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

ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 1, 1977 - JUNE 30, 1978

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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 1978.

Following intensive efforts on the part of Departmental personnel and a Search Committee appointed by the Commissioner of Human Services, Mrs. Norma F. Krajczar was appointed Executive Director of the Commission in October, 1977.

As is customary with a new administration, a period of adjustment is necessary in order to become accustomed to and acquainted with the scope and methods of administering the various services of the agency in an efficient and timely fashion. Had it not been for the co-operation of a fine and dedicated staff, the course of the Director in progressing effectively would have been much more difficult. However, the delivery of services to blind and visually-impaired citizens of the State of New Jersey continued in a smooth and orderly manner.

Innovatively, a Seminar was convened at which the Director and Administrative staff were present. Their task was to identify problems confronting Commission programs and projections for future trends and expansion of services. Included in the Seminar were discussions on role clarification, the need to improve internal and external communication effectiveness, the need for human resource development, etc.

The Commission is a comprehensive agency serving blind and visually-impaired persons. In addition to a State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation Program, it includes a State-wide Education program for blind children using itinerant teachers, a Prevention of Blindness program supported by State funds, and a Home Service program for the elderly and homebound which is also State supported.

The agency is mandated, by law, to maintain a register of all legally blind and visually-impaired individuals which currently stands at 17,547 persons. Approximately one-half this number are active annually. It is statistically estimated that there should be approximately 14,058 blind people (about two per 1,000) in New Jersey. The number of new cases referred to the Commission this past year is estimated at 3,677. Although not all of these individuals 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 individuals who for a variety of reasons do not apply for services. The agency register on June 30, 1978 reflects an estimated total of 17,660.

In the agency's EDUCATION DEPARTMENT there were 370 new referrals for the year and 237 closures. The number continuing on the register and in school programs in this unit as of June 30, 1978 numbered 1,670. 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>747</i>
<i>Special Programs for Multiply-Handicapped</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>161</i>
<i>Special (Separate) Classes in Public Schools</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>57</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>131</i>
<i>In State Institutions</i>	<i>-</i>	<i><u>320</u></i>
<i><u>TOTAL</u></i>	<i>-</i>	<i><u>1,670</u></i>

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

Some innovations to the department this year included: development of braille and math curriculums by selected staff members with appropriate workbooks for staff utilization. Optacon training was provided to Instructors and is now an integral part of the tutorial program. The department intensified its activities in organizing parent groups throughout the State, both for blind and deaf-blind clients. These will have the advantages of opportunities for shared problems and experiences, for better communications with the department and for co-operative Commission-consumer efforts on behalf of handicapped children.

320 blind and deaf-blind children in institutions for the mentally retarded are registered with the Education Service. This is a significant increase and is attributed to better case finding and identification of institutionalized children found to be visually impaired. The development of the deaf-blind program at Woodbridge State School resulted in increased referrals of children with multiple handicaps who are also retarded, and in their teens. Retardation is the single largest category of multi-handicapping conditions to affect visually-impaired children and large numbers are eventually placed with the Division of Mental Retardation by their parents or guardians.

In co-operation with the agency's Vocational Rehabilitation Department, the Education Department conducted summer programs in specialized preparation areas for 28 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, skills of daily living, vocational and career counseling, etc.

An evaluation and training program for 27 noncollege-bound students was conducted at the Commission's Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center as a means of preparing these high school students with vocational information and introduction to the working world. In addition, twenty-eight (28) multi-handicapped children attended a six (6) week vocationally oriented program at Perkins School for the Blind.

192 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 12 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 e.g. winter sports, personal grooming, preparation of meals, group socialization, etc.

In the Textbooks and Material Center 6,881 braille volumes, 526 reels of recorded material, and 1,512 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 1,333. Sight was restored or improved for 269 persons.*

2. Preschool Vision Detection Program for Amblyopia - In its 13th year, 348 community-wide detection programs were conducted. 24,532 children were screened. 2,540 required follow-up for complete eye examinations or treatment.
3. Glaucoma Control Program - The 23rd State-wide detection program was conducted in co-operation with the Medical Society of New Jersey at 93 hospitals. Over 13,242 adults were examined at no cost to them; 750 Glaucoma suspects were identified and referred to the Commission for follow-up.
4. The Traveling Eye Unit provided 196 days and 14 evenings of service and 6,662 examinations. Among the "high risk" population groups reached were: 13 special centers for the handicapped or retarded; 6 nursing homes; 22 health departments; 33 senior citizen centers and housing projects; 23 migrant locations; 3 community centers, 5 drug programs, 1 industrial program, 1 community program through a major newspaper.
5. Community Health Vision Screening Programs - A total of 368 hours of service was provided by staff ophthalmologists resulting in 2,819 disadvantaged persons being examined and appropriately followed. Programs were conducted at center for neurological impaired, school for severely multiple-handicapped and mentally-retarded, retirement homes, retarded children centers, health fairs, mental institutions, low income housing, senior citizen centers, and nutrition centers.

