



**North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind**



# Biennial Report 2015-2017



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**NORTH DAKOTA VISION SERVICES/SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND (NDVS/SB)  
AGENCY FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION**

*Our Mission*

*We are educators and advocates partnering with related agencies to provide individualized services and resources to infants, children and adults with visual impairment to empower them in achieving their goals.*

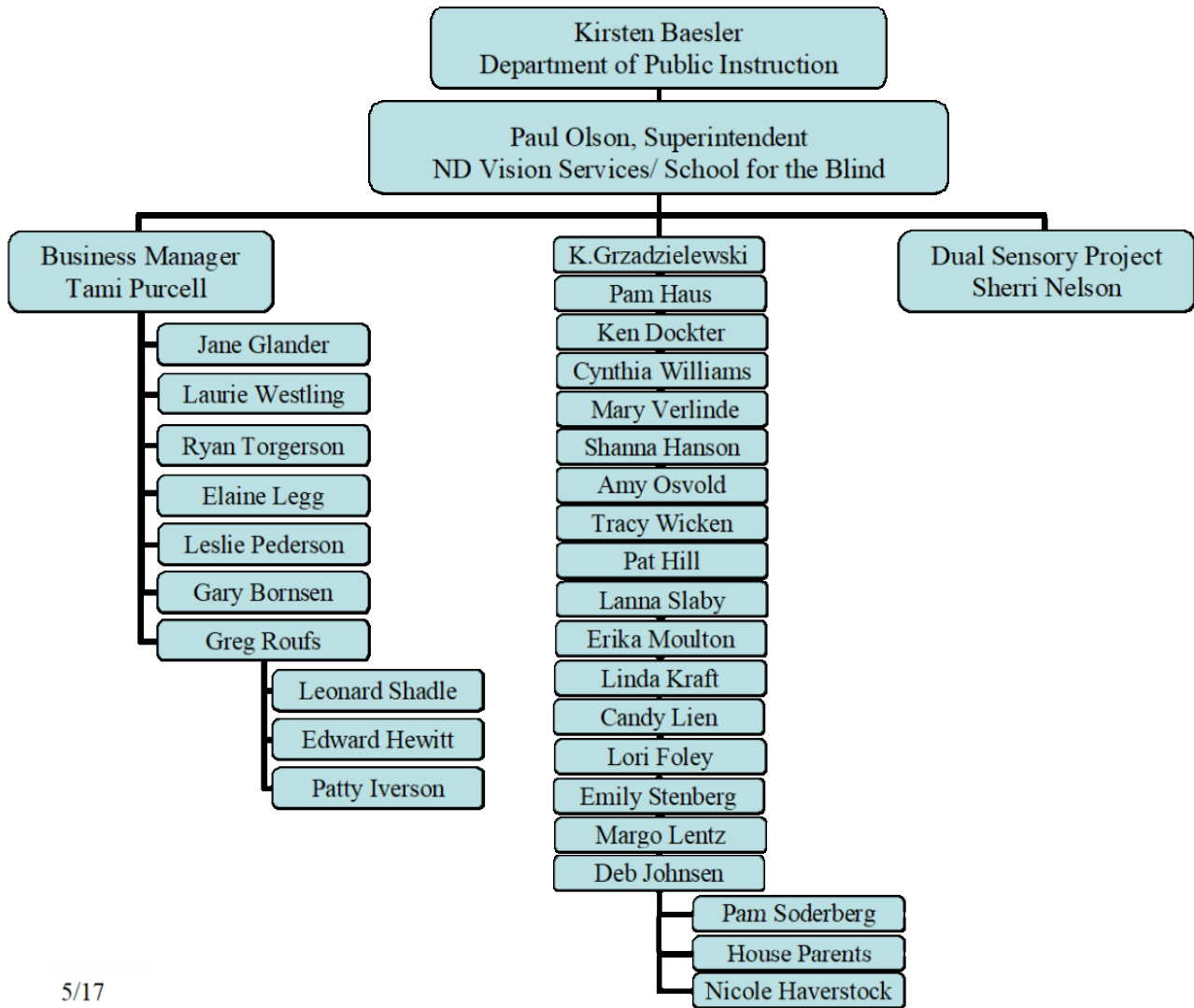
*Our Vision*

*To inspire hope and the desire to achieve in our students as we strive to be leaders in the field of visual impairment.*

## History of NDVS/SB

- 1908** North Dakota School for the Blind opens in Bathgate with 25 residential students
- 1961** Modern facility opens, with relocation to Grand Forks
- 1967** NDSB Band performs at the Multi-District Lions Convention in Regina, Saskatchewan; they end their visit with a "Command Performance" for Princess Alexandra, cousin of the Queen
- 1974** The school obtains its first piece of adaptive equipment--a talking calculator
- 1980** NDSB Pop Singers ... accompanying themselves with electric guitars, bass, drums and keyboard ... perform at the opening session of the Helen Keller Congress held in Boston on her 100th birthday
- 1980** NDSB begins an annual tradition of sending students to Close Up in Washington, D.C.
- 1991** NDSB becomes a division of the ND Department of Public Instruction
- 1994** State legislature changes programming focus to outreach model
- 1996** Major renovation completed converting the former residence into instructional centers and offices
- 1997** State legislation enables operation of The Store to provide a convenient source of low-vision aids
- 1998** Major renovation converts former pool building to accommodate center-based programming needs
- 1999** Braille Access Center begins operation
- 2001** State legislature officially changes name to North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind
- 2001** Legislature clarifies mandate for NDVS/SB to serve persons of all ages
- 2007** Legislature grants resource to expand adult services
- 2008** NDVS/SB commemorates centennial.
- 2009** Legislature grants 2nd FTE for adult services
- 2014** Major renovation of the west wing and installation of elevator in the south wing

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



5/17

# STATUTORY/CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

## CHAPTER 25-06—EDUCATION OF BLIND PERSONS



**25-06-01. North Dakota vision services – school for the blind – Maintained – Location.** There must be maintained at Grand Forks, in Grand Forks County, a statewide service, resource, and referral center for the education and training of all residents of this state who are blind or have a visual impairment which must be known as the North Dakota vision services - school for the blind.

