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The Monthly Newsletter of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

June 2017 – Volume 5, No. 6

Daniel B. Frye, J.D. Pamela Gaston

Executive Director Editor

# From the Director’s Desk

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the federal legislation that governs the administration of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, now requires that VR agencies engage with employers and other parts of the National Workforce System (NWS) as part of an expanded strategy to create integrated, competitive employment for persons with disabilities. One of the six common measures for entities that are a part of the NWS programs will be how effectively these organizations engage with employers. The New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI or Commission), consistent with this federal directive, has over the last year adopted a number of measures to respond to this obligation. Almost a year into our concerted effort to engage the business community, we are becoming nationally recognized as a blindness-specific VR agency that is taking seriously this expanded responsibility.

Initially, CBVI leaders decided to create a Business Relations Unit within our organization, tasked with providing systemic information to employers about blindness and the needs of people who are blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind. This general education effort is undertaken to inform employers (large and small) about the community that we serve so that businesses simply can interact with blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind people on a more comfortable basis. Some of our general service offerings include conducting seminars on blindness protocol, evaluating the accessibility of workplace technologies, and the like. If employers are better aware of blindness-related issues, it stands to reason that businesses will be better equipped to interact with our community as a subset of customers among the general public and as potential employees. Further, our Business Relations Unit is also charged with the targeted aim of helping to match interested employers with talented consumers who are ready to enter the job market.

Wanting to guarantee that our Business Relations Unit was built on a solid foundation of policy and practice, the Commission applied to receive technical assistance from the Institute on Community Inclusion, the entity that serves as the Job-Driven Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center, sponsored by a grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education. CBVI leaders, with a particular emphasis on those affiliated with our Business Relations Unit, have participated in both on-site and national trainings that introduced us to strategies for effectively engaging with employers. As a result of our involvement in the first cohort of VR agencies to develop business-oriented programs, we have been able to adopt sound policy for the administration of our Business Relations Unit; execute innovative, employer-focused programs; and cultivate strong relationships with several recognized New Jersey employers, including Prudential and Princeton University.

During the last several months, CBVI’s Business Relations Unit, staffed with seasoned Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors who have a particular interest in the business-side of VR-related services, has undertaken some creative projects to promote the dual mission of generally educating employers and introducing consumers to promising job leads. On May 19, 2017, our Business Relations Unit hosted its first Business Summit on the Scotch Plains campus of Rutgers University, where 10 businesses (representing both the private and public sectors) received basic blindness education to help better acquaint them with the needs of our consumer community. I was pleased to help launch this first summit by introducing the Commission, our Business Relations Unit, and facts about living as a successful blind person. We plan to host similar summits going forward, once a year with a blindness-specific focus, and once a year in cooperation with the nascent Business Relations Unit being developed at the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) at the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development. Additionally, on Thursday, June 29, our Business Relations Unit will be holding a “Reverse Job Fair” at the Cherry Hill Public Library for approximately 15 of our consumers who have finished their individual VR training and are looking for work. A reverse job fair will see the consumers at tables, ready to greet mingling employers, who will visit each booth and talk to these consumers about their education, interests, and ambitions. Moreover, our Business Relations Unit has also worked in partnership with DVRS to have some of our consumers attend and promote their candidacies at multiple Schedule A Federal Job Fairs. For those unaware, Schedule A is a special hiring authority program that the federal government uses to identify and recruit qualified disabled talent for the full array of employment opportunities within the federal government. These are just a few examples of how our Business Relations Unit is off to an excellent start in an effort to engage with employers in New Jersey.

