



Delaware Health and Social Services

Department of Health & Social Services

Division for the Visually Impaired

"Working in partnership with Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired in empowering them to be self-sufficient"

**Joint Finance Committee Hearing
Fiscal Year 2017**

***Daniel M. Madrid
Division Director***

Tuesday, February 23, 2016

Delaware Health and Social Services

Senator McDowell, Representative Smith, members of the Joint Finance Committee and members of the public, my name is Daniel Madrid and I am the Director of the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI). With me today is Deputy Director, Elisha Jenkins, and Senior Fiscal Administrative Officer, Olu Ogunsola. Thank you for allowing us to discuss DVI's programs with you today.



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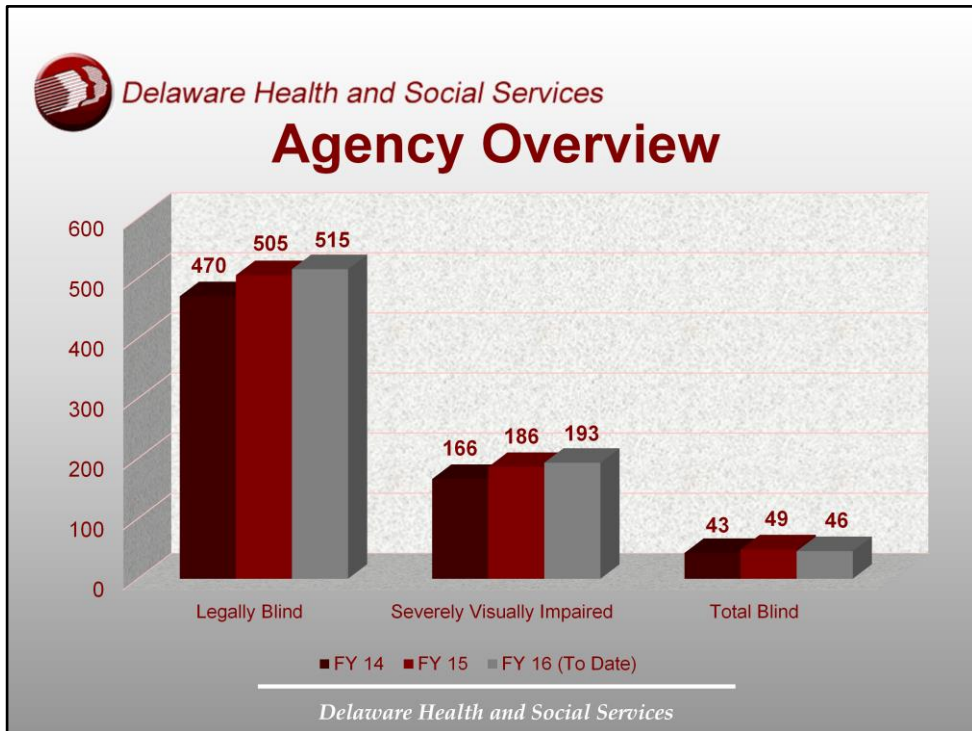
Statewide Overview*

- **Incidence of Vision Related Disabilities:**
 - 2013 – 2.3% of Delaware's population or 21,026 residents
- Persons with disabilities have a 36.1% Employment Rate (counts those actively seeking work within the past year) and a 23.7% rate of poverty.
- In contrast, Delawareans without disabilities have a 76.3% employment rate and 10% rate of poverty.
- Prevalence under the age of 5 is .5% vs. prevalence over the age of 65 is 6%.
- **Leading Causes of Blindness in Delaware:**
 - Macular Degeneration (31%)
 - Glaucoma (9%)
 - Diabetes Related Vision Loss (7%)

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Currently in Delaware, roughly 2% of our population is living with significant vision loss. The incidence of vision loss will grow rapidly over the course of the next decade due to our aging population and the ongoing obesity epidemic.

*(Source: Disability Statistics Compendium based on American Community Survey, Census Bureau, 2011 – 2013)



The statistics in the chart represent the number of new customers served by DVI within a typical year. In addition, the agency maintains a registry for all customers served since this system began tracking customers over a decade ago.

In FY '15, the Division for the Visually Impaired's registry of qualified customers included:

- 70% Legally Blind (20/200 vision or worse) or 2,058 Legally Blind Delawareans;
- 26% Severely Visually Impaired (20/70 – 20/200 vision) or 790 Severely Visually Impaired Delawareans; and
- 4% Totally Blind (no light perception) or 125 Totally Blind Delawareans.

