

2021-2023



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Biennial Report



North Dakota Vision Services/ School for the Blind



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

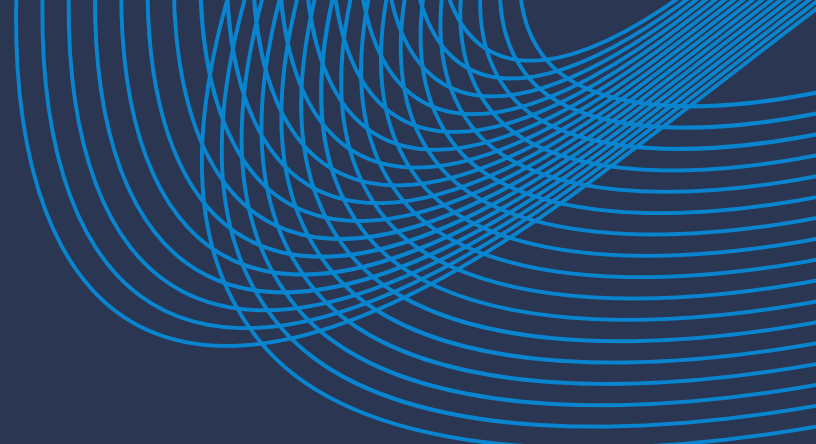


“ALONE WE CAN
DO SO LITTLE;
TOGETHER WE
CAN DO SO MUCH”

-HELEN KELLER

Superintendent
PAUL H. OLSON
State Superintendent
KIRSTEN BAESLER

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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

- **1908** The North Dakota Asylum for the Blind opened in Bathgate, ND.
- **1961** The school moved to Grand Forks to enable better transportation, medical services, and a more modern facility.
- **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-year anniversary.
- **2020** The COVID-19 Pandemic suspended Short-Term Programs for students and adults from April through May of 2021.

