

COLORADO COMMISSION FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED



ANNUAL REPORT 2008



Colorado Department of Human Services

people who help people

STATE OF COLORADO
Bill Ritter, Jr., Governor

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REPORT AND RECIPIENTS

This report has been prepared and is being submitted pursuant to Section 26-8.7-106 (g) (3) C.R.S. (Statute attached).

The statute directs that this report be submitted to the following:

Governor Bill Ritter, Jr.;

The Health and Human Services Committee of the Colorado House of Representatives;

The Health and Human Services Committee of the Colorado Senate; and

The Independent Living Council in the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Colorado Department of Human Services.

The purpose of the annual report as identified in statute is to submit recommendations regarding the topics identified below, including recommendations for proposed legislation. This initial Commission Report contains no formal recommendations for policy or legislative changes. This report describes the start up and training that the Commission engaged in during their first year of operation in an effort to prepare themselves to effectively make recommendations in the future.

CREATION, POWERS AND DUTIES

The Colorado Commission for Individuals Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired (CCIBVI) was created pursuant to House Bill 07-1274 to make recommendations concerning the provision of services to aid individuals who are blind or visually impaired in Colorado. The CCIBVI is a Type 2 transfer agency placed in the Department of Human Services. Its statutory duties include:

- To make recommendations regarding the provision of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired, pursuant to Section 101 of the Federal "Rehabilitation Act of 1973", 29 U.S.C. sec.701, et seq.;
- To make recommendations concerning the provision of independent living services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, including services for older individuals who are blind or visually impaired, pursuant to Title VII of the federal "Rehabilitation Act of 1973", 29 U.S.C. sec. 701 et seq., and article 8.1 of this title concerning independent living services;
- To make recommendations concerning pre-vocational and other training to prepare individuals who are blind or visually impaired for vocational training, job placement, and independence;
- To make recommendations concerning responsibilities of and evaluations of business enterprise programs for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, pursuant to the federal "Randolph-Sheppard Act", 20 U.S.C. sec. 107, and article 8.5 of this title;
- To make recommendations concerning responsibilities for developing and administering any other program that will further the provision of services to individuals who are blind or visually impaired;

- To serve as a liaison between the blind and visually impaired community and the General Assembly, Governor, Colorado State Department and state agencies. The Commission serves as an information resource and makes recommendations concerning the provisions of vocational rehabilitation, independent living services, pre-vocational and other training, and evaluates business enterprise programs.

COMMISSIONERS

On December 21, 2007, Governor Bill Ritter, Jr. appointed the following Commissioners:

- David E. Bolin of Broomfield, Colorado, a representative of an organization for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and who represents veterans who are blind or visually impaired.
- Barbara Hopke Boyer of Arvada, Colorado, a representative of an organization for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and who represents a national organization that is part of an advocacy group for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- Michelle L. Chacon of Arvada, Colorado, an individual who is blind or visually impaired and who is living independently.
- Peter O. Goshia of Longmont, Colorado, a senior who is blind or visually impaired.
- Dr. Kara S. Hanson of Aurora, Colorado, a professional who works directly with seniors who are blind or visually impaired.
- Julie M. Hunter of Denver, Colorado, a parent of a child who is blind or visually impaired.
- Scott C. LaBarre of Denver, Colorado, a representative of an organization for individuals who are blind or visually impaired, and who represents a national organization that is part of an advocacy group for individuals who are blind or visually impaired.
- Sammie McKay of Buena Vista, Colorado, an individual who is blind or visually impaired and who uses a service dog.
- Dr. Nalin J. Mehta of Golden, Colorado, an ophthalmologist, low-vision optometrist, or other qualified low-vision specialist.
- Evelyn Tileston of Craig, Colorado, a representative of an independent living center.

- Mark N. Wedgle of Westminster, Colorado, an individual who is blind or visually impaired and who is also deaf.
- Kevan Worley of Colorado Springs, Colorado, an individual who is a licensed blind manager involved in the federal Randolph-Sheppard program.
- Julia M. Zanon of Denver, Colorado, a vocational rehabilitation counselor who works with individuals who are blind or visually impaired.