Consistent with the Commission’s increasing reliance on a teaming and trans-disciplinary approach to all service delivery, members of our Assistive Technology Unit have worked with our Business Relations Unit to provide Assistive Technology feedback and evaluation to Princeton University, in particular, and many other smaller businesses. In an effort to guarantee that all of our Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, supervisors, and managers are familiar with our emerging obligation to work with employers, in addition to our traditional customer base, CBVI invited representatives from Mississippi State University, currently funded as the National Technical Assistance Center on Blindness and Low-Vision from RSA, to New Jersey to provide a four-day seminar on effective strategies for employer engagement to all of our frontline staff. During the next 18 months, CBVI will be part of a research project at Mississippi State to evaluate the impact of this training on our agency’s interaction with employers. Finally, I’ll be marketing the Commission’s services generally, but emphasizing the offerings from our Business Relations Unit in particular, when I speak to the leaders of the local Workforce Investment Boards, in conjunction with my responsibility as CBVI Executive Director on the State Employment and Training Commission.

In light of the capable, results-driven leadership of Amanda Gerson, CBVI’s Coordinator of Vocational Rehabilitation and Transition Services, and the manager responsible for our Business Relations Unit, CBVI has distinguished itself through our national networking at the ICI-hosted Business Relations Technical Assistance Learning Collaboratives throughout the entirety of this project. Pending departmental approval, both Amanda and I will be speaking and participating in a national conference on employer-focused VR efforts sponsored by ICI in Bethesda, Maryland, in early August 2017. The invitation to feature CBVI’s innovative Business Relations Unit at a national event reflects positively on what our organization has accomplished thus far and bodes well for what we will achieve in the future. I offer my heart-felt congratulations to Amanda and her team, including those team members who have supported these efforts from other agency units and from our original Strategic Planning workgroup, for the success that they have realized in building a strong relationship with the business community on behalf of the Commission and the blind, vision-impaired, and deaf-blind consumers that it serves.

In closing this month’s column, allow me to make one final and important observation. All of our effort to enter the arena of VR-related Business Relations is made with one objective in mind: our work with employers, as a secondary customer of Vocational Rehabilitation, is motivated by one fundamental objective, educating the general public about the nature of blindness and low-vision, and most critically, facilitating greater employment opportunities for our agency’s consumers. All of our efforts—new or routine—must have, if they are to be retained as agency programs, a strong and direct correlation to increased consumer placements in the integrated, competitive workforce.

Let’s make it happen.

*Daniel B. Frye*

Executive Director

**Learning Lunch Reminder:**

As previously noted, during each of these monthly sessions, I will meet with five CBVI staff and a member of our Executive Management Team to receive feedback or suggestions on what the Commission might do that is new and exciting. Please indicate your interest in being part of such an up and coming forum by sending an email with the subject line “Learning Lunch” to my assistant, Melissa Brown, at Melissa.Brown2@dhs.state.nj.us

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# Program Administration – John C. Walsh, Chief

**Collective Impact (Part II – Getting to Know our Partners)**

As the agency continues to explore new ways to collaborate with other service providers throughout the state to create a collective impact for our consumers, it is important to know key details about organizations within the human services sector in which we operate. One such agency that is providing an array of services to a segment of the consumers we also serve is the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD).

DDD is a sister division within the Department of Human Services with the primary of providing public funding for services and supports, assisting New Jersey adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities age 21 and older, to live as independently as possible. Services and supports are available in the community from independent service providers, and in five state-run developmental centers.

In order to be eligible to receive services from DDD, individuals must meet the following criteria:

* An individual must be determined eligible for services before DDD can provide services;
* An individual must meet the functional criteria of having a developmental disability;
* In general, individuals must document that they have a chronic physical and/or mental impairment that:
	+ - manifested in the developmental years, before age 22;
		- is lifelong; and
		- substantially limits them in at least three of these life activities: self-care; learning; mobility; communication; self-direction; economic self-sufficiency; and the ability to live independently;
* In order to receive DDD services, individuals are responsible to apply, become eligible for, and maintain Medicaid eligibility;
* An individual must establish that New Jersey is his or her primary residence at the time of application;
* At 18 years of age individuals may apply for eligibility. At 21 years of age, eligible individuals may receive DDD services.

The determination of an applicant’s eligibility for DDD services shall be completed as expeditiously as possible.

