

# Washington

## State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

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October 2017 - September 2018

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Department of Services for the Blind  
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## ANNUAL REPORT INTRODUCTION

The Washington State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB) is an advisory group of volunteers, appointed by the Washington State Governor, who provide counsel and guidance to the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB.) In Washington State, the DSB has primary responsibility to deliver Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services, the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), and Independent Living (IL) skills training to individuals who are blind or visually impaired. DSB provides services for individuals crossing the entire life span.

The SRCB reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations to DSB on its plans, policies, and activities to insure that blind or visually impaired people in our state receive the most effective and efficient rehabilitation services possible.

In addition to providing direction to the Director of DSB on behalf of the public and consumers, the SRCB also advises and reports to the Governor; makes recommendations to the State Legislature about services that impact the lives of blind people; and, works closely with other state councils, agencies and organizations to enhance the services, opportunities, and rights of Washingtonians who are blind.

The SRCB is authorized by the federal Rehabilitation Act under the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, and in Washington State statute RCW 74.18.070-74.18.100.

REFLECTING ON 2018: A LETTER FROM THE SRCB CHAIR

Dear Acting Deputy Commissioner Dobak and Governor Inslee,

I am pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report on behalf of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB).

This has been my first year as Chair of the SRCB. We have welcomed new members to the Council, including filling the State Workforce Board position. We continue to experience a high level of dedication by Council members to our work. We have had reports from DSB's major programs and are completing our first year with a new tracking system for the agency's satisfaction survey. We now hold committee breakout sessions at each of our quarterly meetings. This has enhanced the work of our Council committees. We have also instituted a Constituent Spotlight section at each meeting so that we can stay up to date on the work of each of our Council members.

With the Washington Department of Services for the Blind going into an Order of Selection for the first time in its history we have been focused on ensuring that current and prospective participants receive accurate and consistent communication about this process. We have been working closely with DSB and consumers and are pleased with the agency's thorough and ongoing training for DSB staff.

At our recommendation DSB has established an advisory group for the Independent Living program. This program, which serves both older blind persons and younger blind (under 55) persons not seeking employment has experienced funding challenges during the current state fiscal year. The advisory group is made up of service providers, DSB staff and interested stakeholders. Consumer organizations are represented. I currently serve as Chair of this group. We have had several telephone conference calls over the last few months. This advisory group is developing strategies for addressing current challenges and future program needs. I believe this process is also greatly enhancing communication between DSB and the IL providers.

Sincerely,

Marci Carpenter, Chair

GET TO KNOW OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

Council members are appointed by the Governor for no more than two 3-year consecutive terms. The Governor actively encourages us to seek demographic and ethnic diversity of membership in addition to meeting the federal requirements for representation.

The Council currently has vacancies for a Community Rehab Program Service Provider and two Labor and Business Representatives.

CURRENT MEMBERS

CHRIS ALEJANO: STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

*Seattle, WA*

Chris Alejano is the Education Policy Advisor for City of Seattle Mayor, Jenny Durkan. He works with city programs and efforts in early learning, K-12, and post-secondary education. Chris brings a unique background that spans the entire educational system from the local to the federal level.

COREY GRANDSTAFF: CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

*Vancouver, WA*

Corey is a graduate of the University of Northern Colorado. Since 2012, he has been employed at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) as a Residential Program Assistant and teacher.

DOUG TRIMBLE, 2018 SRCB VICE-CHAIR: STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

*Vancouver, WA*

Doug has worked at the Washington State School for the Blind since 1999 where he currently teaches Orientation & Mobility to middle and high school students. Doug is also a contracted service provider with the DSB Independent Living Blind Skills Services.

GLORIA WALLING: BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR

*Olympia, WA*

In 2008, Gloria became a licensed operator in the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) where she has managed cafeterias and other locations. Gloria is active in her local chapter of the Washington Council of the Blind and the BEP Vendor's committee.

JERRY JOHNSEN:

CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

*Seattle, WA*

Jerry has been CAP Director for 38 years and also serves on the DVR SRCB and the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE). Jerry is married with two children; he loves photography, cycling and hiking.

