons. This is due to the fact that in the Commission's Workshop program we must maintain standards of production comparable to those in competitive industry. In addition, in the private sheltered workshops the numbers of extended employees must be limited in order to provide accommodations for clients in the various evaluation and training programs. Extended employment

is very costly to the private facilities. This problem is further compounded by the lack of adequate transportation to and from the facilities. In addition, there continues to be no Federal action to eliminate work disincentives for Supplemental Security Disabilities beneficiaries. The reluctance of many to sacrifice benefits for wages continues to impede gainful employment.

Within this department, the results of a general reorganization initiated two (2) years ago are visible. Pilot projects involving decentralization of authorization approval and billing approval authority proved successful and has been incorporated into regular operating procedures. In keeping with this, the previous 100% quality assurance check was reduced to 5% making the entire administration aspect more cost effective with no measurable loss in quality.

The Staff Development and Training Section experienced a setback for a three (3) month period as a result of the resignation of the member overseeing this major effort. A new staff person has been fully assigned to the Unit and a most productive year is anticipated, since appropriate linkage with Federal and State training offices was re-established. Training programs for staff included management development, technical/professional skills, general training programs, clerical training programs and tuition aid and career development. The number of staff participating in training activities has grown throughout the year. Future goals and objectives of this program include expansion of training resources and library materials, including materials and aids which will benefit blind and visually-impaired staff members; orientation programs which will provide effective knowledge of the Department of Human Services and the Commission to new employees; expansion of an inter-office training program using the knowledge and skills of staff to provide training in areas which have been identified through evaluation;

increased training for clerical staff; and basic and advanced training in eye pathology.

The Summer Developmental Experience Program is in its 8th year and provides 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. The program is an effective tool in assisting students who experience difficulties in breaking into the job market. 29 young people were involved in appropriate work activities such as clerical, supervisory assistants, counseling aides, camp counselors, and ground and building maintenance workers, etc. What is of major impact as a result of this program is the fact that more and more young people are securing employment through their own efforts. This was especially evident this year - 22 of the 29 employed did so on their own merits.

The Social Security Beneficiary Program (which is a combination of the SSI and Trust Fund) rehabilitated 28 Social Security Disability Income Trust Fund clients and 16 Social Security Income clients into suitable employment.

The Program Evaluation Unit worked on a variety of projects in addition to the mandates program evaluation activities. Referring to the latter, considerable time and effort were expended in the collection of data for the Annual Report on the General Standards for Evaluation of Vocational Rehabilitation Programs. In accordance with Standard #2 a study of 25% of persons closed who had received training revealed 96% had received training related to subsequent job placement.

Follow-up surveys were sent to clients closed as rehabilitated in order to obtain information on client's satisfaction with services and retention of vocational rehabilitation benefits. 322 surveys were mailed and 182 responses were received. 63% were still employed. Salaries increased by 13% from an average of \$105.00 per week to \$119.00 per week. 80% indicated satisfaction with services received.

A study was made of Spanish-speaking persons to determine whether or not they could utilize the services of the Commission. The results indicated that the Commission was not adequately reaching this population and there was an estimated 306 Spanish-speaking persons who could benefit from services. The study strongly indicated the need for the addition of a Spanish-speaking member to the Vocational Rehabilitation staff.

At the request of the Director staff of this unit were assigned other tasks which included the preparation of a directory of organizations of the blind and of other services available in the State in addition to the Commission's services. This material is to be provided to clients at time of registration. There was involvement in the early stages of the agency's effort to establish a State-wide radio information service for the print handicapped; participation in an in-depth review of the Hayes Unit Program at E. R. Johnstone Training and Research Center; and a study of the Filing and Registration Department which substantiated the fact that the department is overburdened with paperwork and the system of handling data is antiquated. One of the recommendations was for a study to determine whether or not computers or microfiche some of the files could add to efficiency in this department. At the conclusion of the study, arrangements were made to dispose of an accumulation of inactive main and vocational rehabilitation client files. Parenthetically, it should be noted that microfiche has been procured for this purpose.

A study of information management needs of the agency was developed and a report presented to the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services. This report demonstrated not only the complexity of the agency but the comprehensive nature of numerous information recording and reporting needs of its various service programs. It is anticipated that when the study is concluded a full report will be prepared with the

request that a Consultant be retained to design an information management system for the Commission.

The Commission's Supervisor of Facilities and Workshops' efforts were devoted to specialized areas of concern. Among these was the serious need for suitable transportation of clients in the urban, suburban and rural areas of the State to Workshop sites. These sites provide not only rehabilitation of persons but placement in suitable employment, thereby making them self-supporting.

In grants management two (2) Innovation and Expansion Grants were continued.

- 1. Expanding and Improving Work Horizons for the Blind in New Jersey. The importance of this grant is evident, since it deals with the problem of the decline in placements in recent years of Commission clients. The Career Development Unit created through this grant has proven to be very effective in developing new opportunities for 20 persons in the past two (2) quarters as well as conducting promotional and training activities for clients and staff in job readiness skills.*
- 2. Expanding Vocational Training for the Blind in New Jersey was continued for its third and final year. The program, which was delayed and not initiated until January of this year because of the inability to recruit a qualified Instructor has proven successful. As a result, it will be continued with State support.*

With the participation of staff of the agency's deaf-blind program a grant proposal was developed for the establishment of a Vocational Rehabilitation program (mentioned earlier in this report) for deaf-blind youngsters at the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf in West Trenton. The proposal provides for a residential facility and two (2)

special classrooms. This will provide service to 14 young people and include instruction in skills of daily living, orientation and mobility, communication skills as well as vocational evaluation and training.

