

NYC Youth and Vision Loss Coalition

General Handbook

An Introduction to Services and the
Service Systems for Youth Who Are Blind,
Visually Impaired or Multi-Disabled in
New York City

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1. Preface

This General Handbook and four additional age-specific handbooks have been created to help young people and their parents, caregivers, and guardians gain a better understanding of their vision loss and the services available to meet their needs. Often, parents/guardians are distressed by their child's vision loss and may begin to treat it like the elephant in the room or never discussing it. With this handbook, we hope to assist you in feeling more comfortable speaking on topics from low vision, blindness and multiple disabilities where vision loss is also present. People have different feelings and experiences when describing or coping with vision loss. In this overview, we will provide you with some background to help you better understand vision loss and move forward.

Some children are born with little or no vision, this is considered congenital vision loss or congenital blindness, respectively. Anyone who loses vision after the age of one are considered to have adventitious vision loss. The New York State definition of legal blindness is 20/200 acuity in the better eye with standard correction (while wearing prescription glasses) or less than 20 degrees of visual field in the better eye. The scope or amount of vision loss can be very different in each child. With this definition, two children may function in different ways: one might see nothing, while the other sees nearly everything. The legal definition is based only on acuity and visual field. It is an arbitrary threshold created to establish eligibility for government benefits. It does not consider contrast sensitivity (the ability to see the difference between an object and its background), sensitivity to glare, or daytime versus nighttime vision. Optometrists (ODs) and ophthalmologists (MDs) can measure the extent and type of vision loss, including contrast and glare sensitivity. Vision is also affected by the child's ability to perceive subtle differences and so is unique to that child. A full description of eye care professionals can be found in the section on Terms and Acronyms.

One type of vision loss that can be more difficult to diagnose in young people is **Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)**. CVI is currently among the fastest growing types of visual impairments. It is a condition that indicates that the visual systems of the brain do not consistently understand and interpret what the eyes see. CVI is caused by a neurological problem affecting the visual part of the brain. One reason CVI is difficult to diagnose is because the young person may be able to read an eye chart during a vision screening. Since the damage is not in the eye itself, the eye will appear "normal" during regular pediatric examinations. This is partly because research has enabled us to understand so much more about the relationship between the eyes and the brain, so the condition is now identified more often. Read more about CVI at: http://tech.aph.org/cvi/?page_id=1175.

All babies and young children should receive a comprehensive vision evaluation prior to and periodically throughout the pre-K and school years. Often it is the parent or guardian who notices that one eye may not focus as well as the other (or "a lazy eye"), frequent blinking, an inability to focus, looking closely at objects, or lack of attention to

bright or flashing lights. Any observations like these should immediately be assessed by an eye care professional.

2. Background

The schools and organizations providing services for those who are visually impaired are aware of the number of young people whose vision is misclassified or who, as a result of multiple disabilities have never received proper vision services. To address this issue, a meeting of interested stakeholders was held by VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired in the offices of The New York Community Trust on November 1, 2013. As a result of that meeting and the generous start-up grants from the New York Community Trust and JP Morgan Chase-Sarah K. de Coizart Trust, the ***New York City Youth and Vision Loss Coalition*** was formed.

The mission of the Coalition is to work toward the improvement of services for young people with vision loss from birth to 21 years, and the dissemination of that information to caregivers. As well as offering assistance in navigating the maze mandated federal, state and city legislation.

The NYC Youth and Vision Loss Coalition membership includes nonprofit agencies, schools, organizations, service providers, consumer groups, individuals, youth with vision loss, and parents/guardians of children with vision loss. These members include but are not limited to:

- American Council of the Blind of New York
- Art Beyond Sight
- Artist/Met Museum Educator
- Bronx Independent Living Services
- Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled
- Catholic Guild for the Blind
- Children's Vision Coalition
- City Access New York
- Dominican College
- Greater NY Council of the Blind
- Harlem Independent Living Center
- Helen Keller International
- Helen Keller Services for the Blind
- Hunter College
- Include NYC,
- Lavelle Fund for the Blind
- Lavelle School for the Blind
- Metropolitan Museum of Art
- National Family Association for Deaf-Blind
- National Federation of the Blind NY

- New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative (NYDBC)
- New York Institute for Special Education
- New York Parents of Blind Children
- New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) Executive Board
- Parent to Parent NY, Inc.
- Staten Island Special Education Parent Center
- Parent to Parent of NYS
- Reader's Digest Partners for Sight
- Staten Island Center for Independent Living
- SUNY College of Optometry
- VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- Youth who are blind or have vision loss, and parents of children with vision loss

The Coalition is always happy to welcome new partners!

Another goal of the coalition is to work with the community and provider agencies to create this General Information Handbook and four additional handbooks: *Youth and Vision Loss*, *Early Intervention*, *Preschool*, *School Age and Transition*. The Coalition will continue to research, compile, and make available an extensive list of resources for youth with vision loss and the parents of those youth. It will also continue to reach out to parents, young people, community leaders, additional organizations, and agencies for collaboration and partnership in moving the mission of the coalition forward. The purpose of these handbooks is to provide you, youth with vision loss and caregivers, with the information and resources to assist you in finding your personal path to success. We hope that youth who are visually impaired will live, learn, and understand that success comes from their hard work, values, and their own high expectations for themselves. Please note, handbooks will be updated as new information is gathered and will be available free of charge on the VISIONS website.

3. Brief History of Rehabilitation/Education for the Blind

People who are blind have been receiving rehabilitation services in conjunction with their education in one form or another since 1784 when the first school for the blind opened in Paris, France. Times have changed since the mid-19th century when the movement to open specialized schools for blind children swept this nation.

To aid in the teaching of blind students, in 1879 the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) (www.aph.org) in Louisville, Kentucky was named by the Congress of the United States to be the provider of braille books to schools. This is a service that still provides today, more commonly known by the modern term, Quota Funding; read more at www.aph.org). Today, APH has expanded its service to include not only braille textbooks, but a wide range of adaptive materials and equipment.

The naming of Braille as the universal code sparked the War of the Dots in 1920; it was opposed, primarily, by a group working to create another tactile system entitled New York Point. In spite in of this "war", Braille has remained the standard for tactual reading and writing; to learn more go to www.afb.org/warofthedots/bookasp). Nonetheless, it continues to undergo changes. The most recent change is called UEB (Unified English Braille Code), this uses new codes that are designed to enhance a braille reader's understanding of formatting and font differences in a print document; read more at www.brailleauthority.org/ueb.html.