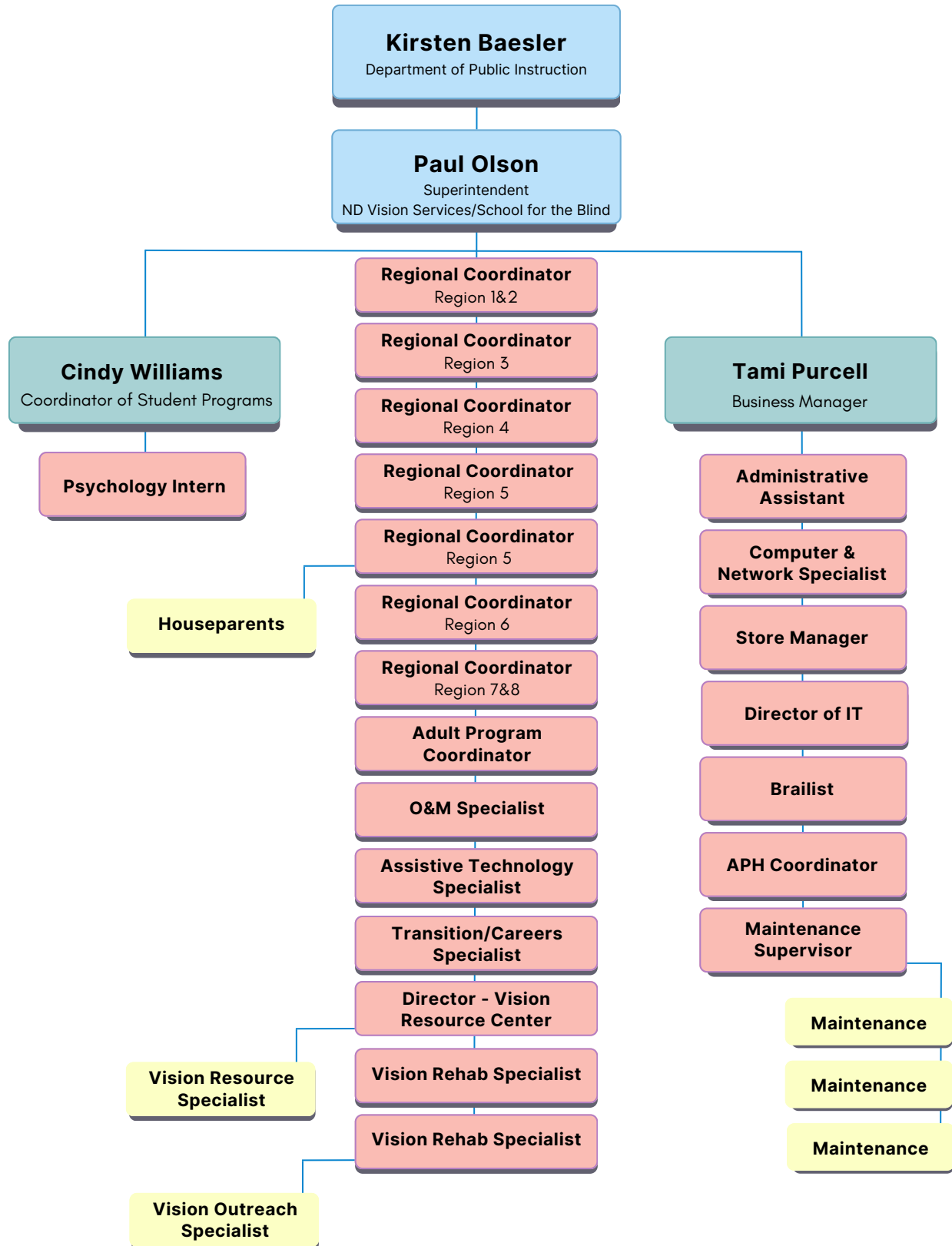


NDVS/SB SUPERINTENDENTS

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| • 1908-1937 | Benjamin Phillips Chapple |
| • 1937-1973 | Herbert D. Jeffery |
| • 1973-1989 | Charles Borchert |
| • 1989-1990 | Alan Mealka |
| • 1990-1992 | Betty Bender |
| • 1992-1994 | Michael Graham |
| • 1994-2013 | Carmen Suminski |
| • 2013-Present | Paul H. Olson |

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

NDVS/SB



STATUTORY/CONSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

CHAPTER 25-06—EDUCATION OF BLIND PERSONS



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.

25-06-01. 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

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.

225-06-02.2. 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

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.



(Image: students working on STEM skills with instructor.)



(Image: elementary students during programming week.)

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, by mail, via 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 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.

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: ndvisionservices.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.

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.



(Image: two students playing goalball in gymnasium.)

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.

Short-term Programming for Students

The primary purpose of short-term programs is to provide high quality instruction and experiences to students to facilitate independence in the Expanded Core Curriculum and provide a foundation for overall academic achievement.

Short-Term Programs - Academic Year

- Teen/Career Short-Term Programs (10th–12th grade)
- Middle School Short-Term Programs (6th–9th grade)
- Elementary Short-Term Programs (1st–5/6th grade)
- Summer Programs (Elementary, Middle School & High School)

Short-term student program sessions consist of sessions throughout the school year 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 and in the community 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, written reports are compiled and disseminated to parents and the local school and/or other pertinent parties who are part of the educational team.

(Image: students practicing O&M skills downtown Grand Forks with instructor.)



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



(Image: adult client working with DLS instructor on cutting skills.)

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, but are not limited to,

- Braille
- Technology
- Daily Living Skills
- Visual Aids
- Orientation & Mobility
- Recreation/Leisure

2021-2023 BIENNIUM LEGISLATION

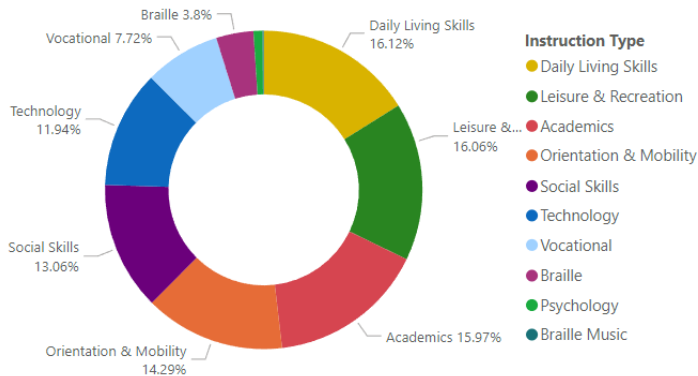
No new legislation specific to the operation of NDVS/SB was enacted.