KIM CONNER:

STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)

*Olympia, WA*

Kim is Executive Director of the SILC. She previously worked as a consultant providing strategic planning, program development, and partnership building for non-profits and small businesses.

LINDA WILDER:

QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

*Tacoma, WA*

Linda has a Bachelor's degree from Seattle University and a Master's degree from Chapman University. In 2017, Linda retired from DSB after working 30 years as a Vocational rehabilitation Counselor.

LOU OMA DURAND:

DSB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (EX-OFFICIO MEMBER)

*Seattle, WA*

Lou Oma was appointed Executive Director of the DSB in July 2005. Previously she served as Deputy Director, and held other executive and administrative positions at DSB. In addition to over 25 years of service in state government, Lou Oma was employed for 3 years at Boeing, and has served on numerous education, arts and other non-profit boards, advisory councils, literary arts organizations, and legislative task forces.

MARCI CARPENTER, 2018 SRCB CHAIR:

CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION

*Seattle, WA*

Marci Carpenter is the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington. A Washington native, she has been a lifelong advocate for blind children and adults. Marci also serves as Chairperson of the Seattle Transit Advisory Board.

NATE MARSHALL:

COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM

*Port Townsend, WA*

Nate has served two full terms as the CRP representative. We will miss his enthusiasm and his thoughtful contributions. We are actively recruiting for someone to serve in this position.

SHEILA TURNER:

BLIND, WITH MULTIPLE DISABILITIES

*Pasco, WA*

Sheila is employed as the Independent Living Skills teacher at the Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Kennewick. She is working towards dual certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialist at the University of Northern Colorado. She is the parent of two children who are blind; one has multiple disabilities.

STEVE FIKSDAL:

BUSINESS, LABOR AND INDUSTRY

*Federal Way, WA*

Steve is the owner of ConnectEd Institute, which provides character strength assessment and education to individuals and teams. Steve says DSB played a significant role in the establishment of his new company and career by providing him the skills and the resources to succeed in a sighted world and embark on a new and exciting career.

TIM PAULDING:

CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

*Spokane, WA*

Tim is an Orientation and Mobility instructor at the Lighthouse for the Blind in Spokane. He also contracts with the states of Washington and Idaho, teaching adaptive technology and O&M to children and adults. He has worked in the blindness and disability field for 10 years and is certified in Vision Rehabilitation Therapy and Orientation and Mobility.

TRACY KAHLO:

PARENT INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTER

*Tacoma, WA*

Tracy has a Master's in Not-for-Profit Leadership from Seattle University. She has served as the Executive Director of Partnerships for Action, Voices for Empowerment (PAVE) since 2008.

YVONNE THOMAS-MILLER:

NATIVE AMERICAN

*Bellingham, WA*

Yvonne is employed at the Lummi Vocational Rehabilitation Program on the Lummi Reservation as an Outreach Specialist. She is certified by the PET-AIR (Post Employment Training-American Indian Rehabilitation program) and is working to obtain her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Yvonne graduated from Evergreen State University and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

STAFF

MEREDITH STANNARD

DSB APPOINTED LIAISON

*Seattle, WA*

Meredith worked as a vocational rehabilitation counselor and supervisor for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in Seattle, and retired from her position as Regional Area Manager at the Washington Department of Services for the Blind in 2017. She is entering her second year as the liaison to the Washington State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind.

DEPARTING STAFF

DEBBIE COOK

DSB APPOINTED LIAISON

*Seattle, WA*

Debbie retired from the University of Washington Center on Technology and Disability Studies in 2018 where she managed the Older Blind Independent living Program as a sub-recipient grant of the DSB and served on DSB's Executive Team as a consultant. Prior to her employment at the UW, Debbie worked 16 years at DSB as a VR Counselor, rehabilitation teacher and program manager and 6 years as an Independent Living service provider.