Schools for blind children were first established in the mid-19th-century. The first two schools established here in New York City were the New York Institute for Special Education (1832) (<http://www.nyise.org>), and the Lavelle School for the Blind (1904) (<http://www.lavelleschool.org>). And while these schools are still active today, many more have been established over the years.

Many of the techniques first developed in these schools have been refined over the years and were developed into an Expanded Core Curriculum or ECC. The ECC consists of nine components that encourage and enable blind and visually impaired students to learn the skills and knowledge usually acquired incidentally through visual stimulation and interaction. It has also been modified to be taught in conjunction with the Standard Core Curriculum as students move through the educational system. Additionally, it provides a concrete set of verbal or hands-on instructions with the goal of teaching youth what they cannot see: body language, social interaction, concepts of space and color, as well as sports and physical exercise. The common term referenced within much of the evidence-based research on the ECC is "Incidental Learning" which is the ability to learn from seeing or learning through sight. Visit on the ECC: www.pathstoliteracy.org/expanded-core-curriculum. Read more at: www.eccadvocacy.org.

The nine areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) instruction are:

- **Compensatory Skills**
Skills include concept development and organizational skills as well as communication such as speaking and listening, sign language (if applicable), tactile symbols, braille or print reading and writing, and accessing recorded materials
- **Orientation and Mobility**
Helping a child to know where they are in space and to move safely, independently, and efficiently in the environment
- **Social Interaction**
Skills needed to participate actively and appropriately in social situations
- **Independent Living**
Daily living skills needed to care for oneself independently, including personal hygiene, food preparation, cleaning, clothing care, and money management
- **Recreation and Leisure**
Promoting the enjoyment of leisure activities, including learning new leisure activities and making appropriate choices about how to spend leisure time

- **Sensory Efficiency**
Helping students to use all their senses, including functional vision, hearing, touch, taste and smell
- **Assistive Technology**
Skills to use computers, software and other electronic equipment to function independently and effectively at school, home or work
- **Career Education**
Encouraging students to explore career options and learn about the world of work
- **Self-Determination**
Enabling students to become effective advocates for themselves based on their own needs and goals.

3. 1. Rehabilitation Services

In 1913, the New York State Commission for the Blind or NYSCB (<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb/Default.asp>) was established as New York's registry of people who are blind. The Smith-Fess Act of 1920 expanded the provision of federally funded vocational rehabilitation services from veterans to the civilian population and, because New York State already had the NYSCB in place, its scope was expanded to include providing rehabilitation services as well as remaining the custodian of the eye registry. In its early years, the Commission only served people from ages 18 to 65. ***Today, services are provided from birth to death.***

Starting at age 3, legally blind children are eligible to receive Pre-K services from public and private schools. As they get older, the Commission continues to aid youth in becoming successful adults through rehabilitation services (such as social work, orientation and mobility, and vision rehabilitation therapy), prevocational and pre-college programs, work experience training internships, and short-term after school or summer career awareness programs.

After a child has turned 10, the Commission will begin to use federal dollars to fund students rather than state money. New York and Texas are the only states with approval from the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration to start VR services at age 10 whereas other states start at 14. Because of this, once legally blind youth turn 10, they are assigned to a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor at their local Commission office. For more information on this topic, visit the Commission's Transition handbook at <http://ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/pub5100.pdf>.

In 1931, the Pratt-Smoot Act was enacted by the United States Congress. It established the federal program of providing books for blind people. It created what was then known as the Division for the Blind of the Library of Congress, now the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped or the National Library Service (NLS). In New York State, there are currently two libraries providing

services for blind residents: the New York State Talking Book and Braille Library in Albany (<http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/tbbl/>) and the Andrew Heiskell Braille and Talking Book Library in Manhattan (<https://www.nypl.org/locations/heiskell>).

NLS has gone digital with the Bard (Braille and Audio Reading Download) program; you can find them at <https://nlsbard.loc.gov/login//NLS>. BARD offers people with disabilities full access to a wide range of digitally downloadable books, magazines, music, etc.

VISIONS at Selis Manor located on 23rd Street in Manhattan operates a satellite library service assisting many blind users with downloading books.

3. 2. Assistive Technology

Part of modern-day vision rehabilitation, Assistive Technology, or AT is one of the means available to level the field for youth with low or no vision. AT refers to the tools that allow an individual with vision loss to function beyond his or her visual limits. Just as singers use microphones to amplify their voices through a theater; a visually impaired person uses lenses—a form of assistive technology—to enhance their vision.

For clarity, the tools are described as "low tech" and "high tech." But in all cases, the tools listed below can help students with vision loss better achieve their goals, both personally and academically.

Low Tech: These are typically not computer-based and are meant to help blind and visually impaired youth write, take notes, read books and other hard copy documents. They include slates, styluses, braille writers, hand magnifiers, 20/20 pens (for thicker lines when writing), bold lined paper and standard digital voice recorders.

High Tech: These tools make use of digital technology. They include computers, smart phones, and tablets (including off the shelf commercial or proprietary note-takers). Some of the technologies are speech output, screen-magnification, refreshable braille displays and braille embossers, Optical Character Recognition (OCR) or scanning technology, and video magnifiers.

Parents are encouraged to become acquainted with their child's prescribed technology. Practicing together helps build skills for both while strengthening the parent-child bond and demonstrating the parent's acceptance of the child's vision loss.

Equipment used in school is the property of the DOE (Department of Education) and, therefore, must be returned at the end of each school year. Prior to graduation, however, students are encouraged to meet with their Commission Counselors. This meeting will ensure that the student has continued access to the technology that will help them remain successful throughout postsecondary schooling, training, or employment.

3. 3. Advocacy

The National Federation for the Blind, or NFB (www.nfb.org) was founded in 1940, as an organization that promotes independence for blind people of all ages. The New York State Chapter of NFB has a local affiliate in New York City. They also have a group for parents called Parents of Blind Children. Parents of Blind Children of NY (POBCNY) is an affiliate of the parent's division of the National Federation of the Blind.

