

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED



2025 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

New Jersey Department of Human Services
Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

2025 Annual Report - State Rehabilitation Council

The New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) promotes and provides services in the areas of education, employment, independence, and eye health for people who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired, their families, and the community.

The Commission adopts four major strategies in carrying out its mission, which are:

- (1) Providing specialized services to people with limited or no vision.
- (2) Educating and working in the community to reduce the incidence of vision loss.
- (3) Improving social attitudes about blindness and visual impairment; and
- (4) Increasing employment outcomes for individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf blind.

Detailed information about services can be found at: <http://www.cbvi.nj.gov>.

Any questions regarding this report, or requesting it in alternate format, should be directed to Charles McKenna at 973-648-7900 or via e-mail at charles.mckenna@dhs.nj.gov.

Table of Contents

Letter from SRC Chairperson	4
CBVI Executive Director’s Letter	5
SRC Working Principles and Responsibilities	6
SRC Board Members	7
SRC Proposed Goals in 2026	9
Overview of CBVI	10
Statewide Impact of CBVI Services	12
Employment Outcomes	13
Education Services	14
PUMP	14
Pre-Employment Transition Services	15
Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE 1.0)	15
LIFE 101	16
SUCCESS	16
STEPS	16
CREATE	17
EDGE 2.0	17
The Fellowship Program	17
Vocational Rehabilitation Services	18
Youth Employment Solutions	19
Joseph Kohn Training Center	20
Business Relations Unit	20
Technological Support Services	22
QWERTY Program	22
Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ)	23
Deaf-Blind Services	23
iCanConnect – NJ	23
Support Services Providers of New Jersey	24
Independent Living Services	24
LEAP	24
SHORE	25
Community Outreach Education/ASPIRE	25
Project BEST	26
Success Throughout the Lifespan – Spotlight Stories	28
Did you know?	36
SRC Meeting Dates 2025	37
Service Centers and Facilities	37

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – Chairperson’s Letter

Dear Stakeholders,

I am Vito J. DeSantis, and I have the privilege and honor of being the chairperson for the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

This cover letter is part of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Annual Report for 2025. The report was produced by the Commission and the SRC as required by section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act, 1973, as amended. The SRC’s purpose is as follows: “To provide guidance for the development and expansion of vocational rehabilitation services, programs, and concepts on a statewide basis to maximize employability, independence, and integration into the workforce and the community of individuals who are blind, deaf/blind, and visually impaired.”

The purpose of the Annual Report is to provide Consumers, stakeholders, legislators, and the general public with information regarding services provided by the Commission related to the Vocational Rehabilitation program (VR). The purpose of the VR program is to assist individuals who are blind, deafblind, or visually impaired to achieve integrated, gainful employment. The testimonials and statistics in this report demonstrate the Commission's success on behalf of its consumers.

I hope you enjoy reading this Annual Report and join the SRC and the Commission in congratulating all the consumers who have reached their employment goals.

Vito J. DeSantis MPA, CRL

Vito J. DeSantis

Chairperson

State Rehabilitation Council

Executive Director's Letter

It is my pleasure to join the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) of the NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) in sharing this report that details our accomplishments during Federal Fiscal Year 2025. The pages ahead will highlight the work of the CBVI team with the support of the SRC.

This partnership is vital to carrying out our mission of assisting New Jersey residents who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired in their efforts to reach their educational, employment, and self-sufficiency goals. It continues to be my privilege to serve in my role while working alongside people who apply their talents, skills, and expertise with a shared focus on enabling CBVI to provide comprehensive services to our constituents, appropriate to their individual needs, and to serve them in a timely and effective manner.

I am also deeply appreciative of the State Rehabilitation Council members for their unwavering commitment to making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities. Their dedication is evident in their consistent efforts to offer valuable insights, feedback, and thoughtful advisement that help make CBVI better. Their contributions are a testament to their genuine interest in advancing the rights and opportunities for people who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired, and their dynamic energy continues to be a driving force for positive change.

