

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

JULY 1, 1976 - JUNE 30, 1977

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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 1977.*

*Currently, the Commission is undergoing an interim period, as a result
of the untimely loss of its esteemed Executive Director, Joseph Kohn. Despite his
terminal illness, the Director continued to maintain a line of communication with
the agency. With the assistance of a fine and dedicated staff the delivery of services
to the blind and visually impaired of the State of New Jersey continued in a smooth
and effective manner.*

*Among obstacles encountered was the threat of the loss of one of its major
services, as a result of budgetary cuts which eventually was resolved following
many hours of exhaustive efforts on the part of the Director, Board of Trustees,
and the Acting Director. In addition, the major service departments of the Commis-
sion have been hampered by lack of staff to meet the demands and needs of its
clientele, especially those in institutions, the homebound, the elderly, and the
multiply-disabled.*

*The agency is required by law to maintain a register of all blind and visually-
impaired individuals. Statistically, it is estimated that there should be 15,000
blind people (two to three per 1,000) in New Jersey. The number of new cases*

referred to the Commission this past year was 3, 538. Although all of these individuals may not be 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 individuals who for a variety of reasons do not apply for services. The agency register on June 30, 1976 reflects a known total of 15, 839.

In the agency's EDUCATION DEPARTMENT there were 353 new referrals for the year and 232 closures. The number continuing on the register and in school programs in this unit as of June 30, 1977 numbered 1, 661. The classification of these children at year end by school needs is as follows:

Preschool	-	161
Local School Placement (Elementary and Secondary)	-	785
Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped	-	166
Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools	-	69
Residential Schools and Training Centers	-	91
Multi-Handicapped Children at Home	-	10
College and University	-	95
In State Institutions	-	<u>184</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>	-	<u>1, 661</u>

The major causes of blindness in the preschool population are: cataracts, optic atrophy, retrolental fibroplasia, central nervous system afflictions, albinism, and myopia.

Some innovations to the department this year included: formation of a parent advisory group to assist in the development of goals for deaf-blind children; development of a curriculum and teaching guides; in-service training programs

for public and private school teachers on methods and materials utilized in working effectively with visually-handicapped children. In addition, it continued its program of monitoring case service effectiveness with 125 cases reviewed.

284 blind and deaf-blind children in institutions for the mentally retarded are registered with the Education service. Initial funding for the expansion and centralization of the Commission's program of services to the deaf-blind population at Woodbridge State School was secured last fiscal year from Title VI-C funds. As a result of the increase in the number of deaf-blind children located in institutions, additional funding has been secured from a Title VI-C grant to expand services and double the number of children served in the special program at the Woodbridge State School.

In co-operation with the agency's Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the Education Department conducted summer programs in specialized preparation areas for 30 college-bound students at Drew University. Students lived on campus; were counseled by Instructors and given training in special areas of need such as Freshman composition, mathematics, preparation of term papers, selection of courses, mobility, activities of daily living, vocational counseling, etc.

An evaluation and training program for 21 noncollege bound students was conducted at the Commission's Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center as a means of preparing these high school students for suitable employment. Twenty-two (22) multi-handicapped children attended a six (6) week vocationally oriented program at Perkins School for the Blind.

The Commission continued to operate classes for preschool deaf-blind children in Cranford, Teaneck, and at Glassboro State College. A summer program was provided for 23 of the deaf-blind children and included parental participation.

230 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 10 of the deaf-blind children were integrated with regular campers. 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 the Textbooks and Material Center 6,372 braille volumes, 852 reels of recorded material, and 1,187 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 individuals requiring surgery and treatment as follows:

- 1. Case Service - The number of individuals served totaled 1,223. Sight was restored or improved for 182 individuals.*
- 2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 12th year, 334 community-wide detection programs were conducted. 23,141 children were screened. 1,990 required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.*
- 3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 22nd State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 93 hospitals. Over 10,949 adults were examined at no cost; 589*

Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.

- 4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 214 days and 11 evenings of service and 6,555 examinations. Among the vulnerable population groups reached were: 11 special centers for the handicapped or retarded; 6 nursing homes; 17 health departments; 27 senior citizen centers and housing projects; 15 migrant locations; 5 community centers; 2 drug programs.*
- 5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 466 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 3,117 disadvantaged individuals being examined and appropriately followed. Programs were conducted at learning disabilities and low income centers, drug abuse centers, mental retardation centers, senior citizens centers, model cities programs, recreation centers, and 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 4,955 clients.