In total, there are 2,973 Delawareans with visual impairments currently on the agency's registry that receive regular notices about programs and services.



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Overview

Vocational Rehab
and Business
Services

Education and
Instructional
Resource Material
Center

Independent Living

Business Enterprise
Program

Orientation and
Mobility/Technology
Centers

Delaware Industries
for the Blind

Delaware Health and Social Services

DVI's staff are highly trained in providing expert vision related services.

Our core service delivery areas include:

- Itinerant Education Services provided by Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs);
- Independent Living and Low Vision Services by Vision Rehabilitation Therapists; and
- Vocational Rehabilitation and business services provided by qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors and our entrepreneurial program (the Business Enterprise Program).

The Division also provides assistive technology, orientation and mobility and other support services to the visually impaired population within Delaware.



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Independent Living Services

FY 15 - 453 Persons Served

- Adaptive skills training and techniques
- Low Vision Services
- Sensitivity/Vision Simulation training
- Staffed by Vision Rehabilitation Therapists
- Utilizes group training sessions and AT labs to augment one on one training



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During FY 2015, DVI provided Independent Living Services (ILS) to 453 people. Independent Living Services include community based training on communication devices, daily living skills and the use of low vision aids. These services are vital to the community in support of full community inclusion and cost effective systems of maintaining independence for persons with visual impairments.



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Education Services

School Year 15/16 – 260 Students Enrolled

- 12 DVI itinerant teacher positions (Coordinated with 1 District Resource Room in Colonial School District)
- Provide direct braille instruction, accessible instructional materials, consultative services, assistive technology and expanded core services to ensure all students are able to access their curriculum



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Our team of dedicated education personnel works to prepare students for life long success. In conjunction with one district resource room program, our Education team provides itinerant consultation and direct services to 260 students, their families, and school personnel. The opportunities in developing this system lie in addressing changes across DHSS, DOE, and local education agency (LEA) systems as funding models have evolved and standards have improved for all students with disabilities. We are grateful to the members of the Delaware House and Senate for work that went into the education taskforce, particularly the leadership of Senators Hall-Long and Lawson, for our student population to examine education programs for the blind and visually impaired which resulted in a report to the Governor and Legislature with specific recommendations, which our agency has begun to put into effect. Some of the specific recommendations that have been implemented to date are:

- Reclassifying the agency's child youth counselors to teachers so that the positions and personnel are fully qualified to provide early intervention services per Federal law.
- Continuing to build capacity for assistive technology specialists through a contractual relationship with the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative.
- Collaborating with the Delaware Department of Education and the Office of Management and Budget to bring aboard several new contracted teacher positions to ensure students and schools receive the necessary level of service. In addition, DVI has developed a mentorship model and professional development system to allow aspiring teachers of students with visual impairments to be hired, contracted, trained, and developed toward becoming fully credentialed teachers of students with visual impairments. We are also extending this model to our orientation and mobility unit to build capacity in this area.
- Requiring all new teaching positions be 12-month teaching positions to meet the needs of our student population. With these changes DVI will have moved from two 12-month teachers to seven 12-month teachers as of the beginning of next school year.



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In addition, our Instructional Resource Materials Center develops braille and alternate format materials for these children each school year. This work would not be possible without the support of Department of Correction's Men with A Message program whereby inmates provide braille and large print transcription services to our students. Last, our teachers also work in the community with children birth through age five, in coordination with Child Development Watch and the school districts, to educate parents/caregivers and their children that have visual impairments.

Additionally, we continue to develop our standards of practice through the Quality Programs for Students with Visual Impairments program. Now in our third year of implementation, we have adopted improved standards of practice for assessing and recommending services to students with visual impairments in Delaware. The results are showing increased needs in the expanded core curriculum, braille, literacy, and overall service hours for both direct and consultative services.



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Vocational Rehabilitation Business Services

FY 15 – 294 Persons Served

- Staffed by qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors and business service specialists.
- Serving our dual customers of persons with visual impairments and the business community.
- Services to young persons with visual impairments begin at least four years prior to graduation through coordinated efforts with the Delaware Department of Education.
- Shifting outcomes under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

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Our Vocational Rehabilitation Program provides a range of employment services to both our customers with visual impairments and businesses in the community looking to hire persons with visual impairments. Our agency currently has 68 consumers that we provide direct support to in college or other post secondary training programs, while we have another 85 consumers ages 14 to 24 that are actively receiving transition services preparing for their exit from high school within the next four years.