The American Council of the Blind, or ACB, (www.acb.org) was established in 1961 as an advocacy organization. They strive to increase the independence, security, equality of opportunity, and quality of life for all blind and visually impaired people. The mission is carried out locally by the New York Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind of New York (ACBNY) (www.acbny.org) and the Greater New York Council of the Blind, a chapter of ACBNY based in New York City.

The National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments NAPVI is an affiliate of Lighthouse Guild. Their main office is located in New York.

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB) is the largest national nonprofit organization serving the deaf-blind community.

4. Laws

Because the history of the laws and regulations governing the rights of people with disabilities span many years, we have chosen to focus on the laws from the 1970s to the present. Over that span of roughly 45 years, ground breaking laws were enacted that created equal access to the public and education systems and offered increased opportunities for all people with disabilities.

4. 1. Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 introduced the well-known Section 504. This part of the act provides for the civil rights of people with disabilities through prohibition of discrimination against qualified individuals by any entity receiving federal funding. Within Section 504, the regulations require all public school districts to provide a Free Appropriate Public Education, or FAPE, to each qualified student, regardless of the nature or severity of their disability. If you, the caregiver, choose a 504 plan, a written plan is developed to ensure the child receives accommodations that will provide full access to the education program). The document assures compliance of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and developed by a team of individuals that may consist of the student with a disability (if appropriate), the student's caregiver, teacher(s), counselor, and the 504 coordinator.

504 Plans ensure that students with disabilities receive timely and appropriate accommodations. It also provides for educators with information about the specific

needs of their students with disabilities and practical strategies they can incorporate into to assist students. Examples of accommodations include but are not limited to wheelchair-accessible facilities, adjustable-height tables, braille or large-print reading materials, and increased time to complete assignments and tests; read more about 504 Plans at: <https://ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.

4. 2. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1990) had its beginning in 1975 as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. It is a federal law that governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services for all children with disabilities. It also addresses the educational needs of children with disabilities from birth to age 18 or 21 in the following specified categories:

1. *Autism*
2. *Deafness*
3. *Deaf-Blindness*
4. *Emotional Disturbance*
5. *Hearing Impairment*
6. *Learning Disability*
7. *Intellectual Disability*
8. *Multiple Disabilities*
9. *Orthopedic Impairment*
10. *Other Health Impairment*
11. *Speech or Language Impairment*
12. *Traumatic Brain Injury*
13. *Visual Impairment*

IDEA—in addition to providing a Free Appropriate Public Education—offers resources for the provisions of, or the lack of, supports and services in accordance with the Individual Education Program, or IEP. However, the ultimate responsibility for knowing and understanding the IEP process falls on the parents or guardians. The IEP

is a legal document that mandates the supports and services while setting goals and milestones for the student to strive for.

You should view the IEP as a contract between the family, the school and the school district. In it, the education system agrees to provide various supports and services. One example is the provision of mobility training by a certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. This agreed upon service cannot be substituted by a different professional such as a travel trainer or a paraprofessional. Another example is the provision of TVI services at least once a week. If one isn't already on staff, it is the school's responsibility to coordinate with Educational Vision Services (EVS) to employ a TVI. If you believe that the student is not receiving the services listed in the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan) in Early Intervention or IEP for preschool through high school graduation, it's always best to ask questions. The IFSP/IEP is a powerful tool and can assist you, the student, and appropriate school officials when properly written and implemented. There are organizations that can teach you about the IFSP or IEP and guide you if you feel your child's needs are not being met.

An unfortunate aspect of IDEA is the required categorization of the student into only one of the thirteen disabilities listed above. Often, children have more than one disability. IDEA forces the school, parents and guardians to choose one disability as primary with no opportunity to choose a second or third disability. An example might be a child who has Autism and is blind or has a traumatic brain injury and has low vision. Which disability is more severe? Which disability receives better or more comprehensive services? Who will make the decision as to which disability will be primary? These are questions confronting parents and teachers today. There is one category for multiple disabilities, but that often does not guarantee the receipt of the right supports and services for all the differing needs of the student, especially if vision loss is one of several disabilities.

Students with disabilities who qualify for special education are also automatically protected by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (see next section). However, all modifications that can be provided under Section 504 (see the section on Rehabilitation Act of 1973) or the ADA can be provided under the IDEA if included in the student's IEP.

4. 3. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA, (www.ada.gov) gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities that are equal to those provided for individuals based on race, gender, national origin, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications. Because all young people have the right to a free, public education, it can be considered a government service under the ADA and therefore must be accessible to people with disabilities.

The unfortunate aspect of the ADA and Section 504 is that they are difficult to apply. The enforcement entity for these federal laws is the US Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division. Filing a complaint can sometimes take long periods of time to work its way through the system and this method removes one's right of action to file a lawsuit. A lawsuit is the other means of enforcing the right to avoid discrimination under the ADA, Section 504 or IDEA. A lawsuit may take many months or years to be settled and can be costly. Using the IEP and enforcing it under IDEA may be the best option with regards to education as it was designed with education in mind.

U.S. Department of Justice: The Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section offers an extensive question and answer fact sheet with numerous resources for ADA related information at: <https://www.ada.gov/childqanda.htm>.

5. NY State and City Specific Laws

5. 1. Chapter 377 (2002)

Effective April 21, 2002, Chapter 377 of the Laws of 2001 required every school district and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services, or BOCES, (www.boces.org) to develop a plan to ensure that all instructional materials used in schools of the district—or in a BOCES program—are available in an alternate format for every disabled student, in accordance with his or her individual needs, at the same time that such materials are available to non-disabled students. The plan must include a procurement policy that ensures that preference in the purchase of instructional material the school has selected for its students is given to those vendors who agree to provide such material in alternate formats.

5. 2. Section 219 (2004)

Section 219 is an act to amend the education law in relation to instructional materials for students with disabilities. This law concerns disabled college students and the formats they use to access printed materials. These amendments set forth the requirement that the college make available any and all print material being used within all classes in alternate formats. The college's accessibility office can assist in meeting each student's individual needs. For example, students can work with this office by acquiring the syllabi to their classes as early as possible and providing the office with a list of required texts. They will have resources for providing the books in alternative formats.

