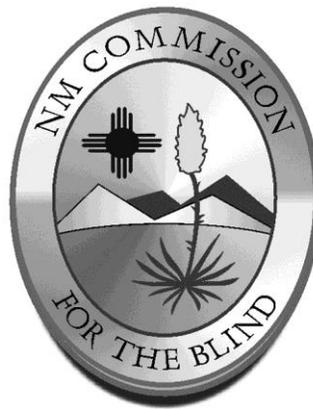


2013 Annual Report



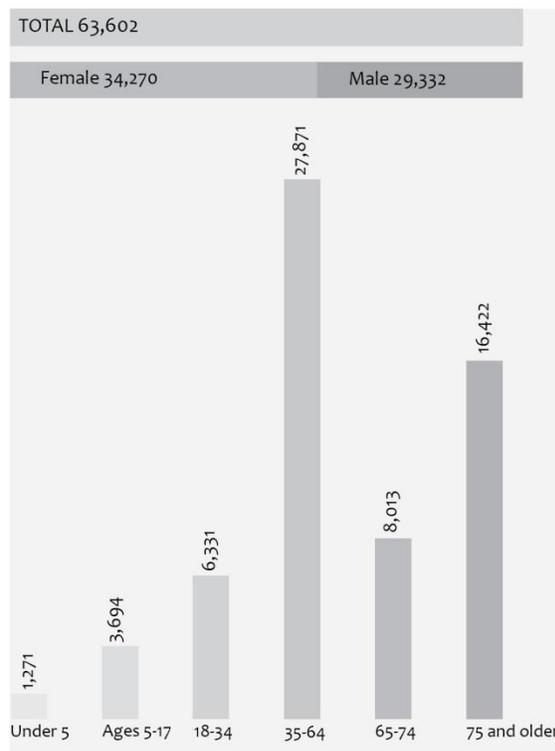
New Mexico Commission for the Blind

and

New Mexico Commission for the Blind
State Rehabilitation Council

FISCAL YEAR 2012 -2013

New Mexicans with Vision Loss



Definition and Scope:

The term vision loss refers to individuals who reported they have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses or contact lenses, as well as those who are blind or unable to see at all.

Data source: 2011 American Community Survey (Census)
1-Year Estimate / Updated January 2013

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Introduction

The Commission for the Blind provides vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to persons who are blind or visually impaired, enabling them to become more participating and contributing members of society. Persons who are blind or visually impaired lead normal lives, have families, raise children, participate in community activities, and work in a wide range of jobs. They are secretaries, lawyers, teachers, engineers, machinists, scientists, supervisors and business owners. The real challenge is to educate people who are blind or visually impaired about their own potential, and to educate society about the capabilities of persons who are blind or visually impaired.

The Commission believes persons who are blind or visually impaired are normal, and blindness, in and of itself, is not a bar to leading a normal and productive life. The Commission provides services that enable persons who are blind or visually impaired to enhance their abilities and assume roles in the community as working, taxpaying, and contributing citizens.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is created pursuant to the federal Rehabilitation Act. The SRC works in close partnership with the Commission by helping to formulate vocational rehabilitation policies and priorities. The primary product of this partnership is the State Plan, which is developed jointly between the SRC and the Commission.

NEW MEXICO COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

2200 Yale Blvd. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
(505) 841-8844
FAX (505) 841-8850

December 15, 2013

The Honorable Susana Martinez
Governor of the State of New Mexico
State Capitol Building, Fourth Floor
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503

Dear Governor Martinez,

In accordance with Section 28-7-15 through Section 28-7-23 NMSA 1978, the Commission for the Blind submits its Annual Report for the state fiscal year ending June 30, 2013. According to the national "Standards and Indicator," the New Mexico Commission for the Blind is ranked:

- First for the percentage of clients with competitive employment outcomes;
- First for the percentage of clients with significant disabilities;
- First for clients who primarily rely on their own earnings after receiving services; and
- Ninth for the starting wage compared to the average state wage.

The Commission is dedicated to the goal of helping blind persons become self-supporting and participating members of society. The following report details the ways in which we accomplished this goal.