**25-06-01.1. Definitions.** For purposes of this chapter, an individual who is blind means an individual who is totally blind or whose central visual acuity does not exceed twenty/two hundred in the better eye with corrective lenses, or the widest diameter of the visual field is no greater than twenty degrees; and an individual with a visual impairment means an individual with an impairment in vision which, even with correction, adversely affects the individual's functional ability.

**25-06-02. Duties and responsibilities of North Dakota vision services – school for the blind.** Within the limits of legislative appropriation, North Dakota vision services – school for the blind shall:

1. Provide vision-specific services that

include consultations, evaluations, information, training, and educational services, including instruction in orientation, mobility, Braille, Braille music, daily living skills, technology, vocational training and recreation.

2. Collect and distribute information on vision services and resources available in the state.
3. Coordinate loans of adaptive devices, equipment, and materials.
4. Maintain a data base of residents who are blind or have a visual impairment.
5. Facilitate collaboration with agencies and programs providing services to individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment.
6. Assist residents to access appropriate services, including services available from the vocational rehabilitation division, independent living centers, infant development programs, developmental disabilities programs, the state library, local education programs, and advocacy programs.

**25-06-02.1. North Dakota vision services – school for the blind – Appointment of superintendent, budget, staff, and reporting structure.** The superintendent of the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind is appointed by and reports to the superintendent of public instruction. The North Dakota vision services – school for the blind must have a separate budget and separate staff from the department of public instruction.

**25-06-02.2. Superintendent – Special duties.** The superintendent of the North



Dakota vision services – school for the blind may also be the superintendent of the school for the deaf.

**25-06-03. Superintendent to possess certain qualifications.** The superintendent of the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind must possess those qualifications, educational and otherwise, as in the opinion of the superintendent of public instruction may qualify that person to instruct and minister to the needs of the blind persons.

**25-06-04. Qualifications for admission to school for the blind – Residents of state entitled to free education.** Repealed by S.L. 2001, Ch. 257, § 5.

**25-06-05. Services to nonresidents.** Individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment who are not residents of this state may receive services from North Dakota vision services – school for the blind if the individuals pay the cost of the services as determined by the superintendent of public instruction. Nonresidents may not receive services to the exclusion of residents of this state.

**25-06-06. Transportation of indigent persons.** Repealed by S.L. 1979, ch. 336, §3.

**25-06-07. Instruction at school for the blind.** Repealed by S.L. 2001, ch.257, § 5.

**25-06-08. Accounts for clothing – How collected.** Repealed by S.L. 1997, ch. 244, §4.

**25-06-09. Blind person – Duty to report.** Repealed by S.L. 2001, Ch. 257, § 5.

**25-06-10. Purchase and resale of vision-specific adaptive aids, devices, and appliances – Revolving fund – Continuing appropriation.** A revolving vision aids, devices, and appliances fund is hereby established in the state treasury to be used by the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind to purchase and resell vision-specific adaptive aids, devices, and appliances to be used by blind and visually impaired persons resident in this state. The North Dakota vision services – school for the blind may apply service charges when needed to cover the cost of purchasing, invoicing, and shipping, and all revenue from the sale of aids, appliances, devices, and shipping and postage fees must be deposited in the fund. The North Dakota vision services – school for the blind may receive gifts, grants, and donations for deposit in and use by the fund. All moneys in the revolving fund are hereby appropriated to the North Dakota vision services – school for the blind on a continuing basis for expenditure for the purposes of this section.



## MAJOR PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB) provides regionalized outreach services and center based programming to persons of all ages; namely, infants and their families, students, and adults with blindness and visual impairment, including those with multiple disabilities. Information and resources are available to enable persons to maintain their independence.

### Vision Resource Center

The Vision Resource Center at NDVS/SB serves patrons from ages birth through end of life: this includes but is not limited to students, teachers, vision professionals, parents, and people with visual impairments or blindness. We manage and administer materials obtained through federal and state funding as well as grant funding sources. We strive to offer the latest in both professional and practical information for individuals whose lives are touched by visual impairment or blindness. We provide standard materials in non-standard formats, educate patrons in information literacy, and support the rights of all to the freedom of access to information.



The Vision Resource Center is committed to the state-wide accessibility of its collec-

tion through Online Dakota Information Network (ODIN) and to a working partnership with the North Dakota State Library in providing all patrons within the state access to information despite physical or geographical limitations. Public awareness activities and education are, therefore, an important component of our mission. Requests for materials are taken over the telephone, mail, email, etc.

**APH Quota Funds:** The Ex Officio Trustee at NDVS/SB administers the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) program for all legally blind students and eligible adults in the state. The system through which these specialized materials are distributed is known as the Federal Quota Program. Through it, textbooks and educational aids are provided free to eligible blind students in educational settings ranging from early intervention programs for visually impaired infants to rehabilitation for elders who have age-related vision loss, from center-based and residential school programs to the regular classroom.

A wide variety of specially designed and adapted materials are available from APH, such as core curriculum materials for teaching reading, social studies, mathematics, and science. Also, available are materials for assessing and improving the use of low vision aids and expanded core curriculum materials for cultivating emergent literacy and concept development. These materials are also useful for facilitating sensory, motor, and perceptual development, for developing self-help and prevocational skills. Other examples of available research-based materials are braille teaching programs, talking computer software, low vision development programs, infant intervention materials, and motor skills improvement kits.

Educational tools include adapted audio

recording equipment, devices for writing braille, and talking computer hardware. Special supplies such as braille and bold-line papers, special binders and notebooks, and other consumable materials used in the classroom are also available.

**Large Print and Braille Textbook Repository:** In response to requests from local teachers and/or special education directors, NDVS/SB staff locate and obtain textbooks in alternative formats and loan them to students for the school year. If a textbook is not available in the NDVS/SB collection or through APH Louis Database, another option is to search the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC).