See Chapter 219 NYSED law at:
<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/publications/persprep/chap219.htm>

5. 3. Blind Student's Literacy Rights and Education Act (1999)

The Blind Student's Literacy Rights and Education Act requires the Department of Education to make provisions for instruction in braille and the use of braille unless the IEP team determines, upon evaluation of the child, that such instruction is not appropriate. Additionally, it sets standards of competency and instruction for the blind or visually impaired child. Finally, it requires teachers certified in the education of blind and visually impaired children to demonstrate competence in reading and writing braille. The passage and the implementation of this law into the New York State education laws are consistent with IDEA as stated by Melody Musgrove, Ed. D and Michael K. Yudin, the Director of Office of Special Education Programs and Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services respectively, in their June 19, 2013 "Dear Colleague" Letter. Read the letter at:
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/guidance-on-fape-11-17-2015.pdf>

This law requires that braille be taught to students who are blind unless deemed inappropriate after a full assessment of the student's needs and ability has been considered.

5. 4. Goals and Expectations (Age group specific handbooks)

As stated above, this handbook is the introduction to four additional handbooks that will provide information and perspectives on the educational and developmental milestones and goals for youth with vision loss. In the four additional handbooks, we provide parents, guardians, and young people with useful information on agency services and how these services can be accessed. Consumers or workers within the field of blindness are providing this information. They know the system firsthand. Your questions may not be the same as the ones included in the handbooks, but we hope that sharing this background information will help you move forward knowing that you are not alone, and that help is available.

6. Resources

In doing the research for the handbooks, we found information that was published less than a year ago but already out of date. And, although we have done our due diligence to provide the latest data and resources available, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of its information. Therefore, whenever possible, we have made every attempt to include a webpage or URL address providing you with access to our source. As you find updated or more accurate information, please let us know so that we can update the handbooks.

6. 1. Government Agencies

Below are government agencies that provide funding for community services for people who are legally blind or with functional vision loss.

New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB)

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb/>

NYSCB was established in 1913 to create and retain a list of blind people in New York State and to provide rehabilitation services for blind persons seeking employment. NYSCB's present day mission is to assist and ensure that the quality of life for New York State residents—ages 3 and older—meet the criteria of legal blindness. Their offices are listed below:

Manhattan

80 Maiden Lane 23rd Floor
New York, NY 10038
Telephone: (212) 825-5710
Serves all five boroughs (VR only)

Hempstead

50 Clinton Street, Suite 208
Hempstead, NY 11550
Telephone: (516) 564-4311
Fax: (516) 292-7448
Serves: Nassau, Suffolk, Queens (VR and Independent Living Only)

Harlem

163 West 125th Street, Room 209
New York, NY 10027
Telephone: (212) 961-4440
Serves: Manhattan and the Bronx

Queens Outstation

Telephone: (718) 557-8871

Adult Career and Continuing Education Services — Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR)

ACCES-VR, formerly known as VESID, provides vocational rehabilitation services to prepare people with disabilities for employment. Individuals must apply and be found eligible in order to receive services from the agency. Your child's Transition Linkage Coordinator * (TLC), Transition Counselor, Guidance Counselor or other school personnel should help them apply to ACCES-VR if and only if they are not entering NYSCB as a registered consumer of services.

ACCES-VR offers a variety of programs to help students prepare for employment including job training, payment for post-secondary education, supportive employment, and competitive employment. In addition, ACCES-VR can help your child develop independent living skills. Sheltered employment (also known as sheltered workshop) under a 14c certificate from the Department of Labor is a placement of last resort according to federal law. Sheltered workshop placements are permitted to pay less than minimum wage. For more information, visit: <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr> (or the NYS Department of Labor website (see below.)

Department of Labor (DOL)

The mission of the New York State Department of Labor is to protect workers, assist people who are unemployed, and connect job seekers to jobs. The Department of Labor administers state and federal laws and regulations. Learn more about the DOL at: <https://www.labor.ny.gov/home>.

New York City Department of Health

NYCDOH is responsible for public health, issuing dog licenses, birth and death certificates. They also offer up to date information affecting people with disabilities. Visit the NYCDOH website at www.nyc.gov/health.

New York City Department of Education

NYCDOE offers free, public education from Pre-K to 12th grade; the NYCDOE website can be found at <http://schools.nyc.gov/default.html>.

New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)

<http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/>

OCFS is dedicated to improving the integration of services for New York's children, youth, families, and vulnerable populations by promoting their development; and to protecting them from violence, neglect, abuse and abandonment. The agency provides a system of family support, juvenile justice, childcare services, and child welfare services that promote the safety and well-being of children and adults. Among the operating principles across all program areas are that services should be developmentally appropriate, family-centered, family-driven, community-based, locally responsive, and evidence and outcome based.

OCFS is responsible for programs and services involving foster care, adoption and adoption assistance, child protection services including operating the Statewide Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment, preventive services for children and families, services for pregnant adolescents, and protective programs for vulnerable adults. OCFS is also responsible for the administration and oversight of the functions performed by the New York State Commission for the Blind. OCFS coordinates state government responses to the needs of Native Americans on reservations and in communities.

The agency provides oversight and monitoring of regulated child care (family day care, group family day care, school-age child care and day care centers outside of

NYC), legally exempt child care, child care subsidies, child care resource and referrals, the Advantage After School Program, and provides services and programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children and their families.

New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH)

New York State has a large, multi-faceted mental health system that serves more than 700,000 individuals each year. The Office of Mental Health (OMH) operates psychiatric centers across the State, and regulates, certifies and oversees more than 4,500 programs which are operated by local governments and nonprofit agencies. These programs include various inpatient and outpatient programs, emergency, community support, and residential and family care programs.

For questions about mental health services, to find a mental health service provider, or to make a complaint, call OMH Customer Relations toll-free at 1 (800) 597-8481 or visit: <http://www.omh.ny.gov/index.html>.

New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)

www.opwdd.ny.gov

The New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities, or OPWDD, is responsible for coordinating services for more than 126,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Downs Syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, and other neurological impairments. It provides services directly and through a network of approximately 700 nonprofit service-providing agencies, with about 80 percent of services provided by the private nonprofits and 20 percent by state-run services.

Supports and services, which include Medicaid funded long-term care services such as habilitation and clinical services, as well as residential supports and services, are primarily provided in community settings across the state. Largely because of intensive treatment needs, about 1,200 people (down from approximately 30,000 in the 1970s) continue to reside in institutional settings such as developmental centers, secure facilities, and residential schools for children jointly operated by OPWDD and the New York State Education Department. In addition to these Medicaid services, OPWDD also provides New York State-funded family support services, which are designed to assist families in providing care for their loved ones who live full-time in their family home, and employment supports, which include ongoing job coaching, job matching, and vocational training.

