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SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND



ANNUAL REPORT 1987-1988

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State Budget And Control Board

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STATE DOCUMENTS

south carolina commission for the blind

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TELEPHONE 734-7522

WILLIAM K. JAMES, COMMISSIONER

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June 30, 1988

The Honorable Carroll A. Campbell, Jr.
Governor of South Carolina
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Governor Campbell:

Fiscal Year 1987-1988 proved very positive and successful for the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. A Legislative Audit Council review of the agency found no evidence of "mismanagement" as alleged by an outside interest group. In fact, the report admonished the group's leadership for interfering in the daily activities of the Commission and thereby negatively impacting service delivery.

The legislative audit of our agency determined the Commission was providing quality service to blind South Carolinians. The report commended our Disability Determination Unit for having the highest accuracy rate in the United States for Federal FY 1986-1987. In addition, it complimented the highway vending component of our Business Enterprise Program for providing gainful employment for more blind individuals than our southeastern counterparts. The audit, however, did make recommendations for improvements. We are currently reviewing these recommendations and soliciting input regarding implementation.

Our vocational rehabilitation efforts experienced continued progress in FY 1987-1988. Seventy-one percent of our vocational rehabilitation clients were placed in employment at or above minimum wage.

By developing a cooperative agreement with the Department of Mental Retardation, we are addressing the needs of persons who are retarded and blind, as well as those who are deaf/blind.

The Honorable Carroll A. Campbell, Jr.
June 30, 1988
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Our Technical Assistance Unit was established two years ago as a pilot project to address the extremely high jobless rate among employable blind individuals. Because of its demonstrated success and the growing need for the unit, it became a permanent part of the Commission in FY 1987-1988. The unit provides job modification and identifies potential employment opportunities by surveying job sites.

We are proud to announce that during FY 1987-1988 the Commission made significant progress in affirmative action. Of 74 agencies ranked in terms of goal attainment, we went from 41st in 1986 to 10th in 1987.

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind is one of the most progressive agencies serving blind and visually impaired persons in the country. Our successes are the direct result of a concerned Governing Board, support from the General Assembly, dedicated staff, and valuable input from consumers throughout the state.

With these key elements in mind, we shall continue to uphold the public trust placed in us and provide quality services to blind and visually impaired citizens of our great state.

Sincerely,

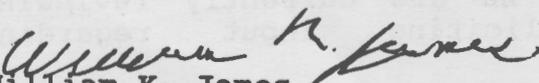

William K. James
Commissioner

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S.C. COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

GOVERNING BOARD

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3. Mrs. Earlene GardnerAiken
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4. Mr. William J. Shealy.....Columbia
(2nd Congressional District)
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(4th Congressional District)
6. Mr. Robert R. Bell.....Laurens
(5th Congressional District)
7. Ms. Yvonne Bradley.....Sumter
(Member-At-Large)

LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind is in compliance with the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and all requirements imposed pursuant thereto to the end that no person shall, on the grounds of sex, race, age, color, national origin, or handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination in the provision of any care or service. Any client participant, potential client, or interested person who is of an opinion that benefits are provided on a discriminatory basis has the right to file a complaint with the State Agency or Federal Agency, or both.

LEGAL BLINDNESS QUALIFICATIONS

1. "Blindness" is defined as that level of central visual acuity, 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best corrective lens, or a disqualifying field defect in which the peripheral field has contracted to such an extent that the widest diameter of visual field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees and which is sufficient to incapacitate him for self-support, or an 80 percent loss of visual efficiency resulting from visual impairment in more than one function of the eye, including visual acuity for distance and near visual fields, ocular mobility, and other ocular functions and disturbances.
2. "Severe visual disability" is defined as any progressive pathological condition of the eye or eyes supported by an acceptable eye examination, which in the opinion of the examiner may or will result in legal blindness within 24 months.

ADMINISTRATION

Fiscal Year 1987-1988 was marked by significant accomplishments at the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. Foremost among these were improvements in our application of computer technology.

At midyear the Institute of Information Management, Technology and Policy at the University of South Carolina completed its review of our agency's information resources management (both manual and automated). The study recommended the Commission modernize its client information and fiscal accounting systems through automation.

Subsequent planning, training, and the purchase of specific computer hardware have enabled the Commission to begin implementation of the new systems.

Ultimately, the Commission will have a communications network linking all nine district offices. The fiscal accounting system will interface with the Statewide Accounting and Reporting System (STARS) requirements and will feature double entry accounting that is self-balancing by fund and fund group.

In addition plans have been developed for the elimination of obsolete, less efficient technology and the implementation of new administrative automated systems for personnel, leave, fixed assets and the Business Enterprise Program.

In an effort to better serve the elderly blind population, the South Carolina Commission for the Blind applied for a federal Independent Living grant. The grant will enable the Commission to coordinate our outreach initiatives with the local Councils on Aging throughout the state.

In FY 1987-1988 the Personnel Department, along with the Human Resource Management Division of the Budget and Control Board, analyzed each staff position to determine if duties were classified correctly. As a result of the study, 52 positions were reclassified to bring them more in line with the current job market.