The Supports Program is a DDD initiative that is part of the Comprehensive Medicaid Waiver program, which was approved by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on October 1, 2012. As Medicaid funds are now being utilized to fund a full array of community support services, all individuals with developmental disabilities who wish to avail themselves of these services must be found eligible for Medicaid and maintain that eligibility. The allowable types of Medicaid to be eligible for the Supports Program include:

* Supplemental Security Income Medicaid
* Workability Medicaid
* NJ Care
* Supports Program Medicaid Only

The types of services available through the Supports Program include:

* Assistive Technology
* Personal Emergency Response System (PERS)
* Behavioral Supports
* Physical Therapy
* Career Planning
* Prevocational Training
* Cognitive Rehabilitation
* Respite
* Community Based Supports
* Speech, Language, and Hearing Therapy
* Community Inclusion Services
* Support Coordination
* Day Habilitation
* Supported Employment – Individual Employment Support
* Environmental Modifications
* Supported Employment – Small Group Employment Support
* Goods & Services
* Supports Brokerage
* Interpreter Services
* Transportation
* Natural Supports Training
* Vehicle Modification
* Occupational Therapy

The comprehensive nature of the support services provided by our sister DHS division makes DDD an important partner for assisting our consumers to increase the level of community integration and to gain competitive integrated employment with supports. In addition, DDD allows individuals to choose the self-directed services model, which is based on the principles of person-centered planning. The focus of this process is to build a comprehensive “life” plan around an individual’s preferences, strengths, and abilities. DDD provides a twenty-two-page guide, called “A Quick Guide for Families”, which is a broad overview of the Supports Program. I encourage you to become familiar with this document and to share it with your consumers and their families, so they can avail themselves of these critical services. The document can be found at:

<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/ddd/documents/family_guide_to_supports_program_policy_manual.pdf>

# Organizational Logistics – Ines Matos, Chief

The LEAP (Library Equal Access Program) will be in its third year this fall!

We will be adding a new library in Morris County, the Morris Township Library and will also be adding the Newark Library in the spring of 2018. This will bring our total of libraries to nine as of next spring. Currently, classes are being scheduled in the following libraries: Atlantic City Free Public Library, Atlantic County Library at Mays Landing, Cherry Hill Public Library, East Brunswick Library, Johnson Public Library in Hackensack, Ocean County Library in Toms River, and the South Orange Public Library.

Classes being offered include iPad Basics, iPad Intermediate level and Introduction to Computers and Accessibility. Below are the descriptions of these classes:

iPad Basics: In this beginner class you will receive an introduction to the iPad including the accessibility features. Accessibility features that will be covered include both Voice Over (Apple’s built in screen reader) and Zoom (for magnification). This class is designed for new users who have no experience with an iPad.

iPad Intermediate: Prior experience with an iPad is a prerequisite for this class. In the intermediate class, users will build on basic iPad skills to learn more about accessibility features and other assistive apps that are available for users of this device.

Introduction to Computers and Accessibility: In this beginner’s class, users will learn basic computer terminology, mouse and keyboarding skills and navigation of a computer. An introduction to available assistive technology software will also be covered.

Participation in the LEAP program is not restricted to current CBVI consumers. The courses are designed for adults age 55 and older who have experienced a change in vision. Specific dates for the fall classes are set by the participating libraries and consumers can register by calling Advancing Opportunities at 888-322-1918 extension 595.

Please note: The computers with assistive technology software that have been installed at the libraries for the LEAP program can also be utilized by CBVI staff and consumers when not in use for scheduled classes. This is a good option for consumers who don’t have access to a computer at home however; it is recommended that anyone who wants to use the equipment call before visiting the library to be sure of availability.

# Fiscal Operations – Edward Szajdecki, Chief

By now you should all have received emails that include important information pertaining to the June 30th end of the State Fiscal Year (SFY). Please carefully read all of the information contained in those notifications especially references to directives and cutoff dates. Our suggestion is that managers and supervisors take steps to ensure that all staff have taken note and also to recommend that this information be saved for future reference.