Social Security Administration (SSA)

www.ssa.gov

1(800) 772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778)

Social Security delivers a broad range of services online at (www.socialsecurity.gov) and through a nationwide network of over 1,400 offices that include regional offices, field offices, card centers, tele-service centers, processing centers, hearing offices, the Appeals Council, State and territorial partners, and Disability Determination Services.

Children from birth up to age 18 may get Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. They must be disabled and have little or no income and resources. Social Security has a strict definition of disability for children: The child must have a physical or mental condition that very seriously limits his or her activities; and the condition(s) must have lasted, or be expected to last, at least 1 year or result in death. Learn more at: <http://www.ssa.gov/disability/disabilitystarterkitschildeng.htm>.

6. 2. NYC Vision Rehabilitation Nonprofit Service Providers

Catholic Guild for the Blind
1011 First Avenue, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10022
T: (212) 371-1011
www.archny.org

Helen Keller Services for the Blind
57 Willoughby Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
T: (718) 522-2122
F: (718) 935-9463
E-Mail: info@helenkeller.org
www.helenkeller.org

Lighthouse Guild International
15 West 65th Street
New York, NY 10023
T: (212) 769-6200
Toll Free: (800) 284-4422
www.lighthouseguild.org

VISIONS/ Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
500 Greenwich St., 3rd Fl.
New York, NY 10013
T: (212) 625-1616
Toll Free: (888) 245-8333
F: (212) 219-4078
E-Mail: info@visionsvcb.org
www.visionsvcb.org

Blindline (www.blindline.org- A NYS information and referral website and center staffed by blind interns (888) 625-1616

National Association of Parents of Children with Visual Impairments (NAPVI): NAPVI, a nonprofit, national membership organization established in 1980, helps parents find information and locate resources for their children who are blind or visually impaired and who may have additional disabilities. They advocate locally and on a national level for

the resources necessary to educate children with vision loss. Learn more at:
www.lighthouseguild.org/napvi

Parents of Blind Children of New York

The POBCNY is a parent advocacy group working to improve the lives of blind children within the State of New York. Their mission is to elevate the quality of education for blind children, to affect their children's access to services, to create opportunities in theater and the arts, in sports and recreation and to raise the level of expectations that those around them have of their children. The children served vary in their degree of vision and often have additional disabilities. Learn more at: www.pobcny.blogspot.com

6. 3. Youth and Vision Loss Coalition Members

American Council of the Blind of New York (ACBNY)
104 Tilrose Avenue
Malverne, NY 11565
(800) 522-3303
www.acbny.org

Art Beyond Sight/Education for the Blind
589 Broadway, 3rd floor
New York, NY 10012
(212) 334-8720
www.artbeyondsight.org

Brooklyn Center for Independence of the Disabled (BCID)
27 Smith Street, 2nd Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 998-3000
www.bcid.org

Bronx Independent Living Services
4419 Third Avenue
Bronx, NY 10457
(718) 515-2800
www.bils.org

Catholic Guild for the Blind
1011 First Avenue, 6th floor
New York, NY 10022
(212) 371-1011
www.catholiccharitiesny.org

City Access New York
1207 Castleton Avenue

Staten Island, NY 10310
(718) 285-6548
www.cityaccessny.org

Dominican College
470 Western Hwy
Orangeburg, NY 10962
(845) 359-7800
www.dc.edu

Harlem Independent Living Center
289 St. Nicholas Avenue, suite 21
New York, NY 10027
(212) 222-7122
www.hilc.org

Helen Keller International
352 Park Avenue, 12th floor
New York, NY 10010
(212) 532-0544
www.hki.org

Helen Keller Services for the Blind
57 Willoughby Street
Brooklyn, NY 11201
(718) 522-2122
www.helenkeller.org

Hunter College
695 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10065
(212) 772-4000
www.hunter.cuny.edu

Lavelle Fund for the Blind
307 West 38th Street, Suite 2010
New York, NY 10018
www.lavellefund.org

Lavelle School for the Blind
3830 Paulding Avenue
Bronx, NY 10469
www.lavelleschool.org

Metropolitan Museum of Art
1000 5th Avenue

New York, NY 10028
(212) 535-7710
www.metmuseum.org

Modest Community Services
88 New Dorp Plaza, Suite 306
Staten Island, NY 10306
(718) 516-5444
www.modestservices.org

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB)
141 Middle Neck Road
Sands Point, NY 11050
1 (800) 255-0411
<https://nfadb.org/>

National Federation of the Blind New York (NFBNY)
471 63rd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11220
(718) 567-7821
www.nfbny.org

New York Deaf Blind Collaborative (NYDBC)
Queens College
65-30 Kissena Blvd, KP 325
Queens, NY 11565
(718) 997-4856
<http://www.qc.cuny.edu/community/nydbc/>

NY Institute for Special Education
999 Pelham Pkwy
Bronx, NY 10469
(718) 519-7000
www.nyise.org

Parents of Blind Children of NY
(POBCNY)
471 63rd Street
Brooklyn, NY 11220
(718) 567-7821
www.pobcny.blogspot.com

Parent to Parent NY, Inc.
S.I. Special Education Parent Center

Institute for Basic Research
1050 Forest Hill Road
Staten Island, NY 10314
(718) 494-4872
Fax: (718) 494-4805
<http://parenttoparentnys.org/offices/new-york-city/>
<http://parenttoparentnys.org/offices/long-island/>

Readers Digest Partners for Sight
100 South Bedford Road
Mount Kisco, NY 10549
(800) 877-5293
www.partnersforsight.org

SUNY College of Optometry
33 W. 42nd Street
New York, NY 10036
(212) 938-4000
www.sunyopt.edu

VISIONS/ Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
500 Greenwich St., 3rd Fl.
New York, NY 10013
(212) 625-1616
www.visionsvcb.org

6. 4. Books and Literature

National Library Services (NLS)
www.loc.gov/nls

Andrew Heiskell Library
www.nypl.org/locations/heiskell

Learning Ally
www.learningally.org

Bookshare
www.bookshare.org

Audible
www.audible.com

6. 5. Tools and Equipment for Living

American Printing House for the Blind (APH)
www.aph.org

Independent Living Aids
www.independentliving.com

MaxiAids
www.maxiaids.com

LS&S
www.lssproducts.com

General Resources

American Foundation for the Blind
Information, publications, training webinars, directory
www.afb.org

Blindline
www.blindline.org
(888) 625-1616

Vision Aware website
www.visionaware.org

7. Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Early Intervention (EI): is a program for babies and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Children must be under the age of 3 years old with an established developmental delay or confirmed disability as defined by the State.

