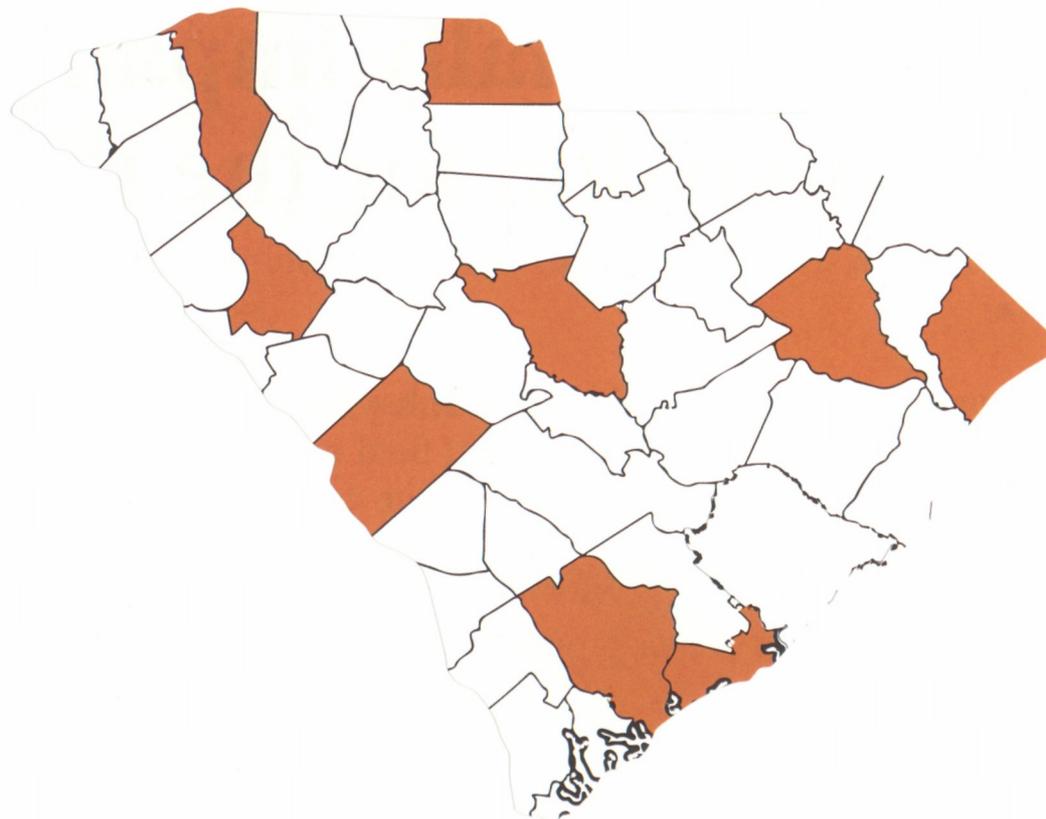


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# *Leading the Way to Independence*

