

October 19, 2000

Mr. Les Boles, Director
Office of State Budget
1122 Lady Street, 12th Floor
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear Mr. Boles:

The South Carolina Commission for the Blind is pleased to submit our annual Accountability Report for fiscal year 1999-2000. Please find attached 3 print copies and a diskette.

Chapter 25, beginning with Section 43-25-10 of the South Carolina Code establishes the South Carolina Commission for the Blind and charges it with the responsibility for providing vocational rehabilitation and related services to the blind and severely visually impaired citizens of South Carolina. In keeping with this mandate from the General Assembly, the Commission has adopted a mission that focuses the agency resources on direct services to the special population it is designated to serve.

South Carolina has an estimated 10,000 blind and severely visually impaired citizens of all ages. Not all of this number can benefit from rehabilitation and related services provided by the Commission. For fiscal year 1999-2000, more than one third of the total population who are blind or severely visually impaired were served by one or more of the programs provided by the Commission for the Blind.

Many changes occurred for the Commission in fiscal year 1999-2000. A new governing Board was seated in June of 1999, and a permanent commissioner took office in March 2000. The new leadership made it clear that the agency's resources are to be clearly focused on consumer services. Goals, objectives and strategies were developed to provide staff with direction and guidance in achieving the mission. Performance measures were established creating an evaluation process to determine whether goals are being achieved.

The Commission's programs are planned and implemented on theories of intervention and prevention. Special training in adjustment to blindness and in specific skills is

Mr. Les Boles

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provided to assure independence and prepare individuals to participate in the work force and/or in the family unit and community. Services are also provided to prevent loss of vision and stabilize specific eye conditions.

This report reflects the Commission's efforts to focus sharply on consumer services, manage and enhance human resources and practice accountability and efficiency in the management of our financial resources.

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the activities of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. I will serve as the agency contact person, and I can be contacted at 898-8822.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nell C. Carney
Commissioner

SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

1999-2000 Annual Accountability Report

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Annual Accountability Report for 1999-2000 emphasizes the commission's efforts to comply with mandates from the legislative and executive branches of state government as well as to comply with its' federal funding source. The report also demonstrates the commission's commitment to accountability, effectiveness and efficiency while focusing all resources on timely and appropriate services delivery to the consumers.

MAJOR PROGRAM GOALS

Vocational Rehabilitation: This program exists to train and place in competitive employment individuals who are blind or severely visually impaired. This goal is reached by increasing the overall number of individuals who are served in the program. Accomplishment of this goal is not only in the interest of the individuals placed in employment but also good for the economy of South Carolina. When an individual is placed in employment, he/she ceases to be a recipient of public assistance and becomes a tax-paying citizen.

Prevention/Independent Living: The program goal is to reduce the incidence of blindness and/or increase the level of independence among older blind citizens allowing them to remain in the home and in the community.

Children's Services: The major goal is to provide case management and consulting services to blind and severely visually impaired children and their parents reducing the risk of academic failure and preparing individuals to transition into vocational rehabilitation. This program is closely coordinated with the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind, public school programs and the South Carolina Department of Education.

Administration: The goal of administration is to manage the fiscal and human resources of the commission to assure accountability, effectiveness and efficiency while assuring compliance with state regulations and policies. The commission is committed to affirmative action, hiring well qualified individuals and enhancing the employment of staff through training.

OUTCOMES AND CUSTOMER FOCUS

Consumer satisfaction surveys indicate an acceptable level of satisfaction among individuals receiving services in all program areas. In addition to being responsive to consumer requests for services in a timely manner, consumers also express satisfaction with the quality of services provided.

The strategic plan developed during this reporting period clearly emphasizes consumer focus as the highest priority of the commission. The mission, goals and objectives address both quantity and quality consumer services.

In State FY 1999-2000 the commission served 4,020 of the estimated 10,000 blind and severely visually individuals in the state of South Carolina. Of this number: 1168 individuals were served in the vocational rehabilitation program where the ultimate goal is competitive employment, 1320 individuals were served in the prevention of blindness program, and the remainder were served in the commission's other programs.