Early Intervention Service Coordinator (EISC): assists the family with developing the right plan for their child.

Educational Vision Services (EVS): part of the NYC Department of Education; they provide instruction in utilizing braille, Nemeth Code, large print, optical and non-optical low vision devices and other skills that are necessary to attain academic, social, vocational, and life adjustment skills, and literacy and acquisition of information using tactile, visual, and auditory strategies.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): a required component of IDEA, FAPE mandates that school districts provide access to general education and specialized educational services. It also requires that children with disabilities receive support free of charge as is provided to non-disabled students. It also provides access to general education services for children with disabilities by encouraging that support and related services be provided to children in their general education settings as much as possible.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): the national law that provides children with disabilities access to Special Education Programs prescribed under Federal Law.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): the IEP spells out the child's individual needs and goals for the school year while documenting and describing the supports and services the child will receive throughout each school year.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP): documents and guides the early intervention process for children with disabilities and their families. The IFSP is the vehicle through which effective early intervention is implemented in accordance with Part C of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE): a written plan which describes the youth's employment goal and the steps the youth will take to achieve that goal. This document is similar to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) the youth might have had during the primary and secondary education process. The IPE is developed in accordance with the interests and abilities of each youth and reflects their choices in identifying an employment goal and the services to be provided to enable them to reach their goals. It may be helpful for the youth, as well as parents or guardians, to learn more about vocational rehabilitation services, different types of employment, and their own capabilities before the plan is written.

New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB): The mission of NYSCB is to enhance employability, maximize independence and assist in the development of the strengths and capabilities of legally blind people of all ages. (www.ocfs.ny.gov/main/cb)

New York City Department of Health (NYCDOH): responsible for public health, issuing dog licenses, and birth and death certificates. They also offer up to date information for people with disabilities. (www.nyc.gov/health)

New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE): Offers free, public education from Pre-K to 12th grade. (www.schools.nyc.gov)

New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH): promotes the mental health and wellbeing of all New Yorkers. Their mission is to facilitate recovery for adults receiving treatment for serious mental illness, to support children and families in their social and emotional development and early identification and treatment of serious emotional disturbances, and to improve the capacity of communities across New York to achieve these goals. (www.omh.ny.gov)

New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD): responsible for coordinating services for more than 126,000 New Yorkers with developmental disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, Downs syndrome, autism spectrum disorders, and other neurological impairments. It provides services directly and through a network of approximately 700 nonprofit service providing agencies, with about 80 percent of services provided by the private nonprofits and 20 percent by state-run services. (www.opwdd.ny.gov)

Optician: a person trained in filling prescriptions for eyeglasses, determining the proper eyeglass frames, and adjusting frames for proper fit. In some states, opticians may be licensed to fit contact lenses. Opticians often work closely within the same location as an optometrist or ophthalmologist or may also have their own independent practice.

Optometrist: A Doctor of Optometry (O.D.). To become an optometrist, one must complete pre-professional undergraduate college education followed by 4 years of professional education in a college of optometry. In optometrist school, the student receives education primarily about the eyes and receives a comprehensive education regarding the rest of the body and systemic disease processes. The graduate is then eligible to become licensed by a state as an optometrist. Some optometrists do further postgraduate residency in a subspecialty of optometry such as low vision rehabilitation, primary eye care, geriatric optometry, pediatric optometry, family eye care, contact lenses, sports vision, or vision therapy. There is one school of optometry in NYS located in New York City on West 42nd Street, SUNY College of Optometry. (www.aoa.org)

Ophthalmologist: a medical doctor who specializes in eye and vision care. In order to become an ophthalmologist, acquisition of an M.D. or a D.O. (doctor of osteopathy) degree is necessary following the completion of college. After 4 years of medical school and a year of internship in general medicine, every ophthalmologist spends a minimum of 3 years in a university and hospital-based residency specializing in ophthalmology. During residency, the eye M.D. receives special training in all aspects of eye care, including prevention, diagnosis, and medical and surgical treatment of eye conditions and diseases. (www.aao.org)

Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS): teach people who are blind or visually impaired the skills and concepts they need in order to travel independently and safely, indoors and outdoors, at home, in the school, at a worksite, in a classroom, and/or in the community. Certification is available through the national Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals ACVREP. There currently is no NYS licensure for O&M professionals so it is important to ask if the O&M specialist is certified. (www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/orientationmobility-specialist.html)

Occupational Therapist (OT): NYS licensed health care professional who assist patients of all ages with disabilities and chronic health conditions, so they can participate in all activities of daily life as independently as possible. (www.aota.org)

Physical Therapist (PT): NYS licensed health care professional who help patients improve or restore mobility and physical function. Physical therapists assess each individual and develop a plan, using treatment techniques to promote the ability to move, reduce pain, restore function, and prevent disability. In addition, PT'S work with individuals to prevent the loss of mobility before it occurs by developing fitness- and wellness-oriented programs for healthier and more active lifestyles. (www.apta.org)

Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA): a term used by the federal Social Security Administration (SSA) defined as: A person who is earning more than a certain monthly amount (net of impairment-related work expenses) is ordinarily considered to be engaging in SGA. The amount of monthly earnings considered as SGA depends on the nature of a person's disability. The Social Security Act specifies a greater SGA amount for statutorily legally blind individuals. Federal regulations specify a lower SGA amount for non-blind individuals. Both SGA amounts generally change as a reflection changes in the national average wage index.

Teacher of Children with Visual Impairment (TVI): certified by NYS. They provide educational services to students of all ages and ability levels, as well as adaptive skills needed for success inside and outside of the classroom. TVIs plan effective instruction and develop a clear understanding of the unique complex issues facing students with vision loss and their parents. (www.teachingvisuallyimpaired.com/teacher-of-students-with-visual-impairments.html)

Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (VRT): offer individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired instruction, service plans, and equipment they need to lead successful, productive, and independent lives. They provide specialized methods or adaptive techniques for efficient and effective communication, home management, medication management, leisure activities, and coping with the demands of daily living as a child, youth, or adult with vision loss.