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Orientation and Mobility Services

FY 15 – 329 Persons Served



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Our Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists provide direct instruction to customers of all ages to ensure safe and independent travel along with the ability to access their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities both from the perspective of physical and psychological adaptive techniques. The team partners with other organizations including Moving Wilmington Forward, DART First State, and DelDOT to expand accessible pedestrian signals, public transportation options and other transit focused activities for persons with visual impairments.



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Delaware Industries for the Blind

www.promoplace.com/dib

- DIB provides a wide array of custom promotional products to our customers
- Employment opportunities for the blind and visually impaired
- Over 70% of the direct service staff in this department are legally blind.

A partner with other businesses that support the employment of persons with disabilities under the State Use Law.



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Delaware Industries for the Blind is a self-sustaining state business providing promotional products and services. Our core services include screen printing, embroidery, plaques, trophies, embossing and sublimation. The sale of these products is reinvested directly into employment and training opportunities for individuals who are visually impaired. This section of DVI went through significant restructuring in the prior year and continues to work toward becoming an independent enterprise consistent with the mission of Employment First in creating competitive, integrated job opportunities for persons with disabilities.



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Business Enterprise Program

- Provides entrepreneurial opportunities for the blind and visually impaired
- Doubled the number of licensed business owners
- FY 15 – Gross Sales – \$1.5 million
- Average Business Enterprise's Net Income (2015) - \$28,768



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Our Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides entrepreneurial opportunities in vending and food service across the State. This program is also working on strategic partnerships with the Division of Public Health, DNREC, the Hospitality School of Delaware, DELDOT and the City of Wilmington to expand business ownership opportunities to persons with visual impairments.



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Challenges

- **The growth of vision related disabilities is expected to grow by 70% in the next decade.**
 - (The primary drivers behind this are the aging population/workforce and the obesity epidemic in America)
 - Shifting business models as an employment first leader under changing economic conditions.

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Over the next decade, the greatest challenge that DVI will face is the growth of vision related disabilities, which is expected to increase by 70% according to Lighthouse International. In general, DVI will continue our work to improve the perception of what our customers can achieve by systematically addressing:

- Attitudinal barriers related to hiring and educating persons with visual impairments; and,
- The technological divide in making technology systems accessible to persons with visual impairments.

In addition, we have been an Employment First state since July 2012 thanks to the leadership of Rep. Heffernan, and I am proud to serve as the co-chair of the State's Employment First Commission. In implementing Employment First as a priority, we continue to examine state systems, such as our own Delaware Industries for the Blind, in shifting from a segregated facility-based model of employment to an integrated and inclusive business through strategic partnerships with other agencies and non-profits. This redesign continues with the support of our Department, the feedback and support of various state councils and commissions such as the State Use Law Commission, Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, Governor's Advisory Council of the Blind, and our Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council. I'd like to thank the current and past chairs of our community advocacy groups for their ongoing support and feedback regarding the development of our agency and program areas. These advocate-leaders are Lloyd Schmitz, Sonya Lawrence, Kevin McAllister, Patti Addison, Darryl Garner, Debbie Harrington, and Doyle Dobbins.



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Opportunities

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act
Implementation (July 1, 2104 – Ongoing)**

**Implementation of 1915(i) Medicaid Waiver
(January 2015 – Ongoing)**

Launching Camp Abilities Delaware (July 2016)

**Blind and Visually Impaired Education Summit
(September 2015 – June 2016)**

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We are a partner with the Division of Developmental Disabilities Services, Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities, and the Division of Medicaid and Medical Assistance in the Pathways to Employment program, which is the first of its kind in this country. This partnership will provide expanded services to our population that support employment and allow our customers to maintain independence and equitable access to our communities today and in the future.

As of July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act was signed into law and all public vocational rehabilitation agencies across the country have been tasked with implementing the law effective immediately. The new law, being termed “WIOA”, requires coordinated services across vocational rehabilitation, public workforce, and adult and technical education programs. In addition, the law places emphasis on directly serving transition age youth with disabilities by dedicating funding and requiring additional services to this age group. The law also fully supports the intent of employment first by ensuring that all people are afforded the opportunity to maximize their potential as citizens in integrated, competitive employment. We are meeting frequently with key stakeholders across Departments and Agencies to create greater efficiency and improved services for all Delawareans seeking employment.

We look forward to fulfilling the mission of our agency, DHSS and the State in assuring our citizens are fully valued and supported by government in living healthy and productive lives.



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Improving Perception

Thank You!

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We would like to thank you again for your continuing support and for the opportunity to present DVI's programs before you today.

We would be happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time.