**NIMAS:** NDVS/SB has been designated as the provider of NIMAS materials for eligible students in North Dakota. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandated the establishment of the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC) as a national repository for publisher source filesets of textbooks and related core printed materials that are created according to the technical specification included in the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard, commonly known by the acronym NIMAS. The NIMAC has been established by the American Printing House for the Blind, Inc. (APH) in Louisville, Kentucky.

When a publisher creates a NIMAS fileset for a textbook or other print material and deposits the fileset in the NIMAC, that fileset can be converted into student-ready specialized formats, such as braille, large print, audio, or digital text by an accessible media producer that has been authorized by NDVS/SB. NDVS/SB staff can search the NIMAC database for availability of materials or a request may be made to have a fileset created. This part of the process is done free of charge, but it is important to note that the cost of creating large print or braille materials that are properly format-

ted, may cost the local education agency/school to have it produced. NDVS/SB can help local agencies/schools identify appropriate accessible media producers when materials need to be created.

**Talking Book Machine Lending Agency:** NDVS/SB maintains the National Library Service (NLS) Talking Book Machine Lending Agency. This service is available to anyone who is unable to read standard print materials as a result of temporary or permanent visual or physical limitations. Digital talking book machines, headphones, and pillow speakers are examples of available equipment. Most books are played on cartridges on the digital talking book machines. The service and all of the equipment are free. Applications are available from the Vision Resource Center.



**Sensory Education Library:** Students with additional disabilities can benefit from specialized toys and equipment to enhance their auditory, tactual and visual interaction with the world around them. Children learn best when it is done in a multi-sensory manner. Toys that vibrate, light up, or have unique textures may help students develop greater awareness and resulting communication skills. Switches can assist students with limited dexterity and range of motion interact with technology in a meaningful way.

NDVS/SB Regional Coordinators work closely with local teachers and parents to select the toys and equipment that are best suited to the individual needs of children.

**Descriptive Videos:** Patrons may borrow videos with a description of the visual elements of a movie spoken during natural pauses in the dialogue.

**Professional Collection:** This collection provides time-tested references as well as current resources for vision professionals, families and other educators who need to research particular topics. New curriculums, journals and textbooks cover a wide range of topics. It is essential that this collection reflect the most current research in this ever changing field. These materials are particularly important given the fast pace of changing technology, educational trends and medical treatment for visual impairment.

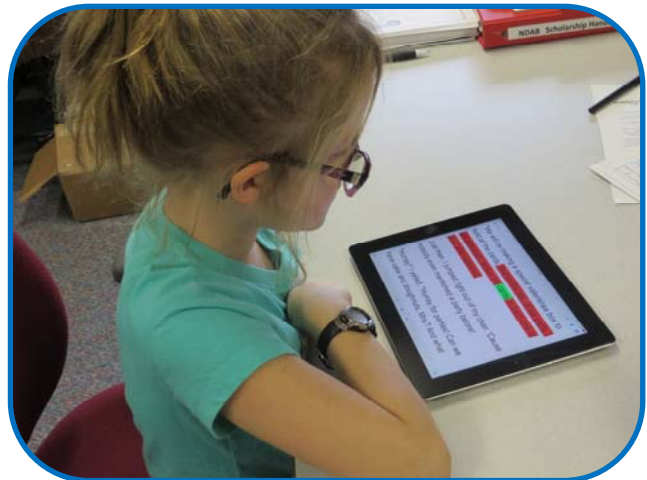
**Fiction and Non-Fiction Books:** A consumer library of fiction and non-fiction books in braille and large print is maintained. In addition, the library stocks numerous titles with tactile adaptations for the pre-braille reader.

**The Store:** The purpose of The Store located in the Vision Resource Center is to provide persons who are blind or visually impaired direct access to a sampling of low-vision aids that they may need for daily living and enjoyment. The hope is to bridge that difficult first step in selecting low-vision aids. Some examples of items for sale are canes and tips, labeling and writing supplies, magnifiers, sewing and measuring aids, talking clocks, and a wide variety of recreational games. Print catalogs are available as well as a virtual catalog on the NDVS/SB website. Individuals are encouraged to access the catalog on-line to read product descriptions and view pictures of products. Whether someone is shopping for themselves or for a loved one, this catalog will help customers

select the best product. Phone orders are welcome and staff is happy to answer questions.

An additional benefit to North Dakota customers is that we do not charge shipping or handling fees.

**Braille Access Center:** The mission of the Braille Access Center is to provide equal access to print materials for persons who are blind or visually impaired. Materials are made available in braille and large print. Items prepared include agendas, programs, catalogs, flyers, brochures, reports, menus, tactile concept books, greeting cards, conference handouts and correspondence. Customized braille materials are provided on a fee for service basis. A limited number of textbooks for students are produced annually upon request.



### Technology Center

The purpose of the Technology Center is to provide assistance and information to those persons who are blind or visually impaired and who wish to use technology to meet their needs at school, at work or at home.

A collection of technology for the blind and visually impaired is maintained in the Technology Center. This includes devices such as video magnifiers for enlarging print; talk-

ing calculators; computers with large print, braille or synthetic speech output; and computerized reading machines for the blind.

Services offered by the Technology Center include:

- On site hardware and software demonstrations for consumers and professionals.
- Information on regional and national vendors of assistive technology
- Hardware and software from APH for loan to eligible students, as well as other hardware or software which is loaned to qualified consumers for a specified amount of time, as available.
- Computer training for professionals and persons with a visual impairment; may include workshops, set-up and installation of equipment, and individualized training at either NDVS/SB or local setting.
- Select equipment can be loaned to individuals for short-term trial use in their home, school, or work site.
- Referrals to and collaboration with ND Asstive which is the comprehensive, state assistive technology organization.

### **Regional Outreach Services**

In providing a full range of services throughout the state, it is very important to sustain regional offices with highly trained teachers of the visually impaired. These teachers consult with local schools and other service agencies in the following areas: classroom adaptations, functional vision evaluation, orientation & mobility, technology, braille, vocational education, recreation, physical education, daily living skills and music.