On April 24, 2008, Governor Ritter appointed the following Commissioner:

- Kenneth J. Schmidt of Littleton, Colorado, as the designee of the Director of the Department of Human Services.

A Young Adult Commissioner who is at least 18 years of age has yet to be appointed.

TEMPORARY STAFF

In order to ensure that the CCIBVI could begin its work in a timely manner and be involved in assisting the Department with the hiring of a permanent Administrator, a Temporary Administrator was hired by the Department in April 2007. Hiring of the permanent Administrator position was delayed due to the hiring freeze. The Department applied for and received an exemption from the freeze in November 2008. Preparation for hiring a permanent Administrator is currently in process and should be completed early in 2009.

MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission held four meetings in 2008, as required by statute: on May 23rd, June 25th, October 8th and November 19th. At their initial orientation meeting, the Commission decided that they should begin their work by learning as much about existing programs and services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired as possible. They identified a number of programs they would invite to the next three Commission meetings to educate them about their programs and services, their client populations and any unmet needs of which they were aware.

ORIENTATION MEETING

The CCIBVI held an initial orientation meeting on May 23, 2008. During the meeting, they received the following orientation presentations:

- Mary McGhee, Director, Division of Boards and Commissions presented an overview of State Government, the Colorado Department of Human Services and the Division of Boards and Commissions where the Commission is placed in the Department, Executive Branch policies and procedures;

- Assistant Attorney General Wade Livingston reviewed the Commission's enabling Legislation HB 07 1274, their status as a Type 2 transfer within CDHS, and the Colorado Sunshine Act; and
- Jan Haroldson, Human Resources Specialist, gave an overview of the State hiring process and personnel rules so Commissioners would understand the process and their role in assisting the Department with the hiring of their permanent Administrator.

Election of Officers and Commission Procedures including Decision Making

The CCIBVI elected the following officers at their Orientation Meeting:

Chair: Commissioner Sammie McKay, and
 Vice Chair: Commissioner Worley as Vice Chair.

They chose to use a modified version of Roberts Rules of Order for making decisions. They also indicated that communication with the Commission should go through the Administrator at CDHS, who would then distribute any communications to all of the Commissioners and keep a record of those communications on their behalf.

TRAINING

During their meetings in June, October and November, the CCIBVI received training on the following topics:

- The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation programs and services;
- Independent Living Centers Program administered by DVR;
- Findings of the Town Hall Meetings, a needs assessment conducted by DVR in different areas of the state in 2007;
- Colorado's Talking Book Library;
- The Howard Fund;
- The Business Enterprise Program;
- Center for Adjustment to Blindness (DVR) tour, program overview and meeting with participants;
- Colorado Center for the Blind tour, program overview and interaction with participants;
- Colorado Department of Transportation;
- RTD para-transit systems (Access-A-Ride) and fixed bus route system;
- Colorado Department of Health Care Policy & Financing Medicaid programs and waivers;
- Department of Education, Special Education Services for children and the School for the Deaf and Blind

PRIORITIES

Although the CCIBVI has no formal recommendations for Legislation or Policy change in this first year of their operation, they did identify the following priority areas to address in the coming year:

- Development of a web site for the Commission with links to services statewide
- The identified needs in the DVR Town Hall Report:
 - Transportation
 - Employment
 - Public awareness regarding the availability of services
 - Independent living services for individuals who are elderly and blind or visually impaired
 - Deaf-Blind services
- Voting
- Public awareness education
- Physician/Ophthalmologist and Optometric services outreach
- Outreach to people who are blind or visually impaired
- Improve the delivery of VR services for the blind (including research on what other states are doing)
- Analysis of available funding sources and existing needs
- Statewide needs assessment utilizing on site meetings, internet and conference calling options

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Commission scheduled a Strategic Planning session for their first meeting in January 2009.

The Department applied for and received an exemption to proceed with hiring a Permanent Administrator for the Commission. It is anticipated that that position will be filled in the early part of 2009.