

South Dakota

**Board of
Service
to the
Blind &
Visually
Impaired
Annual
Report**



2014

**See
What
You Can
Do.**



For more information or to refer:

South Dakota
**Division of
Service to
the Blind
and Visually
Impaired**

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Dear Governor Daugaard:

As Chair of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) I respectfully submit the 2014 Annual Report. The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired partners with the Division of SBVI to address the needs of South Dakota citizens with vision loss. The data, program details, and success stories demonstrate how SBVI is helping to positively change the lives of South Dakotans with significant vision loss.



The mission of the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide individualized rehabilitation services that result in quality employment and independent living outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired continues to be relevant to the work we do. Utilizing information from the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, public meetings and consumer satisfaction surveys helps the Board and Division of SBVI to jointly develop goals and strategies to address the needs identified.

On behalf of the Board of SBVI I would like to express our appreciation of your leadership and support as we collectively address employment of South Dakota citizens with visual impairments. The recommendations from the Governor's Employment Works task force are relevant to citizens with vision loss and we look forward to working with the Division of SBVI and other partners on activities related to those recommendations.

Respectfully,

Eric Rippentrop

Chair, Board of SBVI

CC: Christopher Pope, Rehabilitation Services Administration State Liaison

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Executive Summary

This year's Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) Annual Report highlights the activities and priorities the Board addressed in 2014; in addition, accomplishments of the Division are presented through data and information prepared by SBVI staff.

Sometimes the best measure of performance is the experience of those who have participated in services; for that reason we have included feedback from citizens with vision loss who benefitted from services throughout this report. We have also included a new feature, "Spotlight on SBVI" to highlight publications that honored SBVI employees and news that featured SBVI.

Board members bring unique perspectives and experiences to assist the division with planning service provision for citizens of South Dakota with vision loss. They devote their time and talents as volunteers to participate in meetings and other Board sponsored events. Their collective knowledge and experience is a valuable resource when planning goals and strategies for service delivery and evaluating current practices.

I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge the contributions of the staff of the Division of SBVI. Their hard work and dedication to providing quality services is the backbone of the data and stories contained in this report.

As 2014 comes to a close, we look forward to the possibilities in 2015. Partnerships are one key to ensuring services are comprehensive and we are committed to strengthening current partnerships and forging new ones to improve employment and independent living outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired.

Gaye Mattke, Director
SD Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired

Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired

The Board of SBVI is the State Rehabilitation Council for the Division of SBVI as defined in the Rehabilitation Act as amended. Board members advise the Division on services provided to citizens with vision loss. Members are appointed by the Governor of South Dakota for three year terms. The following Board members served in 2014.

Name	Hometown	Representation
Eric Rippentrop Chair	Dell Rapids	Disability Advocacy Group
Marilyn Steffen Vice Chair	Yankton	Business and Industry
Dr. Lynda O'Connor–Ohayon Member at Large	Sioux Falls	Business and Industry
Karla Bucknall	Rapid City	Business and Industry
Linda Biffert	Volga	Disability Advocacy Group
Robert Kean - Retired	Pierre	Client Assistance Program
Tim Neyhart	Pierre	Client Assistance Program
Gaye Mattke	Pierre	SBVI Director– Ex Officio
Steve Kelsey	Aberdeen	VR Counselor– Ex Officio
Connie Sullivan	Pierre	State Education Agency
Ken Rollman	Rapid City	Disability Advocacy Group
Patrick Czerny	Piedmont	Community Rehab Program
Lyle Cook	Eagle Butte	Native American VR
Bill Molseed	Pierre	Workforce Dev. Council
Bruce Micheel	Cavour	Business and Industry
Julie Briggs	Sioux Falls	Business and Industry
Teresa Nold	Sioux Falls	Parent Connection
Daniel Weischedel - Resigned	Sturgis	Disability Advocacy Group

Nominations for Board vacancies are solicited from organizations representing people with disabilities including the South Dakota Association of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota. At least 50% of Board Members are people with disabilities as required by federal law. Board members serve on a volunteer basis and are reimbursed for expenses. Their knowledge and experience are a valuable resource for planning meaningful services that result in employment for citizens with vision loss.

Board Committees

Executive Committee – The Executive Committee consists of the Board Chair, Vice Chair and Member at Large. The Executive Committee plans agendas for Board meetings and handles decisions between regularly scheduled meetings and other activities assigned by the Board.

Strategic Planning and Policy Development Committee – This committee provides input on strategic planning and policy development and also evaluates state plan updates, consumer satisfaction surveys, and SBVI policy revisions. Recommendations from the committee are brought to the full Board.

Public Relations Committee – The Public Relations Committee recommends activities to promote the programs and services offered by SBVI and assists SBVI in designing and conducting outreach activities.

Assistive Technology Advisory Committee (ATAC) – ATAC is comprised of individuals who are knowledgeable about the latest innovations in assistive technology. Members advise SBVI in matters concerning assistive technology.

Board Meetings

The Board meets as often as necessary (determined by the Chairperson in cooperation with the Director of SBVI), but at least four times per year. Meetings during the report period were held on the following dates and locations:

December 6, 2013, Fort Pierre, SD

March 28, 2014, Pierre, SD

June 9, 2014, Pierre, SD

September 19, 2014, Sioux Falls, SD

Meetings are open to the public and held at accessible locations. Meetings are announced via the SBVI website, in the VISIONS newsletter, on the State of South Dakota news website, and through a variety of publications throughout the state. Meeting dates are determined by the Board; agendas and minutes are posted on the SBVI website at: <http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/boardsbvi.aspx>

White Cane Awareness Day

The White Cane Day event in Sioux Falls on October 12th, included opening statements by the Mayor and police force, a walk down Phillips Avenue, distribution of pins and brochures, and concluded with refreshments and a panel discussion at the City Library. The Board of SBVI sponsored the event by covering costs for sign language interpreters.



Governor's Awards for Employment of People with Disabilities –The annual Governor's Awards recognize the efforts of individuals and employers for their contributions to the employment of people with disabilities. This event is a joint effort of the Board of SBVI, the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Department of Human Services. A member of the Board of SBVI serves on the committee that reviews nominations and selects award recipients.



National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Activities – The Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR), the Board of SBVI, and the respective divisions in the Department of Human Services plan activities in communities across the state in October to increase awareness of the capabilities of citizens with disabilities to work. The Board of SBVI voted to contribute to the events in 2014 and an SBVI Board member served on the BVR committee that approved the activities and funding for the events. Twelve events were held in communities across the state targeting employers and included recognition for employment of people with disabilities.



Local human resource manager's organizations, Mayor's Committees and Tribal Government were included in planning and participation in the events in many communities. An event sponsored by the Oun'iyekiyapi (find their place) Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program included the drum group Wakinyan Maza O'ka (Iron Lightning Singers) & the Oyate Ta Akicita (Protectors of the People) veterans group also known as the Cheyenne River Veterans Association.

Public Forums

The Board of SBVI recommends dates, locations, and formats for annual public meetings to solicit input on services and to discuss service options with current and former consumers, as well as the public. Members of the Board of SBVI facilitated meetings held on April 10th (videoconference/ teleconference with sites in Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City, and Sioux Falls) and in Rapid City, April 25th, in conjunction with the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota Convention. An April 29th meeting planned for Mission, South Dakota had to be cancelled due to weather.

Citizens who participated in SBVI services in the past year were notified by mail of these opportunities to offer input on SBVI services and the SBVI State Plan. Announcements were also included in local papers and on the state news site, as well as on the SBVI web site. The South Dakota Association of the Blind (SDAB) and National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota (NFB) hosted the public meetings held in Rapid City and at videoconference sites. A variety of topics were discussed during the meetings, including the following:

- The need for assistive technology training for citizens with vision loss who are not eligible for the SBVI vocational rehabilitation or independent living programs.
- Transition services for students under age sixteen.
- Acknowledgement of SBVI's involvement in older blind peer support groups.
- Outreach to ensure citizens are aware of SBVI services.
- The benefits of ongoing education and mentoring programs.