Regionally based teachers (coordinators) provide consultation and limited direct service. Case management is the respon-

sibility of the local school, however, the NDVS/SB teacher works alongside the local educator as part of the IEP team. The regional teacher also works to coordinate consultation provided by other staff at NDVS/SB that specializes in areas of instruction like orientation & mobility and technology. The key to success in this model of service delivery is teamwork.

Family and home based service is also typical. Home visits to observe and work with infants and preschoolers are frequent. The goal during home visits and through regular communication with parents is to provide needed support and vital information.

### **Adult Services**

NDVS/SB provides vision specific services to adults which may include evaluations, consultations, and instruction in the following areas:



- Access to Community Resources
- Adaptive Technology
- Communication (i.e., braille, large print)
- Daily Living/Self Care Skills
- Functional Vision Evaluation

- Low Vision/Adaptive Techniques/Aids
- Orientation and Mobility
- Recreation/Leisure Activities
- Vocational/Career Exploration

It is the goal of NDVS/SB to assist individuals in reaching their personal and professional goals through the process of assessment and training. The process involves educating the consumer about available resources, determining training needs, evaluating the individual's ability level, delivering instruction, and providing follow-up services as needed.

Referrals may occur through self-referral or through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which pays a fee for vocational related services for those consumers who are eligible. Services are provided at NDVS/SB and in local communities.

Regional rehabilitation specialists are available to consult with individuals in their homes. Some individuals need minimal adaptation to regain independence while others can benefit from instruction over a longer period of time to meet their personal goals. When intensive instruction is recommended, individuals often choose to participate in the adult training weeks that are scheduled periodically throughout the year at NDVS/SB.

For individuals who seek assessment of vocational potential, the Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation System (CVES) can be provided for those who are blind or visually impaired ages 16 and older. This is a system specifically designed to evaluate essential verbal/spatial/cognitive, sensory/motor, and emotional coping abilities. This comprehensive report assists with case management and vocational/career planning.

## Summer Camps for Students

Themes and activities at summer camps change from year to year, but the inherent value and enrichment that students experience are timeless.

The primary goal of summer camps is to provide students with visual impairments additional experiences relating to skills that are unique to the visually impaired, but that are not included in the academic programs of the school year.



Teen Camp is held in June and provides students opportunity for building friendships with peers who also have a visual impairment. Together they learn about various careers, practice daily living skills, orientation and mobility skills, leisure recreation, community awareness and personal development.

Kids Camp is held in August with a focus on the theme adopted by the ND State Library Reading Program. The activities are wide ranging but they revolve around building literacy (braille or large print), orientation and mobility activities, daily living activities, team games, craft projects, music games and lessons, and special guest visitors from the community. Friendship skills are developed as they play with peers who understand what it is like having a visual impairment.

## Recreational Activities

Recreation and leisure skills may include traditional and adapted physical education activities as well as a host of other hobbies and pastimes that are enjoyed by the general public. However, a person with a visual impairment may need help in identifying the array of choices available. In addition, many of these activities require a degree of adaptation in order to make them accessible for participants with vision impairments.



There are activities specifically designed with visual impairments in mind. Goalball, Beep Baseball and Power Showdown are games designed for both entertainment value and competition for people with visual impairment. The list of other activities that are encouraged is limitless. Most board games, crafts, music activities, etc., can be made accessible. The goal of any programming in this area is to promote a wide range of interests to enhance the individual's quality of life.

How can NDVS/SB help an individual in this area?

During short-term program weeks, time is allowed to experience many activities. A formal leisure/recreation checklist can be used, or informal outings and opportunities can be arranged to experience a variety of selected leisure activities on an individual or small-group basis

## Short-term Student Programs

Teen Weeks (7th—12th grade)

Kids Weeks (1st—6th grade)

JAM Mini-Session (7th-12th grade)

Career Week (10th-12th grade)

Preschool mini-session

Summer Camps (Elementary & High School)

Short-term student programs consist of numerous one-week training sessions and two special mini-sessions.

The mini-sessions are designed to meet the needs of preschoolers and teens. These sessions are 2-3 days in length and are structured to provide both skills training and opportunity for socialization.

The one week programs allow for instruction in vision specific areas known nationally as the **Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)**. The one-week programs allow students to spend time periodically at NDVS/SB to enhance skills and receive one-on-one instruction in the expanded core curriculum areas.

Lessons are taught based on input from parents/guardians and teachers, utilizing various checklists, and incorporating input from informal and/or formal assessments in various ECC areas. The daily schedule has time devoted for specialized instruction from Teachers of the Visually Impaired, personal development, study skills and social activities. Selected weeks may have a

particular instructional focus or theme.

After the week-long session, a written report is compiled and mailed to parents and the local school. If an on-site or home visit is desired, that can be arranged through our staff.

If parents or educational staff members desire to receive training to learn more about the ECC areas, they are welcome to spend time at NDVS/SB. On-site housing can be arranged.

The **Expanded Core Curriculum** addresses the following areas:

- **Daily Living Skills:** Skills in daily living may include dressing, grooming, food preparation, social graces, house-keeping, and clothing care.
- **Braille:** Braille instruction includes reading and writing braille, and may include instruction in braille music.
- **Orientation and Mobility:** Orientation and mobility may consist of instruction in white cane, public transportation, telescopic aids, street crossings, and stairway negotiation.
- **Technology:** Students learn how to access the computer using magnification or screen readers, keyboarding, computer terminology and concepts, and to use closed-circuit television systems and other assistive devices.
- **Career Education:** Career education includes interviewing skills, work attitudes, information about colleges, job shadowing, and job exploration.
- **Recreation/Leisure:** Instruction in recreation/leisure includes team games, athletics and other leisure activities that focus on the development of life-long skills.
- **Social Interaction Skills:** Students learn ways to relate to others and to

examine their own personal development.

- **Visual Efficiency Skills:** Students learn techniques to use their existing vision with proper modifications and aids
- **Self-Determination Skills:** Students are encouraged to make decisions, and learn how to define life goals which can affect their future careers. Self-determination has been described as “The ability to define and achieve goals based on a foundation of knowing and valuing oneself” (Field and Hoffman, 1994).



