



SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

North Dakota Vision
Services/School for the Blind

Biennial Report

2017-2019

NDVS/SB is a Division of the ND Department of Public Instruction

Paul H. Olson
Superintendent

www.ndvisionservices.com

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. NDVS/SB AGENCY FUNCTIONS AND ORGANIZATION

Mission and Vision	1
History of NDVS/SB	2
Organizational Chart	3
Statutory/Constitutional Responsibilities	4
Major Programs and Activities	6
• Vision Resource Center	6
• Technology Center	8
• Regional Outreach Services	9
• Adult Services	9
• Summer Programs	10
• Recreational Activities	10
• Short-Term Student Programs	11
• In-service Training	12
2017-2019 Biennium Legislation	12
2017-2019 Biennium Additions and Deletions	12

II. PROGRAM EVALUATION

Accomplishments and Activities	13
Trends & Identified Needs	15
Departmental Goals	16
Core Priorities & Values	18
Statistical Information	19

III. SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES

23

IV. RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

25

V. CONCLUSION

25

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.



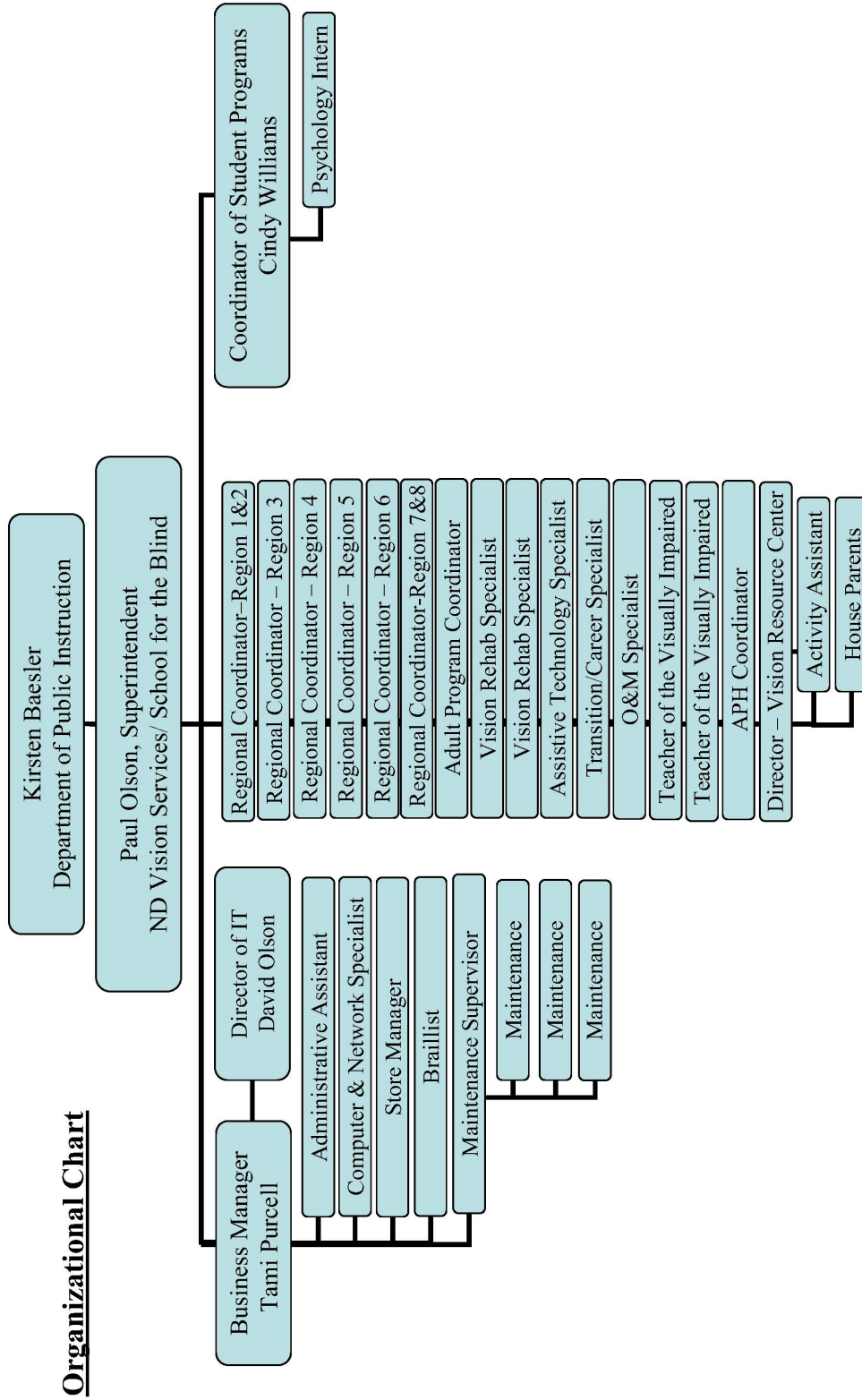
OUR VISION

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

History

- 1908 The North Dakota Asylum for the Blind opened in Bathgate, ND.
- 1941 significant improvements to the building were made by the Works Progress Administration during the war.
- 1961 The school moved to Grand Forks to enable better transportation, medical services and a more modern facility
- 1975 Historic legislation The Education for All Handicapped Act passed which further strengthened special education in public schools and led to fewer students in residential settings.
- 1995 The residential program was discontinued and a new model of short-term programs and outreach for children was established
- 2001 Name change to North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind coincided with clarification of the mission to serve all ages
- 2008 Celebration of the 100 years included former students and staff, Lions Clubs, legislators and the publication of the book "Recollections of 100 Years of Excellence."
- Most states had special schools for the blind well before 1900 but ND was a late comer. Even South Dakota had a school and this is where a number of children from North Dakota attended prior to 1908. When the North Dakota Asylum for the Blind was completed in early 1908, eleven children who had been in Gary, South Dakota were transported back to North Dakota and finished the school year in Bathgate in Pembina County. The building was beautiful but existence in a very small community was challenging.
- The benefits of moving to Grand Forks were so great that the 1959 legislature voted to relocate the school to 10 acres adjoining UND. The new, modern, school opened in 1961 and ushered in an era of big change. Although most of the students were just blind or low vision, many students being placed at NDSB had additional handicaps.