In addition to formal public meetings, SBVI staff attended consumer organization conventions, events on tribal lands and a variety of other venues to share information and obtain input.

State Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation

The Board of SBVI worked in conjunction with the Division to update state plan attachments which are based on input from public meetings and results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment and recommendations from the Governor’s Task Force on employment of people with disabilities. The state plan goals align with the top five needs identified in the comprehensive statewide needs assessment and the recommendations brought forward from the Governor’s Task Force as demonstrated below.

State Plan Goals

1. Improve the earnings, benefits, and career advancement for consumers served by SBVI.
2. Develop outreach methods so that referral sources, employers, and citizens who are blind or visually impaired are aware of the unique services provided by SBVI.
3. Ensure that Vocational Rehabilitation consumers receive services that allow for informed choice and help them to improve their ability to communicate, interact, and perform to their potential in their community.
4. Strengthen the agency’s ability to provide quality services to the ever-changing minority populations that exist in South Dakota.
5. Provide quality transition services to eligible students that facilitate the students’ movement from school to post-secondary education and/or employment and results in successful employment.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment	Governor’s Task Force Recommendations
Employer Public Outreach/Education	Find and support businesses to employ people with disabilities.
Job Placement Supports	Connect businesses to employees with disabilities.
Transition Services	Eliminate disincentives to employment for people with disabilities.
Assistive Technology	Develop flexible systems and promote promising practices.
Benefits Work Incentives	Educate the public, providers, employers and people with disabilities.

The following attachments were updated and submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration with input and approval from the Board of SBVI. Update attachments were shared with and approved by the Workforce Development Council.

- [Attachment 4.2\(c\):](#) Input of State Rehabilitation Council
- [Attachment 4.7\(b\)\(3\):](#) Request for Waiver of Statewideness
- [Attachment 4.10:](#) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
- [Attachment 4.11\(a\):](#) Statewide Assessment
- [Attachment 4.11\(b\):](#) Annual Estimates
- [Attachment 4.11\(c\)\(4\):](#) Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI, Part B Funds
- [Attachment 4.11\(c\)\(1\):](#) State Goals and Priorities
- [Attachment 4.11\(e\)\(2\):](#) Evaluation and Reports of Progress
- [Attachment 4.11\(d\):](#) State Strategies

Future Priorities

2015 brings many opportunities to address employment and independent living services for citizens who are blind. The Board and Division of SBVI will participate in activities related to recommendations from the Governor's Employment Works task force. Promoting employment of citizens with significant vision loss and educating employers on the capabilities of citizens who are blind or have a significant visual impairment will continue to be a priority.

Public forums and disability summits to share information and obtain input are already in the works and will be announced early in 2015. Information obtained through public input, coordination with other entities including labor, education and consumer organizations will be used to re-evaluate goals and strategies for service provision.

Authorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in July of 2014 will impact priorities for service delivery and contents of the state plan. The Division and Board of SBVI are awaiting regulations to determine state plan requirements. Strategic planning with workforce partners has already begun to prepare for addressing new priorities stipulated in WIOA.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

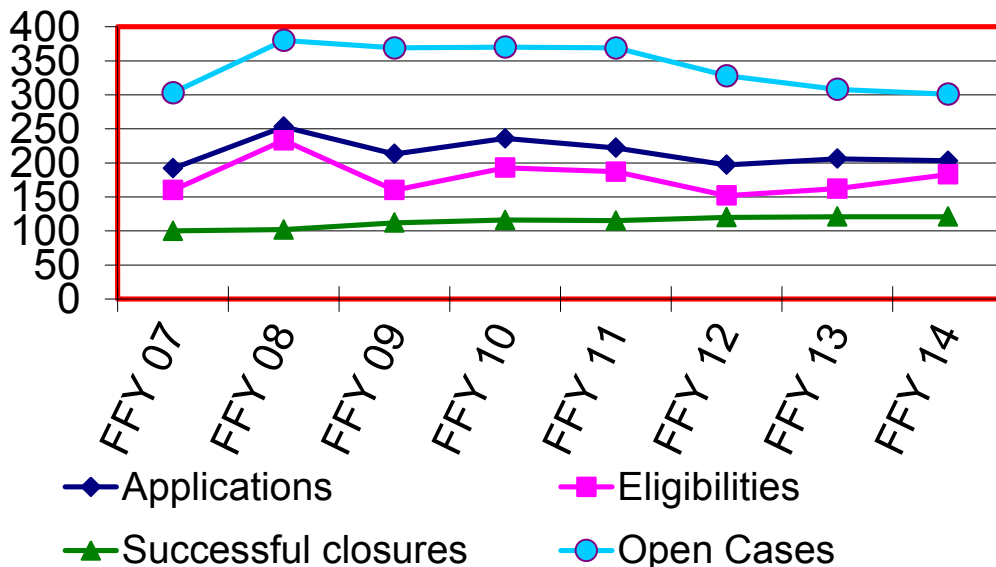
The Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program provides individualized rehabilitation services that result in optimal employment outcomes for citizens who are blind or visually impaired. Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors provide specialized services in all areas of the state.

Fiscal Year 2014 Performance

- 509 people were served through the SBVI VR Program during Federal Fiscal Year 2014 (FFY 14).
 - 121 people were successfully rehabilitated through the vocational rehabilitation program.
 - 96% of the people whose cases were closed successfully had significant disabilities.
 - The average hourly wage was \$12.35 and the annual income was \$20,277.85 for people who obtained and/or maintained employment through the vocational rehabilitation program.
-

SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Caseload Summary

The chart below illustrates the number of people who have applied for or received services from the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program over the past several years. While there was a decrease in 2014, SBVI caseloads remain well within the range when compared to prior 7 years. Counselors are increasing outreach efforts to both public and private sectors in an effort to provide awareness of SBVI services.



Federal Program Evaluation Standards

The Federal Government measures vocational rehabilitation agency performance in part by using six “Standard 1” performance indicators. SBVI’s performance on each indicator is illustrated on the corresponding chart. SBVI has exceeded all six of the Standard 1 indicators for the past ten years (FY 2004 thru FY 2014). The indicators are the Division’s “report card”; SBVI is the only agency for the blind in the nation to meet or exceed all six Standard 1 indicators throughout this time span.

Standard 1: Employment Outcomes

- 1.1 The number of successful case closures compared to the preceding two years’ number of successful closures.
- 1.2 The percentage of individuals exiting the program during the performance period who have achieved an employment outcome after receiving services.
- 1.3 The percentage of consumers who exit the SBVI VR Program in competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.4 The percentage of individuals who have significant disabilities who obtain competitive employment at or above the state minimum wage.
- 1.5 The ratio of average hourly earnings of all individuals successfully closed to the average hourly earnings of all employed individuals in the state.
- 1.6 The difference in the percentage of individuals at application versus closure who reported their income as the largest single source of support.