Respectfully,

Greg D. Trapp, J.D.
Executive Director

NEW MEXICO COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

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Albuquerque, NM 87106
(505) 841-8844
FAX (505) 841-8850

December 15, 2013

The Honorable Susana Martinez
Governor of the State of New Mexico
State Capitol Building, Fourth Floor
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503

Dear Governor Martinez,

Pursuant to Section 105(c)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, the State Rehabilitation Council of the Commission for the Blind submits its State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report for the federal fiscal year ending September 30, 2013. Our accomplishments include:

- The Council helped the Commission revise the Strategic Plans for both the agency and Orientation Center;
- The Council made policy recommendations that resulted in several revisions to practices and policies, including the Manual of Operating Procedures;
- The Council helped the Commission to revise and adopt new goals and priorities as a part of the State Plan and Strategic Plan.
- The Council assisted the Orientation Center to attain its CCARF accreditation, and assisted with the renovations of the Orientation Center.

The following Annual Report details the accomplishments of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Commission for the Blind.

Respectfully,

Bernadine Chavez
Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

Mission Statement

Our mission is to enable persons who are blind to achieve vocational, economic and social equality by providing career preparation, training in the skills of blindness, and above all, promoting and conveying the belief that blindness is not a barrier to successful employment, or to living an independent and meaningful life.

Commission Members and Director

Greg Trapp
Executive Director, Albuquerque

Arthur A. Schreiber
Chairperson, Albuquerque

Dallas Allen
Commissioner, Albuquerque

Jim Babb
Commissioner, Albuquerque

State Rehabilitation Council Members

Commission for the Blind

For the State Fiscal Year July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013, and the
Federal Fiscal Year October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013

Council Members

Bernadine Chavez, Chairperson -- Albuquerque

Kelly Burma, Secretary -- Albuquerque

Greg Trapp, Executive Director -- Albuquerque

Dallas Allen -- Albuquerque

Lucy Birbiglia -- Albuquerque

Peggy Chong -- Albuquerque

ShaRon Dandy -- Albuquerque

Brianne Kotschwar -- Albuquerque

Arthur Schreiber -- Albuquerque

Paula Seanez -- Navajo Nation

Linda Thayer -- Las Vegas

Adelmo Vigil -- Alamogordo

Accomplishments State fiscal year 2013

Services Delivered

Vocational Rehabilitation Program	375
Technology for Children Program	42
Students in Transition to Employment Program	45
Orientation Center	20
Assistive Technology Deliveries	1770
Business Enterprise Program	22
Independent Living / Older Blind Program	888
Emergency Eye Care Program	91

Chairman Schreiber Receives National Award

Chairman Art Schreiber was presented the prestigious “TenBroek” Award on July 6, 2013. The award was presented to Chairman Schreiber during the banquet of the National Federation of the Blind in Orlando, Florida. The award was named after Jacobus TenBroek, the founder and first President of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). “The award is the highest honor of the Federation,” said Chris Danielsen, the Federation’s Director of Public Relations. “The award recognizes Schreiber’s many accomplishments that have advanced the rights and opportunities available to the blind,” added Danielsen.

State Rehabilitation Council Goals and Priorities

1. Increase the number of consumers served through enhanced outreach activities; including media outreach, collaboration with eye doctors, and the use of the Technology for Children program to conduct outreach to school districts.
2. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes of transition consumers by providing assistive technology where appropriate as a part of an individualized plan for employment, by providing assistive technology through the Technology for Children program, and by conducting educational activities to increase awareness and use of Braille, including Braille math.
3. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing services in a way that genuinely honors the “informed choice” provisions of the Rehabilitation Act, enabling Commission consumers to have the opportunity to obtain employment at higher levels of compensation.
4. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes achieved by consumers by providing a quality Newsline system that gives consumers access to employment listings, news, and other important information.
5. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using the Skills Center to meet the needs of vocational rehabilitation consumers, as well as potential vocational rehabilitation consumers, in a way that is creative and innovative.
6. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes by using and renovating the facilities of the Adult Orientation Center to provide employment preparation training for both adults and transition students.
7. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the provision of independent living services to vocational rehabilitation consumers.

8. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers who are deaf-blind through collaboration and partnership with the Community Outreach Programs for the Deaf and with the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, including through the delivery of assistive technology to consumers who are deaf-blind.
9. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) by shortening the time required for vendors to complete the required training.
10. Enhance overall performance and productivity by improving administrative services and increasing the accuracy and timeliness of the submission of Federal reports.
11. Enhance overall performance and productivity by engaging in activity designed to mitigate and ameliorate the impacts of blindness and visual impairment, and by engaging in outreach and other activities designed to identify additional potential consumers, and by making the public and medical establishment more aware of Commission services.
12. Enhance the number and quality of employment outcomes for consumers by providing enhanced benefits counseling and guidance, with the purpose being to reduce fears related to the loss or reduction of benefits.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves persons who are legally blind and certain qualifying individuals with significant visual impairments. The Vocational Rehabilitation program helps persons to become employed in ways that are appropriate to each individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. The Commission provided 375 persons with vocational rehabilitation services during the course of the year.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Standards and Indicators data, New Mexico ranked first in two of the three Primary Indicators used to measure the performance of vocational rehabilitation programs.

