

NEW JERSEY STATE COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 1964 - JUNE 30, 1965

We respectfully submit herewith the Annual Report of the Commission's activities and accomplishments for the Fiscal Year 1965.

EYE HEALTH SERVICE

The Eye Health Service function is to prevent blindness and to help conserve the vision of citizens in New Jersey through a program of eye health information and safety as well as through a program of direct case services and counsel to individuals requiring eye surgery or treatment.

In the case service sphere, the total number served amounted to 1,910, a slight decrease over the previous year. Three hundred nineteen (319) individuals had their sight restored or improved.

A Glaucoma Control program is maintained throughout the year, since this is a condition which is controllable and which can result in permanent blindness if not treated promptly and continuously. In cooperation with the State Medical Society a successful Glaucoma detection program was conducted in 72 cooperating hospitals which made available to the public a free screening service by eye physicians. In the set aside period of one (1) week, 12,687 individuals were screened with 684 referred to the Commission for Glaucoma follow-up which was accomplished. An additional 203 patients with Glaucoma were checked during the year on referral from hospital eye clinics. At the year's end there were 2,671 patients listed in the Glaucoma Registry.

New Jersey State Library

The Traveling Eye Unit began the year with a new vehicle paid for through private contributed funds replacing its well-worn Unit which had been in service 18 years. In 132 days of service, 3,492 eye examinations were extended to 2,115 school children by staff ophthalmologists. This makes possible the early detection and treatment of serious eye problems.

HOME INDUSTRIES

This service is concerned with the processing and selling of handcraft articles made by homebound blind people. Gross sales totaled \$162,530, less than the year before because of a drop-off in wholesale sales due in part to competition from increased numbers of groups or individuals selling out-of-State products. In June, new State legislation was implemented (Chapter 290, P. L. 1964) which authorized the Commission to license groups who seek to sell "blind-made" articles in order to maintain appropriate standards. This should result in a better protection for the public and increased sales volume for the department. During the year \$67,000 was returned as earnings to blind craft workers. This represents an important source of supplementary income to blind individuals which minimizes dependency and improves the individual's acceptance in family and community life.

HOME TEACHING AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The Home Service program serves newly-blinded individuals and homebound adults through an array of services which include personal adjustment, training in communication skills, handwork training for leisure-time or occupation, and

assistance with personal, family and social problems related to or growing out of the individual's loss of sight. Working with the blind individual chiefly in his home setting, workers traveled 97,000 miles and made 5,010 client calls in providing these services. The close of the year saw approximately 2,400 Talking Book machines in use by blind clients and this number is growing.

Some of the noteworthy activities of the unit may be summarized as follows:

1. Three (3) blind college juniors were given a planned field-work placement with the department as a method of supplying a live job evaluation experience.
2. The need for expanding the qualifications of trained Home Teachers was evaluated with staff and Rutgers University with a view toward developing a graduate training program. In-Service Training provision in specialized areas are continuing. Lectures were attended on diabetic involvements affecting vision; the use of new tools and special aids suited to blind people; refresher lessons in machine sewing; demonstrations and discussions of handcraft items. Two (2) Home Teachers attended a two (2) day workshop on services to deaf-blind persons. Several staff members completed University courses in specialized areas.
3. The Housing Registry for blind people is continuing and has been particularly well-used by community agencies and other departments of the Commission.

4. The successful program of using trained volunteers in the Essex County area is being expanded to other large city areas. Training of volunteers follows a fixed curriculum and is made available in co-operation with the American Red Cross. Recognition of volunteer efforts was extended for the first time formally at a meeting presenting service pins to each individual with a year of service.
5. Consultation services were made available by staff to the East Orange Veterans Hospital.
6. In addition, staff members in response to numerous requests discussed the agency's program at meetings of service clubs, church groups, Women's Clubs, professional organizations, etc. thereby stimulating new referrals.
7. About 1,500 users now have the newer two (2) speed Talking Book machine. To complete the transfer from one (1) speed units, the department will reach nearly 1,000 additional individuals in the year ahead.
8. A State-wide library service for New Jersey residents housed within the State is under active consideration and development.
9. Also in development is a series of group training meetings for blind mothers of sighted children which will include discussions and lectures on child care problems.

EDUCATION SERVICE

On June 30, 1965 there were 1,517 youngsters registered with the Education

Service, a net gain of 11 for the year. Two hundred twenty-three (223) new referrals were received during the year and 212 were closed. The 1,517 children were classified as follows, by school needs:

Pre-School	-	131
Special Classes	-	202
Regular Elementary Classes	-	633
Regular Secondary Classes	-	161
Boarding and Residential Centers	-	129
College and University	-	61
Multiply-Handicapped (Not in School or Institution)	-	56
Retarded - In Institutions	-	<u>144</u>
TOTAL	-	<u>1,517</u>

Certain aspects of the educational program should be noted.