FFY13 SBVI Performance on Standard 1 Performance Indicators

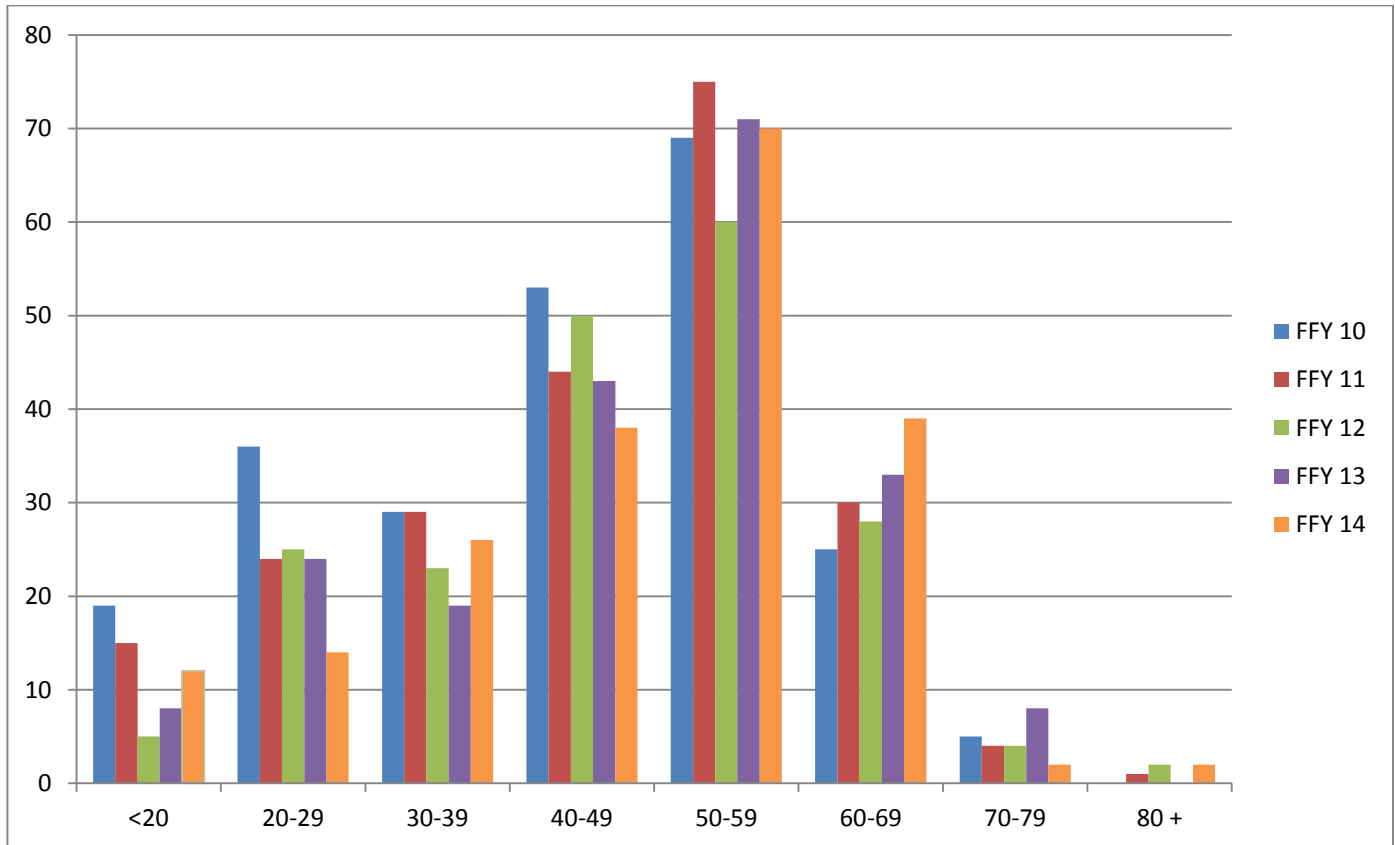
Indicator	Minimum Requirement	Division Performance
Standard 1: Employment Outcomes	Meet 4 of the 6 Indicators	6 of the 6 Indicators Were Met
Indicator 1.1	235	241
Indicator 1.2	68.90%	73.25%
Indicator 1.3	35.40%	97.93%
Indicator 1.4	89.00%	100%
Indicator 1.5	0.59	0.657
Indicator 1.6	30.40%	31.36%

- FY 2014 official performance data is not yet available

Demographics of People Served in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

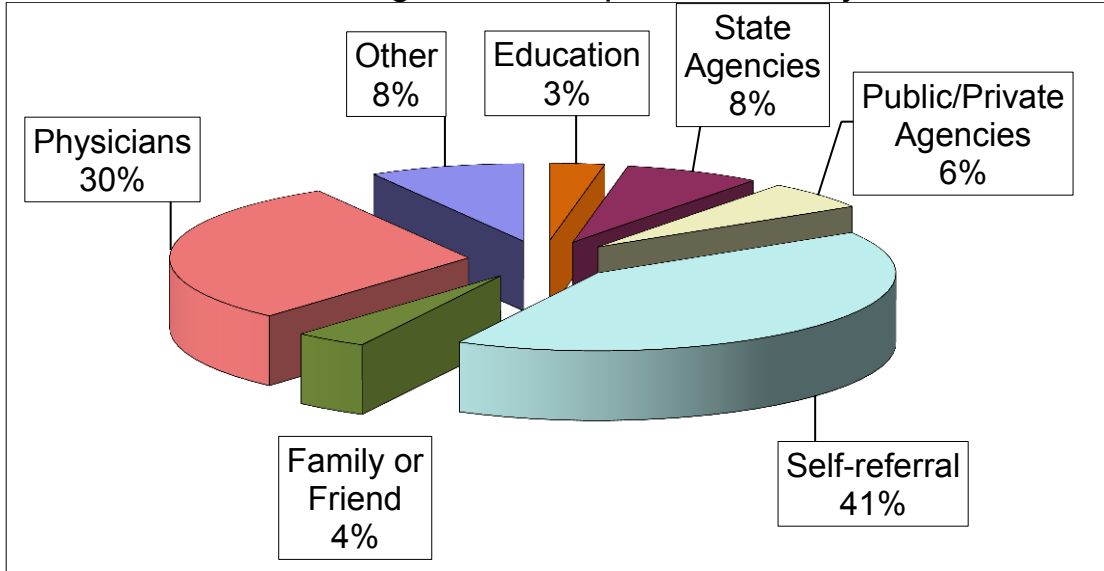
The following graph illustrates the age groups of VR applicants. Although SBVI takes applications from individuals from age 14 on, historically the majority of applicants who apply for services are between the ages of 50 to 59 due to the progressive nature of vision loss. SBVI did see increases this past year in applicants for age groups of 20 years and younger, 30-39, 60-69 and had 2 applicants who were 80 years of age or older. For FY 2014 closures, 114 of total closures were males and 97 of the closures were females.

Age of Applicants



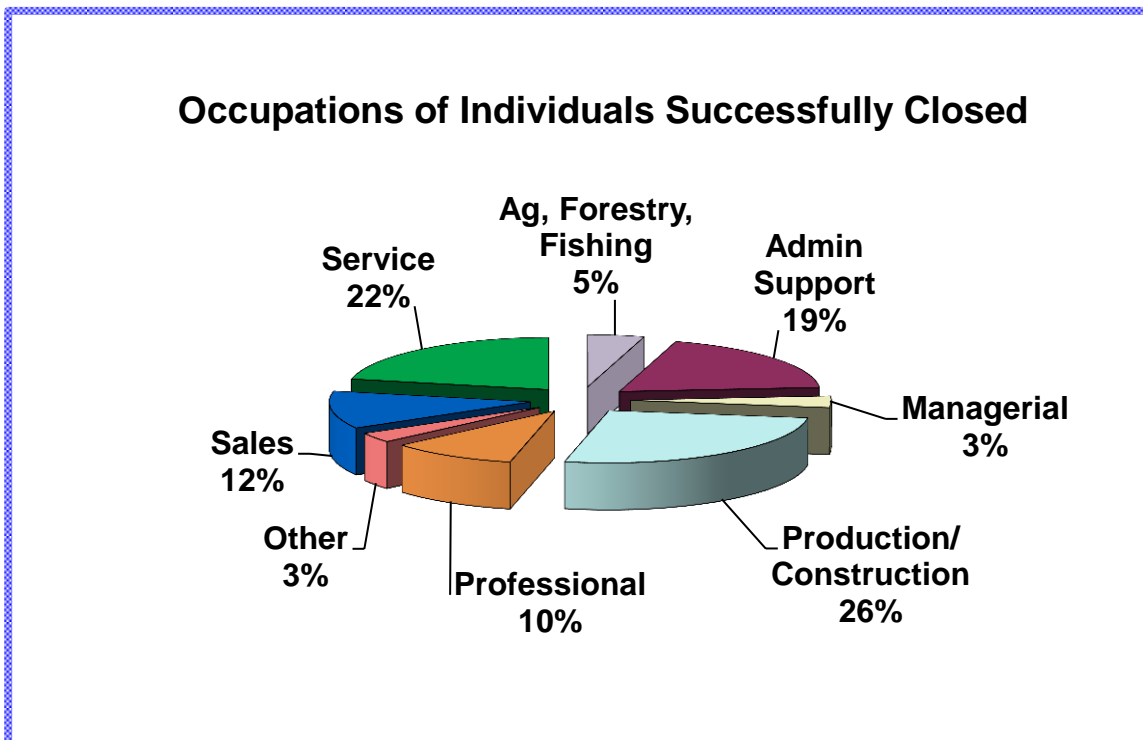
Sources of Referrals for Applicants

The following chart demonstrates that physicians and self-referrals make up three-fourths of the referrals to the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program, whereas only 3% of the referrals came from high school or post-secondary education.