We thank you for your conscientious work and continued support of our mission, and we look forward to another year of collaborating to achieve successful outcomes for the people it is our mission to serve.

Sincerely,

Dr. Bernice Davis

Executive Director
Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

SRC Working Principles and Responsibilities

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was established by Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. It provides advice and works in partnership with the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agency. The members of the State Rehabilitation Council are appointed by the Governor and convene at least four meetings a year. All meetings and public forums are announced, open, and accessible to the general public. The sessions are held in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6.

The functions of the SRC are to:

- Review, analyze, and advise CBVI regarding performance of its responsibilities of the Agency under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 2014.
- Assist CBVI with the development of State goals and priorities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation program.
- Advise and assist CBVI with the preparation of the State Plan and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required under the Rehabilitation Act amendments of 2014.
- Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, Vocational Rehabilitation services.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of Vocational Rehabilitation programs operated within the State, and to make the report available to the public.
- Coordinate with other councils within the State, including the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC).
- Establish successful working relationships between CBVI, the SILC, and Centers for Independent Living (CIL) within the State; and
- Perform other functions consistent with the purpose of this title, as the SRC determines to be appropriate.

SRC Board Members

Vito DeSantis, Chair

(856) 296-1315 | jdesantis@optonline.net

*Representative of Individual
Multiple Disabilities

Don Campbell

(609) 816-9605 | decampbell124@gmail.com

*State Independent Living Council (SILC)

Nicole Pratt

(973) 642-8100 ext. 143 | npratt@spanadvocacy.org

SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
*Parent Trainer & Information Center

Gwen Orłowski

(609) 292-9742 | gorłowski@disabilityrightsnj.org

Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ)
* Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Keith White

(609) 802-2531 | keith.white@dol.nj.gov

*Representative of NJ Department of Labor (DOL)

William Schuldt

(973) 627-0055 ext. 1 | wschuldt@vlanj.org

Vision Loss Alliance of New Jersey
*Community Rehabilitation Program Provider

Ronda Banks

(973) 491-4303 | rpbanks@njtransit.com

New Jersey Transit
*Business and Industry Representative

Steven McCoy

(212) 810-0744 | stevenmccoyb@gmail.com

*Business and Industry Representative

James Good

(201) 406-2310 | jimgoodfanclub@gmail.com

*Business and Industry Representative

Gary Robinson

(845) 517-0165 | grobi34852@aol.com

*Business and Industry Representative

Anthony Lanzillotti

(609) 361-3038 | titi777@gmail.com

New Jersey Council of the Blind (NJCB)
*Advocacy Group Representative

John O'Connell

(732) 300-5524 | joconnel9@gmail.com

Blinded Veterans Association
*Advocacy Group Representative

Linda Melendez

(908) 590-1747 | president@nfbnj.org

National Federation of the Blind NJ (NFB NJ)
*Advocacy Group Representative

Joseph Zesski

(609) 410-8890 | jzesski@rilnj.org

* Current/Former VR Applicant or Recipient

Alice Eaddy

(856) 765-3543 | cheiro_alice@aol.com

*Current/Former VR Applicant or Recipient
Representative

Sioban Leahy

(551) 208-1305 | siboban.leahy@gmail.com

*Current/Former VR Applicant or Recipient
Representative

Breeanna Douglas

(862) 249-2506 | douglasbreeanna@gmail.com

* Representative of an Individual Who is Blind

Sarah Schiffelbein

609-376-3530 | Sarah.Schiffelbein@doe.nj.gov

N J Department of Education, Special Education

*State Education Agency Representative

Felicia Hopson - Ex-Officio

(609) 273-6109 | Felicia.Hopson@dol.nj.gov

*Representative of NJ Department of Labor (DVRs)

Dawn Corbett – Ex-Officio

(732) 668-6177 | Dawn.Corbett@dhs.nj.gov

Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

*VR Counselor

Charles Pat McKenna – Ex-Officio

(973) 648-4300 | Charles.Mckenna@dhs.nj.gov

Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired

*Assistant Division Director

Dr. Bernice Davis – Ex-Officio

(973) 648-3160 | Bernice.Davis@dhs.nj.gov

Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired

*Executive Director

SRC Proposed Goals for 2026

The SRC will meet four times in 2026 and continue to support CBVI's goals and commitment to excellent services.