Please note these general requirements:

* Any type of reimbursement for costs (travel, petty cash, etc.) incurred by staff in SFY 2017 must be submitted to Fiscal no later than July 21, 2017.
* Any goods or services provided for our consumers by the last day of the SFY (June 30th) involving State accounts (Independent Living, Education, Technology, Project BEST, any “06” accounts) should have a FACTS authorization created by June 30th.

Another matter of note pertains to the extension of the State Transportation provider contracts with Pro Care and Belleplain. It is very important that any complaints or incident reports since March 1st to date be reported immediately regarding the services that were provided by these vendors by emailing me at: Edward.Szajdecki@dhs.state.nj.us . Please be sure to include names, dates, times and any other descriptive details that will illustrate the circumstances of the situation and the impact on the consumer and the operations of CBVI. This documentation is required for Treasury compliance evaluation.

 As always, thank you for your cooperation and enjoy a safe and healthy summer season.

# Vocational Rehabilitation and Transitional Services – Amanda Gerson, Coordinator

**Summer Pre-Employment Transition Services Programs**

Summer 2017 has arrived and with the change of seasons comes a shift in focus for the coming months. Although for many, the summer is a time for slowing down and vacations, such is not the case in the world of Transition services. CBVI Transition counselors, our partners at the Center for Complex and Sensory Disabilities at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), and the Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) staff, along with some of our Technological Services Specialists (TSS’s), Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs), and Orientation and Mobility Specialists have been working hard to prepare for our Summer Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Programs.

On June 3, we welcomed students and families participating in Work Skills Preparation (WSP) and our College Preparation Experience (CPE) Programs to TCNJ for Family Day. This event provided an orientation to the programs, answered questions and delivered information about Transition, Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as College Services, and gave everyone an opportunity to become better acquainted before the move-in of the participating students.

Summer also brings the expansion of our Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE) program, to include a pilot of EDGE 2.0, which was discussed in the May issue of the *Commission Edition*. Both EDGE programs are now accepting interest letters and beginning the process of reaching out to new students to complete intakes. Finally, nine EDGE students, through a competitive application and interview process, were hired as interns to work at our Student Hands-On Alternative Reinforcement Program (SHARP), the summer program for our elementary-aged education students. These students will essentially be giving back while gaining valuable experience in a work environment as they assist CBVI staff in implementing activities and serve as positive peer role models for younger students with vision impairments.

All of our Pre-ETS Programs focus on some or all of the five Pre-ETS services outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act: 1. Job Exploration Counseling; 2. Work-Based Learning Experiences; 3. Counseling on Post-Secondary Education Opportunities; 4. Workplace Readiness Training; and 5. Instruction in Self-Advocacy. Through hands-on learning activities, workshops, and experiences, our transition students participate in an immersive two-to-four week experience that lays the foundation for continued exploration, skills acquisition, and learning to facilitate a successful transition to post-secondary life.

Thank you to all CBVI staff for your contributions to making our Summer Pre-ETS programs what I know will be a continued success. From Vocational Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology, to Independent Living and Education, the interdisciplinary teams at CBVI that come together for our collaborative programs truly model the way in which we can help our consumers achieve great things by leveraging the talents and skill sets from all CBVI service units.

**Summer Pre-ETS Programs Schedule**:

EDGE 1.0 and 2.0 Info Session: June 24

Work Skills Prep Session I: June 25 – July 7

Work Skills Prep Session II: July 9 – July 21

College Prep Orientation: June 25 – July 6

TCNJ Pre-College Program: July 9 – July 21

Life 101 at JKTC: July 24 – August 4

# Educational Services – Eva Scott, Director of Blindness Education

*“Anyone who does anything in life to help a child is a hero to me.”* - Fred Rogers

We serve approximately 1,900 infants, toddlers, children, and youth across all service units at CBVI. Our youthful consumers are a diverse group in terms of their talents and abilities. Each student is important to us as we strive to help them achieve their academic potential, develop skills of independence, acquire necessary technology skills, and plan for a successful adult life.