- A new model of outreach across the state had already begun by 1991 alongside the residential program. In 1994 the legislature decided that it was too expensive to provide residential programming for such a small number of students and voted to close the dormitories. This was a controversial decision that may not have served all children well, but children were largely successful in their transitions. Staffing was reduced significantly. Most that remained sought training in specialty areas to serve the diverse population of students statewide.
- By 1995 all of the children had either returned to their home communities or were placed around the state in residential facilities for the children with developmental disability. This radical change in service had merit in many ways but there continued to be a need for intensive assessment and training in specialized life skills. We call these special skills the "Expanded Core Curriculum." In order to provide very focused and intense training in areas like technology, braille, mobility and daily living skills a new model of "Short-Term Programs" was developed and was the first of its kind in the United States. At the same time the number of regional offices and teachers providing outreach expanded. Our goal was to reach every school district in every corner of the state. In 2001 the legislature changed our agency name to North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind and clarified in Century Code that our mission had expanded to serve all ages.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



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, short-term programming (STP) 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.



(Image: students seated around Luna, a therapy dog, and her owner in the VRC.)

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 collection 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.

Partnership with the American Printing House for the Blind:

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 formatted, 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 maintained the National Library Service (NLS) Talking Book Machine Lending Agency through the first year of the biennium. During the summer of 2018, machine lending transferred to the state library by mutual agreement for the purposes of efficiency. This was an example of government working well for the benefit of citizens.



(Image: High School student practicing her braille skills as the braille instructor looks on.)

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 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 ndvision-services.com. 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; talking calculators; computers with large print, braille or synthetic speech output; and computerized reading machines for the blind.



(Image: NDVS/SB's Assistive Tech instructor explaining how to use an app to middle school students.)

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 Assistive 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 responsibility 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



(Image: Each Adult Training concludes with a "Courage Ceremony," which is an affirmation of the newly gained skills and confidence.)