2021-2023 RESPONSIBILITY ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

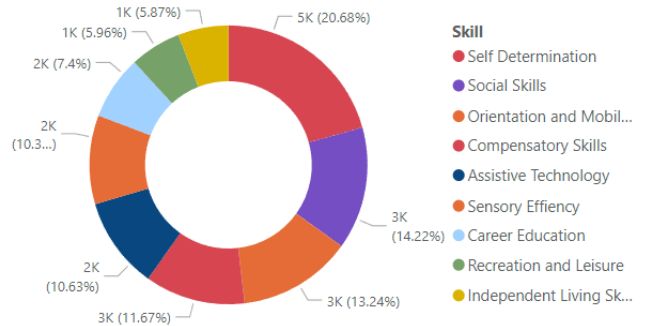
No changes in agency responsibility were added or deleted.

PROGRAM EVALUATION

Service Hours by Instruction Type



ECC Student Performance by Skill



Our approach to overall program evaluation is multi-faceted. Periodically, phone surveys are conducted with adult clients to gauge satisfaction. In addition, we conduct satisfaction surveys with parents of students who have been served on an outreach basis.

Data collected in the 2021-2023 biennium has focused on outcomes for student Short-Term Programs (STP). A system of collecting data after each STP week was developed by staff prior to the advent of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It was not possible to collect continuous data during that time frame because students who had been attending STP were then served virtually. In the Fall of 2021, however, in-person STP weeks resumed. The goal is to both examine individual student growth as well as overall efficacy of STP at NDVS/SB.

Illustrated above is an example of how we can review data as a programming team in order to make adjustments that are intended to improve student growth and potentially the overall approach to programming. The intent is for the program team to review the aggregated data and make decisions that result in improvements.

When working with students during our in-house short term programs, we log and capture the hours spent in various instructional categories to understand how time is spent as a student works hands-on with a teacher.

With our data collection, we have developed an understanding of student performance in focused learning areas that help students develop lifelong independent and job-ready skills. With the ECC attributes we can better determine student growth and deficiencies in the nine areas of the ECC range. We now have an improved visual of outliers in these ranges that teachers can use to focus teaching and best practices. Using student development performance as a reference point, we can now approximate teachers' time spent versus student ECC performance to focus resources and time into independent student teaching, helping improve growth in the ECC areas and improve on any outliers.

Major Agency Accomplishments

NDVS/SB adapted successfully to the multitude of new needs that arose during the COVID Pandemic. NDVS/SB staff carried out a successful transition to a combination of direct and virtual (hybrid) services in both schools and home settings. Several new virtual adult discussion/teaching groups were launched using Zoom Video Conferencing in collaboration with the ND Association of the Blind. These adaptations have permanently and positively altered our service delivery going forward.

During the height of the COVID pandemic, students and adults were served virtually or under very strict parameters in their homes. Short-term programs were also conducted virtually. In the Fall of 2021, NDVS/SB began to offer center-based training opportunities again with great enthusiasm and near average levels of pre-pandemic participation. The successful return to the high quality, hands-on instruction was a huge accomplishment showing trust in our agency by adult clients, parents of students and school districts.

A new series of virtual professional development training courses for teachers of students with visual impairment around the state were conducted by NDVS/SB and are ongoing. These training sessions have met a growing need for teachers to learn new strategies and technology required to meet the diverse needs of the population we serve. This on-going professional development provides an easily accessible and cost-effective way to ensure North Dakota is providing the best education possible for our students.

