
Issue Brief – Blind Services

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF REHABILITATION

PED IB-USOR 4

SUMMARY

The Division of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) assists individuals who are blind or visually disabled obtain employment and increase their independence. The division provides a variety of services that include orientation and mobility training, vocational counseling, vocational training, assistive technology, visual screening, and prevention of blindness training.

OBJECTIVE

This brief provides information on the division's request to increase outreach and rural service opportunities to the blind.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Outreach and Rural Services

The division estimates that 20 percent of the state's blind and visually impaired individuals live in rural areas. Individuals living in Utah's rural communities that are blind or visually impaired are not able to access services offered by the division on an ongoing basis. Services provided by the division in Salt Lake City, are not available to rural residents on a regular basis. Often, rural residents will travel to Salt Lake City to receive orientation and mobility training as well as learn skills on equipment provided by the division. These individuals, when returning home, must apply their training on

different equipment and learn to navigate their communities.

Requested funding will allow the division better identify and serve rural individuals with visually impairments. The division anticipates hiring four part-time outreach staff to locate and serve eligible individuals. In addition, the division anticipates hiring a full-time rehabilitation employee to coordinate rural service delivery and follow-up on consumer needs. DSBVI will also use matching federal funds to provide these rural outreach services.

Recommendation: the subcommittee may wish to evaluate the request for \$62,500 to provide rural outreach coordinators and prioritize this request with other items before the subcommittee.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations presented in this brief.

1. Consider the request for \$62,500 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to be appropriated to the Division of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide for increased rural outreach services.