SBVI Closures

In FFY 2014, 121 people achieved their employment goals through the SBVI VR program. The chart below reflects the occupations of people who were successfully employed with a majority of jobs in Production/Construction, Service Industries and Administrative Support (67%). Compared to FY 2013, production and construction occupations increased by 10% in 2014 and service occupations decreased by 13%.



Services to Minorities

According to the 2010 census, South Dakota's minority (non-white) population was 14.1%. The largest minority group in South Dakota involves American Indians from nine South Dakota Tribes making up approximately 9% (8.8% according to 2010 U.S. Census data) of the state's total population. In FY 2014, 8.5% of SBVI closures were comprised of individuals of American Indian descent, and 15.6% of all closures reported coming from a minority background, which exceeds census data for minorities in the general population of the state.

The Board and Division work to address culturally relevant services to minority populations through a number of initiatives. Strategies from the state plan attachment 4.11(d) for 2014 specifically addressed strengthening SBVI's ability to provide quality services to minority populations specific to the following activities:

- Maintain regular contact with minority service agencies to increase awareness of services that are available.
- Collaborate with Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation and other programs to ensure that all services are provided in an effective and efficient manner while addressing cultural diversity.
- Provide SBVI staff with resources and training so they are able to meet the cultural and linguistic needs of diverse populations.

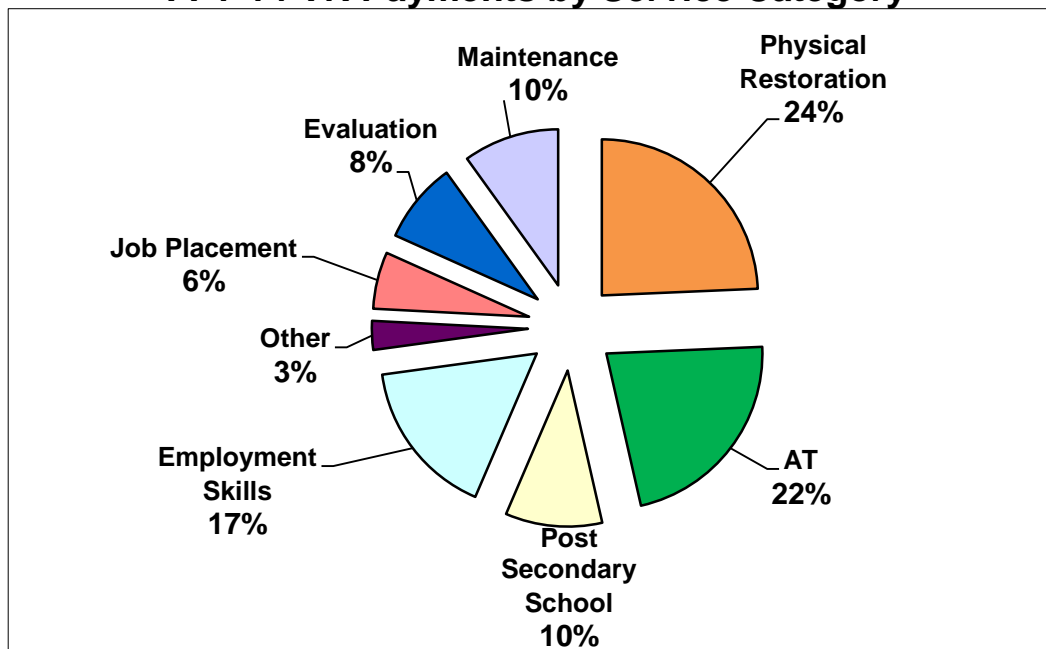
In 2014 SBVI redistributed a media campaign for broadcast of a radio ad in Lakota for Native Americans on the state's Tribal lands. In addition, State and Tribal VR are conducting meetings on Tribal lands for information sharing and to identify and address specific needs and concerns.



Vocational Rehabilitation Purchased Services Analysis

In FFY 2014 SBVI spent over \$897,700 on client services for vocational rehabilitation consumers. As shown by the pie chart below, employment skills, physical restoration, assistive technology (AT) and post-secondary services constitute three-quarters of the total expenditures.

FFY 14 VR Payments by Service Category



SBVI VR Program – Consumer Satisfaction Survey Analysis

FFY 2014 marks the sixth year that SBVI has partnered with the Board of SBVI to conduct a consumer satisfaction survey using the SBVI Client Satisfaction Questionnaire-8 (CSQ-8) survey. The survey consists of eight core questions and an additional seven questions that were developed with the help of the Board of SBVI.

The survey was sent to 154 people who received services and were closed from the SBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program during the past year. Seventy-eight surveys were returned for a response rate of 51% which represents a substantial improvement over previous years. As with previous years, the overall consumer satisfaction mean was very high at 29.77 out of a possible 32, with a standard deviation of 3.3. Survey participants were asked directly “In an overall, general sense, how satisfied are you with the service you received?” Ninety-six percent of survey participants indicated that they were very satisfied with the service they received from SBVI. Responses from the survey illustrate that SBVI improved substantially from past years in providing services to people that were perceived as positive, effective and satisfying.

Demographics of survey respondents reflected predominately Caucasian, slightly more males than females and mostly over the age of 55 years of age. These results indicate that SBVI has successfully addressed the gender imbalance observed in

FFY 2013. On the basis of this information, it may be beneficial for SBVI to consider additional staff training in the area of service to people over the age of 50.

Below is a summary of the responses of the survey which indicate that the majority of the people are pleased with the services they received from SBVI.

1. How would you rate the quality of service you received?

96% of respondents answered “excellent” or “good”.

2. Did you get the kind of service you wanted?

99% answered “yes, definitely” or “yes, generally”.

3. To what extent has our program met your needs?

97% answered “almost all” or “most” of their needs had been met.

4. If a friend were in need of similar help, would you recommend our program to him/her?

98% answered “yes, definitely” or “yes, I think so”.

5. How satisfied are you with the amount of help you received?

97% answered “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied”.

6. Have the services you received helped you to deal more effectively with your problems?

91% answered “yes, they helped a great deal” or “yes, they helped somewhat”.

7. In an overall, general sense, how satisfied are you with the service you received?

96% answered “very satisfied” or “mostly satisfied”.

8. If you were to seek help again, would you come back to our program?

97% answered “yes, definitely” or “yes, I think so”.

To understand the impact of vocational rehabilitation, it is important to not only look at the program’s performance in terms of data, but also to see the comments that individuals share. These are quotes from consumer satisfaction surveys:

- “I am very happy to keep my job. I have been in the car business for 25 years. I would not have been able to keep my job without your help. Thank You!”
- “Without this program and the people who run it, I would not be able to work and have my independence.”
- “I love my job and can’t thank you enough for the Pebble and computer big screen.”
- “Kellie was the best!”
- “Alan treated me with such compassion and demonstrated his understanding of my needs, while making me feel as though I deserved the help provided and that I was not a charity case asking for welfare.”
- “Steve did a great job!”
- “Julaine was great! She helped me so much with keeping my job!”