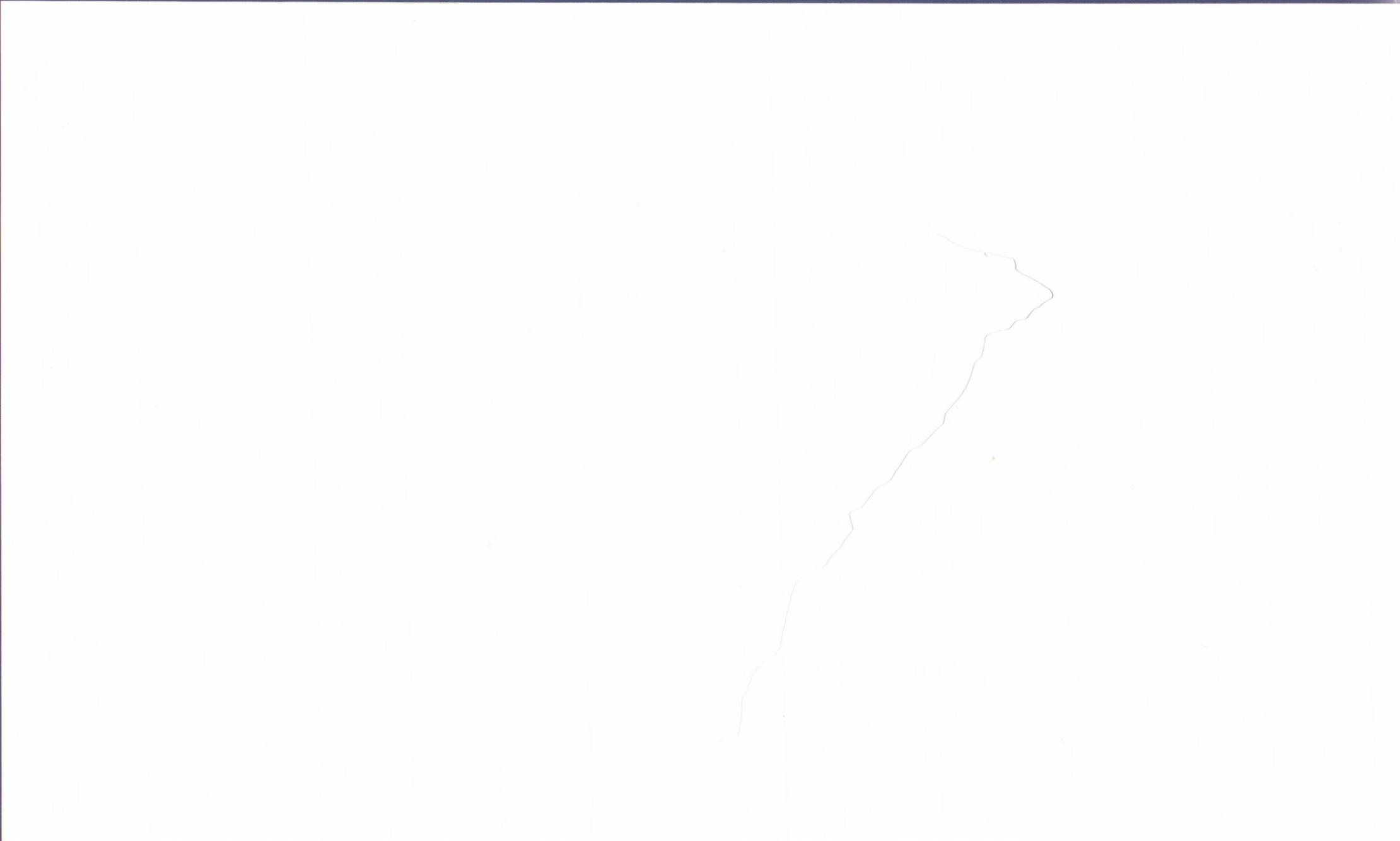


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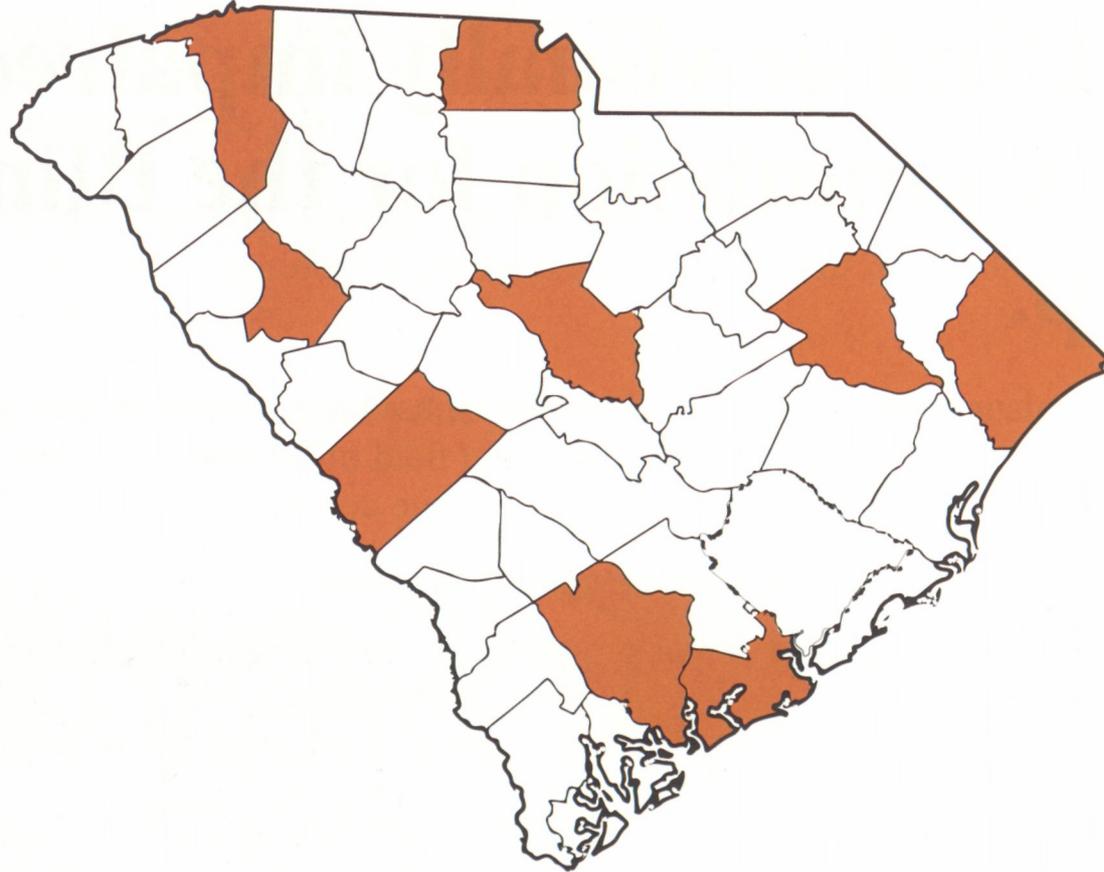
STATE DOCUMENTS





The **South Carolina Commission for the Blind** helps blind or visually impaired residents of South Carolina gain independence and identify their strengths, abilities, skills, and resources to obtain employment. The commission provides adjustment-to-blindness training and job-placement services for thousands of South Carolinians each year.

The commission also provides support to employers who are looking for talented staff.



## Getting Started

# **If you are blind or visually impaired, the staff at the Commission for the Blind is here to help.**

Our services are for individuals who are legally blind — that is, having a central visual acuity of 20/200 in the better eye with corrective lenses — or who have a visual field of 20 degrees or less. We also offer services for those who have been diagnosed with a progressive eye condition that may lead to legal blindness.

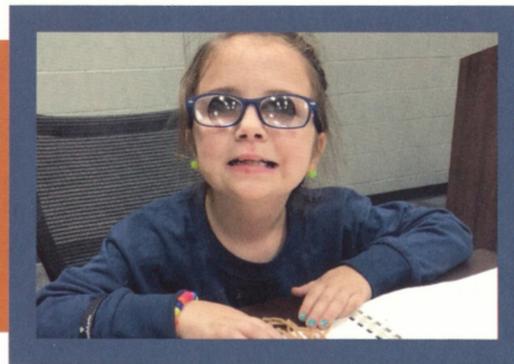
Our programs are tailored for your needs. All of our programs are structured to maximize your options and help you realize your full potential.

You will be assigned a counselor based on county of residency. After you are determined eligible for one of our programs by your counselor, your counselor will help you develop an Individualized Service Plan or an Individualized Plan for Employment based on your skill-building pace and employment goals.