**SHARP 2017:** The countdown to SHARP (Student Hands-On Alternatives Re-enforcement Program) 2017 is on! Just a reminder, the start of Session One of SHARP is approaching. Session One will occur from July 11th through July 27th, and will include students in fifth grade through eighth grade. Session Two will occur from August 1st through August 17th and will include students in first grade through fourth grade. Shortly before the start date, parents will be contacted with important information about morning pick up times and afternoon drop off times.

**Blindness Education Service Agreements:** The service agreements for the 2017-2018 Academic Year will be mailed to school districts this month. The task of preparing the agreements is a collaborative effort between Blindness Education and MIS staff.

**2017 Annual Teachers’ Symposium:** The Annual Blindness Education Teachers’ Symposium will occur on October 18th and 19th. This event is conducted by CBVI teachers, O&M instructors, transition counselors, and technology specialists. It is an important professional development activity for classroom teachers and school administrators from local school districts and school programs that serve blind and vision impaired students across New Jersey. This year, the symposium will occur at the Department of Children and Families Professional Center in New Brunswick. The change of location will allow us to increase attendance and better accommodate the classroom teachers who participate. A “Save the Date” notice went out to our CBVI teachers to share with classroom teachers before they adjourn for summer vacation.

**From the George F. Meyer Instructional Resource Center - A New Educational Option for Students with Vision Impairments in the Classroom, submitted by Christine Hinton:** Students with vision impairments use many different tools and devices to access educational information in the classroom and in their home environment. A new device, the MATT Connect, will soon be available for students to use in the classroom. This device is a magnifier with distance and near viewing ability through an Android tablet with preloaded software that allows students to use the tablet for conventional uses through the internet. Accessing book downloads, book reading, web searches, and emailing are a few of the features. The MATT Connect is designed to have OCR with magnification and the ability to capture and save single or multiple pages or images.

Humanware has partnered with the American Printing House for the Blind to develop this product and it will be available to consumers in the near future.

(The following image depicts: A tablet that sits in a framed holder with a reading table at the bottom of the frame. On the right side of the frame is a mounted camera that sits on an eight to ten inch camera stick.)

 

# Independent Living & Clinical Services – Elizabeth DeShields, Coordinator

**Northern Veteran Support Groups Join the ASPIRE Network, submitted by Susan Vanino:** Assistive Support Programs for Independence, Renewal, and Education (ASPIRE) is an extensive statewide network of peer support groups offered by CBVI. These groups facilitate an environment where members form strong connections and provide emotional as well as practical support to one another. Through ASPIRE people often discover they are not alone and can live a quality life despite visual impairments.

On the morning of June 7, I visited a support group in Somerset County that was unlike any I previously attended for the program. The meeting offered many of the same characteristics and benefits of a traditional support group, but there was one difference that was obvious. What set this meeting apart from others is that the participants all shared a strong common bond long before ever becoming vision impaired.

The distinguished individuals I had the honor of meeting belong to a fellowship made up of veterans who have honorably served our country in the armed forces, and are now experiencing the challenge of vision loss. The group meets monthly in Lyons, and is one of four related support groups in New Jersey that are part of the Visual Impairment Services Outpatient Rehabilitation (VISOR) program, of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Other locations for VISOR groups include East Orange, Hamilton and Brick Township, as well as several additional geographic areas closely bordering New Jersey.

The mission of the VISOR program is to provide comprehensive blindness related rehabilitative supports to vision impaired veterans and their families to maximize their adjustment to vision loss as well as their quality of life. ASPIRE is thrilled to announce joining efforts with the VISOR program to enhance services for vision impaired and blind veterans who have given so much of themselves through their military service. These dynamic groups will give additional options to consumers working through the adjustment process.

Referring consumers to groups mentioned in this article or to any of the additional 43 groups in the ASPIRE network is easy. A complete directory of groups currently participating in ASPIRE can be found on CBVI’s intranet homepage. Should you be unable to access this information feel free to contact me by phone at 973-648-2821 or by emailing susan.vanino@dhs.state.nj.us, and I will be happy to assist you.