498 multi-handicapped blind adults were served by the agency's Multi-Handicapped Unit of which 60 were placed in suitable employment. The Hayes Unit at the Johnstone Training Center, a special co-operative project with the State Division of Mental Retardation served 20 retarded blind clients providing vocational evaluation and skill training.

The Commission's Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in Newark, which is a day center, served 90 clients during the year for a total of 5,225 man days. 70% of these persons were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of added handicapping conditions which included diabetes, hearing loss, orthopedic, multiple sclerosis, etc. 40% were totally blind.

The new stress upon services for Independent Living makes the establishment of a Residential Rehabilitation Center more imperative. To meet funding for such a facility, an application for a construction grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration has been made which will allow for the renovation of a suitable location in the Westfield area of the State. This grant, which will be matched by the State, will provide funding for the purchasing and renovation of the facility. Necessary studies and evaluation have been made to determine the adequacy and appropriateness of the site to meet agency requirements.

A three (3) day seminar sponsored by the Career Development Unit was conducted for 15 clients and their Counselors. This conference was under the direction of two employment consultants whose presentations and techniques sparked the development of a program which will assist high school and college clients as well as parents of blind youngsters in the coming months.

To prepare blind people for independence and to cope with the mobility demands in employment situations, specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 841 clients. This is a critical element in successful job placement and in the pursuit of daily activities.

In the Vending Stand Program 59 vending stands were in operation at year end. This program provides one of the most lucrative sources of employment for blind persons in New Jersey. Average net annual earnings for operators increased to approximately \$15,117 as against \$14,000 last year. The Commission was re-certified as the State licensing agency and formal agreements were established under which operators hold their positions in the program under contract. Vending facility regulations under which the program is administered were revised and issued to each stand operator.

The agency operates three (3) Contract Workshops - one in Newark, one in Somerset and one in Westmont. These Shops provide short-term evaluation as well as extended employment for clients not ready for outside competitive employment. 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 - \$592,522; Number of Blind People Employed - 90; Total Wages to Blind People - \$199,567. The Transitional Workshop program instituted last Fiscal Year has successfully completed two (2) contracts. This program has provided paid work experience to 19 clients undergoing industrial evaluation in the Contract Shop setting - 11 of whom were placed in the regular Shop program. The average Transitional Shop employee is severely multi-handicapped and progress is often slow and tedious, as these persons require constant supervision and extensive daily counseling.

Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$324,244 - a \$64,161 increase over 1978. 515 consignors benefited from this program and received

earnings of \$112,366. Blind consignors in this program are homebound blind persons who are provided with instruction in handcrafts, caning, sewing and the like as a leisure outlet as well as a source of supplemental income. Many of these articles are sold through local sales. In the department's marketing programs of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets, sales to chains increased in 1979 by 15% for a total of \$91,673. Following a number of years of coping with inadequate space and serious maintenance problems, the Home Industries Department moved to a more expansive and accommodating location in Old Bridge.

Although additional equipment e.g. Laser Cane and Mowat Sensor (electronic travel aids) has been obtained for the Technological Resource Center its ability to fully function has been limited as a result of inadequate space to display and accommodate individuals in a convenient and controlled setting. The Resource Center concept has generated much interest and enthusiasm.

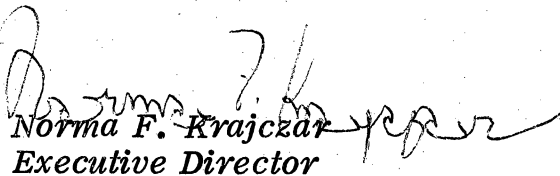
The principal role of the Supervisor of Volunteers is to co-ordinate the activities of volunteers associated with the agency, arrange for recruitment, training, evaluation, and awards programs. Annual State-wide Awards Day and Luncheons were held to give recognition to volunteers in the various sectors of the State. Three (3) separate luncheons were held - one in Tinton Falls, one in Cherry Hill, and one in Fairfield. 238 organizations and 2,922 volunteers provided 42,357 hours of service to the agency. In the Education Department 262 volunteers provided 33,507 hours of service in brailleing, thermoforming, binding of textbooks, taping, proofreading, duplication of textbooks and the making of educational aids. 1,788 volunteers assisted the Eye Health Service in the preschool and community eye screening programs and with the Mobile Eye Unit at screenings. Other volunteers assisted the agency in taping and reproducing taped books, sponsored and assisted at sales conducted by the Home Industries Department, while

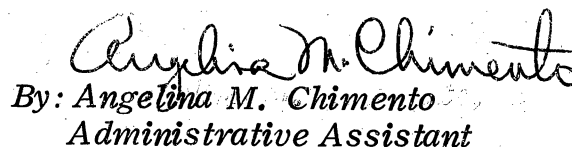
others provided direct personal service for homebound blind persons in a program sponsored by the Home Service Department. The responsibilities of this Supervisor have grown to include educating the public on the program of services of the Commission, thereby making them more fully aware of the various facets of program development. The expanse of public relations activities has included representation at special workshops, exhibits, and centers as well as meetings of Lions Clubs. The latter work very diligently in supporting programs for blind persons. As a result a better line of communication developed between the agency and consumers of service.

The task of a relatively new Director in meeting the increasing demands and changes in programs could be overwhelming, especially so, because of the uniqueness of the Commission's services. Despite limited funding the accomplishments and delivery of services was made possible through the assistance of a highly skilled, dedicated and competent staff and Board. These individuals have committed themselves unstintingly to serving blind and visually-handicapped persons in New Jersey.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMISSION F/T BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED


Norma F. Krajczar
Executive Director


By: Angelina M. Chimento
Administrative Assistant

NFK:AC

October 1, 1979