If your plan includes entering or re-entering the workforce, you may have the opportunity to participate in career exploration, assistive technology training and job readiness programs. Job retention services are available if your vision is affecting your job.

An employment consultant can help with writing your resume, honing your interviewing skills and helping you find a job match. The assistance continues with our team helping your new employer make any needed adjustments to help you excel at your job.

**We are there with you for every step of your journey to independence.**



## Going to Work

# **We have a variety of job readiness programs to fit your needs.**

Our Summer Teen Program teaches independent living skills to 14- to 18-year-olds over three weeks. We also offer a competitive, paid summer internship opportunity for high school juniors and seniors.

For college students or recent college graduates, we offer an eight-week, 120-hour paid internship program.

Our Bridge Program gives you the skills you need to qualify for apprenticeship training, which could lead to full-time employment.

# Learn how you can be your own boss with the Business Enterprise Program.

This program identifies eligible individuals and trains them to be Blind Licensed Vendors, working in more than 100 different food service facilities in federal, state, municipal and private businesses.

Upon acceptance to the program, you will complete eight weeks of residential training in Columbia and eight weeks of on-the-job training. Once you successfully complete this program, you can take the ServSafe Exam and go on to bid on vacant vending operations. ServSafe is an accredited food and beverage safety training certificate program administered by the National Restaurant Association.



EBMRCEI

# **Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center for Employment and Independence**

in Columbia, is the ultimate residential training facility. The programs offered here include Braille literacy, computer training, independent travel orientation and mobility, independent living skills, financial literacy, and manual arts.

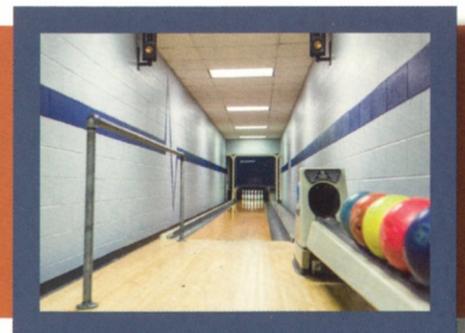
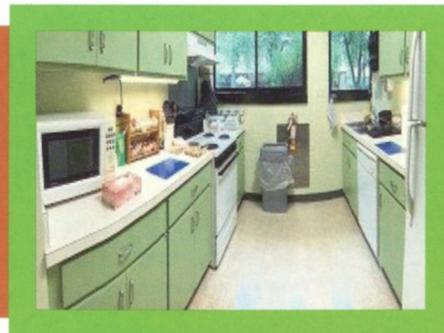
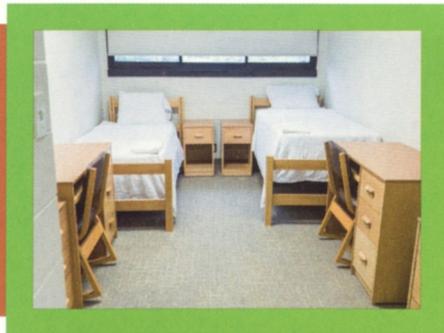
The center serves as a home away from home while helping you become independent and job-ready.

The Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center for Employment and Independence is open Monday-Friday for residential training and transportation to and from the center is provided at no cost to residents.

The dormitory accommodates up to 36 people and staff members are available 24 hours to help make you feel at home. The on-campus cafeteria serves breakfast, lunch and dinner and is operated by participants in the Business Enterprise Program.

Medical personnel are available for any minor issues and counseling services are available as well.

The facility includes a gym, weight room and bowling alley for recreation and yoga and personal training services also are offered.



## Beyond Employment

# **If you are 55 or older and are legally blind or have been diagnosed with a progressive eye pathology,**

the Older Blind Program can help you determine what assistance you need to stay independent and in your home.

The program staff will complete an assessment of your concerns regarding daily living activities with vision loss and of your current living situation.