- “Excellent people. Very caring – great people!”
 - “With your help and the equipment I received, I have been able to keep my job and continue to advance my schooling. I did not expect all the help I got and would like to thank any and all who helped me. Keep up the wonderful work you do!”
-

Vocational Rehabilitation Success Story

Nick was laid off from his job when Communication Services for the Deaf closed their doors in June 2013. At age 24, with a degree in broadcasting, Nick was eager to gain employment, however he realized he would need to refine his skills. Nick started classes at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and participated in Employment Skills Training to improve his computer, customer service and interviewing skills. To enhance his independent travel skills, his SBVI Rehabilitation Counselor recommended Nick receive training in Orientation and Mobility. Nick learned valuable skills in using public transportation, crossing multiple lanes of traffic, soliciting assistance in directions, and orientation to new buildings. It wasn't long before Nick was ready to begin his job search. Through his determination and perseverance, he secured employment as a Customer Service Representative with Midco Connections. Nick answers inbound customer service calls providing order entry support, reservations, scheduling, and literature requests. Each day he travels to work via public transportation, crossing two different streets with five lanes of traffic each and navigating within his office building. Nick's positive attitude and good work ethic enhance his success with his job. Nick has exemplified the benefits of hiring people with disabilities.



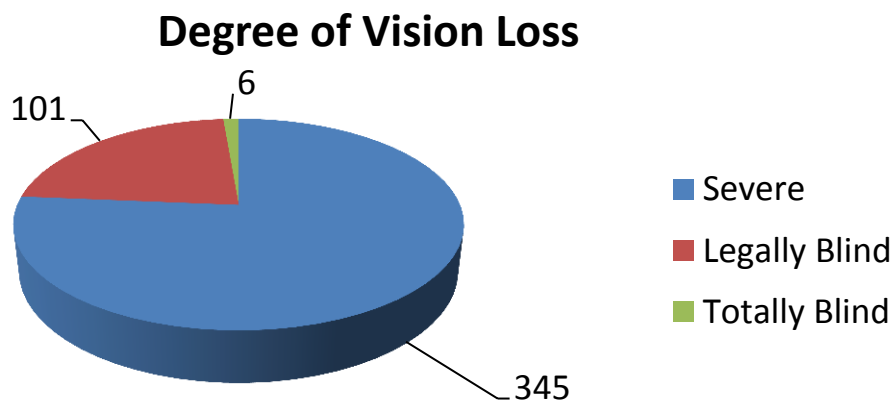
Nick says one of his greatest experiences is when he was able to ride a four wheeler.

Independent Living Blind Program

Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired is often contacted when there is “nothing else that can be done” for the patient who is experiencing difficulties as a result of the changes in their vision. Changes to the individual’s prescription lenses have been attempted and difficulties with reading or feeling confident when navigating a new environment continue to frustrate them or perhaps worsen.

These individuals are experiencing “low vision”. Low vision should not be confused with legally blind. Legal blindness is defined as acuity of 20/200 or worse in the better eye with correction, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less in the better eye. Sometimes individuals with low vision feel they can “get by” or there are no solutions because they’ve heard the words, “nothing else can be done”. Often, these individuals still have usable vision but would not be able to read or do activities of daily living without specialized training or the use of an assistive device.

In the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program, the individuals served are determined eligible based on the degree of vision loss and the functional difficulties they are experiencing. Below is a chart that demonstrates the number of people served in 2014 and the degree of vision loss they experienced.



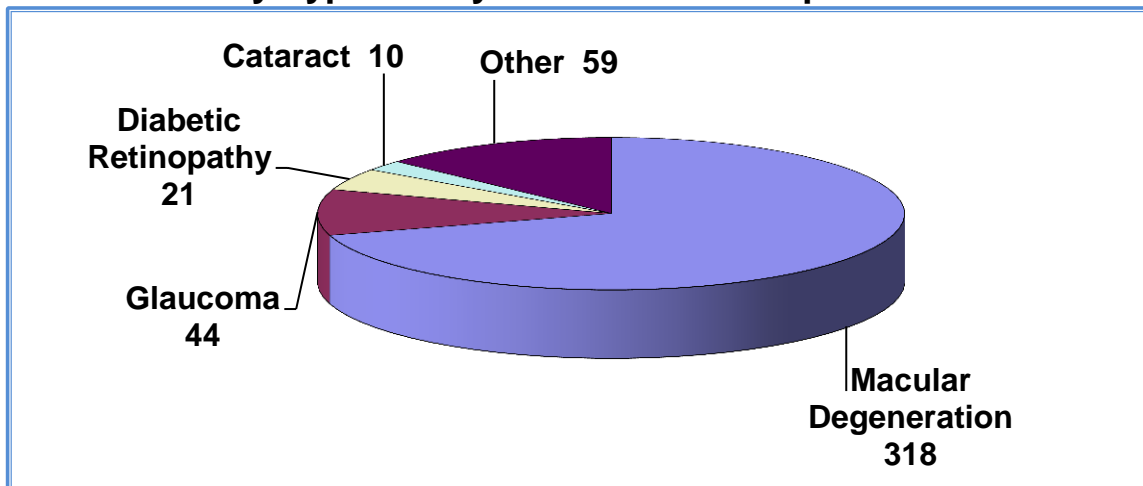
-
- In FY 2014, the ILB program provided services to 452 elderly blind individuals compared to 458 in FY 2013. Staff successfully closed 258 individual cases compared to 261 individuals in FY 2013.
 - In addition to providing services to older citizens who have severe vision loss, the ILB program provided services to 18 individuals under the age of 55 who required independent-living-skills training due to their vision loss.
-

Services Provided

Services provided by SBVI Rehabilitation Teachers help citizens make the most of their remaining vision, which strengthens their confidence as they learn techniques to perform tasks with vision loss. The services listed below define the training areas provided to those eligible for the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program in 2014.

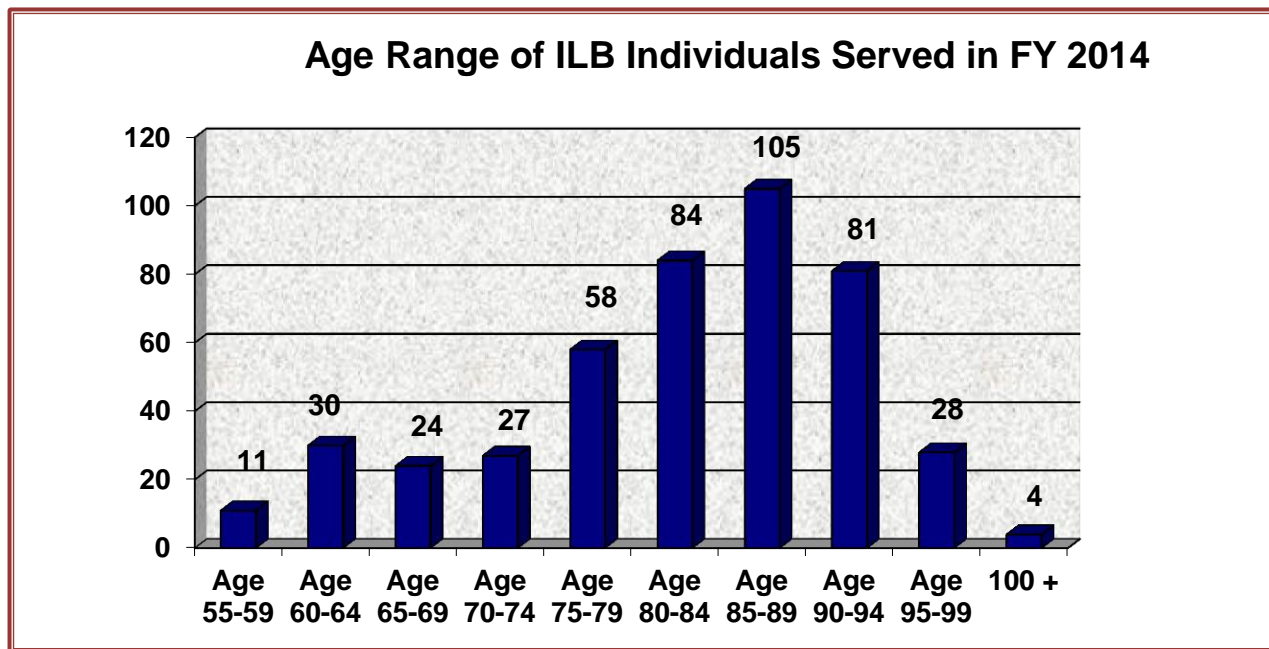
<i>Type of Service and Description</i>	<i>Number of People</i>
Communication Skills – Training in the use of the telephone, writing guides, telling time, reading large print or Braille, etc.	400
Daily Living Skills – Training in the use of adaptive aids and assistive technology for daily living.	350
Low Vision Device Training – Services related to the use of optical aids and devices.	358
Low Vision Aids – May include items such as canes, insulin gauges, CCTVs, magnifiers, adaptive cooking items, etc.	348
Counseling – Peer, individual, or group counseling to assist with adjustment to visual impairment and blindness.	347
Low Vision Exams – Evaluations to identify strategies and devices for enhancing visual performance.	287
Advocacy Training – Participation in advocacy activities such as consumer organization meetings and peer support groups.	92
Referral to Other Agencies – Referral to other service providers, programs, and agencies.	284
Orientation and Mobility – Travel training and learning to access public or private transportation to travel safely and independently.	138