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.

NDVS/SB employs two regionally based rehabilitation vision specialists. These professionals 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.

Summer Programs for Students

The primary goal of summer programs 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 Career Exploration 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.

Elementary Literacy Weeks are 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. Social 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.



(Image: A teen student participates in a assigned job in Medora during Summer Career Exploration Week.)

Short-term Student Programs

- Teen/Career STP Weeks (10th—12th grade)
- Middle School STP Weeks (6th—9th grade)
- Elementary STP Weeks (1st—6th grade)
- Summer Programs (Elementary, Middle School & High School)



(Image: Students learn to snow shoe and ski at Annie's Place in Bottineau)

Short-term student programs consist of numerous sessions that are either four or five days in length. These sessions allow for instruction in vision specific areas known nationally as the **Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)**. The sessions allow students in specific age groups 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.

After each 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

NDVS/SB staff provide in-service trainings upon request throughout the year. A number of the events are conducted on an annual basis and are hosted at NDVS/SB or in other locations around the state on a rotating basis. NDVS/SB hosts a large professional development conference called the Dakotas AER Conference every other year on a rotating basis with the South Dakota School for the Blind. The most recent one being held in April of 2019 in Grand Forks. An average of 50 professionals in the vision field attend this conference. Professionals not only learn from experts in the field about new and important topics, they earn credit for re-licensure in their areas of expertise.

Family Weekend is an annual event which brings together our students, their parents and siblings. This weekend of activities and learning is considered one of the most important events in our calendar. Twelve to Fifteen families participate annually.

In addition to these regularly scheduled events, numerous in-services were also provided by staff per request at local and private schools, homes, worksites, and

senior facilities. The number of people who learned about NDVS/SB services and special topics relating to visual impairment totaled **1,417** participants. This is a significant number of individuals in a small population state who have been touched by our staff.

2017-2019 BIENNIUM LEGISLATION

In spite of the biennium being a time of economic austerity, the 66th Legislative Assembly provided a relatively stable budget for NDVS/SB. The agency did sustain a reduction in the number of FTEs compared to the 2015-2017 biennium. Salaries for all state employees were frozen during this time frame as well. Per executive request NDVS/SB did not request general fund dollars for capital projects. A modest amount of special funds were expended for reconstruction of the front office/reception area to better serve the public.

2017-2019 RESPONSIBILITY ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

No changes in agency responsibility were added or deleted.



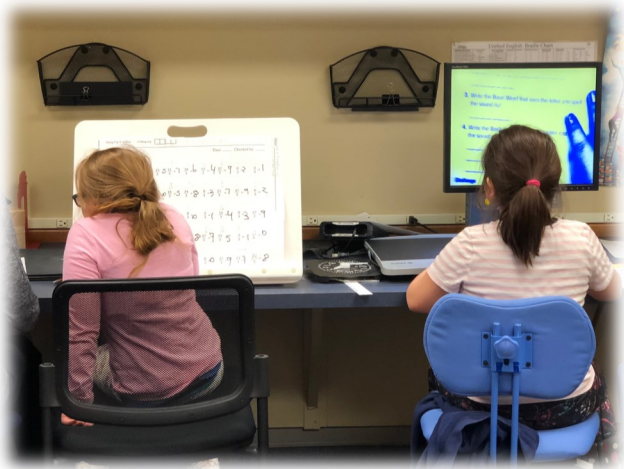
(Image: Elementary students proudly posing with the robots they created during 2019’s summer program.)

Program Evaluation

Major Agency Accomplishments

Enhanced Use of Information Technology Resources

Every modern organization that strives to be effective must embrace information technology. NDVS/SB has increasingly made use of IT tools in recent years, but the advancements that occurred in the recent biennium were transformational. Every aspect our operation was improved through utilization of new tools. The variety and sophistication of the IT tools was forthcoming because of the recruitment of new IT Director—David Olson.



(Image: Students learn how to use a variety of educational aids when attending programming.)