### A CHANCE TO CONNECT, LEARN FROM, AND WORK WITH EACH OTHER

The SRCB met four times in Seattle during 2018. All meetings were open to the public; a phone conferencing system with call-in information advertised ahead of time allowing interested consumers to take part regardless of where they live throughout our state. In addition to special presentations and subcommittee updates, meetings consist of a report from the DSB Executive Director about progress towards goals outlined in the state plan and a report from the SRCB Chair about Council activities.

The agenda always offers an opportunity for public comment on subjects related to Council business including the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Programs, and issues impacting the employment or independence of blind Washington State citizens. In 2018 there were also two public forums held; one for a review of the proposed Washington Administrative Code revisions, and one for public comment on the proposed Order of Selection process.

Agenda items this year included:

- Discussion and planning regarding SRCB infrastructure and orientation of new members
- Ongoing DSB Director reports to keep the SRCB apprised of Department highlights
- Budget impacts resulting from required set asides in WIOA implementation
- Information on the Older Blind Program: Technical Assistance Opportunities
- Committee break-out sessions at each quarterly meeting, and reports back to the SRCB
- Update on the changes to the Washington Administrative Codes for 2018
- Discussion of the change in process for administration of the participant satisfaction survey process in 2018
- Order of Selection (OOS) discussions led by the DSB Director and Deputy Director prior to October 1, 2018 implementation of OOS
- Independent Living and Older Blind Program discussion
- Discussion regarding the creation of an Independent Living Thought Group
- Information on two public forums; the new Washington Administrative Codes and the Order of Selection Process
- Youth Services summer programs report on statewide youth service programs
- SRCB constituent spotlights on individual programs
- Business Enterprise Program presentation, highlighting enhanced training opportunities

## COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2018

The SRCB has four standing committees that do the work of the Council. Every member is expected to serve on a committee.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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This committee provides overall leadership, vision, and guidance. It includes the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Chairs of the other standing committees. Responsibilities include: supervising SRCB staff; developing and managing SRCB resources; planning meeting agendas; strategic planning and work plan development; meeting federal and state mandates on time and within budget; and submitting this Annual Report.

### MEMBERSHIP AND COLLABORATION COMMITTEE

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This committee works to maintain a strong, active, and high-functioning Council. This includes: member recruitment, training and support; public relations and outreach; and coordination of collaborative activities with partner councils.

In 2018 the membership committee for the SRCB worked on filling four vacant positions open on the council: two business and labor positions, a Community Rehab Provider, and a representative from the Work Force Investment Board. The committee was excited to recruit Chris Alejano, a member of the Work Force Investment Board, to fill one of our positions. In addition, the council was able to recruit an individual to fill our vacant Community Rehab Provider position; however, due to a career change, this position is still vacant. In addition, the membership committee has begun looking to the future to fill multiple positions that will be open in the next year.

### PROGRAM AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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The committee evaluates customer satisfaction and other DSB performance measures, and makes suggestions for program improvement based on finding; coordinates opportunities for public feedback, and input to the SRCB Annual Report.

This committee oversaw the anonymous satisfaction survey for VR customers closed in the federal fiscal year, conducted by SRCB staff. Surveys were completed online. Questions address categories identified in the Governor's Results Washington initiatives. The target for all satisfaction measure is 80%.

Overall satisfaction: for 2018 was 79%; for 2017 was 83%; for 2016 was 78%

Training offered: for 2018 was 93%; for 2017 was 84%; for 2016 was 78%

Accuracy of staff: for 2018 was 90%; for 2017 was 86%; for 2016 was 83%

Respectfulness of staff: for 2018 was 85%; for 2017 was 84%; for 2016 was 83%

#### POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

This committee provides input to DSB's internal policies and practices by: identifying opportunities to engage in DSB internal workgroups; giving input on policy changes affecting DSB participants; and supporting DSB's State Plan forums.

## DSB PROGRAMS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

### BUILDING THE FOUNDATION OF A HAPPY AND INDEPENDENT CHILD

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The DSB serves children who are blind or have low vision from birth through 8. DSB provides assistance in understanding the nature and potential impact of the child's visual disability to the often overwhelmed parents of this most challenging population. Parents are trained alongside the children, receiving training in parenting techniques and understanding the child's developmental needs. Of course, daily living skills are also taught to the child (and their family) to help the child become more independent at home and participate in household chores.