A host of facility maintenance projects have been or will soon be completed. The implementation of an electronic key fob system has enhanced facility safety and security significantly, which is one of our primary responsibilities. A major conversion of fluorescent to LED lighting for energy efficiency



(Image: NDVS/SB instructors and adult clients holding certificates for completing an adult programming week at NDVS/SB.)

is also very noteworthy. Working with the SiteLogic consultants has resulted in a number of well-planned facility efficiencies.

In 2021, the Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP), which is supported by the Department of Education, accepted four of our Golden Guide videos into its collection of premium media designed for students with disabilities. They are available to view on the DCMP website and on our own YouTube Channel. These four videos, all of which were produced and created by NDVS/SB staff, currently have a combined total of almost 100,000 views and have greatly increased our YouTube Channel's visibility. We now have 931 subscribers and 69 Golden Guide videos.

Margo Lentz (NDVS/SB Teacher and Orientation and Mobility Specialist) was chosen as the National Related Services Provider of the Year in 2021 by the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB).

Paul Olson was selected to receive the William H. English Award in 2022 by the Council of Schools and Services for the Blind (COSB). The Council of Schools and Services for the Blind presents the William H. English Leadership Award at the annual COSB Banquet to a deserving superintendent or chief administrator from a school or program for the blind who has made significant contributions to the field and to students who are blind or visually impaired. At the same time he ended his two year term as president of the organization.

North Dakota Vision Services/ School for the Blind

Core Priorities and Values

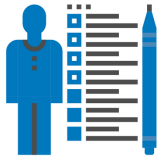


INCREASE AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

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.

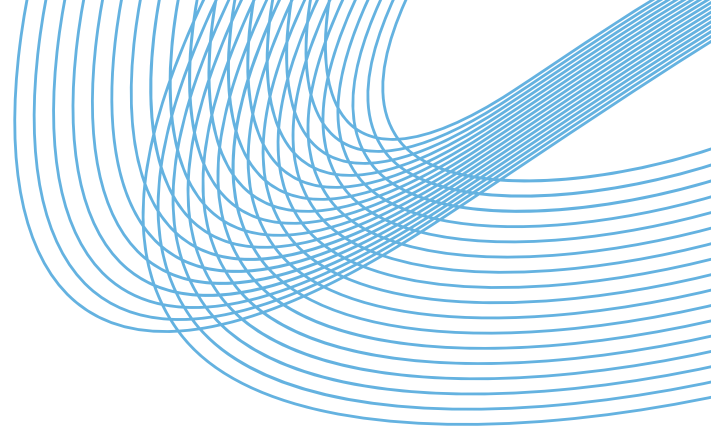
REDUCE UNDEREMPLOYMENT

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

2019-2021
Biennium

2021-2023
Biennium

Clients Served (Unduplicated):

Infants/Students	292	312
Adults	217	222
Total	509	534

Vision Resource Center:

New Loans	969	1,125
"Reaching Out" Newsletter (Circulated Quarterly)	365	376
APH Federal Registry	296	314
Store Sales (Invoices)	417	388
Braille Access Center (pages)	11,638	14,146

Short-term Center Based Programs (Persons Served):

Short Term Programming	175	134
Adult Week	14	38
Summer Programming	27	38

Evaluations, Consultations and Instructions

(Services Provided):

Consultations	1,598	1,849
Evaluations	400	383
Instruction	5,616	9,629
In-Service Training (Attendees)	660	1,512

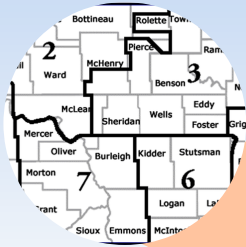
As of 06/30/20

Touching North Dakota Lives

ND Vision Services/School for the Blind 2021-2023 Biennium

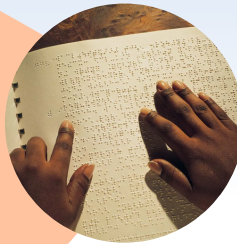
Outreach Services

1,848 Consultations
373 Evaluations
1,540 Instructions



Braille Access Center

14,146 Braille pages
Providing braille transcription to schools & organizations across North Dakota.