A plan of services could include counseling and training on how to manage daily tasks, organizing items around your home, safe cooking techniques, use of adaptive computer software, independent travel orientation and mobility, technology training, and adjusting to life with impaired vision.

# Prevention of Blindness Program

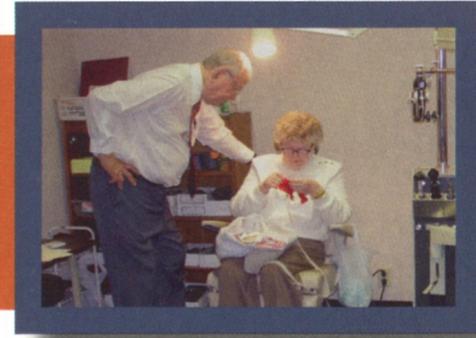
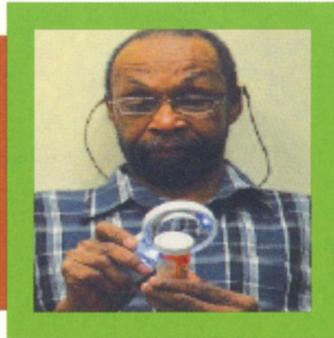
The Prevention of Blindness Program helps pay for eye exams, glasses, cataract and retinal-detachment surgeries. This program is for U.S. citizens and residents of South Carolina who are not covered by health insurance and who need financial assistance to pay for procedures and treatments.

## Low Vision Clinic

The Low Vision Clinic provides assistance to help enhance your remaining vision and quality of life. You must have an open and active case with the commission.

We also partner with optometrists and ophthalmologists throughout the state to provide free services that may enhance remaining vision and improve your quality of life.

Transportation to clinics in Columbia, Charleston, Florence, Greenville, Walterboro and York County is provided at no cost.



## Employer Services

# The South Carolina Commission for the Blind is a resource for employers.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors and employment consultants are trained to assist companies in finding the right person for their job needs. Commission staffers continue to work with companies after the hire to make sure blind or visually impaired workers have the assistive technology and other accommodations to be the best employee they can be.

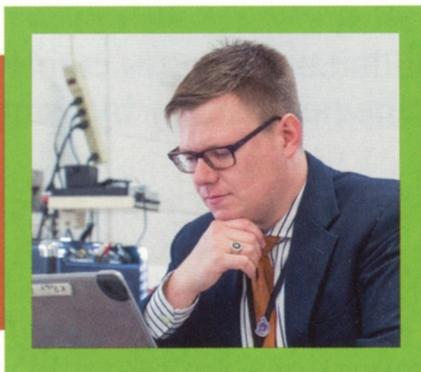
Companies also may be eligible for tax credits for hiring someone who is blind or visually impaired. Our staff can provide resources to assist companies in making necessary workplace accommodations.

The commission's services to partner companies are provided at no cost.

Those services include talent recruitment and development, which connects employers and potential candidates based on the candidate's skill set and career interests, and the employer's recruitment needs.

Commission staff can assess what companies need to do to be able to accommodate our consumers, including assistive technology services, and help train other employees to work alongside blind and visually impaired workers.

Our commitment doesn't end once our consumers are hired. We are only a telephone call away.



# Financial Incentives

In South Carolina, hiring a blind and/or visually impaired applicant may qualify your business for financial incentives that help your bottom line. They include:

## **Disabled Access Credit**

Disabled Access Credit is designed to help employers comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It's available to eligible small businesses whose gross receipts do not exceed \$1,000,000 for the preceding taxable year or who employed no more than 30 full-time employees during the preceding year. The tax credit is equal to 50 percent of the "eligible access expenditures" that exceed \$250 but do not exceed \$10,250 for a taxable year.