They teach a broad sphere of communication including braille, adapted computers and software, handwriting, listening and recording technology, mathematical calculation and keyboarding. Instruction in daily living skills includes food preparation, personal management, home management, home mechanics, leisure and recreation activities, and orientation and movement in familiar indoor environments. VRT's reinforce the use of low-vision technology prescribed by the OD or ophthalmologist.

Certification is available through the national Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals ACVREP. There currently is no NYS licensure for VRT's so it is important to ask if the VRT is certified.

7. 1. Acronyms

ACB - American Council of the Blind

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

ADL - Activities of Daily Living

ADT - Assistive Technology Device

AFB - American Foundation for the Blind

AYP - Adequate Yearly Progress

CPSE - Committee on Preschool Special Education

CSE - Committee on Special Education

ECC - Expanded Core Curriculum

ECDC - Early Childhood Developmental Center

EI - Early Intervention

IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

IEP - Individual Education Plan

IFSP - Individualized Family Service Plan

IPE - Individualized Plan for Employment

NAPVI - National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments

NCEO - National Center on Educational Outcomes

NCLB - No Child Left Behind

NFADB- National Family Association for Deaf-Blind

NFB - National Federation of the Blind

NYCDOE - New York City Department of Education

NYDBC - New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative

NYSCB - New York State Commission for the Blind: (previously CBVH, NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped)

O&M- Orientation and Mobility

OPWDD- NYS Office for People with Developmental Disabilities: formally, OMRDD, Office of People with Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities

OT - Occupational Therapy

PT - Physical Therapy

SGA - Substantial Gainful Activity

SSA - Social Security Administration

SSDI - Social Security Disability Insurance

SSI - Supplemental Security Income (SSA program)

TVI - Teacher of Children with Visual Impairment

VCB - VISIONS Center on Blindness (formerly known as Vacation Camp for the Blind, program of VISIONS)

VRT - Vision Rehabilitation Therapist

7. 2. Disability Codes

The below coding is most commonly found in the legal documents: the IFSP and the IEP.

AU - Autism

Deaf - Deafness

DB - Deaf-Blind

ED - Emotional Disturbance

HI - Hearing Impairment

ID - Intellectual Disability

LD - Learning Disability

MD - Multiple Disabilities

OHI - Other Health Impairment

OI - Orthopedic Impairments

SLI - Speech or Language Impairments

TBI - Traumatic Brain Injury

VI - Visual Impairment

8. Appendix

8. 1. NYS Commission for the Blind 1913-2013

Below is a time line compiled by Ms. Susan Loeb of the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) in 2013 as she researched the history of the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB) in preparation of the Centennial Celebration.

HIGHLIGHTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE NYS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND 1913-2013

Preliminary Investigations on Blindness

- 1903- Governor Benjamin B. Odell, Jr., signed a bill providing for a three-member commission to investigate "the condition of the adult blind in New York State." The Commission study found available records unreliable and that there was a regrettable amount of unnecessary blindness.
- 1906- A second investigation committee was mandated by law to make a complete census of the blind in New York State. In the taking of this census, the Massachusetts definition of blindness was used. All persons were termed blind who..."with the aid of glasses yet were not able to distinguish form or color, to count fingers within one foot of the eye or to read writing or ordinary print." In the census, 5,308 persons were identified as blind in New York State. A recommendation was made that a Commission for the Blind be established.
- 1913- The New York State Commission for the Blind was established on April 30, 1913. It was comprised of a five member non-salaried board of commissioners. The original board had administrative functions and had the authority to appoint staff and fix their compensation. The first office of the New York State Commission for the Blind was opened on September 15, 1913 at 105 West 40th Street, New York City.
 - Mandated activities of the commission for the Blind under the 1913 Commission Act (chapter 415 of the laws of 1913) included:
 1. Maintenance of a register of the blind in New York State.

2. Maintenance of a bureau of information and industrial aid, the object of which was aiding blind persons in finding employment and teaching them trades and occupations which they would be able to follow in their homes and disposing of the products of home industry.
3. Inquiry into the causes of blindness, and inauguration and cooperation in preventive measures.
4. Investigation of the needs of blind person.

Permissive activities of the Commission for the Blind included:

1. Establishment of training schools and workshops for the employment of blind persons and payment of training and maintenance fees.
2. Amelioration of the condition of blind persons by the promotion of visits among them and teaching them in their homes.

The Commission for the Blind Community Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Services programs, which were developed later, had their earliest beginnings in 1913. Vending Stand Service also had its beginning in 1913, when the Commission field agent set up a blind man in business as a street corner news vendor and the Production and marketing service when the Commission agreed to take over the home industry department of the MATILDA ZIEGLER MAGAZINE. This function provided furnishing to blind people in their homes, at cost, such material as could be made into saleable objects.

- 1915- The Commission invited a group of well-known ophthalmologists to act as its advisory council in the formulation of policies related to prevention of blindness.
 - Workshop opportunities for blind persons in various parts of the State were enhanced by the Commission through assistance given to local agency industrial centers for the blind.
- 1916- The Commission organized an eye clinic program at Sing-Sing Prison. It continued to operate under the auspices of the commission until 1920 when responsibility for this function was passed onto the prison's medical staff.
 - The presently constituted Eye Health Service had its beginning in January of 1916 when two Social Service Nurses were added to the Commission staff for prevention of blindness work. During 1917 Commission Social Service nurses began working with local boards of education in providing sight-saving classes for groups of children with defective sight.
- 1920- A reorganization of the Commission for the Blind took place during 1920. Policies of the commission were reshaped; work of special sections was re-defined; work, which did not fit into the general scheme, was eliminated; and new branches were created. A special effort was made in this reorganization to obtain closer cooperation with local agencies for the blind throughout the state, and attempts were made to organize associations for the blind in communities where none existed. During the summer of 1920 the Commission for the Blind

conducted its first sale of articles made by blind persons in New York State at the Watermill Shop on Long Island.