A few of the advancements include but are not limited to the following: Conversion of all paper documents (student and adult related) to digital format, development of accessible internal website (Drupal Platform) for organization programming and information, enhanced data collection for short-term programming, increased security via hardened server using FW/ rules & policy rules, an updated, comprehensive technology usage policy and utilization of Bit locker on all backup and laptop mobile devices.

Management decisions relating to business operation, outreach services and short-term programming have been positively influenced through better use of information technology as a result of these enhancements.

Enhanced Public Awareness

NDVS/SB staff participated in numerous efforts to make the public aware of NDVS/SB services. This is a very important function since statistics indicate that only a fraction of adults with visual impairment seek services on an annual basis. Infant and student referrals are consistent and predictable given the partnerships with Early Intervention Providers and Special Education Units statewide. The public awareness activities noted below largely target the adult population which are historically underserved.

Several radio interviews were conducted late in 2019 and early 2019 including statewide broadcast on Prairie Public Radio and a television appearance on North Dakota Today out of KVLV in Fargo.

The NDVS/SB Facebook site has grown to 498 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 directly reaches over 200 direct stakeholders. The exact number of individuals who receive this newsletter is likely several times larger since it is shared in several nationwide listservs.

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: ndvisionservices.com There is a listing of upcoming events and links to regional and national resources. The website content was improved for both accessibility and security.

Enhanced Collaboration with State Consumer Advocacy Groups

NDVS/SB takes an active role in coordination of the annual Ski for Light in the Black Hills of South Dakota every January in cooperation with the ND Association of the Blind (NDAB). NDVS/SB also hosts an annual "Walk for Vision," fundraising event and supports the NDAB Camp Grassick which serves up to 60 adults every August. In addition to collaboration with NDAB, we have begun exploring opportunities to collaborate with the National Federation of the Blind state affiliate.

Development and Implementation of Updated Strategic Plan

The completion of a three-year plan was a major accomplishment given that the last comprehensive plan was written in 2006 with a review in 2011.

The NDVS/SB Visions Team secured the services of Dr. Brent Askvig with the ND Center for Persons with Disability to facilitate a focused strategic planning process for the agency. A plan was developed for the period beginning July 1st 2018 through June 30th 2021.

NDVS/SB Strategic Plan 2018-2021

Goal 1: NDVS/SB will provide increased options and individualization for services to people who are blind/low vision.

Objective 1.1 - NDVS/SB will have an individualized protocol for all center-based services

Objective 1.2 – Redesign on-campus week/weekend services for consumers

Objective 1.3 – Reconfigure services to increase distance services and consults for school-age and adult consumers

Objective 1.4 – Improve agency decision-making through data analysis



(Image: Shown is a high school student practicing her Orientation & Mobility skills in the snow with one of our Orientation & Mobility Specialists.)

Goal 2: NDVS/SB will have an active and progressive staff recruitment and cross-training program.

Objective 2.1 – NDVS/SB will work with UND and/or other educational units to develop and plan interest in the field of vision education to aid in recruitment of qualified teachers.

Objective 2.2 – Develop and implement cross-training program for NDVS/SB instructional staff.

Objective 2.3 – Explore internships and temporary employment options for areas of specialized need (social work, marketing, etc.) based on available funding

Goal 3: NDVS/SB will increase public awareness of services and programs to individuals and groups who will benefit from our services.

Objective 3.1 – Increase public awareness in an effort to be more consistent and focused.

Objective 3.2 – Conduct ten regional (both East and West) presentations per year on services available to ND residents with low vision and blindness. The topic of this presentation will be services at ND Vision Services/School for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation, ND Assistive, ND State Library, North Dakota Association for the Blind, National Federation of the Blind. Whenever possible, NDVS/SB will include representatives from the afore mentioned agencies organizations.



(Image: Students grooming a therapy horse, while visiting a local stable.)

Trends & Identified Needs

In review of the information compiled for both outreach services and short-term programming, no statistically significant

trends emerged as compared to the previous biennium. The total number of individuals served was virtually the same. In regard to outreach services, the total number of consultations and evaluations rose. There was a slight downturn in the number of students and adults served through short-term programming. It should be noted that the number of students participating in a program week was capped at 8 during this time frame to better control quality of instruction. Administration continues to support this policy with a greater emphasis on outcomes relating to independence.