Center Based Programs

24 Consultations
10 Evaluations
8,091 Instructions



Adult Services

555 Consultations
75 Evaluations
1,791 Instructions



Reaching Out Newsletter

350 E-mail subscribers
23 Print subscribers
3 Braille subscribers



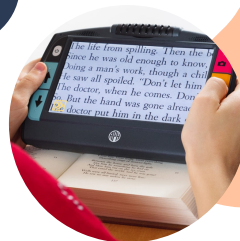
Facebook

790 Followers
Providing educators, families and all North Dakotans a way to communicate with us and each other.



Vision Resource Center

1,125 New Loans
Books and APH Products to North Dakotans who are unable to read standard print materials.



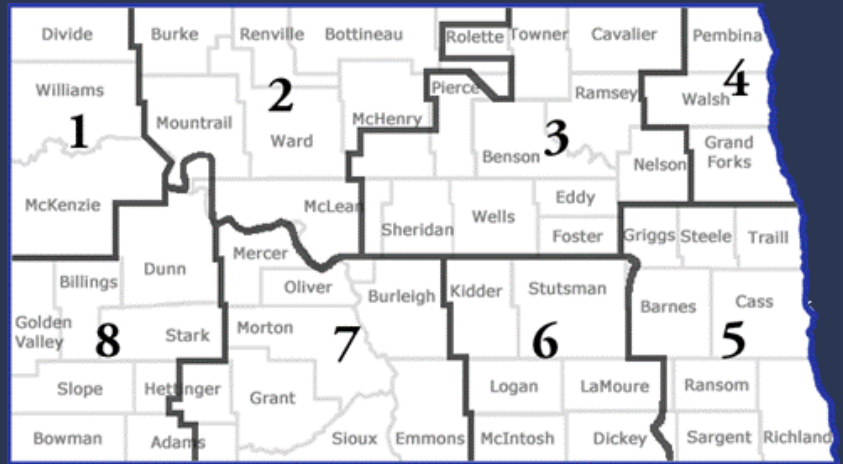
The Store

388 Sales
Providing faster access to low vision aids.



CLIENTS SERVED BY REGION (UNDUPLICATED)

JULY 1, 2021 - JUNE 30, 2023



Region 1

Infants/Students - 10
Adults - 7
Total: 17

Region 6

Infants/Students - 40
Adults - 5
Total: 45

Region 2

Infants/Students - 44
Adults - 18
Total: 62

Region 7

Infants/Students - 31
Adults - 35
Total: 61

Region 3

Infants/Students - 34
Adults - 19
Total: 53

Region 8

Infants/Students - 37
Adults - 13
Total: 50

Region 4

Infants/Students - 37
Adults - 67
Total: 104

Relocated/Out of State

Infants/Students - 3
Adults - 9
Total: 12

Region 5

Infants/Students - 76
Adults - 49
Total: 125

Total Infants/Students Served: 312
Total Adults Served: 222
Total Persons Served: 534

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES AND REVENUES

Revenues by Source:

Lease - Rent of Buildings (GFPS, NDSD, EHS)	\$	362,323
Donations		6,551
Admissions (Vocational Rehabilitation/Center Based Students out of state)		10,222
Lease - Rent of Land (UND)		5,800
Transfer from Common Schools/Ellendale Fund		1,375,000
Transfer from Federal Fund		100,544
Braille Access Center		645
Total Revenue for 2021-2023	\$	1,861,085

Expenditures by Program	General Fund	Federal Fund	Special Fund	Total
Maintenance & Utilities	\$ 515,569	\$ 86,000	\$ 813,611	\$ 1,415,180
Administration	674,314	-	48,279	722,593
Adult Program	201,338	-	21,544	222,882
Outreach (Age 0-5)	200,084	-	25,280	225,364
Outreach (Age 6-21)	1,772,921	10,430	97,422	1,880,773
Technology	541,929	-	47,056	588,985
Short Term Programs (K-12)	232,342	-	65,818	298,160
Vision Resource Center	624,931	-	10,059	634,990
Braille Access Center	1,602	-	2,168	3,770
Summer Camps	3,835	2,489	3,946	10,270
Total Expenditures	\$ 4,768,865	\$ 98,919	\$ 1,135,183	\$ 6,002,967