Twenty-two employees completed a one and a half day orientation program for recently hired staff. Topics included an agency overview; sighted guide training; discussion on the psychological, social and medical aspects of blindness; personnel policies; and other pertinent information.

We are pleased to announce the Technical Assistance Unit, a two year pilot project, became a permanent part of the Commission in 1987. Staffed by an electrical engineer and a technician, the unit assists in the application of new technology to job sites. It conducts job site evaluations and equipment modifications in its mission to reduce the high unemployment rate among the employable blind. The unit also works closely with employers to secure jobs previously closed to blind persons.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

The Vocational Rehabilitation Department of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind assists blind and visually impaired clients secure productive employment and achieve economic independence.

Various vocational rehabilitation services designed to maximize independent living are available to clients. These services include: job development and placement, medical treatment, psychological and vocational evaluation, adjustment to blindness training, vocational training, tools and equipment, and specialized counseling and guidance services.

For each case, counselors develop an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program detailing services to be provided that focus on the achievement of objectives specific to each client.

In FY 1987-1988, 249 cases were closed as successfully rehabilitated. Of this number, 178 or 71 percent were closed at or above minimum wage, which by definition means they are earning at least \$3.35 per hour and are working at least 20 hours or more per week. There were 32 individuals or 13 percent earning below minimum wage, and 39 individuals or 16 percent closed as homemakers or unpaid family workers.

The following are examples of jobs held by rehabilitated clients: accountant, contact collection representatives, counselors, biomedical equipment technician, art teacher, taxpayer service representative, business manager, computer programmer, small engine repairman, musician, general laborer, music teacher and janitor.

The Commission dispatches Mobile Outreach Units to provide instruction in daily living skills, adjustment to blindness, and independent travel to persons unable to attend training at the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center in Columbia. The units served a total of 135 individuals in FY 1987-1988. Of these, 54 or 40 percent were rehabilitation clients of the Agency; 14 or 10 percent were served under the Federal Independent Living-Part C Program for the elderly blind; three or two percent were under the Federal Independent Living-Part A Program for the severely disabled; and 65 or 48 percent were clients of the State Independent Living Program. Three units located in Charleston, Columbia and Greenville provided mobile outreach throughout the state in such areas as Greenville, Anderson, Lancaster, Spartanburg, Seneca, Aiken, Florence, Charleston, Conway and Summerville.

The Commission has contracted with the South Carolina Department of Mental Retardation to provide job coaches for retarded blind and deaf blind individuals. On an ongoing basis, job coaches will work with clients in the employment environment to ensure their success.

THE ELLEN BEACH MACK REHABILITATION CENTER

During the 1987-1988 Fiscal Year, the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center (EBMRC) in Columbia served 120 clients. The residential facility offers a variety of training programs including adjustment to blindness, vocational evaluation, horticulture, business enterprises and blindcraft. Seventeen elderly blind clients were served in the EBMRC Independent Living Program, and 27 students participated in the 11th annual High School Summer Program.

Through the EBMRC Low Vision Clinic, 95 clients received diagnostic evaluations of low vision needs and training in the appropriate use of these aids so as to benefit and capitalize on their remaining vision. Agency clients are provided these services at no cost; private citizens pay a nominal fee. The Commission's Low Vision Clinic in Spartanburg served 142 blind and severely visually impaired individuals in the upstate during the past year.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

As the State Licensing Agency for the Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facility Program, the South Carolina Commission for the Blind operates the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). BEP increases the opportunity for blind individuals to achieve economic independence and productive employment by training them in all areas of merchandising and customer service and by placing them in a business enterprise of their own.

While offering remunerative employment for the state's legally blind and visually impaired citizens, BEP provides public and private locations with a high quality food service. This service boosts employee morale in municipal, state, federal and private buildings. The availability of a high quality snack and food operation tends to reduce the number of employees leaving the work site during lunch and breaks, thereby alleviating problems associated with tardiness and wasted time.

Throughout the past 12-month period, BEP demonstrated continued success and expanded significantly. Highlighting the program's accomplishments was the completion of six new interstate vending facilities built by the the South Carolina Commission for the Blind in cooperation with the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation. Construction has begun on three additional sites.

Blind licensed vendors now operate vending facilities at Welcome Centers on I-26 near Asheville, I-85 near Blackville, and I-20 near North Augusta. In addition facilities are located at the following Safety Rest Areas:

I-385 near Laurens, eastbound I-20 near Camden, and westbound I-20 near Camden.

We are proud to announce that a \$27,000 donation from the South Carolina Lions Sight Conservation Association financed construction of the vending facility at the westbound I-20 Safety Rest Area near Camden.

Construction has begun on northbound and southbound Safety Rest Areas near Duncan/Lyman on I-85 and at the Welcome Center in Oconee County on the Georgia/South Carolina border. The Commission also completed construction of the canteen in the AT&T Building in Columbia and a cafeteria in the Greenville County Complex.

Vending facilities translate into gainful employment and self-sufficiency for blind licensed vendors---they become taxpayers, not tax consumers. Blind licensed vendors are independent businessmen; their employment is accomplished without the creation of new state jobs.