A one (1) year grant was received by the Eye Health Service to further explore the needs of migrant children. The program was developed, planned and co-ordinated in co-operation with the Migrant Services Office of the State Department of Education to extend its established summer service to migrant children enrolled in the regular school program, children whose families remained or settled in New Jersey on a less transient basis. The children were provided with a complete ophthalmological examination and follow-up of identified pathology.

A Diabetic Services Policy was established by the agency's Board of Trustees and a sampling survey made of 129 diabetic clients active in the Vocational Rehabilitation Department of the Commission. Findings were reviewed by a medical team to establish positive guidelines for the development of the program which is designed to prevent blindness caused by diabetic retinopathy as well as to serve the over-all needs of known diabetic persons.

The HOME SERVICE DEPARTMENT serves adventitiously blind 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 5,015 clients.

8,295 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 10,695.

With the renewal of the Title XX Grant initially implemented in Fiscal Year 1976, it was possible to reach greater numbers of visually-handicapped individuals.

As the program progressed it became apparent that additional staff was required to adequately serve clients and provide more effective service. As a result, one (1) additional Case Worker was approved in the new Grant. Of the 524 clients served, 488 were closed as homemakers.

Intensified efforts on the part of staff continue in identifying the blind and visually-impaired population in the State's mental institutions. Limited progress has been made because of various pressures on hospital personnel, absence of regular eye examinations and frequent staff turnover. In spite of its limited staff, the Home Service Department focused on the four (4) State mental hospitals and identified 296 persons at these locations. 18 persons were provided with instruction in self-care, activities of daily living, orientation and handcraft.

In-service training programs were conducted for staff of nursing homes and long-term care facilities in the State. These sessions included information about agency services to the visually-handicapped, suggestions for working with visually-impaired patients and methods of early detection of eye problems. 56 training programs were given to 1,000 employees of these facilities.

A specialized service program was developed for clients residing at Blaine Manor - a State licensed small group home. The objective of this service was to stimulate activity, develop manipulative skills, and enhance the quality of life for the severely multi-handicapped blind residents who are in their twenties. The program was the first of its kind and an effort to meet the steadily growing problem of dealing with institutionalized multi-handicapped children when they outgrow institutions because of their age or the unsuitability of institutional life.

The rental assistance program by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) which is in full operation in five (5) Counties of the State has been of tremendous impact in the placement of clients in an effort to upgrade their living standards and provide lower cost housing for elderly and handicapped persons. Efforts by Home Service staff, in co-operation with HUD, resulted in approval of 22 applications for clients.

The city of Newark in its urban renewal efforts has designated the Lincoln Park section of Broad Street as a senior citizen reserve. Through efforts by Home Service staff 19 of the 352 units at this location have been reserved for blind persons who now enjoy new, secure, convenient units at a rental which equals 25% of their income. In addition to the foregoing, staff have assisted 78 clients in relocation to apartments, boarding homes, and nursing homes.

In the VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION DEPARTMENT a total of 3,231 clients was served; 257 individuals were placed in competitive employment, 154 were rehabilitated as homemakers, and three (3) unpaid family workers for a total of 414. Projected aggregate annual earnings for those placed in employment amounted to \$1,423,100. Earnings for the same group at the time of referral were \$247,428. Despite the economic upturn, as in the past, the unemployment rate in the State continued at a higher than national level and except for seasonal employment the rate hovered around 15% State-wide with levels reaching up to 20% in such urban areas as Newark, Paterson, Camden, and Plainfield. CETA was of no measurable support in efforts to locate employment for capable blind persons. State-wide workshops were disadvantaged by the economic crunch and did not provide adequate employment opportunities for multiply-disabled clients. Severely disabled persons

faced additional competition from other Federally funded programs designed to improve the economic scene.

Efforts to ensure quality and effectiveness in services to clients are evident concerns of staff. Periodic evaluations on client benefit and cost effectiveness are conducted. Other sources of funding are sought and obtained from Medicaid, Medicare, Veterans Administration and college grant programs in addition to customary resources. In an effort to improve management and efficiency a reorganization study was initiated to assess staff motivation and involvement, a peer committee for operational procedure is in the process of revising and updating required Vocational Rehabilitation forms. District Office autonomy is being developed with a 5% quality assurance procedure scheduled to begin in September of this year. Intensification of staff training resulted in a positive effect demonstrated by staff attitudes and motivation. Staff have been assigned as back-up support personnel in supervisory positions to assure continuity of service delivery to clients when vacancies occur.

The Staff Development and Training Section arranged for a number of training programs for staff which had a positive impact on their effectiveness by broadening and expanding their knowledge in the delivery of services to clients. These included special courses in diverse areas e.g. management development programs, technical and skills development programs, tuition aid and career development and secretarial training programs. The unit was involved in an active campaign to solicit the aid of outside training resources for its training programs. A total of 1,121 staff members participated for a total of 6,130 man hours of training.

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 seventh (7th) 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. 39 young clients were placed in appropriate work activity in diverse areas of employment including rehabilitation facilities, hospital settings, day camps, pharmacies, etc. 51 additional clients secured their own positions in equally varied areas.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer and Providers Advisory Committee and the Vending Stand Advisory Committee mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 held several meetings and are becoming more involved with the programmatic aspects of the department.