COORDINATION WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES

The Commission for the Blind operates under the same federal regulations as the South Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, and this commonality creates a natural cooperative working relationship between the two agencies. Both agencies have worked closely with the Workforce Investment Council to forge partnerships and to assure full participation in one-stop centers. Coordination with the state Universities and community colleges has been another area of coordination between the two agencies.

The commission has worked cooperatively with the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind to develop a teacher training program in vision in South Carolina. The commission has also coordinated services with the school to assure that services to children are not duplicated.

The commission works cooperatively with the Office of Human Resources, Comptroller General, Attorney General and other state agencies to assure compliance with state regulations, policies and practices.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

1999-2000 was a year of numerous changes for the Commission for the Blind. A new governing Board and a new, permanent Commissioner brought changes in leadership, changes in priorities and renewed commitment to planning, consumer focus and accountability. Although the various changes had a significant impact on the operations of the commission, staff were capable of absorbing the changes and accepting new leadership. Much was accomplished even with the barriers and challenges created by change.

SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

1999-2000 Accountability Report

III. MISSION

The mission of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind is to provide quality, individualized vocational rehabilitation services, independent living services and prevention to blind and visually impaired consumers leading to competitive employment and social and economic independence.

The commission's long range vision is to become a national model separate vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind demonstrating quality consumer services, accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

The Board, Commissioner and staff of the commission embrace the following values.

- I. The abilities, dignity and potential of consumers who are blind and visually impaired.
- II. Compassionate, talented and committed staff.
- III. Progressive, effective leadership.
- IV. Human, fiscal and information resources.
- V. The support of the community, the Legislature, the Executive Branch and the Federal partner.
- VI. Employers who are receptive to employing consumers.
- VII. Collaboration with other organizations, training programs and community based programs.

IV. LEADERSHIP SYSTEM

The leadership of the commission consists of the Governing Board, the Commissioner and the Executive management Team. The Governing Board meets on a monthly schedule to consider policy issues, hear progress reports and listen to concerns from staff and from consumers. The Board also visits district offices, attends consumer organization meetings and is available to staff and consumers at all times. Input from consumers and staff is discussed with the executive management of the agency to assure follow-up and feedback.

The Commissioner holds scheduled meetings with senior managers, has meetings with district office staff, meets with headquarters staff in groups, attends consumer organization meetings and hosts an annual all staff meeting. In the spring of 2000, the Commissioner directed all staff to participate in the development of a strategic plan for the agency. Drafts of the mission, vision, values, goals, objectives, strategies and performance measures were carefully considered by a team composed of representatives from each program area. When the final versions of the various components of the strategic plan were chosen, the plan was made available to all staff and the Governing Board. The Commissioner and executive level management continuously articulates the mission, vision, values and goals of the agency.

The Executive Team is made up of the Commissioner, the Chief of Administration and the Chief of Consumer Services. This team sets the agenda for senior management: and through scheduled meetings, allows senior managers representing each program to communicate issues from all levels of staff. Through these meetings we have been successful in setting a work pace, providing clear direction and integrating the agency mission, vision and goals across all programs. We have also been successful in integrating performance goals into the day-to-day activities of the agency.

Throughout the process of developing a strategic plan for the Commission, the leadership clearly articulated to all staff and to consumers that the highest priority of the agency is consumer services and satisfaction. This priority has been clearly demonstrated in the development of budgets, policies and procedures, and it has been communicated to consumers.

The Governing Board and the Commissioner attempt to keep staff and consumers focused on future opportunities to achieve excellence and realize the commission's vision which is to become a national model program serving the blind and visually impaired population of South Carolina while demonstrating accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

The leadership of the commission has used feedback to improve the leadership system including information gather through a survey, staff input and consumer input. The critical area of communication between leadership and consumers has been enhanced

with the redefining of the Consumer Advisory Council which acts as an advisory group between consumers and the Governing Board and the Commissioner.