In 2018, 14 children from birth to age 8 received services, including counseling, family consultations, and basic independent living skills.

Children and Families webpage: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/children-and-families.shtml>.

### A NATIONWIDE EMPHASIS ON YOUTH TRANSITION

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A national emphasis in the VR program is services to ensure smooth transition for youth who are moving from school to post-secondary activities. DSB helps students, as young as age 9 to as old as age 24, and their families think about and plan for life after high school. The DSB provides:

- Career counseling: including consulting on part-time employment and internships
- Assessments to help students determine their interests for their future careers.
- Information regarding services for adults, including job counseling and training in the adaptive skills of blindness
- Collaboration with students, parents, and high school staff on IEP development and post-school activities
- Five summer programs are available for students in transition, as well as a growing handful of day long programs. Programs have different focuses depending on the age of the participants. The youngest participants are working on social skills and the oldest participants are taking college classes while living on campus.

In 2018, DSB provided a variety of services in addition to the summer programs to 354 youth. Of all individuals who currently have an open VR Transition case, the average age at the time of application is 16 years old. DSB assisted 144 participants with their higher education tuition.

School to Work Transition webpage: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/school-work-transition.shtml>

## GETTING PEOPLE TO WORK AND HELPING THEM KEEP THEIR JOBS

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is for people interested in getting a job or keeping a job. The comprehensive program considers the needs of each individual and provides quality services to customers rather than just placing people in jobs. DSB consistently gets higher wages than most other VR programs and consistently has the highest ratio of individuals who earn enough to reduce or eliminate Social Security financial benefits. Services are wide-ranging and encourage the participant to take an active role. Participants often need training in adaptive skills of blindness, computer technology for on-the-job success, career exploration and matching, or internships and other work experiences.

At the end of 2018, 157 participants achieved successful employment outcomes with an average hourly wage of \$24.07. 61 of these participants were receiving job retention assistance. Six of them are Honorably Discharged Veterans. Ten participants now have all of their medical health insurance paid by their employers. 41 participants are no longer relying on Public Assistance as their primary source of income. And, the oldest participant, who needed help retaining employment as a Real Estate Appraiser, was 81 years old.

A complete list of jobs and employers can be found online, but a few examples of employers include Apple, Inc.; Central Washington University; Fred Meyer; Issaquah School District; KeyBank; Microsoft Corporation; Puget Sound Energy; Swedish Medical Center; Top Pot Doughnuts; and WA State Employment Security Department.

VR Services Website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/employment.shtml>

## OTC GRADUATES ARE CONFIDENT, INDEPENDENT, AND SUCCESSFUL

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The Orientation and Training Center is primarily a residential program for VR customers who need intensive daily instruction in adaptive skills of blindness and employment-related experiences. Students participate in a variety of classes, including Home Management, Keyboarding and Computers, and Orientation and Mobility. OTC students participate in other activities and learning experiences. Challenge Activities, like tandem bike riding, help students build confidence with vision loss. The skills they learn and experiences they have enable them to be independent and successful in the home, in school, on the job, and in their communities.

In 2018, the OTC had 26 students graduate from its regular training program. As part of the program, seven students had the opportunity to participate in a Student Training Employment Program internship:

- Two placements as TVI Assistants at Highland School District
- Two placements with a BEP vendor at Just US Café

- Two placements at Lighthouse, Inc.; one in HR and one in Manufacturing
- One placement as a recording assistant at Jack Straw Studio

OTC's website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/orientation-and-training-center.shtml>

#### LEGALLY-BLIND INDIVIDUALS LEARN TO BE INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURS

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The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides training and opportunities for qualified legally-blind individuals to become independent entrepreneurs, operating successful food service businesses, including delis, cafeterias, and espresso stands, in government buildings. Over five to six weeks of online training and hands-on experience, participants complete training in all facets of food service facility operation to become BEP Licensees. They can apply to be operators of program locations and the program will provide the essential food service equipment and provide ongoing guidance to the operator. The Licensee of each location is solely responsible for the success of the business.