## **Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal Deductions**

Eligible businesses may choose to deduct up to \$15,000 for making a facility or public transportation vehicle, owned or leased for business use, more accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. A facility is all or any part of a building, structure, equipment, road, walk, parking lot, or similar property. A public transportation vehicle is a vehicle, a bus or railroad car, for example, that provides transportation service to the public or to customers. The deduction may not be used for expenses incurred for new construction, a complete renovation of a facility or public transportation vehicle, or the normal replacement of depreciable property.

## **Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program**

The Workforce Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC) program is a federal tax credit that encourages employers to hire specific targeted groups of job seekers. WOTC reduces employers' federal income tax liability by as much as \$9,600, depending on the target group.

## **Job Accommodations**

The ADA provides tax credits to small businesses for hiring a disabled employee that will cover 50 percent of eligible expenditures on accommodations over \$250 up to \$5,000. Reasonable accommodations for employees may be as simple as a hand magnifier or inexpensive software. If significant accommodations are required, a cost-sharing arrangement with SCCB may be available.

## **What can I do to be more prepared to interview a blind or visually impaired applicant?**

You can get in touch with your state vocational rehabilitation agency that provides services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

## **Can an employer ask about an applicant's disability or require medical examinations?**

As the employer, you cannot ask applicants if they are disabled or ask about the nature or severity of their disability. An employer can ask questions about function, if the applicant can perform the duties of the job with or without reasonable accommodation.

## **Does an employee have to pay for a needed reasonable accommodation?**

No. The ADA requires that the employer provide the accommodation unless to do so would impose an undue hardship on the operation of the employer's business.

## **Can an employer lower the employee's salary or pay him/her less than other employees doing the same job because a reasonable accommodation is needed?**

No. An employer cannot make up the cost of providing a reasonable accommodation by lowering the employee's salary or paying the employee with a disability less than other employees in similar positions.

## **As an employer, do I have to make non-work areas used by employees, such as cafeterias, lounges, or employer-provided transportation accessible to people with disabilities?**

Yes. The requirement to provide reasonable accommodation covers all services, programs, and non-work facilities provided by the employer.

# FAQs

**If as an employer I have several qualified applicants for a job, am I required to select a qualified applicant with a disability over other applicants without a disability?**

No. The ADA does not require that an employer hire an applicant with a disability over other applicants because the person has a disability. The ADA only prohibits discrimination based on disability.

**Can I as an employer refuse to hire an applicant because I believe that it would be unsafe, because of a disability, for him/her to work with certain machinery required to perform the essential functions of the job?**

The ADA permits an employer to refuse to hire an individual if s/he poses a direct threat to the health or safety of self or others. A direct threat means a significant risk of substantial harm.

**If the health insurance I offer my employees does not cover all the medical expenses related to potential employees with disabilities, does the company have to obtain additional coverage for those employees?**

No. The ADA only requires that an employer provide employees with disabilities equal access to whatever health insurance coverage is offered to other employees.

**Should I expect an applicant with a disability to disclose that disability during the interview?**

If the applicant thinks s/he will need a reasonable accommodation to participate in the application process or to perform essential job functions, s/he should inform the employer that an accommodation will be needed.

**Can I get additional ADA information and assistance?**

For additional information, visit the Equal Opportunity Commission's (EEOC) website: [www.eeoc.gov](http://www.eeoc.gov)

**1. Columbia Complex  
(District Office, Administration and  
Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center)**