Home Service field staff initiated and executed a high number of in-service training programs in care facilities and served as consultants to a wide variety of individuals and groups involved with visually-handicapped persons. All of these efforts have been directed toward the goal of fostering acceptable attitudes regarding blindness, assisting with integration of blind persons into community activities and aiding individual visually-handicapped persons in achieving independence and satisfaction in their personal lives.

1,106 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 7,239.

The renewal of the Title XX grant, which was initially implemented in Fiscal Year 1976, expanded services to clients and enabled the Home Service section to reach greater numbers of visually-handicapped individuals. Funds from Title XX made it possible for clients to receive necessary training equipment required to achieve their goals. Of the 776 individuals served, 504 were closed as homemakers.

In co-operation with liaison appointed by the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services for each mental institution, the Home Service Unit intensified its efforts to identify the blind and visually-impaired population at these facilities. 283 individuals were identified. Home Service staff provided in-service programs and professional guidance to staff members at institutions.

Para-Professionals were utilized to provide ancillary services to clients including escort services and participation in senior citizen services and day care programs, thereby lessening isolation for these individuals.

The inception of the rental assistance program by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided an upgrading in the living standards of a number of clients. This program is designed to improve and lower the costs of housing for elderly and handicapped individuals. As a result of Home Service staff efforts, 72 clients were referred for rental assistance.

Presentations were made by staff of areas of need on national Welfare Reform, i. e. raise in the Supplemental Security Income ceiling, realignment of Medicare to relieve the chronically ill, establishment of half-way houses or group living facilities

for individuals presently living alone and isolated.

In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT a total of 3,138 clients were served; 248 individuals were placed in competitive employment and 137 were rehabilitated as homemakers for a total of 385. Projected aggregate annual earnings for those placed in employment amount to \$1,148,784. Earnings for the same group at the time of referral was \$170,560. The unemployment rate in the State continued at a higher than national level and except for seasonal employment and some upturn in the over-all economy, the rate hovered around 10% State-wide with levels reaching up to 20% in such urban areas as Newark, Paterson, Camden and Atlantic City. Severely disabled individuals faced additional competition from other Federally funded programs designed to improve the economic scene. Staff have been involved with CETA and the National Alliance of Businessmen exploring avenues of potential employment sources.

The summer developmental experience program has proven to be beneficial in assisting students who have difficulties in breaking into the job market. The program is in its sixth (6th) year and is designed to provide blind 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. 70 young clients were placed in appropriate work activity in diverse areas of employment including rehabilitation facilities, hospital settings, day camps, pharmacy, etc. 30 additional individuals secured their own positions in equally varied areas.

336 multi-handicapped blind adults were served by the agency's Multi-Handicapped Unit of which 50 were placed in employment. The Hayes Unit at the

Johnstone Training Center, a special co-operative project with the State Division of Mental Retardation served 16 retarded blind clients providing vocational evaluation and training.

The Commission's Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in Newark, which is a day center, served 96 clients during the year for a total of 5,290 man days. 55% of these individuals were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of severe added handicapping conditions which included diabetes, hypertension, emotional disorders, orthopedic and neurological involvements, etc.

To prepare blind people for independence and to cope with the mobility demands in employment situations, specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 853 clients. This is a critical element in successful job placement and in the pursuit of daily activities.

In the Vending Stand Program 57 vending stands were in operation at year end. This program provides the most lucrative source of employment for blind individuals in New Jersey. Average annual earnings for operators increased to \$13,376 as against \$12,300 last year. Gross sales for the year amounted to \$3,180,108 with a total net income to operators of \$745,915.

The Supplemental Security Income and Trust Fund Programs were combined into one unit in the Vocational Rehabilitation Department for administrative purposes. Many obstacles were encountered as a result of inadequate staffing and as well as the revision of the referral and the statistical reporting system for the program. These required changes in record keeping and the data retrieval system. 536 beneficiaries were referred for service in the Trust Fund program with 35 rehabilitated. 341 individuals were serviced with SSI funds with 21 closed in employment.