### In-service Training

The Outreach Program offers in-service training for parents, teachers, paraprofessionals, and additional staff working with persons with a visual impairment. These individuals have the opportunity to attend training sessions at NDVS/SB or outreach personnel may provide the training in the home, school, job site or workshop. Areas of training may include:

- Braille reading and writing
- Technology
- Daily living techniques



- Visual enhancement
- Orientation & mobility techniques
- Vocational skills
- Recreation/leisure
- Music and braille music

Statewide trainings held during this biennium included the following:

- Visions Forum, October 22-23, 2015
- Family Weekend, April 1-2, 2016
- Visions Forum, October 20, 2016
- Family Weekend, April 7-8, 2017
- Dakota AER Conference, April 19-21, 2017

Inservices were also provided by staff per request at local and private schools, homes, worksites, and senior facilities. Persons participating totaled **1,578**.

### **2015-2017 BIENNIUM LEGISLATION**

The 65th Legislative Assembly approved the requested appropriation with the exception of additional funding for renovation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the NDVS/SB south wing and minor renovation of the office area on the first floor of the south wing of the building. NDVS/SB administration was directed to delay renovation plans until a balance in Special Funds would allow for substantial or full funding of the desired projects.

In 2016 NDVS/SB and the majority of other state agencies were directed to reduce the biennial allotments in two stages totaling 6.55%. For NDVS/SB this was accomplished by not filling vacancies and overall spending reductions within the operating budget.

### **2015-2017 RESPONSIBILITY ADDITIONS/DELETIONS**

No changes in agency responsibility were added or deleted.



# EVALUATIONS

## Accomplishments and Activities

Public Awareness is an ongoing effort. Numerous staff participate in efforts to make the public aware of our services. This is a very important function since statistics indicate that only a fraction of adults with visual impairment seek services. Since its inception in 2013, the NDVS/SB Facebook site has grown to over 200 followers who keep track of special events and news relating to a variety of topics relating to education and rehabilitation. The Reaching Out newsletter is published three times per year and reaches over 400 stakeholders. This publications covers a wide variety of topics of interest to parents, professionals and partners. The toll free number for reaching NDVS/SB (1-800-421-1181) is listed in most of the state's phone books and our website has become increasingly important as a source of information and self-referral. The website URL is: [www.ndvisionservices.com](http://www.ndvisionservices.com) There is a listing of upcoming events and links to regional and national resources.



Short-term programming weeks for students continues to be the most visible and one of the most essential components of the NDVS/SB service delivery model. During the academic school year, participation in the one week sessions for students K-12, provides the essential training in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). Without the option of residential placement in North Dakota, this short-term programming is the only intensive training available to students. Growth in all areas of the (ECC) is now being tracked with a new instrument known as the ECC Indicator Checklist. This tool now tracks individual student growth as well as program effectiveness. Two years of solid quantitative data demonstrates the effectiveness of this service delivery for the 25-30 students that participate on an annual basis. This method for gathering quantitative data represents one of the most substantial improvements in service delivery in the history of NDVS/SB. Decisions regarding program design can now be made based on objective data in a way that has never been done previously.

Collaboration with the ND Association of the Blind continues to be a priority. NDVS/SB takes an active role in coordination of the annual Ski for Light in the Black Hills of South Dakota. NDVS/B hosts an annual "Walk for Vision," fundraising event in Grand Forks every spring. Our staff also promote and support the NDAB Camp Grassick which serves up to 60 adults every August. Communication with the leadership of this consumer group for the blind is ongoing and leads to better outcomes for the citizens we serve.

Significant work has been done in collaboration with the ND Dual Sensory Project and Director Sherri Nelson. Technical assistance is provided by staff from both NDVS/SB and the School for the Deaf to eligible students throughout the state. This unique partnership between NDVS/SB and ND School for the Deaf ensures that children with dual sensory loss have a team working together on their behalf. The federal grant that provides a portion of the funding for this project is hosted by ND School for the Deaf and supervision of the project director has been provided by the Superintendent of NDVS/SB. The grant that provided funding during this biennium will expire in September of 2018. It is unknown whether the grant will be renewed at that point or how the program will operate in North Dakota. It is evident, however, that the lives of the students with dual sensory loss is greatly enhanced through this cooperative effort.

Numerous training opportunities were also conducted in this biennium to better prepare teachers and other professionals to serve this unique population of students. A few of the large conferences that NDVS/SB staff attended include:

- The Annual American Printing House of the Blind meeting in KY
- The Council of Schools for the Blind Leadership Institute--KY
- Getting in touch with Literacy Conference—NM
- Aging and Vision Loss—VA
- The Southwest Orientation & Mobility Conference—TN
- The International Mobility Conference—PA

An Early Head Start Program under

supervision of Mayville State University began operation September 8, 2014 on the second floor of NDVS/SB with a capacity for eight children. Expansion of space and staff occurred during the biennium and now 16 children are served. Although this program is not specifically designed for visually impaired students it is a collaborative effort that strengthens NDVS/SB and results in revenue to support our programming.



Numerous professional positions were filled including: An existing part-time position was reclassified to create a “Transition Specialist.” We were also able to fill a vacant “Regional Vision Outreach Teacher” position in Minot. Recruitment of qualified staff in the vision field is very challenging nationally. Success in recruiting these individuals was a very significant accomplishment.

NDVS/SB hosted the Dakotas AER Conference in May of 2017 with attendees from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Manitoba and Wyoming. This conference constitutes a great deal of time and staff effort but the outcomes are

valuable. Multiple speakers and topics are included to meet the wide-ranging professional development needs of NDVS/SB staff as well as dozens of other vision professionals in the region. This method of delivering continuing education is increasingly important as funding for travel outside of the state has been limited.