North Dakota is experiencing an increase in number of students diagnosed with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI). This corresponds with a national trend because of more sophisticated and readily available medical, diagnostic tools. The result of this identification is the need for significant staff training to learn intervention strategies for this large population of students. Numerous staff have begun training in this area but only one NDVS/SB teacher had gained the endorsement in CVI at the end of the biennium. It should also be noted that perhaps hundreds of students with significant disability in addition to CVI may be identified and seek services in North Dakota in the next few years which will result in higher demand for outreach services for a population that has been underserved.

Redesign of service delivery is being implemented on two fronts based on qualitative indicators. The strategic plan called for more individualization of instruction in short-term programming for students and adults. Outreach service delivery is changing as well in response to new demands. The outreach model is a combination of consultation services to

school districts of all sizes as well as very limited direct instruction in a couple essential areas of the expanded core curriculum. NDVS/SB staff report increasing difficulty in meeting the needs of students in rural districts. This is driving experimentation with distance consultation and teaching through phone and video conferencing. These modes are showing promise but significant gaps in service continue to exist that will require further attention.



(Image: NDVS/SB has been fortunate to collaborate with UND's Space Studies dept. Above, students explore an astronaut's helmet.)

Although NDVS/SB was able to recruit qualified staff in the past year, there is a need statewide to increase the number of teachers of the visually impaired. The University of North Dakota does have a masters level teacher preparation program, but a number of factors seem to contribute to low numbers of graduates coming out of the program for employment in ND school districts. NDVS/SB will continue to collaborate with UND and school districts

to alleviate this disparity. Innovative solutions may be required to train and place educators that can teach Braille literacy and other specialized skills.

Last but not least is an increased need for both improved cyber security and physical security of the agency. The role of the IT Director at NDVS/SB has become critical and will continue to evolve and touch every aspect of management and operation. Upgrades in the physical security and building infrastructure of the facility have been wide ranging and will continue to be of high importance as well.

Departmental Goals

Administration/Information Technology

- 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.



(Image: NDVS/SB programming weeks offer students many opportunities to learn, grow & work on specific skills. Pictured are middle schoolers crafting, playing goalball, touring Cabela's, and swimming.)

Core Priorities and Values

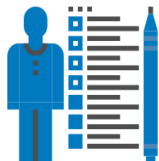


INCREASE AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Increase awareness and engagement with parents of students to better meet the needs of the families and to support learning.

IMPROVE ACCESS

Improve access to all print and electronic materials for more individuals of all ages at home, school and work.



ECC - LIFE SKILLS

Increase students and adult learners who are proficient in the expanded core curriculum (life skills) so they are Choice Ready.

SUPPORT PARTNERS

Increase support to public school partners through consultation and in-service training.



ENHANCE LIVES

Increase persons with visual impairment who are active in their communities by demonstrating strategies to enhance their lives and meet their personal and vocational goals.

REDUCE UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Reduce the rate of underemployment and unemployment for youth and adults who are visually impaired.



North Dakota
Vision Services/School for the Blind

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

Services Provided	2015-2017	2017-2019
	Biennium	Biennium
Clients Served (Unduplicated):		
Infants/Students	339	343
Adults	<u>222</u>	<u>219</u>
Total	561	562
Vision Resource Center:		
New Loans	2,485	1,717
Talking Book Machines (quarterly)	1,059	1,125
"Reaching Out" Newsletter (circulated quarterly)	420	390
APH Federal Registry	320	285
Store Sales (Invoices)	500	433
Braille Access Center (pages)	18,790	20,357
Short-term Center Based Programs (Persons Served):		
Short Term Programming	149	128
Adult Week	49	37
Summer Programming	41	37
Evaluations, Consultations and Instructions (Services Provided):		
Consultations	1,600	1,656
Evaluations	342	375
Instruction	9,033	7,927
In-Service Training (Attendees)	1,578	1,417

* Talking book moved to state library on 06/30/2018

TOUCHING NORTH DAKOTAN'S LIVES



Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) Metric Data

In the middle of the 2017-2019 biennium we transitioned to an internal webform system. This system collects Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) metric data from the NDVS/SB teachers based on Student Short Term Programming ECC standards. The ongoing dataset will help the teachers determine key ECC areas to focus on with students. Currently, we have the building stages of data in the tables. As students revisit short term programs we will work towards repeatable growth and success with our students. The following small sample of student growth data for two age groups is an example of what our teaching staff will be able to review annually to make data driven decisions about both the program as a whole and targeted learning for individual students.