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURES BY LINE ITEM

Salaries & Wages

Salaries & Wages	\$	3,176,937	
Temporary Salaries		53,082	
Fringe Benefits		1,596,984	
Total Salaries & Wages			\$ 4,827,003

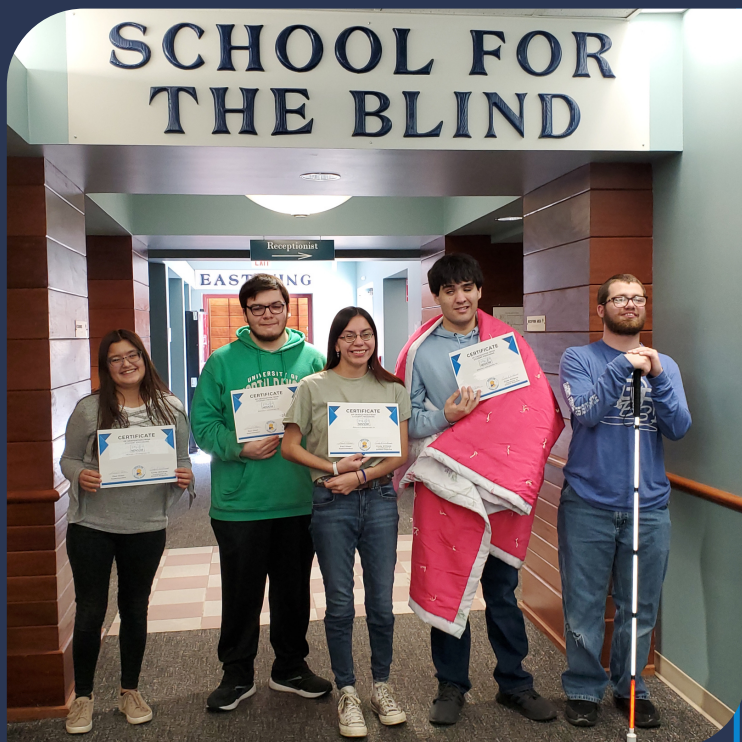
Operating

State Employee Travel	\$	156,107	
<u>Utilities</u>			
-Electricity		35,171	
-Water & Garbage		31,038	
-Steam Heat		119,485	
-Natural Gas		12,176	
Telecommunications		28,815	
Data Processing		92,531	
IT - Software/Supplies		6,129	
Postage		1,834	
IT -Contractual Services		2,127	
Lease/Rent - Equipment		6,807	
Lease/Rent - Bldg		19,174	
Professional Development		17,546	
Operating Fees/Services		23,792	
Repairs		71,861	
Professional Services		1,725	
Insurance		12,941	
Office Supplies		13,354	
Printing		1,427	
Profess. Supplies & Materials		7,970	
Food & Clothing		12,768	
Bld,Grnds,Vehicle Supplies		49,503	
Misc. Supplies		12,002	
IT Equipment under \$5,000		12,856	
Other Equip under \$5,000		18,311	
Office Equip under \$5,000		3,070	
Total Operating Expenses			\$ 770,520
Capital Improvements	\$		405,444
Total Expenditures	\$		6,002,967

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.



(Image: high school students standing under School for the Blind sign, while holding certificates.)

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: Paula Solheim, Business Manager, ND Vision Services/School for the Blind, 500 Stanford Road, Grand Forks, ND 58203, (701) 795-2343.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2021-2023 Biennium was one of both change and stability. Through the numerous issues posed during the COVID-19 Pandemic, NDVS/SB adapted and met unique challenges. Our primary mission is to support the children and adults that are striving to live productive lives. A few of the take aways for this period of time included:

- Utilization of new methods to provide services during the pandemic.
- Several successful facility improvement projects.
- Successful audits which are a testimony to our emphasis on good stewardship of state resources.
- Provision of resources through the legislative process to provide for those we serve and support our employees.
- Numerous accomplishments and national honors that recognize our dedication to quality.