# Joseph Kohn Training Center – Del Basha, Manager

The staff of the JKTC routinely explore alternative teaching methods and curriculum with the goal of advancing the effectiveness of programming. Currently, the Braille Instructor Team is testing a curriculum that is used at the New Mexico Blindness Center. The application of this curriculum plan was observed during my visit to the New Mexico center.

**JKTC Braille Team Update, submitted by Ragan Van Campen and Alyssa Goldman:** The JKTC Braille Instructor Team (Ragan Van Campen and Alyssa Goldman) is currently working with several students to test a new curriculum that will potentially be used for Braille instruction at the center.  It is the McDuffy Reader, A Braille Primer for Adults by Sharon L. Monthei updated to the Unified English Braille (UEB) Edition.  This resource teaches the alphabet, numbers and UEB contracted code, and also has reference pages for new braille readers to learn the older symbols from the EBAE (English Braille American Edition) that are still currently being used. The trial will involve consumer feedback regarding the materials, content, and amount of practice.  Currently JKTC uses the Illinois Braille Series book 1 for un-contracted learning and reading fluency, and the Braille in Brief curriculum for consumers who wish to learn contracted braille.  These materials have been an effective learning tool for our instructional program, but are not yet available in UEB.

The JKTC is also participating in the testing of the Taptilo device on loan to CBVI from OHFA Tech Inc. described in the May issue of the *Commission Edition*.

We are proud to report that JKTC students worked with the Braille and Keyboarding Instructors to complete a public service project. We recently produced braille labels for the Department of Children and Families Professional Center in New Brunswick at the request of a former consumer who now operates a BENJ snack bar in the building.

# Business Enterprises of New Jersey – Deacon Truesdale, Manager

The commercialization of interstate rest areas is the new concern of the Randolph-Sheppard Program across the country. Under the Randolph-Sheppard Act, blind entrepreneurs are given priority in providing food service on federal property that includes the operation of vending locations at federal highway rest stops.  There is legislation pending in Congress to permit the commercialization of vending at federal highway rest areas.  This will impact the livelihood of blind entrepreneurs who manage food service locations along highways. Also, in some states where locations are not suitable to support blind entrepreneurs, the vending is subcontracted out and the revenues support the program in that state.  Although commercialization at rest areas could provide states with some revenue, it could also potentially be devastating to the blind business owners who may be eliminated from the opportunity to effectively bid on these locations. Commercial rest areas would also have a competitive advantage over operations managed by blind entrepreneurs. The leadership of the national Randolph-Sheppard community has requested feedback from the State Licensing Agencies (SLA) on how the passage of this legislation could potentially affect their respective programs.

# Human Resources – Hugo Ruiz, Esq., Manager

 **The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996**

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (known by the acronym of HIPAA) is a comprehensive federal legislation that protects health insurance coverage for employees and families when they change or lose their jobs (Title I protections) and also protects the confidentiality of medical information maintained by covered entities, such as health plans, health care clearing houses (billing services and community health information systems), and health care providers (Title II protections). Employers who handle and process medical information for their employees are also subject to HIPAA privacy and confidentiality requirements. Title III, IV, and V of HIPAA govern the tax aspects, group health insurance requirements, and tax deductions for employers and do not directly impact employees. HIPAA was signed into law by President Bill Clinton on August 21, 1996.