The impact of the NDSB Foundation is immeasurable. The NDVS/SB Superintendent serves as an Ex Officio member to communicate and convey statewide needs to the board. The NDSB Foundation supports many unmet student needs, adult needs, and numerous special projects at NDVS/SB. The NDSB Foundation presents annual grants to students and adults who are blind and visually impaired. These grants provide for equipment and services that are not available to the individuals through their local schools or other organizations. They also budget and provide \$2,000/year for NDVS/SB summer camps, and \$2,000/year for Family Weekend expenses.



Adult training weeks at NDVS/SB fulfill an essential need for adults in North Dakota that experience vision loss. This is evidenced by our program evaluation.

Every adult who participates in center based training weeks receives a phone interview after participation. These interviews provide valuable information regarding the quality of the program. A number of suggestions that have been made by adult clients result in immediate adjustments to the program for improvement.

**The statements below are quotes from adults who participated in adult training during the biennium:**

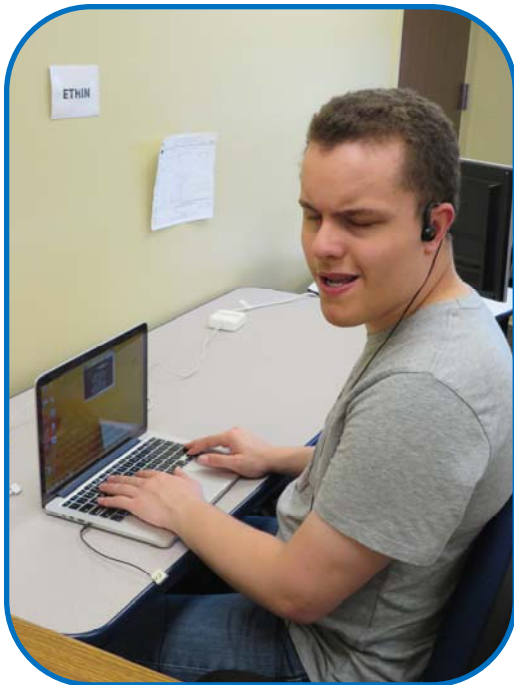
- “Far more than I ever expected. Didn’t know what I was walking into. Sometimes surprises are good.”
- “This week has been so enlightening. Staff has been great and accommodating. Other students this week have been a blast and treat to get to know.”
- “Just Awesome! It makes you feel like you belong and are a real human being.”
- “Instructors are great to work with, and make things easy and are very professional and polite”
- “I enjoyed the week and came away feeling like I learned a lot”
- “It touched upon all the different aspects of training, support, and resources that a person needs to move forward with their new life change. Very complete and thorough.”

**Directional Trends**

The role of NDVS/SB is evolving. The services provided on an outreach basis and at the training facility in Grand Forks remain consistent but there are new demands. Braille, assistive technology, mobility training etc. will continue to be very important components to our service.

These core areas are changing, however, to meet the increasingly sophisticated living and work environments that we are all facing. Trends that we are experiencing and anticipating include:

- There is an increasing need for more professional development training for teachers of the visually impaired as assistive technology advances.



- Transition services that focus on assisting students become better prepared for college and/or career are being targeted. The ND Department of Vocational Rehabilitation and NDVS/SB will be working to carry out the goals of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. The goal is to improve employment outcomes for our youth and young adults.
- Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers of the visually impaired and other vision specialists continues to be a concern. There is a nationwide

shortage of vision professionals. The percentage of aging citizens will increase resulting in higher demand for adult services from NDVS/SB. This demand will effect both the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation Older Blind Program as well as NDVS/SB. The need for provision of technology training to this older population is a new development that requires expert instruction by qualified professionals.

## **Program Goals**

### **Administration**

- To provide sound policy, budget, facility and human resources to support the services that directly serve individuals with visual impairment in North Dakota.

### **Vision Resource Center**

- To provide accessible materials to individuals of all ages and to support the wide range of services that are provided by NDVS/SB

### **Short-term Programming for Students**

- To provide high quality instruction to students to facilitate independence in the expanded core curriculum and provide a foundation for overall academic achievement.

### **Outreach Services—School Age Students**

- To conduct functional vision assessment and other expanded core curriculum evaluation for at risk students and assist in determination of eligibility for vision related services.
- To deliver consultative services to

students, parents and local education agencies to help eligible students achieve academic success in school and age-appropriate independence in their home and community.

### **Infant and Preschool Outreach Services**

- To provide support and assistance to parents of visually impaired children and other related service providers with an emphasis on collaboration.

### **Adult Center-Based Program**

- To provide high quality instruction to individuals to facilitate independence and assist in meeting their individual goals.

### **Adult Outreach Services**

- To deliver consultative and direct service

to persons with visual impairment to enhance quality of life and meet their personal and vocational goals.

### **Strategic Planning**

Strategic planning that was to occur in the 2015-2017 biennium was delayed due to funding reductions. In the spring of 2017 the NDVS/SB Visions Team did secure the services of Dr. Brent Askvig with the ND Center for Persons with Disability to facilitate a focused strategic planning process for the agency in 2017 and 2018. Program goals will be evaluated and rewritten as needed to ensure that the agency is meeting the needs of children and adults with visual impairment in North Dakota and developing an plan to meet anticipated needs through the 2019-2021 biennium.