1430 Confederate Avenue  
Columbia, SC 29201  
803.898.8731

**2. Aiken District Office**

855 York St. NE  
Aiken, SC 29801  
803.641.7658

**3. Charleston District Office  
Garden View Office Park**

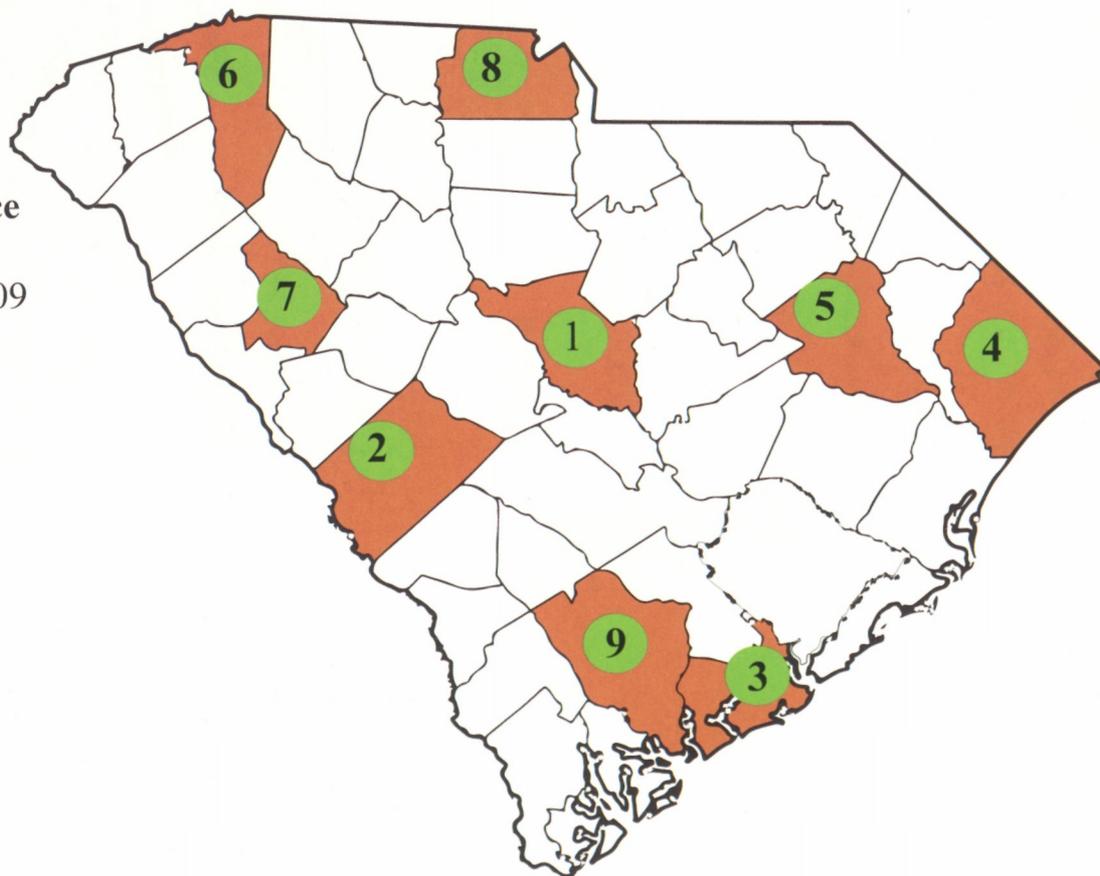
1064 Gardner Road, Suite 109  
Charleston, SC 29407  
843.852.4225

**4. Conway District Office**

1321-C Third Avenue  
Conway, SC 29526  
843.248.2017

**5. Florence District Office**

217 Dozier Blvd.  
Florence, SC 29501  
843.661.4788



**6. Greenville District Office**

620 North Main St.  
Greenville, SC 29601  
864.241.1111

**7. Greenwood District Office**

108B Bypass 225 S.  
Greenwood, SC 29646  
864.223.3334

**8. Rock Hill District Office**

454 S. Anderson Road  
Suite 210  
Rock Hill, SC 29730  
803.980.8140

**9. Walterboro District Office**

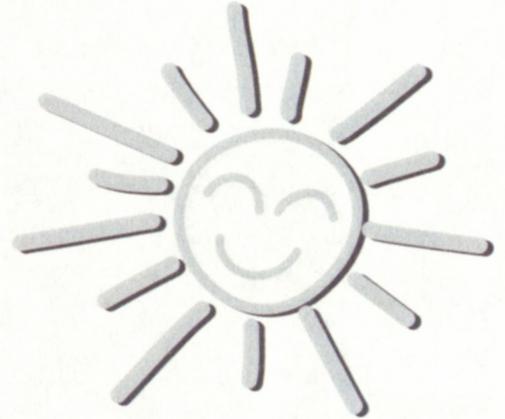
2414 Jeffries Blvd.  
Walterboro, SC 29488  
843.539.1156