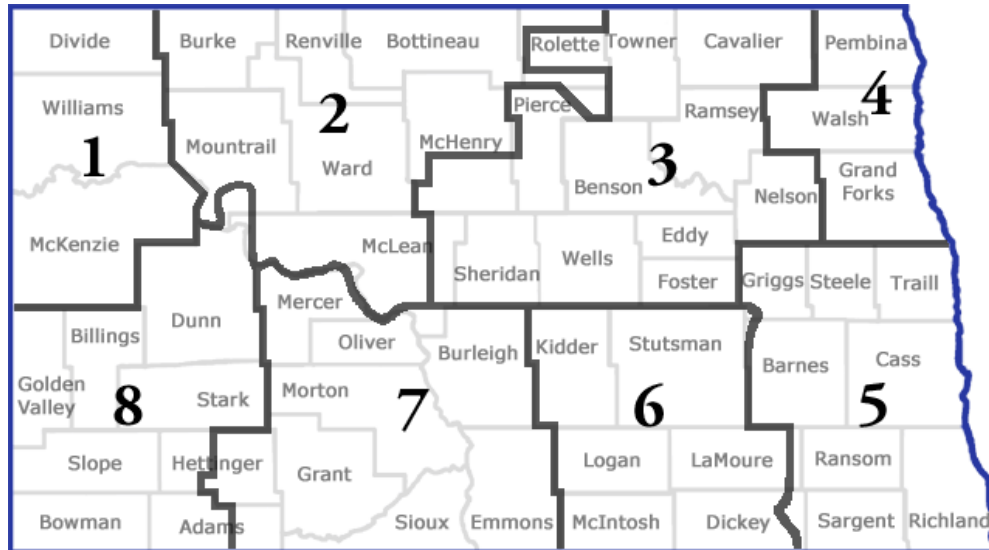
High School Student ECC Progress (Sample)

Name	Oct-18	Nov-18	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	Past 3 Visits
Student 1	64		67		63	
Student 2	51		51	63		
Student 4		72	77		88	
Student 6		64	79		77	
Student 9		73	77		75	
Student 10		75	73		75	

Elementary Student ECC Progress (Sample)

Name	Sep-18	Jan-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	Past 3 Visits
Student 3	35	47		49	
Student 5	62	91	84		
Student 7	67	90		84	
Student 8	39	64		64	

**CLIENTS SERVED BY REGION (UNDUPLICATED)
JULY 1, 2017 to JUNE 30, 2019**



Region 1

Infants/Students – 13
Adults – 4
Total: 17

Region 2

Infants/Students – 33
Adults – 30
Total: 63

Region 3

Infants/Students – 34
Adults – 12
Total: 46

Region 4

Infants/Students – 41
Adults – 63
Total: 104

Region 5

Infants/Students – 99
Adults – 43
Total: 142

Region 6

Infants/Students – 50
Adults – 7
Total: 57

Region 7

Infants/Students – 35
Adults – 38
Total: 73

Region 8

Infants/Students – 32
Adults – 15
Total: 47

Relocated/Out of State

Infants/Students – 6
Adults – 7
Total: 13

**Total Infants/Students Served: 343
Total Adults Served: 219
Total Persons Served: 562**

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES

Revenues by Source:

Lease - Rent of Building (GFPS,NDSD,EHS)	\$	345,502.00
Donations		8,380.00
Admissions (Vocational Rehabilitation/Center Based Students out of state)		8,460.00
Lease - Rent of Land (UND)		5,800.00
Miscellaneous Revenue		1.00
Transfer from Common Schools/ Ellendale Fund		929,984.00
Braille Access Center		4,185.00
Total Revenue for 2017-2019	\$	1,302,312.00

