

Issue Brief – Blind Services

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF REHABILITATION

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SUMMARY

The Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) assists individuals who are blind or who are experiencing a vision loss, receive assistance to enable them to acquire the skills necessary for competitive or self-employment and to increase their independence in their communities. The Division provides a variety of services that include orientation and mobility or cane travel training, vocational counseling, Braille training, assistive technology, vision screening, and competitive job placement services.

OBJECTIVE

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

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Outreach and Rural Services - \$132,865

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 DSBVI in Salt Lake City are not available to rural residents. Clients living in rural communities must travel to Salt Lake City to participate in the full-time training program. These individuals receive training in cane travel, Braille, activities of daily living, and adaptive technology. When returning home, these clients must apply their new skills and training to their specific living situation or environment.

To be functional in employment and in their communities, these clients must receive the necessary ongoing adaptive technology and training provided by DSBVI. These services are provided to ensure that devices and services are accessible to all clients. Many barriers to employment can be

Recommendation: the subcommittee may wish to evaluate the request for \$132,865 to provide ongoing service to clients in rural communities 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 \$132,865 in ongoing Uniform School Fund revenue to be appropriated to the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide for increased rural ongoing services.