Primary Types of Eye Disease for People Served – ILB



Macular Degeneration was the major cause of vision loss in 318 of the 452 individuals who received services in 2014, as reflected in this chart. According to Prevent Blindness America, South Dakota has an estimated 7,300 individuals with macular degeneration.

The target population for the Independent Living Blind program is individuals over the age of 55. As reflected in this chart, in 2014, 66% (302 individuals) of the 452 people served were over the age of 80, with 4 of them over the age of 100.



Consumer Satisfaction

Consumers in the ILB program have the opportunity to provide feedback through a consumer satisfaction survey which is sent out quarterly throughout the year. Two hundred and two consumer satisfaction surveys were sent out to individuals whose records were closed successfully. One hundred thirty six individuals responded to the survey which demonstrates a 67% response rate. Survey responses assist SBVI to assess whether services are effective in assisting citizens to maintain or regain their independence. Frequently the survey responses include statements expressing gratitude for services and SBVI staff that provided training. Following are some comments received from consumers completing the surveys:



- Thank you for services you provided me, they are very helpful.
- Magnifying glasses have been a big help.
- Reading machine has been a GREAT help.
- Great - talked very easily about services & items.
- Loves Nancy; info provided was beneficial.
- Thanks to Chelle for caring & knowledgeable experience.
- Doing just fine now.
- My time with the worker was pleasant. Mike was very helpful.
- Helped a great deal in a kind and concerned manner.
- Appreciated services from Nancy, I probably wouldn't be in my home without services.

A majority of the survey respondents agreed that as a result of Independent Living Services, they regained or improved their independence because of low vision training, they remained involved in usual activities in their home and community, they gained skills or maintained their ability to walk safely around their home, apartment or yard and feel more confident because of the service they received. A key question was asked if they would have considered moving into a facility with a higher level of care without services from the ILB program. Thirty-three percent (46 individuals) who responded to the survey stated that they had considered moving to a facility, but were able to remain in their home because of services from SBVI Rehabilitation Teachers.

Satisfaction with services is sometimes best expressed through the heartfelt correspondence received from those who have benefitted from participating in training, following is one example:

A Letter of Thanks

I wanted to express my gratitude to Mike. I am a baker and thanks to Mike-I can continue baking. And I don't drive anymore, but thanks to Mike, I can dial numbers and visit on the phone. I can wash clothes because of the colored buttons Mike gave me. My son is visually impaired also and was helped by all the provisions Mike provided. Please tell Mike that I have greatly benefited from his assistance. Both my son and myself thank you for the magnifiers, colored buttons or dots, the large print telephone book, recipe book and the letter, envelopes and checkbook stencils. Tell Mike I will miss the visit and thank you for all the care and kindness you showed us.

Older Blind Peer Support Groups

Service to the Blind & Visually Impaired has a small network of peer support groups for older citizens who have vision loss. These groups meet on a monthly basis with



volunteer leaders and participants who have a common experience related to vision loss. Through these peer support group meetings, members are able to share their individual experiences of vision loss, knowledge, and practical help with one another. In April, a "Spring Fling" indoor picnic was held in Mitchell by the peer support group. This was organized by the volunteer leader Kay Miller along with several other group members who assisted with table arrangements and pick-up and delivery of food. Group members wore sun hats and

summer attire and tables were decorated in a picnic theme. There were twenty four people in attendance and people enjoyed guitar music and singing performed by staff member Chelle Hart and Lerae Olson. Lerae was present as the President of the South Dakota Association of the Blind who collaborated with SBVI in sponsoring the picnic for the seniors.

Information and Referral

Rehabilitation Teachers regularly provide information and referral services to the people of South Dakota by attending events in communities including the South Dakota State Fair, community health fairs, employee in-service events or other public forums. In addition to these events, they respond to individual calls and office visits in a timely manner to ensure people obtain the information they need to access Independent Living and other services. In 2014, Rehabilitation Teachers provided information and referral services to 884 people and participated in 173 local events or presentations across the state. Information and referral is a basic component of the Independent Living program which provides individuals with information to help them determine if they would like to access the services to assist with their independence.



Ruth's Story

The first time I met Ruth I walked into her home and she was surrounded by five of her children and their spouses. We visited about Ruth's eye condition and I explained how independent living services might help her accomplish some of the activities she was not able to do because of vision loss. Ruth was very proud of the doll clothes she had made throughout the years and explained how sad she was that she could no longer see to do this due to macular degeneration. During the initial interview we were able to discuss training and devices that might help her get back to doing the activities she loved, including reading, sewing, cooking and writing letters. During the regular monthly home visits training was provided and the Rehabilitation Teacher loaned Ruth several magnifiers so she could read the Bible. Other services included providing bold lined paper and a bold writing pen which helped her resume writing letters to her son every week. She received a video magnification system (CCTV) through the SBVI Lease/Loan Program which she uses to read her Bible, newspaper and mail. She said it is wonderful to be able to do these things independently without relying so heavily on her children. The telephone numbers she frequently calls were typed in large print and she was referred to CSD for an amplified telephone for the hard of hearing which enables her to independently use the telephone. We are still trying to accomplish techniques to help her sew doll clothes and she has been provided a Dazor magnification lamp to work towards achieving her goal. She commented that the services she has received have been a godsend, and is thankful every day for the assistance so that she can remain in her own home. **Submitted by Nancy Kelsey, SBVI Rehabilitation Teacher**



South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind

The SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) served 62 people in the skills of blindness program in 2014. There were 46 men and 16 women, the average age of men was 37 and the average age of women was 43. A typical student attends daily classes in the areas of home management, communications and Braille, computers and assistive technology, orientation and mobility, home mechanics, recreation and leisure activities.



Program Participation			
SDRC Services	FY 2014	FY 2013	FY 2012
Skills of Blindness	62	54	59
Transition Students	5	4	7
Low Vision Patients	82	95	99
Employment Specialists	23	27	38
Employment Skills Training	85	79	125

Those attending training full time spent approximately 7 hours a day in classes. Part-time attendance is also available to accommodate work schedules or health issues. The average student participated in 130 hours of training. People who are impacted with significant vision loss and additional health conditions such as diabetes, hearing loss, physical impairments and/or cognitive impairments often attend for a longer period of time. One student who had greater needs for intense services due to multiple disabilities attended for 725 hours. Individualized training plans are developed with students in skills of blindness training to meet their specific goals.