Primary Indicator 1.3: The Commission ranked first for the percentage of clients with employment outcomes who were competitively employed, with 100% of clients earning at least minimum wage.

Primary Indicator 1.4: The Commission ranks first for the percent of clients with significant disabilities who had competitive employment outcomes, with 100% of clients having significant disabilities. The Commission shares this distinction with eleven other states.

Primary Indicator 1.5: The Commission ranks ninth for the average starting wage of clients compared to the average state wage. Our client's starting wage of \$13.30 was 68.5% of the average state wage of \$19.45. The Commission's ranking was an improvement by one position since the last reporting period.

Indicator 1.6: The Commission ranks first for the comparison of clients who on exiting the program rely on their earnings as their primary source of income compared to those who relied on their earnings as their primary source of income when entering the program. The percentile difference in New Mexico was 69.4%. Though not a primary indicator, 1.6 measures the difference made by Commission services and reflects the quality of the employment outcomes achieved by clients of the Commission.

Technology for Children

The Commission's Technology for Children program provided assistive technology to 42 blind and visually impaired children during the year. The children were under 18 and could not obtain the technology from other sources. The technology ranged from basic eyeglasses to more advanced items such as portable video magnifiers and computerized Braille note takers. The Technology for Children program is designed to help these blind and visually impaired children achieve the Commission's ultimate goal of becoming successfully employed. The program does this by providing blind and visually impaired children with needed assistive technology; and also by helping the Commission build and strengthen relationships with local school districts by identifying transition students, and by providing information about transition and other vocational rehabilitation services. The program is administered in partnership with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired which has responsibility for the eyeglass portion of the program. The program receives major funding from the New Mexico Department of Health.

Transition Services

The Commission provided a wide range of transition services to blind and visually impaired youth during the year. The goal was to enhance the quantity and quality of employment outcomes achieved by clients aged 14 to 21. The Commission's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Technology for Children Coordinator routinely attended Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. This practice helps provide valuable perspectives, resources, and information to the IEP Team. The Commission's goal is to attend IEP meetings by age 14, and in some cases even earlier.

The Commission obtained cooperative agreements with local school districts from across the state. The agreements are designed to enhance transition services and identify new transition clients. The Commission also has memoranda of understanding with the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Public Education Department, the Governor's Commission on Disability, and the Department of Health, all of which are designed to build and enhance transition services.

Students in Transition to Employment Program

The Students in Transition to Employment Program (STEP) is a summer training program that provides the Commission's transition clients with skills instruction and a paid employment experience. Persons who are blind or visually impaired have traditionally been unable to engage in such work experiences, depriving them of the important benefits of youthful employment. STEP served 45 blind students ranging in age from 14 to 21.

For a blind person to become successfully employed, he or she must acquire a positive attitude about blindness and learn essential blindness skills. The STEP participants engaged in activities designed to reinforce the skills they have learned and to instill positive attitudes of blindness. The activities included hiking, swimming, dining out, trips to amusement parks, and excursions to shopping malls. The students also participated in seminars and presentations from successful blind adult role models.

Orientation Center

The Orientation Center provided 31 clients with intensive training in the skills of blindness during the year. The Center is a residential program designed to equip blind or visually impaired persons with the skills needed to become successfully employed. The Center is located in Alamogordo and serves clients from across the state. The training typically lasts about six months, during which time students usually live in the Center's dormitory.

The Center was reaccredited in September by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). The Center was recertified in April by the National Blindness Professionals Certification Board (NBPCB). The Commission's Orientation Center is the only training center in the nation that has both CARF accreditation and NBPCB certification.

The Center spent much of the year undergoing extensive renovations that transformed the Center into a facility that is much more welcoming and modern. The renovations include the addition of an attractive adobe-style portal exterior entrance in place of what had been a very plain entryway door. The portal opens into a newly-built waiting area that is comfortable and spacious. It is overlooked by a much more functional and professional receptionist area. The flooring was replaced with new tile and carpet, and a safer and more sanitary rubber floor was installed in the gym. Energy-efficient windows were also installed, which help create classrooms that are quieter, more comfortable, and more conducive to learning.