Through interstate vending operations, travelers and tourists on South Carolina's interstate highways are provided a much needed service. This has been underscored by praise the state has received regarding the facilities.

The Business Enterprise Program has 102 vending operations throughout the state with a sales volume of \$5,814,104. Blind licensed vendors paid \$246,273 in state sales taxes in FY 1987-1988.

One hundred two (102) blind licensed vendors plus 60 assistants operate the facilities, thereby crediting BEP with generating 162 jobs. During the past year vendors and assistants collectively earned \$2,368,696, which helped boost the state's economy.

The \$710,608 in taxes generated by this payroll has been applied to needy programs by federal, state, county and municipal governments. Additionally, South Carolina blind licensed vendors purchased in excess of \$3,193,142 of goods from wholesalers and suppliers in FY 1987-1988. Purchases from suppliers such as Coke, Pepsi, Tom's, etc., have a multiplier effect and help create additional jobs. South Carolina realized a total \$5,561,838 economic benefit from the vendors' and assistants' \$2,368,696 payroll combined with \$3,193,142 in purchases.

The Business Enterprise Program serves as a model for blind citizens of South Carolina, and it is making this state a leader in providing good job opportunities for blind individuals.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS

During FY 1987-1988, the Prevention of Blindness Department provided 2,991 clients with services that help restore sight or maintain visual functioning.

One hundred six (106) cataract removals, 19 strabismus surgeries to correct crossed eyes in children, six corneal transplants, and five eye enucleations (removals) were among the 301 surgeries sponsored by the department. Other causes accounted for the remaining 153 cases.

The Prevention of Blindness Department sponsored 379 eye examinations, and as a result of these purchased 200 pairs of eyeglasses and 21 contact lenses for clients. In addition the department provided 1,015 re-examinations as a part of its follow-up services. On 42 occasions during the year, the department purchased medication for clients.

THE SPECIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Special Services Department is state funded and is the umbrella department for the Educational Radio Network for the Blind, Volunteer Services, the Media Center and Children's Services.

Educational Radio Network for the Blind provides daily newspapers and other current print material to more than 2,100 blind South Carolinians. The network, a cooperative effort of the South Carolina Educational Television Commission and the Commission for the Blind, features 109 hours of weekly programming. Through specially tuned receivers placed in the home, clients access up-to-date information. Programming is transmitted statewide via a subchannel of the South Carolina Educational Television.

The Volunteer Services Department assigns volunteers to a variety of settings within the agency; however, the majority assist Educational Radio staff in reading print materials for broadcast over the network. Volunteers also help with Braille production, parent conferences, and other special projects. In FY 1987-1988, volunteers gave 6,838.80 hours to the South Carolina Commission for the Blind at a value of \$58,604.77.

The Media Center transcribes print materials into large print, Braille or tape for clients and other blind individuals in the state. A number of highly trained volunteers make this service possible. This fiscal year the Media Center handled 1,584 requests for specialized materials utilizing 2,095 volunteer hours.

The Children's Services Department serves blind children from birth to rehabilitation age (approximately 16). The department served 508 legally blind children this fiscal year.

Preschoolers, those 0-4 years old, are the priority target group for services. The Commission offers guidance and counseling, case management, and parent training services for this population. Children's Services conducted its 13th annual statewide conference for parents of preschool handicapped children in April.

The center-based pilot program for preschool children in Charleston completed a third successful year in providing blind children an opportunity to learn skills and concepts they will need in an academic setting.

Services to school-age blind children were expanded to include five sports awareness programs held in cooperation with county recreation departments in Columbia, Charleston, Florence and Greenville.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION

It is with great pride that we announce our Disability Determination Unit was number one in the nation during Fiscal Year 1987-1988 with an accuracy rate of 98.5 percent. The unit made decisions on 483 claims in which blindness is the primary disabling factor. Of the number processed, 49 percent were awarded disability benefits. All cases were evaluated for referral to the Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation, Children's Services, and Prevention of Blindness departments for possible services.

ASSISTANCE DIRECTORY

TOLL FREE INFORMATION.....1-800-922-2222

Commissioner.....734-7522

Director of Client Services.....734-7524

Adm. Operations Manager.....734-7542

Director of Public Affairs.....734-7548

Personnel.....734-7544

Accounting.....734-7533

Vocational Rehabilitation.....734-7526

Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center.....734-7592

Business Enterprise Program.....734-7540

Blindcraft.....734-7570

Prevention of Blindness.....734-7547

Special Services.....734-7553

Educational Radio for the Blind.....734-7555

Children's Services.....734-7562

Media Center.....734-7577

Volunteers.....734-7565

Disability Determination Unit.....734-7551

Data Processing.....734-7534

Technical Assistance Unit.....734-7838

S.C. COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

FISCAL YEAR 1987-88

SOURCES OF FUNDS

1. Federal Government	\$2,905,532
2. State Government	2,880,862
3. Revenue	75,024
Total-All Funds	5,861,418

EXPENDITURES

1. Administration	1,365,220
2. Prevention of Blindness	758,272
3. Rehabilitative Services	3,407,584
4. Special Services	330,342
Total Expenditures	5,861,418

S. C. COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