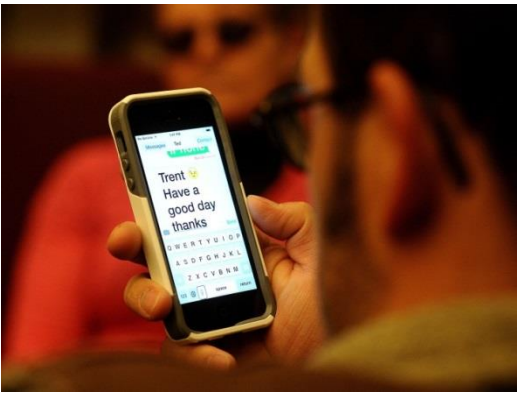
Low Vision Services

The Low Vision Clinic at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind assists people with visual impairments to find adaptive equipment to better use their residual vision. Patients are evaluated by an optometrist who specializes in prescribing low vision equipment. Patients are referred to the clinic by an SBVI Rehabilitation Teacher or Rehabilitation Counselor from the Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. In FY 2014, 82 people attended the clinic and the average age was 67. The low vision clinic tends to serve patients over 65 years of age due to the numbers of older citizens with macular degeneration.



Assistive Technology Training Seminars

Saturday outreach computer classes were implemented in 2014. On the second

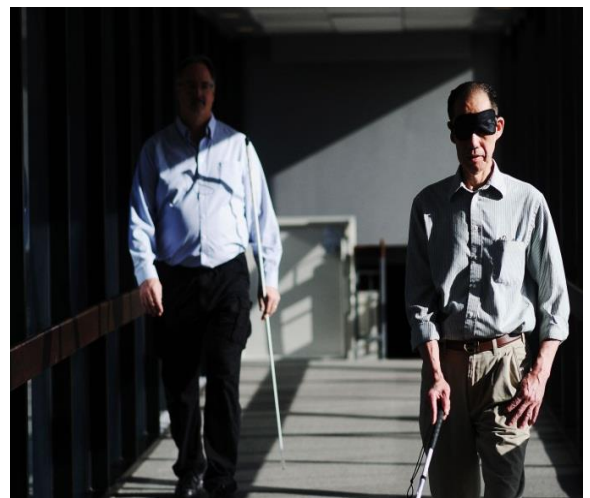


Saturday of each month the SDRC Assistive Technology Instructor offers seminars to teach assistive technology to people who are not able to attend the Center on a regular basis. The first Friday of each month is also available for people to visit the Center and ask technology questions. The primary area of interest has been information about using accessibility features with the iPad and iPhone.

In addition to classes and designated walk-in instruction times, questions were answered and technical assistance provided by email, phone calls, and thru Apple's FaceTime application.

Student Success

Leang came to the United States 31 years ago from Cambodia. He is married with two adult children and lives in Sioux Falls, SD. He worked hard to build a local restaurant which he owns with his family. In 1991, Leang became blind from radiation for a tumor behind his nose. Then he encountered a detached retina, macular degeneration and cataract surgery, all which reduced his vision. Due to limited vision, he would get lost in his house, fall down the stairs and was afraid to go outside of his home alone. He was hit by a car and hospitalized for one month. Leang has limited English skills along with his limited vision; communication was a huge



barrier. He relied on his family and interpreters to communicate with others. His confidence was very low and he was extremely isolated. Leang was referred to the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind by his rehabilitation teacher Amanda. He began attending skills of blindness training three days a week. Through training he learned to move around independently, ride city buses, access his email and internet, and learned to use an iPad. Due to the exposure of staff speaking English and an interpreter to help him, he can now better understand English. When Leang is asked how he is doing, he'll reply "I'm happy, happy" and very thankful for the training he received at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. He changed from being isolated and depressed to someone who smiles, laughs and is confident and optimistic. He also returned to work and is now helping in the family restaurant again, cleaning and talking with customers. Similar stories happen at the Center on a regular basis.

Youth Transition Services



The annual summer Transition Week was held June 16-20. Five young men participated in tours of Sioux Falls businesses including Avera McKennan Hospital, Culvers, KELO-TV, Erbert and Gerbert's Sandwich Shop, and Kmart. Business tours provided students with ideas for entry-level positions, as well as for career possibilities after high school. Post-secondary options were discussed and a tour of Southeastern Technical Institute occurred.

Independent living skills are taught for students moving away from home for the first time. During Transition Week, students experience some of the adaptive techniques used with limited vision. Another goal of the week is to help the student have better communications skills. Members of the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired served as mentors and attended a breakfast where the students presented to them about their interests and goals for the future.

South Dakota Vocational Resources

Job placement, employment skills training, and support services are available through SD Vocational Resources. Individualized services are provided to people to overcome barriers caused by a variety of disabilities that preclude them from working. Employment Skills Training helps them to identify areas where additional skills or accommodations are necessary, and to find employment or prepare for attending post-secondary programs.

Employment Skills Training assisted 85 people by providing services such as computer instruction, World of Work classes, and job skills training including instruction on employer expectations and confidence building. Support to help people with disabilities find employment is available with the help of an employment specialist who has specific knowledge of the needs of employers to match people with disabilities for jobs. During 2014, the Employment Specialist worked with 23 people. This was a slight decrease from 27 served in 2013. Two main reasons for the decrease were a change in personnel causing a gap in services, and when the economy is thriving and there is a low unemployment rate, fewer people are seeking vocational services.

People who attended Employment Skills Training had these comments: *"The new knowledge obtained has given me back self-confidence I was lacking and helped me to regain knowledge to better my chances in moving up in my career."*

"Staff were very friendly, helpful, and professional confidence builders! This was a very positive, happy experience for me. I recommend you to a lot of my friends cuz they are wondering how I am doing."

SDRC Satisfaction Survey Results

Satisfaction surveys are conducted with people who participate in the Skills of Blindness classes at the SD Rehabilitation Center or the Blind. Input from those who attend our Center is valued and instrumental in evaluating our services. A survey is provided to all students at the end of training. They have the option to complete surveys prior to departure with assistance of the SDRC manager or complete them and return by mail. The survey is comprised of twenty statements relating to training. A numeric system correlates to the answer of how they feel. 1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Agree, 4- Strongly Agree, and NA for Not Applicable.

During 2014, SDRC survey return rate was 26%. When people were asked to respond to the statement, "I would recommend this program to others" the average score was 3.71, a Strongly Agree rating. The lowest average response was to "Counseling sessions addressed relevant issues regarding blindness" with a rating of 2.71. The highest rated response was 3.86, to the statement, "During training, I was given adequate opportunity to learn Braille." Braille is an important component to an individual's independence and therefore is encouraged with every student.

Students are encouraged to provide comments about their training experience. One question is "What did you like best about the program?" Comments included "flexibility of structure", "friendly environment", "the knowledge of the staff", "personalization", as well as expressing that they felt they could talk to all the teachers about their concerns. Responses for the question "What did you like least?" included "being away from home", "all good", "liked it all", and multiple responses of "nothing".

Public Relations and Education

In addition to providing training to citizens with vision loss, the SD Rehabilitation Center provides an opportunity for training and education for others in the community. SDRC has consistently hosted college interns seeking degrees in human service related fields and those seeking master's degrees in vocational rehabilitation counseling from South Dakota State University. In addition, medical students from the University of South Dakota participate in training to learn about blindness and visual impairments.

Tours provide an opportunity for individuals and groups to learn about the services provided at the Rehabilitation Center. In 2014, tours were provided to numerous individuals and a variety of groups. Some of the groups who participated in tours included: the Mitchell older blind peer support group, staff from the Oun'iyekiyapi (find their place) Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program and students from the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.



Business Enterprise Program

The intent of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is to provide self-employment opportunities in food service for qualified legally blind individuals. In South Dakota, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired is the state licensing agency (SLA). The SLA recruits, trains, and licenses legally blind individuals interested in and eligible to participate in the BEP.



Currently there are five vendors in the program. Two of the vendor operators have cafeterias on federal property and one has a coffee shop in a state building. Two vendor operators' businesses consist of vending only on federal property.

At the present time, the BEP owns 53 vending machines. These include hot beverage, cold beverage, snack, and combination machines. BEP purchased one new machine this year to expand healthy vending opportunities at one of the federal properties. The vendor operators continue to search for more healthy options to serve in their food service, as well as in vending machines at their locations.

