#### Dear Community Partner:

You are a valued partner in serving individuals with disabilities and, in particular, individuals with visual disabilities.

Because of our shared partnership within the community, the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) is sending this letter to inform you about some changes we are experiencing, and to open dialogue about how you and/or your agency could be impacted.

On October 1, 2018, DSB expects to implement a wait list system for all newly eligible vocational rehabilitation individuals. This is a requirement when a vocational rehabilitation program does not have adequate resources to serve all eligible individuals. Newly eligible individuals are prioritized by significance of need and functional limitations to prioritize those with most significant needs. The formal term for this wait list is “Order of Selection” or “OOS”. The agency will continue to provide comprehensive services to those individuals who are actively engaged in their current vocational plan.

Most state vocational rehabilitation agencies have implemented a similar wait list in order to manage a mandated 15% set aside from adult VR services – essentially a 15% cut in funding.

When the agency determines someone eligible for services and places their case on a wait list, DSB staff are required to provide Information & Referral services to the individual to initiate progress towards vocational goals while awaiting vocational rehabilitation services through DSB.

Our staff may potentially refer such an individual to you and your services. However, the coordination of timing for providing joint case services may prove challenging for those individual cases on the wait list. It will likely be difficult to know when a particular case might come off the wait list and be moved into planned services.

We want to actively connect any appropriate referrals to you, and explore with you the best method for that. Other people may find you independent of us while on the wait list. It would be good in each case to check in and determine if the person has already applied for services at DSB. If yes, it can save the person from feeling bounced back and forth among us; if no, they might benefit by getting their application in as soon as possible in order to come off the wait list sooner.

DSB staff can continue to act as a resource for you, and provide information and/or referrals to assist your work with an individual with a visual disability.

We want to collect any questions you might have, and develop a strong process to streamline connections for individuals on the wait list. Please feel free to contact us at info@dsb.wa.gov or 1-800-552-7103 at any time and with any questions. We will be glad to meet in person or via phone to give the information you need and explore best options for potential referral situations.

You can find a more detailed explanation of Order of Selection, and how the agency’s services are impacted, on the DSB website at <https://dsb.wa.gov/about/order-selection-information.shtml>. There will be an opportunity to provide public comment on Tuesday August 14th at 4:30 PM at DSB Seattle offices or conference call 1-855-929-3239 (access code 802 180 864).

We at DSB really appreciate your passion and work that aligns with our mission of Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Vitality for People with Visual Disabilities. We have a heavy heart that a wait list is necessary at this time, and appreciate all we can do, with your assistance, to make the experience for the individual as positive and streamlined as possible.

Thank you so much

Lou Oma Durand

Executive Director, Department of Services for the Blind