From the perspective of a State agency, such as CBVI, Title II is the section that has the most impact on its operations. This is because Title II of HIPAA and its Administrative Simplification Rules require employers who process, receive or keep medical information for their employees to maintain the privacy and security of the individually identifiable health information of their employees. The most significant feature of these rules is the Privacy Rule, whose effective date was April 24, 2003. The HIPAA Privacy Rule regulates the use and disclosure of what is termed Protected Health Information (PHI). In essence, PHI is any information held by a covered entity that concerns health status, provision of health care, or payment for health care that can be linked to an individual. PHI is interpreted very broadly and includes any part of an employee’s medical record or payment history. Under HIPAA, an employer many not disclose PHI to a third party without an employee’s express written authorization. However, the **HIPAA** Privacy Rule permits employers and covered entities to give employees’ medical information to **workers'** compensation insurance entities or state **workers'** compensation administrators. This applies only as long as the disclosure is required by state or other law, such as in **workers'** compensation claims adjudication. Nevertheless, authorized disclosure of PHI must be limited to only the minimum necessary information required to achieve the stated purpose. All medical information must be kept confidential and in separate medical files. It is the function of the Office of Human Resources to make certain that these standards are followed.

As always, any questions or concerns regarding this subject matter or any other human resources issue, please feel free to reach out to the Office of Human Resources. We are here to be of help to our valued staff.

# Staff Development – Kenya Whitehurst-Percell

Thank you to all employees that have completed the mandatory trainings on the Learning Management System (LMS). Anyone that has not completed the required trainings will receive email reminders and supervisors will be copied. I strongly urge you to schedule time to get these mandatory trainings completed.

I know some staff have experienced issues with the system, and hopefully those issues have been resolved. If anyone is still having problems accessing the system, please let me know.

I will be displaying the courses in Newark, 153 Halsey Street, in the 5th floor conference room, for anyone needing to view them on July 13, 20, and 27.  Please contact me, and submit your approved training request.

In addition to the mandatory trainings there are many other courses that are informative. In light of recent events in the news, workplace violence and other tragic events seem to be on the rise. There is an Active Shooter Response Training available to all state employees at no charge. This training will only take eighteen minutes to complete. Although we never expect the unthinkable to happen at our workplace, we must prepare ourselves with knowledge of policy and procedures as an effort to keep everyone safe.

Lastly, the LMS offers the supervisors the ability to view the courses that their subordinates have taken. To get this information follows these steps:

1. Change your role to Supervisor in the system.  There is a drop down box towards the top of the page.
2. Click the Reporting tab.
3. Click on Standard Reports.
4. Select the ***Learner Transcripts Report***and then click on Filter and Run.
5. Enter the staff member’s last name in the Last Name field, then scroll down and click the Run button.

If you would like to export the data, do the following:

1. Click the Export button.
2. Select your desired format (i.e. XLS for Excel).
3. Then select the Export button.

If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email at: kenya.whitehurst-percell@dhs.state.nj.us.

# Regional Updates

# Southern Region – Jack Thompson, Manager

**A Journey Through CBVI Services or How Ms. Dee Got Her Groove Back, submitted by Leah Severson:** What follows is the story, up to this point, of one woman’s experience in the realm of CBVI, and how she’s making the most of it. Dee, as we will call her, came to my caseload this winter, as a first-time CBVI consumer in the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) program. In late fall, Dee experienced sudden and dramatic vision loss, which resulted in her terminating a longtime career in nursing and having her mother move in to care for her.

As the primary caseworker, I made referrals to the Eye Health Nurse (EHN) and Rehabilitation Teacher (RT) and Dee and I began our work with Orientation and Mobility (O&M). During this time, though motivated to learn, Dee didn’t seem convinced that the goals we set could be achieved. With recent and almost total vision loss, the prospect of walking in her neighborhood alone to a chosen location seemed quite daunting. The idea of traveling via Access Link or bus to a location outside her neighborhood was even less tangible. Dee participated in our lessons, but her heart wasn’t quite in it, as though fear was holding her back.

Then Dee attended the Senior Hands On Retreat Experience (SHORE) program. The week she spent there seems to have changed everything. Dee shared her time in the company of folks who are living a similar experience. New techniques and technologies were discovered, and everyone was independent and doing for themselves. I think Dee gained a new perspective of life after vision loss; a picture of autonomy and productivity. Yesterday I met with Dee and she was reflecting on the SHORE program. She told me that the idea of attending a day program or going to a senior center never appealed to her. She wants to work. Regarding SHORE, Dee said, “If you’re not sure how to continue to be productive and give back to the community, this program helps to get you started.”