The pre-school caseload continues the downward trend of the past several years. The majority of these children have substantial handicaps in addition to blindness, many of congenital origin. The number suffering from Retrolental Fibroplasia has decreased markedly; those suffering from Retinoblastoma and in particular, Congenital Cataracts due to Rubella have increased.

The number of children attending regular elementary and secondary school classes in public schools was the highest ever at 633 and 148 respectively. Through individual evaluation, each child's particular reading needs for braille, print or special educational materials was met by the professional staff. The number of

children in residential centers is increasing because of the many more children with multiple handicaps. In addition to the 144 youngsters currently placed in State and private institutions and those children with severe disabilities added to blindness who have been able to participate in public school classes, there were 56 children with multiple disabilities for whom no program could be provided. It seems probable that 20% of the total education caseload will not be able to participate even in sheltered employment when they mature. Another 30% will probably require sheltered employment or highly selective and highly supervised job placement. Since most of these children do not live in the more populated areas of the State, efforts have been made to help the parents become involved with organizations and agencies that have a particular interest in the child's additional handicap.

Of the 61 students enrolled in Higher Education, nine (9) were studying at graduate schools. The level of successful job placement upon graduation for this group has been consistently excellent. This reflects the appropriateness of the selection process for those students going to college as well as the staff's concentration on vocational and educational counseling.

At the Commission's Educational Materials and Textbook Center shipments of school materials increased about 20% to 29,182 units when compared to 1964. Last year there was a 25% increase. This indicates the importance of the special school materials needed to make public school placement of blind youngsters effective. The use of Braille volumes is still increasing but disc recordings have dropped substantially in favor of a sharp increase in the use of tape recordings.

The Commission now has equipment for quickly reproducing multiple copies of books on tape from masters. Also on the decrease is the use of "large-print" texts partly because of a change in point of view as to their need. Regular print held closer to the eye serves the same purpose. This has been demonstrated to be scientifically sound for children with subnormal vision.

Camp Marcella continued to provide specialized educational training, remedial instruction and tutorial services in a recreational setting to selected blind youngsters. Five hundred one (501) camper weeks were made available to 232 youngsters. Increasingly, the Camp program is supplementing the gaps which develop in the educational background of the visually handicapped children under the Commission's supervision. For example, all children were checked on reading ability (Braille or print), knowledge and use of recording machines and "play-backs", handwriting, typewriting, hygiene and personal grooming. A remedial teacher for Braille and other subjects was available at the Camp as was a physical education specialist.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

During the year, 172 new employment placements were made, a slight increase over the prior year. The earnings of these individuals when projected for one year approximated the total cost for providing vocational rehabilitation services in the State. Personnel changes brought to the department a new Supervisor and Assistant Supervisor. A re-evaluation of the vocational program was undertaken and is still in process. Initiated this year were the following:

1. A Board-Staff committee restudied the Commission's Vending Stand

program. Meetings were held at administrative and policy levels as well as with representatives of organizations of blind people. Recommendations for program change and expansion have been made and approved by the Board. Implementation will be sought in the new Budget and through legislation.

2. The department developed a number of techniques and controls to improve case recording and thereby quality performance as well as closer supervision of case movement to improve efficiency.
3. Territories were reassigned in order to increase client coverage.
4. Portable tape recorders were assigned to several blind counselors for field use to overcome recording backlogs. Clerks were given training in typing from tapes.
5. Plans were developed for the employment of a part-time Medical Director to set standards, supply staff training and act as liason with professional organizations in the physical restoration area.
6. Plans were developed for the physical and program expansion of the Adult Rehabilitation Center and the Newark Contract Shop. This would result in doubling the work space of the units and serving or employing more clients.

The Adult Rehabilitation Center extended training to 79 clients for a total of 4,230 student days. In 1964 there were 4,170 student days of instruction to 66 individuals. Of the total caseload, 36 had additional health or other disability to

contend with resulting in increased attention to factors of personal adjustment, mobility, individual differences and needs.

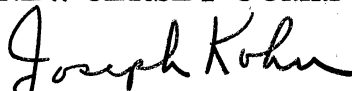
Two members of the Mobility Training Staff left for other positions in the Spring and replacements could not be recruited. However in eight months of service 108 clients were given training tailored to their needs and enabling them to win release from dependence on others within their own capacities.

The Contract Workshop program for older non-competitive blind workers continued to grow. Gross sales amounted to somewhat more than \$206,000. Minimum hourly wages or better are paid and 83 blind workers received \$85,000 in wages. Averages do not tell the story here as a number of workers now on social security chose not to work more than a few months a year. This year, for the first time a paid vacation plan of up to one week will be extended to employees. The extension of social security coverage is under consideration with Federal authorities.

In the Vending Stand Program no increase in the net number of stands occurred. However, two low-grade or marginal stands were closed and a similar number of better paying new ones were opened. Several older stands were modernized. Gross sales for all units amounted to \$901,000 with net income to operators reaching \$165,000.

Respectfully submitted,

NEW JERSEY COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND


Joseph Kohn
Executive Director

July 30, 1965