The leadership of the commission has recognized its' responsibility for public interaction and citizenship. Being aware that the commission needed to improve its' public image, members of the Governing Board, the Commissioner and the Executive Team have made themselves available to the public for speeches and other appearances. A positive process of communication with other state agencies has been initiated, and the commission staff is now participating in community endeavors such as the Red Cross Blood Drive and United Way.

V. CUSTOMER FOCUS AND SATISFACTION

The leadership of the commission has designated services to consumers as the highest priority and has directed that all financial and human resources be focused on this priority. The requirements and preferences of consumers are determined by direct communication with individuals who seek services from the commission. An interview process allows consumers to explore options, make choices and participate fully in the development of a plan of services leading to the provision of services. The process provides a means for the consumer to communicate concerns and/or issues at any time during the process. The consumer also has the option of making changes in the plan of services.

Program managers also meet with consumers individually and in groups to hear broad as well as individual concerns. These concerns are discussed in senior management meetings and may result in policy or procedures changes. The Governing Board maintains a Consumer Advisory Council representative of the state population. This group surfaces issues and concerns about consumer services and communicates these issues to the leadership of the commission where they are addressed.

The satisfaction of consumers is determined through consumer satisfaction questionnaires and through a quality assurance program that examines case management documentation and randomly conducts telephone interviews with consumers. During this reporting period, the vocational rehabilitation program mailed 87 consumer satisfaction questionnaires to consumers and received 53 responses. The percentage of satisfaction was 74%. The comments received were useful in making program improvements. The older blind independent living program surveyed 121 consumers and received 121 responses with 80% satisfaction. Consumers attending the residential rehabilitation center are interviewed during the process of training.

VI. OTHER PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE CRITERIA

Strategic planning has provided goals that have been translated into performance standards in program areas integrating the strategic plan to all levels of the agency. Each work unit is responsible for a quarterly evaluation of performance measures including, input, output, outcome, efficiency and quality. Evaluation results are reviewed by senior

managers representing all programs, and improvement plans are developed and implemented. The collection of data from each program area includes number of consumers served, quality of services, cost of services and consumer satisfaction.

Major focus has been placed on human resource development and management with the revision of the personnel policies handbook and a renewed emphasis on appropriate training on an individual bases as determined by training needs assessments. During this reporting period, the human resource focus has been on shared knowledge and skills across organizational lines, recruitment of highly qualified individuals, health and safety issues for employees, performance management, recognition and reward and flexibility.

VII. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS OR KEY RESULTS AREAS

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Cost: State, \$1,026,267.82

Federal: \$3,968,827.11

Other: \$242,577.14

Total: \$5,237,672.07

Program Name: Vocational Rehabilitation

Goal: The goal of vocational rehabilitation is to train blind and visually impaired individuals to participate in competitive employment.

Objective: To identify and train individuals to participate in the competitive workforce.

Number served: 1168

Number placed in employment: 124

Key Results: 76 percent of individuals placed in competitive employment had a beginning salary at or above minimum wage.

Average wage: \$252.66 per week

Many of the individuals placed in competitive employment were sustained by public assistance prior to being placed. The collective income of these individuals is \$1,629,160. In addition, each is now paying taxes, participating in the family and community and contributing to the overall good of the community. Each has experienced the elevation in human dignity that is a result of assuming economic and social responsibility.

Program Name: Rehabilitation Center

Goal: To provide intensive, 24 hour a day training to individuals who are blind or visually impaired to allow adjustment to blindness and begin the process of preparation for employment.

Objective: To teach alternative skills in travel, personal management, communications, home management to allow individuals to prepare for employment and full participation in the home and community.

Key Results: 144 individuals served.

Program Name: Employment, Training and Projects with Industry

Goal: To provide specialized training in technology and to interface with employers to assure successful job placement.

Objective: To identify and provide specialized training and placement to vocational rehabilitation consumers.

Key Results: 24 placed in employment, 7 served in specialized training in technology, 22 received specialized training in Projects with Industry.

The Projects with Industry Programs partners with private industry to create a bridge between the commission's training programs and employment. Driven by an employer advisory council, the program has created a positive working relationship between state government and private industry.