Where do you think she’s headed next? (SHORE), Dee sought out VR through (ILOB) caseworkers. She is particularly interested in the program offered at the JKTC. She is very excited about her options for moving forward with her life. This week, she applied for Access Link services. She is much more spirited during (O&M) lessons, and has achieved the goal of walking to church independently in a short period of time. Perhaps the highlight of the week was a phone call she received from her former employer, stating that Dee is valued there and they hope to get her to come back.

Thanks for taking the time to read a little bit about a woman who not only appreciates our services but is also completely invested in applying them to her best advantage. Her story has only just begun.

# Northern Region – John Reiff, Manager

NSR welcomes Vocational Assistant, Nkechi Onukogu, who will function as a key member of our First Point of Contact team that handles referrals to the agency.

# New or Noteworthy

**The Work of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind by Lydia Young Hayes**

(Testimony to the NJ Legislature – Continued from the May *Commission Edition*)

“The Legislature of 1913 granted tuition and a reader to each worthy blind student desiring a college education, but made no appropriation for its execution.

During 1912, five blind teachers have given 4,247 lessons to 248 blind persons at the pupils' homes throughout the State and have worked in eighteen counties, leaving only Hunterdon, Sussex and Somerset as yet without help.

These lessons have been in reading and writing the various embossed types, knitting, crocheting, hand and machine sewing, raffia and reed basketry, chair seating, hammock making, and weaving on hand looms. Many messages have come to headquarters from all parts of the state, expressing the pleasure and profit received by the blind from the home teachers. One woman notices a marked improvement in her health over the previous year. Another, hearing of a man recently blinded, would not rest nor give the man or his family any peace till he, too, applied for the services of a home teacher. The relatives of other blind persons have expressed gratitude for the suggested ways of helping the blind. So we are assured that the home teachers are, by example and precept, training their pupils to recognize the sweetness of adversity, and helping transform an "Enchainment into an Enchantment." All are gaining a deeper insight into the truth of the power of the endless life, and all realize more fully that each has the ability to further or retard the happiness of those about him.

The privilege of work is everything in the intellectual and spiritual development. The world may not need any man's work, but the man needs it. He expands under its difficulties and problems, his faculties grow alert, his perceptions become sensitive. With the hope that the blind might be encouraged to produce salable work, Mrs. Sarah J. Churchill, of Montclair, raised a fund with which to pay for such work when completed. This fund enabled us to employ a blind stenographer for twenty weeks. The balance, together with further donations and reimbursements from sales, from June 20, 1910, to the present, amounting to $1,171.83, has been disbursed among the blind throughout the state.

In order that the public may know the blind in their respective communities and become familiar with their capabilities, and also that the market for their work may be extended, addresses, demonstrations and sales of work for and by the blind have been given in sixteen different cities in New Jersey.

In these days of labor-saving machinery it is difficult even for the sighted to earn a livelihood by means of their hands. It is, therefore, impossible for those handicapped by blindness to compete with the sighted and machinery in the industrial struggle. One manufacturer is putting up a high grade breakfast cocoa, which he furnishes at cost to the blind, to sell from their homes. This they may obtain from the headquarters of the Commission at 859 Broad Street, Newark, where, in connection with the office, the commission maintains a classroom, to which the adult blind come daily for instruction. Music lessons are given blind children in the Newark public schools and the work of the blind is on exhibition and sale, and orders for piano tuning and chair seating are solicited.”

[**comments**](http://www.nj.com/monmouth/index.ssf/2016/06/nj_girl_to_compete_in_national_braille_competition.html#comments)

# The Last Words

"*Never lose sight of the fact that the most important yardstick of your success in life will be how you treat people - your family, friends, coworkers, and even strangers you meet along the way."* - Barbara Bush, Former First Lady, U.S

**Please send items or suggestions for the next issue of the *Commission Edition* by or before 11 a.m., Monday, July 17, 2017:**

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