- 1922- The New York State Blind Relief Act was enacted. Local communities under the supervision of the Commission gave direct financial assistance to blind persons for the Blind, which was responsible for investigating need.
- 1927- Plans were completed on July 1, 1927 whereby the New York State Commission for the Blind was made a bureau of the State Department of Charities.
- 1928- On July 1, 1928 a social department for the prevention of blindness was created by the Commission for the Blind. With the assistance of the Medical and Advisory Committee, a general program was initiated with emphasis on educational work, assistance to professional groups, and cooperation with State departments and local organizations.
- 1930- The Commission took a census of the blind persons in New York State. As of June 30, 1930, there were a total of 8,875 blind persons in the state. Of these 4,580 were New York City residents, and 4,295 resided in areas of the State outside of New York City.
- 1933- The Bureau (Commission) was made a Division of the Department (renamed the Department of Social Welfare in 1929) and the Executive Secretary became an Assistant Commissioner of the Department.
 - Professional services for preschool blind children were inaugurated by the Division for the blind with the temporary employment of a preschool educator.
 - The Division for the Blind began sponsoring a "Survey on Eye Conditions" course at the School of General Education, New York University. Later, this course was transferred to Columbia University where it was co-sponsored by the New York Institute for the Education of the Blind. The course became a required subject for teachers of the blind.
- 1935- As part of the WPA project, the United States Library of Congress manufactured several hundred Talking Book Machines for loan to blind persons throughout the country. From the initial agreement of the Division for the Blind, to be responsible for the quota allocated to New York State has grown the present-day Commission for the Blind Talking Book Machine program.
- 1937- The State Department of Social Welfare Division for the Blind was renamed "Bureau of Service for the Blind" and the chief executives title was changed from Assistant Commissioner to Director. Various activities of the bureau at the time were prevention of blindness, home teaching, finding employment for the blind persons, industrial employment in homes, stimulation of

voluntary agency workshop programs through the loan of equipment and giving of instruction, sales of article made by the blind, and investigation of applications for relief under the provisions of the Relief Act of 1922.

- 1938- The Federal Social Security Act was enacted during this year. Aid to the Blind (AB) and other public assistance programs were established in New York State as locally administered public welfare programs supervised by the State Department of Social Welfare.
- 1941- The New York State Social Welfare Law was amended to provide that the Commission for the Blind would continue to exert and perform its duties subject to the supervision and control of the State Board of Social Welfare. It continued as a bureau of the Department of Social Welfare.
- 1944- The Commission for the Blind vocational rehabilitation program was established as a Federal State program with its headquarters in Albany.
- 1945- The name of the State Department of Social Welfare Bureau of Services to the Blind was changed back to the Commission for the Blind of the New York State Department of Social Welfare. Mandatory Reporting of blindness became law, and a legal definition of blindness was formalized in New York State. This definition is: "A blind person shall be defined as one who is totally blind or has impaired vision of not more than twenty/two hundred visual acuity in the better eye and for whom a diagnosis and medical finding show that vision cannot be improved to better than twenty /two hundred; or who has loss of vision due wholly or in part to impairment of field vision or to other factors which affect the usefulness of vision to a like degree."
- 1954- A study of the Commission for the Blind's organizational structure and of each of its major program activities was initiated. Amendments to the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act (Public Law 565) tied the Concession Stand program more closely to the Vocational Rehabilitation program with emphasis on the small business enterprise aspect of the program.
- 1955- The Commission for the Blind was reorganized into three major program sections. The professional and Technical Services section included programs of Eye Health, Services for Blind Children, and Community Services. The Business Services section included programs related to Vending Stands, Production and Marketing, Office Management, and Accounting. The Vocational Rehabilitation Service constituted the third major section.
- 1956-60- A review of Commission for the Blind programs during this period resulted in a clarification of Commission policies and goals with primary emphasis being placed on the following: expansion of the interpretative, educational and standards setting roles of the Commission in the field of work for the blind; development and strengthening of local voluntary agency services for

the blind; advisory and consultative role of the Commission; the coordination of the program of the Commission within the Department of Social Welfare and with other related State and national agencies; the advisory role of the Board of the Commission for the Blind; the elimination of segregation and preferential treatment unrelated to needs caused by blindness, the substitution of skilled professional services for those based on an emotional or "pity" approach to blindness; and the integration of blind persons into the normal activities and services of the community.

- 1961- As a result of an extensive survey of positions within the Commission for the Blind by the Civil Service Department Classification Division, minimum qualifications and salaries were raised for many professional positions unique to the Commission for the blind, in line with the Commission for the Blind shift in program emphasis.

- 1962- Oscar Friedenshon was promoted to the position of Director of the Commission for the Blind. Mr. Friedenshon is the first man to hold this position in the history of the Commission.
 - The Telephone Pioneers, a voluntary organization of long-term Telephone Company Employees, agreed to repair Talking Book Machines without charge and are doing so in five major Upstate cities and in New York City.
 - The entire Register of the Blind was made available to the Department of Motor Vehicles for their action in arranging for up-to-date eye examinations for legally blind persons, who have retained their Motor Vehicle Operators Licenses in New York State. This process will be an ongoing one with all newly registered blind persons.
 - An institute relating to leadership in program planning was held at Arden House for administrators of all the agencies for the blind in New York State. A new major office of the Vocational Rehabilitation Service, located in Jamaica, was opened to serve Suffolk, Nassau and part of Queens. * As a result of a change in programming the rest of the missions most dire sales, the 78 Chambers Street Shop, was terminated. This change in focus has resulted in more extensive consultative and advisory production and marketing aid to workshops for the blind.

- 1963- The Commission for the Blind assisted in writing legislation, which clarifies the sale of blind-made products. The bills have passed the legislature. The Commission also participated in legislation, which mandates regular eye examinations for obtaining motor vehicle licenses. This legislation has also been enacted into law. The first training unit in an agency for the blind was created for students from three New York City colleges. These students are studying for a master's degree in Guidance and Rehabilitation Counseling. The Commission has undertaken a program of distribution of free radios to blind persons on public

assistance. This distribution is being done for the American Foundation of the Blind.

2013- CBVH changes its name to NYS Commission for the Blind and celebrates its 100th anniversary.

*Compiled by Michael Godino, Lisa Senior, Diane S.Weiss, Nancy D. Miller and the members of the NYC Youth and Vision Loss Coalition.
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