## STATISTICAL INFORMATION

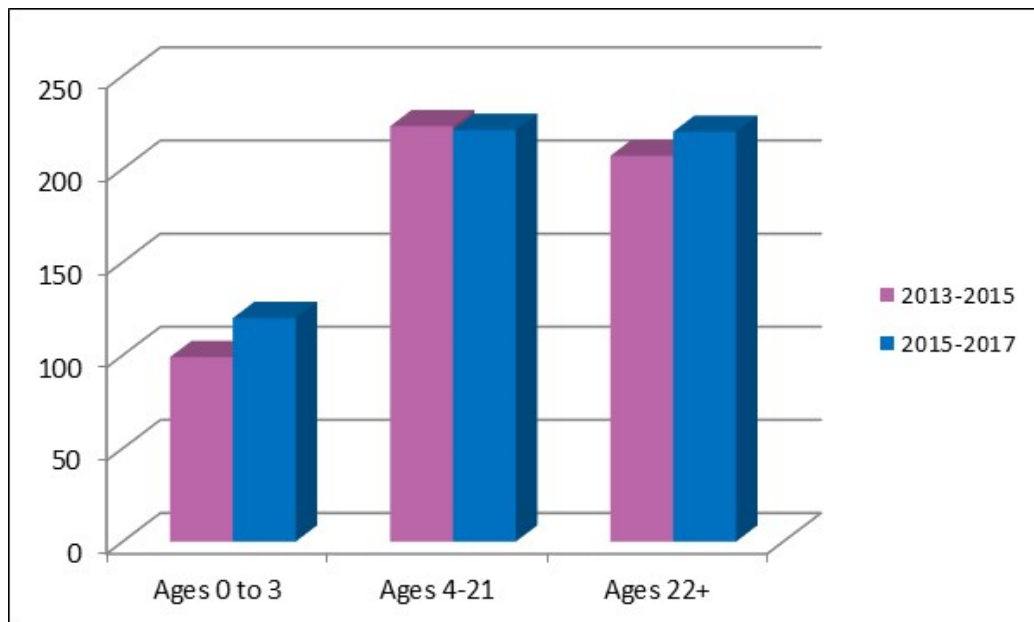
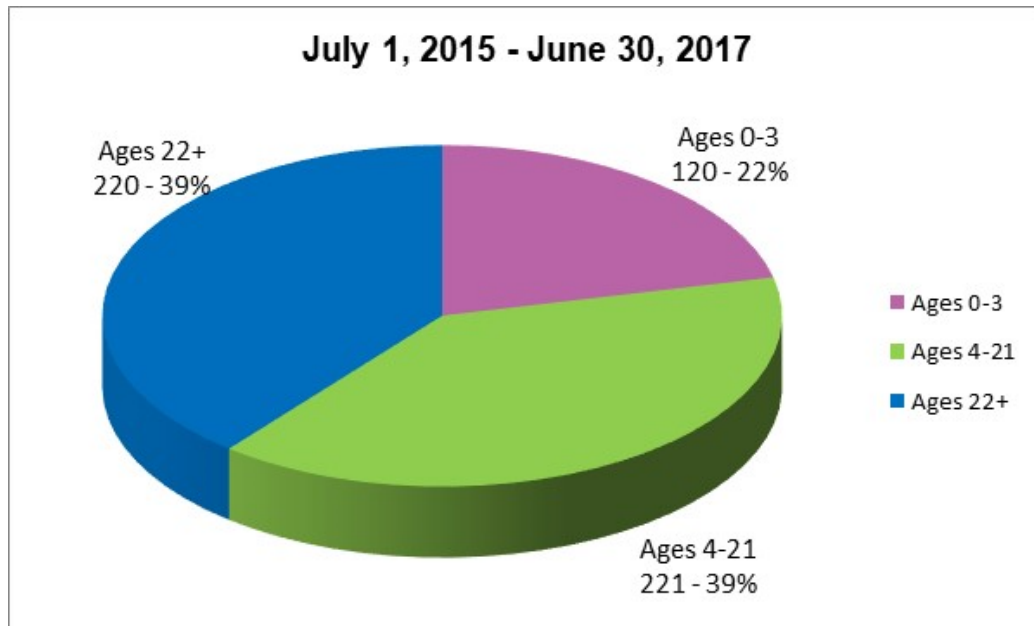
<b>Services Provided</b>	<b>2013-2015</b>	<b>2015-2017</b>
	<b>Biennium</b>	<b>Biennium</b>
<b>Clients Served (Unduplicated):</b>		
Infants/Students	321	339
Adults	<u>208</u>	<u>222</u>
Total	529	561
<b>Vision Resource Center:</b>		
Items Circulated	30,888	
New Loans		2,485
Talking Book Machines (quarterly)	1,241	1,059
"Reaching Out" Newsletter (circulated quarterly)	416	420
APH Federal Registry	339	320
Store Sales (Invoices)	491	500
Braille Access Center (pages)	15,950	18,790
<b>Short-term Center Based Programs (Persons Served):</b>		
Short Term Programming	160	149
Adult Week	61	49
Summer Camps	19*	41
<b>Evaluations, Consultations and Instructions (Services Provided):</b>		
Consultations	1,767	1,600
Evaluations	351	342
Instruction	9,737	9,033
In-Service Training (Attendees)	1,492	1,578

\* Two less camps were held in 2013-2015 biennium than 2015-2017.