In the vocational rehabilitation of clients every source is explored to provide

effective and quality service to clients. To this end, improvisations this year included provision of career information to high school and residential school clients to motivate and acquaint individuals towards realistic employment objectives and the business world; computerization of the vocational rehabilitation reporting program; in-service training programs for Counselors and Supervisors to improve performance and accountability. Program and Fiscal Audits of the Vocational Rehabilitation Department were conducted by Regional Rehabilitation Services Administration staff and by representatives of the General Accounting Office.

The Consumer and Providers Advisory Committee and the Vending Stand Advisory Committee which were mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 held several meetings and an active program is planned for the coming year.

The agency operates three (3) Contract Workshops - one in Newark, one in Somerset, and one in Westmont. 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 - \$472,663; Number of Blind People Employed - 90; Total Wages to Blind People - \$159,689.

The Staff Development and Training Section arranged a variety of training programs for staff to broaden and expand their knowledge in the delivery of services to clients. These programs included special courses in diverse areas i. e. evaluative workshops, facilitative case management workshops, braille and other communication skills, conversational Spanish, clerical development, mobility and orientation training in sonicguide and electronic devices, SSI/SSDI program infor-

mation, visual pathologies, use of audio-video equipment, affirmative action workshops, sensory aids, learning disabilities seminar, etc.

The Commission's Supervisor of Facilities and Workshops works closely with the Federal government, State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation 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 \$169,076 was authorized. All of these grants are matched by the Federal government on a 90-10 basis.

- 1. The third year of a grant for providing Rehabilitation Services to Older Blind Clients.*
- 2. The third year of a grant for a satellite Home Industries sewing unit to expand employment opportunities for blind people using facilities at the New Jersey Blind Men's Association in Leonardo, New Jersey.*
- 3. The third year of a grant for a satellite Home Industries sewing unit to expand employment opportunities for blind people using facilities at the New Jersey Foundation for the Blind in Denville, New Jersey.*
- 4. The first year of a grant for Expanding Vocational Rehabilitation Service to the Homebound Blind.*
- 5. The first year of a grant for Expanding Vocational Rehabilitation to the Blind in New Jersey to establish three skill training programs at the Commission's Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center.*
- 6. A subgrant to the Associated Craftsman-Easter Seals facility in Hackensack in Advanced Clerical Training Program for selected agency clientele.*

The Program Evaluation Unit which was mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 concentrated most of its efforts in meeting the set of standards promulgated by Rehabilitation Services Administration in the evaluation of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, by applying data elements for measuring program efficiency and effectiveness. A study was made of clients who received training and were subsequently placed in employment to determine the relevance of the training. The study revealed that 94% of the individuals had received training which was job related. In accordance with requirements in the standards for the maintenance of follow-up studies on rehabilitated and nonrehabilitated clients a survey questionnaire was developed and data collected which revealed that 68% of the rehabilitants were still employed; several had employment changes; and others required additional agency services.

Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$204,688 - \$13,554 increase over 1976. 365 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$70,075. The consignors in this program are homebound blind individuals 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 program of selected articles to be sold through commercial sales outlets, sales to chains increased in 1977 by 4.0% for a total of \$51,525.

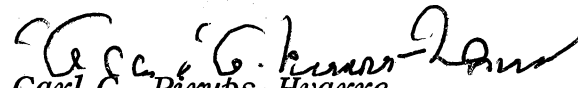
The Supervisor of Volunteers' principal role is to co-ordinate the activities of volunteers associated with the agency, arrange for recruitment, training, evaluation, and awards programs. Annual State-wide Awards Day and Luncheons were held to give recognition to volunteers for their many hours of service 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 Clifton and one in Jamesburg. 252 volunteer organizations and 3,285 volunteers provided 31,299 hours of service to the agency.

It is significant to note that the accomplishments and program delivery of the Commission have been most effective. This is attributed largely to the dedication and competency of the staff and Board which committed themselves to the task of serving the blind and visually-handicapped.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMISSION F/T BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED


Carl C. Pirups-Hvarre
Acting Executive Director

CCPH:AC

September 7, 1977