<u>Expenditures by Program</u>	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>Federal Fund</u>	<u>Special Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
Maintenance & Utilities	\$ 518,400.00	\$ -	\$ 524,455.00	\$ 1,042,855.00
Administration	598,294.00	-	36,718.00	635,012.00
Adult Program	186,781.00	-	26,846.00	213,627.00
Outreach (Age 0-5)	210,375.00	-	18,239.00	228,614.00
Outreach (Age 6-21)	1,604,123.00	-	112,987.00	1,717,110.00
Technology	472,878.00	-	48,136.00	521,014.00
Short Term Programs (K-12)	209,072.00	-	83,562.00	292,634.00
Vision Resource Center	589,796.00	-	12,126.00	601,922.00
Braille Access Center	2,982.00	-	2,156.00	5,138.00
Summer Camps	1,325.00	-	1,614.00	2,939.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 4,394,026.00	\$ -	\$ 866,839.00	\$ 5,260,865.00

Breakdown of Expenditures by Line Item

Salaries & Wages

Salaries & Wages	\$ 2,896,690.00	
Temporary Salaries	80,634.00	
Fringe Benefits	1,419,296.00	
Total Salaries & Wages		<u>\$ 4,396,620.00</u>

Operating

State Employee Travel	\$ 161,177.00	
Utilities		
Electricity	55,890.00	
Water & Garbage	17,574.00	
Steam Heat	83,343.00	
Natural Gas	10,750.00	
Telecommunications	28,352.00	
Data Processing	71,192.00	
IT - Software/Supplies	5,271.00	
Postage	3,819.00	
IT -Contractual Services	5,345.00	
Lease/Rent - Equipment	7,543.00	
Lease/Rent - Bldg	34,519.00	
Professional Development	16,789.00	
Operating Fees/Services	34,103.00	
Repairs	28,980.00	
Professional Services	2,196.00	
Insurance	8,342.00	
Office Supplies	16,522.00	
Printing	1,593.00	
Profess. Supplies & Materials	9,192.00	
Food & Clothing	9,582.00	
Bld,Grnds,Vehicle Supplies	30,747.00	
Misc. Supplies	17,027.00	
IT Equipment under \$5,000	16,121.00	
Other Equip under \$5,000	12,903.00	
Office Equip under \$5,000	1,225.00	
Total Operating Expenses		<u>\$ 690,097.00</u>

Capital Improvements

\$ 174,148.00

Total Expenditures \$ 5,260,865.00

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
5. Facebook

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

CONCLUSIONS

NDVS/SB successfully grew in its capacity to serve through more efficient use of technology and a focus on human resources. Every organization providing human services needs to assess the needs of every sub-group served, gauge the required resources to meet those needs and find new ways to collaborate and innovate. Although the number of individuals with visual impairment served remains stable, expectations for better outcomes for academic success, acquisition of independent life skills and gainful employment have increased. This increase in expectation is partially driven from within but we are also fortunate to witness higher expectations from individuals, their families and society.

Leaders within the organization along with partners in special education across the state recognize the need to target several areas for improvement in order to meet higher expectations. Improvement may come through a combination of better guidance documents and potentially legislation may be needed to strengthen educational standards in the North Dakota Century Code. In particular, more specific guidance for educators in the appropriate assessment of reading media and the provision of braille instruction is warranted.

There have been great strides in the use of assistive technology and more will be forthcoming. NDVS/SB staff stand ready to provide leadership in this and other areas of the expanded core curriculum and look forward to continual progress during the 2019-2021 biennium.

It is a pleasure to serve the people of the great State of North Dakota and live out our Vision: To inspire hope and the desire in our students as we strive to be leaders in the field of visual impairment.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION ND Vision Services/School for the Blind

ND Vision Services/School for the Blind does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, sex (wages) or genetics in its programs and activities. For inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies, please contact: Tami Purcell, Business Manager, ND Vision Services/School for the Blind, 500 Stanford Road, Grand Forks, ND 58203, (701) 795-2707.