PREVENTION OF BLINDNESS/INDEPENDENT LIVING

Cost: State: \$930,909.51

Federal: \$195,634.49

Other: \$670.95

Total: \$1,127,214.95

Program Name: Prevention of Blindness

Goal: To prevent or stabilize eye conditions that lead to blindness and to provide independent living services to stabilize or elevate the level of independence of individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

Objective: To identify and serve individuals who need and can benefit from prevention services and independent living services.

Key Results: 1320 individuals served in prevention program: 772 individuals served in independent living program.

The prevention program was expanded to include a number of screening clinics that will identify individuals who have eye conditions that could lead to blindness if not identified and treated. The independent living program has expanded the services provided to the older blind population allowing individuals to remain in the home and to participate actively in the community rather than being confined to a nursing home or to the care of others.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Cost: State: \$395,951.49

Federal: 0

Other: \$23,727.04

Total: \$419,678.53

Program Name: Children's Services

Goal: To provide case management, consultation and direct services to children birth to age 14.

Objective: To identify and serve children who are blind and visually impaired in the home and in public schools.

Key Results: 583 individuals served

Intervention services for blind and visually impaired children attending public schools often make a difference in whether the child remains in the public school or attends the residential school for the deaf and blind for more intensive training to overcome the barriers to education created by loss of sight.

Program Name: Radio Reading Program

Goal: To provide access to printed material to South Carolina citizens who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print handicapped.

Objective: To continue to expand reading services to include all of the population who can benefit from the services.

Key Results: 4301 individuals served by program.

The radio reading program assists blind and visually impaired individuals to access printed material including health and nutrition information, current events, newspapers, magazines and other printed materials.

ADMINISTRATION

Cost: State: \$1,020,697.12

Federal: \$372,949.74

Other: \$12,250.00

Total: \$1,405,896.86

Program Name: Financial and Procurement Management

Goal: To manage commission financial resources practicing accountability, effectiveness and efficiency.

Objective: To focus agency resources on consumers and provide timely, effective and efficient accounting and procurement services.

Key Results: 8226 Invoices processed: 5885 requisitions processed: All federal reporting on time: All state reporting on time: State audit with no exceptions.

Financial and procurement management works with a complex set of federal regulations as well as the state regulations. A customer satisfaction survey conducted by financial and procurement management indicated that 90 percent of the surveyed staff are satisfied with the management.

Program Name: Human Resource Management

Goal: To provide the human resources leadership, guidance and tools necessary to accomplish the mission of the organization.

Objective: To recruit, hire and enhance the employment of qualified individuals.

Key Results: 23 qualified individuals hired.

Human Resources Management has communicated to all employees critical information about performance evaluation, compensation information, training information, personnel

policies and additional information about health and safety resulting in retention of qualified employees. A customer satisfaction survey conducted by Human Resource Management indicated 79 percent of the customers surveyed were satisfied with the management.

Program Name: Training

Goal: Develop employee skills necessary to accomplish the mission of the agency.

Objective: To identify training needs and provide essential training to all employees.

Key Results: Approximately 520 training opportunities (internal and external); 44% of counseling staff enrolled in a Masters Program in Rehabilitation Counseling. Established training objectives were met. A majority of staff receiving training indicate the training having a positive impact on performance.

Program Name: Information Technology

Goal: To implement a comprehensive information system that encompasses the organizational knowledge, management and strategic levels.

Objective: To develop and manage a standardized information system that reflects and supports the agency's infrastructure.

Key Results: 150 employees served as personal computer users: 13 sites provided services: 60 upgrades: client information system perfected: Reduction in outsource of resource management resulting in saving of \$6,000/month.

The client information system maintained by the IT division has provided the information necessary for staff providing direct services to manage case loads and meet the goals and objectives of the various departments. The IT Division has also assisted with the technical selection of adaptive equipment for visually limited staff and consumers. The Information Technology management conducted a staff survey with 40 percent of the surveyed employees indicating satisfaction with the services provided by this division.