

## Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

### Division Philosophy

DBVI assists individuals who are blind or visually impaired to meet their employment and independence goals. The focus of DBVI is to use a holistic rehabilitation approach that helps people to meet their goals, build new skills, and improve their circumstances. The goal is for all participants to achieve or sustain their economic independence, self-reliance, and social integration to a level consistent with their interests, abilities, and informed choices.

### Division Overview

DBVI's role is to help working age individuals to achieve economic independence by obtaining livable wage jobs and income. This involves supporting training for employment skills gains and higher education that leads to degrees or certificates. For high school students DBVI helps transition them from school to the world of work. For younger students DBVI has a statewide approach to ensure that all blind and visually impaired high school students are learning pre-employment transition skills. DBVI also helps individuals of all ages to build blindness related adaptive skills. These include assistive technology, low vision, orientation and mobility, and independent living skills.

### Staff and Partners

DBVI services are provided by highly qualified professionals who possess specialized training and understanding of the implications of visual loss. Services are provided by ten staff from regional field offices in Montpelier, Burlington, Springfield, and Rutland. Each office has a rehabilitation counselor and rehabilitation associate who are responsible for ensuring that appropriate services are delivered. One rehabilitation technology trainer covers the entire state teaching people how to use assistive technology. The Director of DBVI oversees the statewide program.

DBVI partners with several organization to accomplish our mission. Our major provider of direct instruction for teaching blindness related skills is the non-profit Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI). Their staff include highly trained certified blindness professionals in the areas of Orientation and Mobility, Low Vision and Rehabilitation Therapists. For other DBVI partners please visit [www.dbvi.vermont.gov](http://www.dbvi.vermont.gov).

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### Recent Developments and Accomplishments

The blind community successfully worked with the legislature for support of the NFB-Newsline service. This service gives access to more than 400 local and national newspapers and magazines in an accessible format that can be accessed using a regular telephone or smartphone. There is also a local channel to post important information.

DBVI staff also facilitated several consumer-driven events. These included employment groups to help individuals tackle some of their barriers to employment while in a group setting with peers.

### Future Directions

DBVI continues to expand the Learn, Earn, and Prosper (LEAP) program for high school students. This includes workforce readiness training during school vacations. For more information please visit:

<http://www.retrainvt.org/retrain/LEAP>

### Programs and Services

#### Vision Rehabilitation Employment Services

The goal of DBVI's vocational rehabilitation services is to help people with vision loss to retain, return, or secure employment. Individuals meet with a DBVI counselor to identify goals and develop a plan to reduce their functional limitations.

DBVI counselors provide guidance related to employment and help people explore interests and abilities. On their individual path to employment, most people who work with DBVI:

- Build and strengthen vocational skills;
- Learn new adaptive skills to remain independently regardless of vision loss
- Learn to use specialized technology needed to do their jobs
- Services to maximize your vision
- Help with a job search and provide training in job skills
- Assistance with attending college
- Technology and tools that allow access to printed materials and completing work tasks

## Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired

DBVI is exceptionally proud of the accomplishments of our current and former customers. To read success stories of our former customers and their experiences with DBVI, visit our website: [www.dbvi.vermont.gov](http://www.dbvi.vermont.gov).

### **Services for High School Students**

DBVI transition services provide high school students with opportunities for learning independent living and job skills. DBVI collaborates with several partners including the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), VABVI, ReSource, and the Gibney Family Foundation. DBVI is also working with partners to make sure that all blind or visually impaired high school students are building solid pre-employment skills.

One specific transition program called LEAP (Learn, Earn, and Prosper) provides paid summer employment for youth in a residential setting. This program empowers students to take charge of their employment future by gaining early employment success.

### **Independent Living Services**

DBVI provides assistance in maintaining independence. The DBVI rehabilitation associate meets an individual in his or her own home to discuss the individual's goals and develop a plan to achieve the highest possible degree of independence in activities such as traveling, preparing meals, and identifying medications. The direct instruction is provided by certified blindness professionals through a grant agreement with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI). VABVI also administers the Older Blind Program to provide specialized vision rehabilitation services to eight-hundred individuals over the age of 55 in FFY 2016.

### **Technology**

Maximizing the power of assistive technology is critical for people with vision loss. DBVI invests significant effort in staying current about new assistive technology, that has revolutionized employment access, connection to society and eliminated other barriers caused by vision loss.

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### Results

#### Performance Measures

**Better Off:** Our focus is to help our consumers to become better off by building new skills and improving their circumstances. DBVI has consistently delivered a high Employment Rate.

**Employment Rate:** The percentage of people served by DBVI who have achieved an employment outcome successfully attained vocational goal for a minimum of 90 days.

|                 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | National Standard |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------------------|
| Employment Rate | 75%  | 77%  | 80%  | 79%  | 73%  | 75%  | 67.11%            |

**Deliver Services Well:** We also have a strong focus on delivering services well. Customer satisfaction is measured each year in the following key areas. The percentages below include the range during the time-period from 2011 to 2016.

- Overall Satisfaction--ranges from 92% to 95%.
- Services provided met expectations--ranges from 85% to 90%.
- Staff were helpful to achieve vocational goals--ranges from 95% to 96%.
- DBVI delivered services well for me--ranges from 89% to 92%.
- I did get the results I wanted from DBVI--ranges from 89% to 94%.

Our approach for assisting individuals who are blind or visually impaired on their path to employment and independence begins with the belief that each person can achieve their goals and DBVI can help. We also know that the “voice of the customer” is important and our strategies should be geared to meet those needs. Each staff member is committed to delivering services well and knows that their job makes a difference in the lives of people we serve. Please visit the DBVI website at [www.dbvi.vermont.gov](http://www.dbvi.vermont.gov) and visit the success story link to see real examples of people reaching their goals.