Clients attending the Orientation Center receive intensive training in cane travel, Braille, assistive technology, home management, personal management, physical education, and industrial arts. Most of these students are newly blinded, and require intensive training to participate in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program. The Center has a computer lab, a class with two complete kitchens, a fully-equipped industrial arts shop, and a large conference room where seminars are held. The Center also has an exercise gym that is equipped with quality exercise machines that helps students to improve their fitness level and increase their stamina.

The training is built around the use of sleep shades to eliminate the desire to rely on inadequate or failing vision. By learning effective non-visual techniques, students gain self-confidence and learn how to function as successful blind persons.

Assistive Technology

The use of assistive technology is a crucial factor in the successful employment of persons who are blind. However, according to a 2000 study, only 24% of persons who are disabled own computers, compared to a national average of over 50%. According to a 2003 study, fewer than 30% of persons with disabilities access the Internet, compared to more than 60% for persons who do not have disabilities. This gap is called the “digital divide,” and is wider for persons with disabilities. The Commission’s assistive technology program seeks to bridge this gap. A blind or visually impaired person must learn the application, as well as the assistive technology that allows access to the application.

The Commission’s technology specialists provided clients with assistive technology such as screen readers, Braille displays, screen magnification programs, video magnifiers, and Braille note takers. The assistive technology program conducted 126 evaluations; delivered 105 computers, scanners, printers, and video magnifiers; performed 112 hardware or software upgrades; and provided 120 software or hardware repairs. Technical assistance was provided to 1,402 persons.

Business Enterprise Program

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides employment opportunities for legally blind individuals who wish to operate food service facilities. The BEP has food establishments from small stands, to vending routes, to a full military cafeteria at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. The BEP provides public and government employees with quality food service that is conveniently located within government buildings. Twenty-two blind persons participated in the BEP program, and vendor earnings were \$3,642,814, contributing \$220,440 in gross receipt taxes to the state.

BEP Program Supports National Defense

A BEP vendor operates the Thunderbird Inn and Dining Facility at Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque. The operator of this facility, Robert Vick, distinguished himself in the past by winning the Gold Plate, and the even more prestigious John L. Hennessy award for the “international single-facility category.” Mr. Vick employs approximately 35 persons with disabilities in his facility.

A BEP vendor also serves the food and dining needs at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Artesia. The FLETC is a residential training center that provides law enforcement training to 91 federal agencies, as well as to local, state, and tribal law enforcement agencies.

Newsline for the Blind

Newsline is a telephone-based system that allows persons who are blind or visually impaired to access a variety of newspapers and publications. The offerings include the Albuquerque Journal, the New Mexico Magazine, Consumer Reports, and the Alamogordo Daily News. Newsline also includes the newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico, and the State Library Talking Book Newsletter. Blind or visually impaired readers can use Newsline to access important information, such as grocery ads, drug store ads, and legal notices. The service is in its 22nd year of operation, has served over 5,000 users, averaging more than 10,000 calls a month.

The reader uses the buttons of a telephone to select a category of the paper, such as local news or sports. The reader can read a story, skip to the next story, or exit the category and choose another category or publication. The reading is done by approximately 80 trained volunteers. The service is available statewide free of charge, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The Commission also sponsors NFB-NEWSLINE, an audio information service that provides access to over 350 publications. These include state newspapers such as the Farmington Daily Times, national newspapers such as the USA Today, international newspapers such as The Jerusalem Post, and magazines such as Smithsonian Magazine. NFB-NEWSLINE also provides access to job listings, television schedules, and weather alerts. NFB- NEWSLINE has over 1,100 registered users.

Skills Center

The Skills Center is a state-of-the-art facility that helps meet the needs of the Commission's vocational rehabilitation and independent living consumers. Located in the Albuquerque office, the Skills Center has classrooms for specific subject areas such as Braille, cooking, and personal management. It also has a large lecture room that is ideal for group meetings. The Skills Center was used to teach young students participating in the STEP program, to teach seniors participating in Senior Week, and to instruct many other persons who were attending different events and seminars.

Independent Living / Older Blind

The Independent Living/Older Blind (IL/OB) program serves a rapidly growing population of persons who are blind or visually impaired. Approximately 3.5% of the population over 65 is legally blind, and the aging of the population is resulting in a dramatic increase of seniors who are blind or visually impaired. The IL/OB program provided intensive training to 537 clients, and basic services to an additional 351 clients, most of whom were over 55. To meet the growing need for IL/OB services, the IL/OB program hired a ninth independent living teacher during the year.