2018 ended with 16 BEP vendors in operation, and two DSB clients expected to graduate from the program in December 2018. A café opened in the new FAA Headquarters building in Des Moines specializing in gourmet hamburgers. These BEP facilities benefit the state and our economy as a whole, in addition to the vendors and their employees.

- Median BEP vendor income for 2018 was \$58,353
- Twenty-one (21) facilities combined had total gross sales of \$7,664,004
- \$619,694 was collected as sales tax from all facilities
- \$263,707 was collected as payroll tax from all facilities

BEP website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/business-enterprise-program.shtml-1>

#### LIVING INDEPENDENTLY WITH VISION LOSS

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The Independent Living Program (IL) provides the skills, the tools, and the confidence individuals with recent vision loss need to live independently in their homes and communities. IL providers offer a wide range of services, including training, brief counseling, info and referrals, and supplying aids or devices. For most participants, the goal is simply to regain what was lost: the ability to call a friend on the telephone, heat up leftovers in the microwave, know what time it is to get to a doctor's appointment on time, use a magnifier to look at pictures of a loved one, or take a walk in the fresh air.

The IL Program serves clients 18 years old to over 100 years old. In 2018, IL served 10 centenarians! Most of the participants are actually 55 or older. More than two-thirds of them are women; the majority have macular degeneration; and the average age is 84 years old. Of

those clients 54 or younger, the average age is 35 and more than a third suffer from depression. Most participants live in their home or apartment rather than in a nursing or assisted living setting; in 2018, IL services were provided to 13 homeless people.

As 2018 came to a close, the program's five providers statewide served 1784 clients. 168 of those cases were 54 or younger. Despite an emphasis on outreach to the Asian and Hispanic minorities, these populations are still significantly underserved, falling well short of Washington State's general population percentage who are Hispanic or Asian individuals. Overall, IL service delivery to underserved minority populations has increased, but more work is clearly needed but the program is moving in the right direction.

**A LETTER OF RECOGNITION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND DIRECTOR**

**Dear Acting Deputy Commissioner Dobak and Governor Inslee,**

Representing a broad spectrum of Washington citizens, the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB) is vitally important in our current economic environment. Council members actively seek and convey the input of their respective constituents. They are strong partners in helping the agency to clarify values; assess options regarding our budget, policies and strategies; and achieve our agency mission: Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Vitality for People with Visual Disabilities.

As a result, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) continues to demonstrate the positive impact our services have on children and families, youth transitioning from school to work, adults seeking competitive employment, employers who need qualified workers, and elderly citizens wishing to remain independent in their homes. The focus of the SRCB along with the successful outcomes achieved by our professional staff contribute to Washington's economic and cultural vitality by emphasizing the skills and abilities of all its citizens including those with disabilities. Every day, people in Washington with vision loss are going to work in competitive jobs, starting up their own businesses and employing others, or keeping their current jobs by acquiring new skills and assistive technology. These individuals have taken charge of their lives, can support their families, pay taxes, and contribute to the vitality of their communities.

We create these successes by being innovative in how we manage our resources, providing our state employees an environment of recognition and development, maintaining a strong relationship with our stakeholders, and keeping the public informed. As a state agency, we continue to emphasize accountability, performance outcome measures, and careful analysis of data as the drivers for strategic planning.

Our Council members, eight of whom are blind or have other disabilities, use those same key tools to be well-informed advisors and advocates. They continue to thoughtfully share their expertise, resources, and life experiences with our customers. Both as a group and individually, they function as role models for an engaged Washington committed to the well-being of all its citizens and are persistent on behalf of the economic and cultural vitality of our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to recognize the work of these dedicated volunteers.

Sincerely,

Lou Oma Durand, Director

2018 Outcomes website: <https://dsb.wa.gov/about/dsb-outcomes-and-results.shtml>