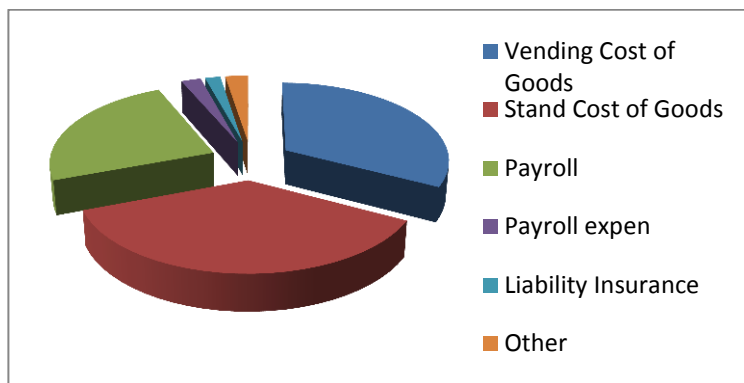


Food safety is a primary concern for the BEP vendors. During this past year, the BEP program needed to replace aging equipment at one of the federal locations including metal shelving, an ice machine, and a commercial refrigerator.

The following table gives a breakdown of sales and net profits earned by BEP vendors in FFY 2014, and the previous two years.

Earnings and Expenses	2012	2013	2014
1) Gross Sales (total income)	\$515,430	\$442,633	\$505,011
2) Merchandise Purchases	\$272,422	\$234,950	\$280,809
3) Gross Profit	\$243,008	\$207,684	\$224,202
4) Total Operating Expenses	\$158,999	\$100,426	\$125,305
5) Net Proceeds	\$104,668	\$128,660	\$114,276
6) Levied Set Aside Funds	\$15,026	\$15,688	\$14,469
7) Net Profit to Vendors	\$89,642	\$112,972	\$99,807

Vendor operators experienced an increase in gross sales in 2014. Gross profit also increased after a downturn in 2013. Total operating expenses were more than 2013 but less than 2012. Net profit to vendors in 2014 was \$13,164 less than 2013. Vendor operators continue to look at ways to reduce their expenses while providing quality food to their customers.



This chart illustrates the expenses the vendor operators incurred in 2014. The total cost of goods purchased is 70% and payroll is almost 25% of overall costs.

Vending at the Interstate Rest Areas is a major source of funding for the Business Enterprise Program. The BEP is responsible for vending contracts with third party vendors who service the rest areas.



Photo courtesy of the SD Department of Transportation.

Spotlight on SBVI

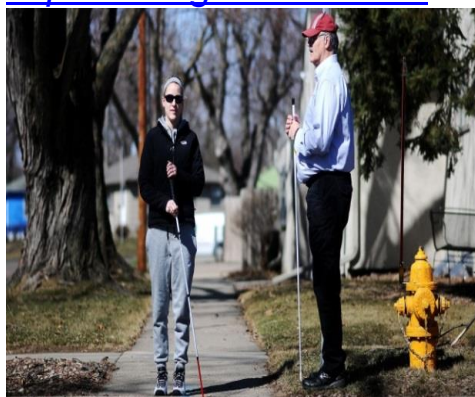
A Vision of Hope – Argus Leader

*The Sioux Falls Argus Leader newspaper wrote a poignant article about the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) entitled **A Vision of Hope** by Jill Callison. The article followed two people through training to learn about their experiences and why they came to the Rehabilitation Center. Joe Ahlquist, Argus Leader photographer, contacted the Rehabilitation Center because he met Bob Smith, the orientation and mobility instructor working in the field training students. Joe felt*

compelled to share the story with his readers. He suggested the idea to the Argus Leader and they agreed it would make a good feature. Jill Callison was assigned to write the article and Joe was the photographer and videographer. They interviewed students, took pictures, and compiled video interviews prior to publishing the article on June 15, 2014.

*Following is an excerpt from the article: “Imagine a life where the smallest actions are difficult. Looking both ways before crossing a street. Making a grilled cheese sandwich. Reading a book. Then imagine hiding your struggles from others- because of the shame or embarrassment or an unwillingness to accept them. Brandi Vissers did just that-hiding her literal tunnel vision from her classmates at Roosevelt High School, not mentioning the challenges she faced in class or at activities. “I never told anyone in school about it,” said Vissers, now 20, who has retinitis pigmentosa, an inherited eye disease that restricts her peripheral vision. She’s always viewed the world through the filter of her disease, though she was aware others saw much more than she could through her tunnel vision.” Five months ago, she walked into the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Sioux Falls to begin long-term intensive training. In that time, she’s come to realize there are ways to live her life more fully – to begin using a computer again, for example, now that she’s found adaptive devices to see words on the screen.” A special thanks goes to the Argus Leader, Joe Ahlquist and Jill Callison for this excellent feature story. For the full **A Vision of Hope** article along with video interviews and photos go to:*

<http://www.argusleader.com/longform/news/2014/06/13/south-dakota-training-impaired-sight/10437593/>



Brandi Vissers of Sioux Falls, a 20-year old student at the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, has retinitis pigmentosa-a degenerative eye disease. She works on her ability to find the edge of a curb and prepare to cross the street at 28th street and Willow Avenue near Edison Middle School with Bob Smith, an instructor at the center.

Julaine Arient-Rollman Receives Recognition for Contributions to Community

2014 was a great year for Julaine Arient-Rollman, SBVI Senior Rehabilitation Counselor in Rapid City who was honored by several entities. She was featured in the Jan – Feb 2014 edition of the Black Hills Woman Magazine for her “*zest for life and commitment to employment of people with vision loss*”. On June 9th, 2014, Julaine was awarded the Wind Beneath Our Wings Outstanding Performance Award by the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce. This prestigious award is designed to recognize people who have made a significant contribution to the health and human services fields through outstanding service to their organizations, community and profession. In addition, Julaine was nominated by Rapid City Mayor Sam Kooiker for the 2014 Spirit of Dakota Award – South Dakota premier woman’s award. The award is given to a woman who has demonstrated leadership qualities, vision, courage and strength of character in the development of her family, community and/or state. Congratulations for these well- deserved honors Julaine.



Dawn Backer Featured in Sioux Falls Woman Magazine



Dawn Backer, manager of the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, was the subject for the cover story for the October/November 2014 Sioux Falls Woman Magazine. The magazine features women in the Sioux Falls area who have contributed to the community and its people. The article “A Devotion to Helping Others – Dawn Backer Inspires Visually Impaired to Reclaim their Independence” focused on Dawn’s interests including her dedication to her work at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. Dawn expressed her dedication to her work in the article stating: “*You have to encourage people to keep going because learning new things and getting out of your comfort zone is hard. The alternative is quitting, which usually means staying*

home and often being afraid to leave or go out because you don’t know you can do it. Working with people and helping them realize they can live a happy and fulfilling life is extremely rewarding to me.” To read the full article go to:

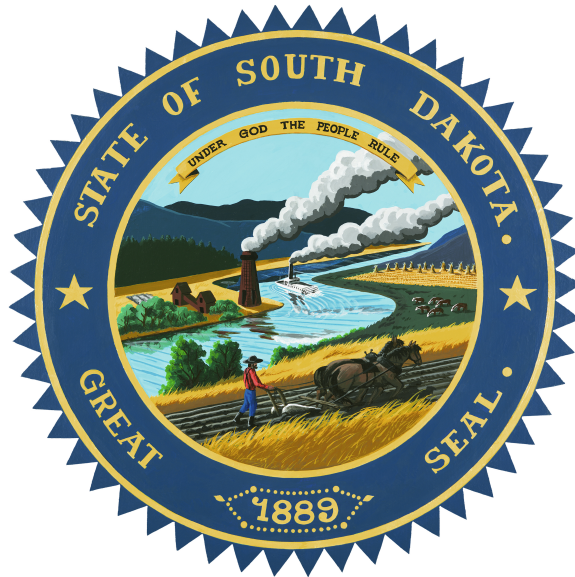
http://issuu.com/siouxfallswoman/docs/sfw101114_web

SBVI Offices

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To find the office that serves your county, go to: <http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/county.aspx>





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