The purpose of the IL/OB program is to enable persons who are blind or visually impaired to live independently in their own homes and communities. To accomplish this, independent living services are provided directly to blind and visually impaired clients throughout the state, with most persons being served in their own homes. The instruction includes training in Braille, how to travel using a white cane, how to use public transportation, and instruction in personal and home management skills. The training also includes provision of basic assistive technology devices such as white canes, magnification devices, Braille writing equipment, talking calculators, and Braille or talking watches. The IL/OB program also began during the year to provide a greater number of clients with more advanced hand-held video magnifiers.

The Commission hired a Coordinator of Independent Living Technologies in April. The Coordinator of Independent Living Technologies is providing services directly to IL/OB clients, as well as supporting the nine independent living teachers. The position of Coordinator of Independent Living Technologies was created because the senior population is gradually becoming more technologically literate, and the IL/OB program is starting to see more clients who are comfortable working with computers and other technologies.

The independent living teachers serve the entire state, sometimes traveling over long distances to reach clients in rural areas. The teachers also serve many newly blinded clients who are participating in the Commission's vocational rehabilitation program.

Emergency Eye Care

The Emergency Eye Care Program seeks to prevent blindness and restore vision through medical intervention. The program provides emergency eye surgery to qualifying New Mexico residents who lack the resources to cover the cost of medical eye emergencies. The program assisted 49 patients with 91 sight-saving procedures during the year.

Covered procedures include emergency eye care problems that, if not expeditiously attended to, could result in irreversible vision loss or structural damage to the eye. The majority of procedures are laser treatments, retinal reattachments, and treatments for acute eye trauma. The program enables patients to receive a continuity of care with an ophthalmologist of his or her own choosing. This program is the only means by which many persons can avoid permanent blindness. The goal is to return those served to their previous activities and prevent the need for expensive medical and rehabilitative services.

Expenditures and Revenues

July 1, 2012 - June 30, 2013

Expenditures

Vocational Rehabilitation	
Assistive Technology	419,492
Consumer Training	285,174
Evaluation and Diagnosis	23,393
Maintenance and Transportation	99,245
Other Consumer Costs	251,678
<u>Counseling and Guidance</u>	<u>1,655,656</u>
Vocational Rehabilitation Total	2,734,638
Business Enterprise Program	208,626
Students in Transition	47,954
Newsline	108,163
Orientation Center	1,210,582
Independent Living	816,513
Emergency Eye Care	166,843
Holloman Contract	90,851
Facilities Management	241,974
<u>Administration</u>	<u>1,215,81</u>
Total Expenditures	6,841,964

Revenues

State General Fund	2,077,956
Federal Funds	4,390,232
<u>Other Revenue</u>	<u>384,970</u>
Total Revenues	6,853,157

Organizational Chart

Commissioners

Arthur A. Schreiber, Chairman

Dallas Allen, Commissioner

Jim Babb, Commissioner

Executive Director

Greg Trapp, J.D.

Technology for Children Coordinator

Kelly Burma

Newsline Coordinator

Krista Mireles

James Salas, Deputy Director for Vocational Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation Services

Assistive Technology

Business Enterprise Program

Virginia Murphy, Deputy Director for Independent Living Services

Independent Living / Older Blind

STEP

Holloman AFB Operations

Building Management

Lucy Alexander, Deputy Director for the Adult Orientation Center

Adult Orientation Center

Michael Stanton, Chief Financial Officer / Deputy Director for Finance and Administration

Budget and Finance

Human Resources

Information Technology

Office Management

Statewide Office Locations

New Mexico Commission for the Blind

Administrative Office

2905 Rodeo Park Drive East
Building 4, Suite 100
Santa Fe, NM 87505
505-476-4479 ♦ Toll free 888-513-7968

Albuquerque Office

2200 Yale Blvd. SE
Albuquerque, NM 87106
505-841-8844 ♦ Toll free 888-513-7958

Alamogordo Orientation Center

408 North White Sands Blvd.
Alamogordo, NM 88310
575-437-0401 ♦ Toll free 888-513-7967

Farmington Office

3535 East 30th Street, Suite 212
Farmington, NM 87401
505-327-3031 ♦ Toll free 888.513-7964

Las Cruces Office

277 E. Amador, Suite 101
Las Cruces, NM 88001
575-524-6450 ♦ Toll free 888-513-7960

Las Vegas Office

2522-B Ridge Runner Road
Las Vegas, NM 87701
505-425-3546 ♦ Toll free 888-513-7963

Roswell Office

400 North Pennsylvania, Suite 900
Roswell, NM 88201
575-624-6140 ♦ Toll free 888-513-7961



Copies of this annual report are available in Braille, large print and electronic format by contacting:

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Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
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