# Children's Services



## Children's services are for youth who are

- Age 3-13
- Legally blind or diagnosed with a progressive eye pathology leading to legal blindness
- Residents of South Carolina and a US citizen



## Children's services counselors

- Help children with low vision and blindness develop to their maximum potential
- Help parents develop a supportive home
- Help communities develop programs for the inclusion of children with low vision and blindness
- Collaborate with other agencies, local school districts, and the SC School for the Deaf and Blind to ensure IEP (Individual Education Plan) goals are met
- Recommend and provide assistive low vision devices and technology so that school assignments may be completed outside of the classroom



# Children's Services Counselors

## Tameka Massey

### Columbia District Office

1430 Confederate Avenue  
Columbia, SC 29201

803-898-1380

tameka.massey@sccb.sc.gov

### Serving

Anderson, Abbeville, Cherokee,  
Chester, Chesterfield, Edgefield,  
Fairfield, Greenville, Greenwood,  
Kershaw, Lancaster, Laurens,  
McCormick, Newberry, Oconee,  
Pickens, Richland, Saluda,  
Spartanburg, Union, York

## Josie Nelson

### Charleston District Office

Fairfield Office Park, Suite 109  
Charleston, SC 29407

843-852-4225 ext 13

josie.nelson@sccb.sc.gov

### Serving

Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell,  
Beaufort, Berkeley, Calhoun,  
Charleston, Clarendon, Colleton,  
Darlington, Dorchester, Dillon,  
Florence, Georgetown, Hampton,  
Horry, Jasper, Lee, Marion, Marlboro,  
Orangeburg, Sumter, Williamsburg

# Children's Services Support Team

## Rhonda Thompson

### Division Director

Older Blind & Prevention of Blindness  
Programs, Children's & Low Vision  
Clinic Services

### Greenville District Office

620 North Main Street  
Suite 100  
Greenville, SC 29601

864-241-1111 • Greenville

803-898-8744 - Columbia

rhonda.thompson@sccb.sc.gov

## Toni Davis

### Administrative Assistant Support

Older Blind & Prevention of Blindness  
Programs, Children's & Greenville  
Low Vision Clinic Services

### Greenville District Office

620 North Main Street  
Suite 100  
Greenville, SC 29601

864-241-1111 • Greenville

toni.davis@sccb.sc.gov

**THE BRIDGE** is an 8-week paid Pre-Apprenticeship training program that combines the components of informational interviewing, work readiness development, career exploration, and skills development in preparation for an apprenticeship or direct placement. The intensive job readiness program bridges the gap between successful completion of adjustment to blindness skills training and individualized community-based job placement services.

**Participants will receive intensive training in the following areas:**



**Forstene Robinson**  
**BRIDGE Coordinator**  
**(803) 898-8771**  
[Forstene.Robinson@sccb.sc.gov](mailto:Forstene.Robinson@sccb.sc.gov)

**Advantages for Business Partners:**

- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), On-the-Job Training Salary Reimbursement
- The Disabled Access Credit for “eligible access expenditures” to small businesses
- Architectural and Transportation Barrier Removal Deduction
- Sensitivity Training for staff at no cost
- Candidates with competencies that meet the specific needs of the employer
- Prior On-the-job training and occupation focused education
- Employees ready to utilize skills taught through career focused discussions and activities
- Workers that are knowledgeable about employment responsibilities and look forward to a successful long-term career

South Carolina  
Commission for the Blind  
1430 Confederate Avenue  
Columbia, SC 29201



This is a free publication of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. To request copies, you may mail request to:

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