The Supplemental Security Income and Trust Fund Programs, for administrative purposes, are combined into one unit in the Vocational Rehabilitation Department. 39 Social Security Disability Income Trust Fund clients and 16 Social Security Income clients were closed as rehabilitated in suitable employment.

As mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 the Program Evaluation Unit is concerned with the evaluation of the various phases of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, utilizing prescribed standards to measure efficiency, effectiveness and client/benefit of services provided. 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 91% of the individuals had received training which was job related. Follow-up surveys of clients closed in employed status one year after closure was made. The data collected indicated that 63% of the rehabilitants

were still employed while 75% of the Homemakers were still managing their household activities. Other studies included rehabilitation facilities, homemakers, authorizations, and District Offices. These covered the effectiveness of Counselors, determination of client contacts within a suitable time period, and transmission of necessary reports.

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 \$218,673 was authorized. All of these grants are matched by the Federal government on a 90-10 basis.

1. Expanding Vocational Rehabilitation Services to the Older Blind in New Jersey.
2. A Work Center in Morris County.
3. A Work Center in Monmouth County.
4. The second year of a grant for Expanding Vocational Rehabilitation Service to the Homebound Blind.
5. The second 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. Expanding and Improving Training and Work Opportunities for the Blind in New Jersey.
7. Expanding and Improving Work Horizons for the Blind in New Jersey.

406 multi-handicapped blind adults were served by the agency's Multi-Handicapped Unit of which 61 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 31 retarded blind clients providing vocational evaluation and skill training.

The Commission's Joseph Kohn Rehabilitation Center in Newark, which is a day center, served 101 clients during the year for a total of 5,540 man days. 65% of these persons were in special programs requiring more intensive professional time because of added handicapping conditions which included diabetes, hypertension, emotional disorders, orthopedic and neurological involvements, etc. 27% were totally blind. The 1979 State Budget includes a Capital appropriation of \$360,000 to match an RSA Establishment Grant of \$1,800,000 to renovate a building, acquisition of which is not yet finalized, for the development of a Residential Rehabilitation Center. This will enable the agency to do a more effective job of rehabilitating a greater number of clients, including those with multiple handicaps.

To prepare blind people for independence and to cope with the mobility demands in employment situations, specialized Mobility and Orientation training was extended to 878 clients. This is a critical element in successful job placement and in the pursuit of daily activities.

In the Vending Stand Program 55 vending stands were in operation at year end. This program provides the most lucrative source of employment for blind individuals in New Jersey. Average net annual earnings for operators increased to approximately \$14,000 as against \$13,376 last year.

The agency operates three (3) Contract Workshops - one in Newark, one in Somerset, and one in Westmont. These Shops provided 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 - \$610,229; Number of Blind People Employed - 97; Total Wages to Blind People - \$187,671. A pilot project was instituted in the spring of 1978 establishing a Transitional Workshop to enable marginal clients to increase their capabilities in areas of potential employment. An Innovation and Expansion grant made it possible to purchase equipment for the production of large-print books thereby enabling the Commission to employ additional severely-disabled workers. It is hoped that as this program expands additional clients will achieve regular employment.

Total sales through the Home Industries and Craft Program amounted to \$260,083 - a \$55,395 increase over 1977. 471 consignors benefited from this program and received earnings of \$83,738. Blind consignors in this program are homebound blind persons who are provided with instruction in handicrafts, 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 1978 by 33.8% for a total of \$77,901. A second Mobile Craft Bus was dedicated in June in memory of the agency's former Director, Joseph Kohn.

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 for their many hours of service to the Commission in its various programs. To accommodate volunteers in the various sectors of

the State three (3) separate luncheons were held - one in Tinton Falls, one in Fairfield, and one in Cherry Hill. 205 volunteer organizations and 2,898 volunteers provided 31,520 hours of service to the agency. In the Education Department 252 volunteers provided 24,062 hours of service in braille, thermoforming, binding of textbooks, taping, proofreading, duplication of textbooks and the making of educational aids. 2,041 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.

As the year is nearing its close the Commission is in the process of developing a low vision program offering citizens with visual problems but who are not legally blind the opportunity for specialized evaluation, provision of appropriate low vision aids, proper training on the use of such items and follow-up service to determine that these aids are useful to the individual.

A State-wide Radio Information Service program is in the planning stages. Through special radio frequencies this will provide programs which will "read" to blind and other print-handicapped persons materials not presently available to them, e.g. newspapers, shopper's guides, magazines, etc.

The agency is currently in the process of establishing an Agency Resource Center housing telecommunication and technological aids and appliances, which can be used for evaluation with clients, training programs, trial periods, and possibly


even research.

It is significant to note that the accomplishments and program delivery of the Commission, which is a unique multi-service agency, given its limited funding, have been most effective. This as indicated earlier in the report is attributed largely to the skills, dedication and competence of the staff and Board which have committed themselves to the task of serving blind and visually-handicapped persons.

To the staff and our consumers of service my deepest appreciation for your patience and indulgence during this reorganization period.

Respectfully submitted,

COMMISSION F/T BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED


Norma F. Krajczar
Executive Director

NFK:AC

August 21, 1978