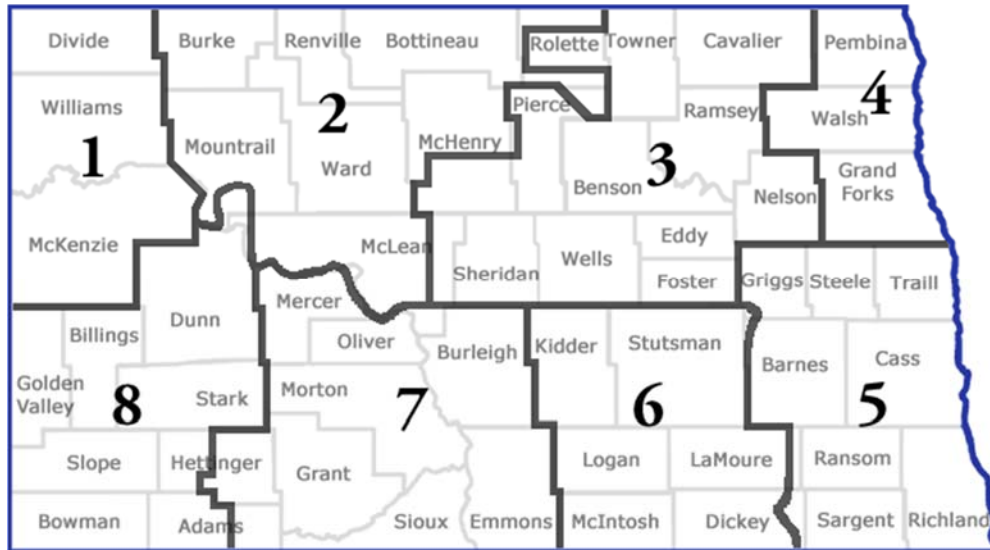
## **TOUCHING NORTH DAKOTAN'S LIVES**



## PERSONS SERVED BY AGE



**CLIENTS SERVED BY REGION (UNDUPLICATED)  
JULY 1, 2015 to JUNE 30, 2017**



**Region 1**

Infants/Students – 9  
Adults – 8  
Total: 17

**Region 2**

Infants/Students – 41  
Adults – 30  
Total: 71

**Region 3**

Infants/Students – 28  
Adults – 10  
Total: 38

**Region 4**

Infants/Students – 51  
Adults – 69  
Total: 120

**Region 5**

Infants/Students – 97  
Adults – 50  
Total: 147

**Region 6**

Infants/Students – 42  
Adults – 13  
Total: 55

**Region 7**

Infants/Students – 36  
Adults – 28  
Total: 64

**Region 8**

Infants/Students – 28  
Adults – 6  
Total: 33

**Relocated/Out of State**

Infants/Students – 8  
Adults – 8  
Total: 16

**Total Infants/Students Served: 339  
Total Adults Served: 222  
Total Persons Served: 561**

## SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES

### Revenues by Source:

Lease - Rent of Building (GFPS,NDSD,EHS)	\$	334,782.00
Donations		181,811.00
Admissions (Vocational Rehabilitation/Center Based Students out of state)		23,116.00
Lease - Rent of Land (UND)		5,800.00
Miscellaneous Revenue		76.00
Transfer from Common Schools/ Ellendale Fund		534,000.00
Braille Access Center		968.00
<b>Total Revenue for 2015-2017</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b><u>1,080,553.00</u></b>

<u>Expenditures by Program</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Federal Fund</u>	<u>Special Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Maintenance & Utilities	\$ 619,182.00	\$ -	\$ 224,545.00	\$ 843,727.00
Administration	623,464.00	-	12,925.00	636,389.00
Adult Program	226,859.00	-	10,814.00	237,673.00
Outreach (Age 0-5)	203,162.00	-	8,588.00	211,750.00
Outreach (Age 6-21)	1,684,452.00	-	36,738.00	1,721,190.00
Technology	490,727.00	-	35,571.00	526,298.00
Short Term Programs (K-12)	274,511.00	-	62,837.00	337,348.00
Vision Resource Center	625,724.00	-	3,618.00	629,342.00
Braille Access Center	3,388.00	-	696.00	4,084.00
Summer Camps	2,154.00	-	1,533.00	3,687.00
<hr/>				
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 4,753,623.00</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	<b>\$ 397,865.00</b>	<b>\$ 5,151,488.00</b>

## Breakdown of Expenditures by Line Item

### **Salaries & Wages**

Salaries & Wages	\$ 2,898,430.00	
Temporary Salaries	93,846.00	
Fringe Benefits	1,427,130.00	
<b>Total Salaries &amp; Wages</b>		<u>\$ 4,419,406.00</u>

### **Operating**

State Employee Travel	\$ 132,834.00	
Utilities		
Electricity	64,297.00	
Water & Garbage	16,208.00	
Steam Heat	81,737.00	
Natural Gas	3,257.00	
Telecommunications	27,923.00	
Data Processing	62,264.00	
IT - Software/Supplies	5,906.00	
Postage	3,843.00	
IT -Contractual Services	12,599.00	
Lease/Rent - Equipment	9,434.00	
Lease/Rent - Bldg	40,417.00	
Professional Development	17,130.00	
Operating Fees/Services	30,624.00	
Repairs	40,533.00	
Professional Services	4,028.00	
Insurance	7,299.00	
Office Supplies	12,116.00	
Printing	2,066.00	
Profess. Supplies & Materials	12,140.00	
Food & Clothing	12,082.00	
Bld,Grnds,Vehicle Supplies	32,297.00	
Misc. Supplies	6,729.00	
IT Equipment under \$5,000	19,294.00	
Other Equip under \$5,000	10,590.00	
Office Equip under \$5,000	7,771.00	
<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>		<u>\$ 675,418.00</u>

### **Capital Improvements**

\$ 56,663.00

**Total Expenditures** \$ 5,151,487.00

## **RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS**

1. "Reaching Out" Newsletter – Published three times each year
2. Store Catalog
3. Center Based and General Services Brochures
4. Website — [www.ndvisionservices.com](http://www.ndvisionservices.com)
5. Facebook

Materials published by the NDVS/SB are available in alternative formats (i.e., braille, CD, large print, audio recording) upon request.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

We filled every critical position after careful examination of statewide needs and the effectiveness of the agency. During the biennium one full time and one part-time position were left unfilled to meet the obligation of reducing the budget due to the statewide budget revenue shortfall. This unanticipated reduction in staffing was challenging but efficiencies were found and the overall mission of the agency was sustained.

A balanced approach to meeting student and adult client needs throughout the state was achieved by weighing the allocation of resources in both outreach and center-based services. Spending priorities within each program was required.

In spite of a reduction in resources during this period of time, overall levels of service were either maintained or increased. The number of infant/students served increased by 5% compared to the previous biennium. The number of adults served increased by approximately 6% during that same period of time. Increased public awareness efforts may have contributed to the increase in adults served, but there is also ample evidence that there is an increasing number of adults with visual impairment in the state due to the aging population.

NDVS/SB staff will continue to partner with other agencies and organizations to better meet the needs of our citizens. Only through greater collaboration will we be able to address the wide range of needs of this growing population. A more aggressive service delivery model and additional professional staff are both likely to be necessary in the next 2-4 years. Level staffing during the 2017-2019 biennium is manageable. Additional effort to find and execute agency efficiencies will continue.

The trends that have been noted in this report will require further attention and effective planning to sustain services and adjust to new societal expectations. The growing number of older North Dakotans that will need assistive technology and training to stay independent and active in their communities will grow. NDVS/SB is planning ahead to meet these needs.

## NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION ND Vision Services/School for the Blind

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