2026 Meeting Dates:

- February 6, 2026
- June 5, 2026
- October 2, 2026
- December 4, 2026

Once in compliance with Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act and CFR 34 361.17, whereby a quorum exists,

- The SRC, by reviewing various reports and current and proposed policies, will:
- Work with CBVI to enhance and improve competitive integrated employment outcomes across all VR consumer groups being served.
- Assist CBVI in identifying and partnering with apprenticeship opportunities.
- Assist CBVI in enhancing partnerships with the local One-Stops and larger workforce system.
- Assist CBVI in providing services, ensuring that Rapid Engagement is utilized while ensuring Informed Choice to the consumer.
- Assist CBVI in developing Career Pathways for appropriate consumers who wish to progress from education and training to Competitive Integrated Employment.
- SRC members will continue to participate, as appropriate, in public forums and agency programs to benefit consumers.
- SRC will work with CBVI to identify, develop, and provide onboarding training for new SRC members to ensure all members understand the scope and role of SRC membership and the VR program.
- SRC and CBVI will conduct yearly SRC Purpose and Responsibilities training.
- SRC will work with CBVI to identify topical presentations that can be presented at each SRC meeting related to agency performance and compliance.
- SRC will enhance and operationalize the role of the subcommittees to align their focus with the core requirements of the SRC, its bylaws, Federal Regulations, and the VR program.

Overview of the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

In April of 1909, the New Jersey State Legislature directed that a state agency be established "to provide any and all means which shall be deemed feasible for ameliorating the condition of the blind." Over 115 years later, the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI), more than ever finds itself fulfilling that original mandate.

The Commission was established as a state agency in 1910 under the direction of Lydia Young Hayes, a blind teacher of the blind. One of the initial tasks of the Commission was to compile a registry of the state's blind residents. During that first year, 750 people were registered.

The formation of a single agency to administer to the needs of New Jersey's blind population emerged from a wave of social consciousness that swept the country in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As a result of increased awareness, significant strides were made toward equalizing opportunities for people who were blind.

During that first year, Miss Hayes and another teacher, Janet Paterson, established the state's first integrated classes for blind and sighted students within the Newark school system. These classes were based on the belief that integrated classes provided blind students with the educational tools and exposure necessary for a smooth assimilation into society.

The integrative educational philosophy and policy was recognized throughout the country, as an innovative model in the field of education of the blind. From the early 1940's to the late 1960's, and under the supervision of Josephine Taylor, the Commission's evolving educational programs, known as the New Jersey Plan, gained world-wide recognition. The educational initiative of supporting blind and visually impaired students in public schools, and sending teachers to assist them through lessons in Braille, low-vision aids, and special classes, has grown over the years into an even more comprehensive educational service program that supported over 2000 students last year.

A Home Teaching Service Program was also installed during the first years of the Commission. Teachers went into consumers' homes to help them discover ways to efficiently use new techniques and their own talents to achieve self-sufficient lifestyles. This program offered instruction in communication skills such as Braille and typing and included guidance in the production of marketable crafts and handiworks, which led to the creation of a Home Industries Program, that functioned as an agent for the sale of products made by blind people.

In 1915, the Commission began a program to place blind workers in the work industry at large, capitalizing on employment opportunities resulting from World War I Armed Services recruitment. Federal and state legislation offered additional support to the Commission's early employment and social service programs, which were designed to provide legal and economic leverage to agencies that served people with disabilities.

Basic legislative mandates and their various amendments allowed the Commission to vastly enhance its services during the middle period of its growth, under the direction of George Meyer (1936-1964). Major legislative amendments, such as the Barden LaFollete Act in 1943, and earlier federal rehabilitation legislation like the Smith-Fess Act of 1920, provided funds and authorized state agencies to help blind and visually impaired people obtain meaningful employment through vocational training, counseling, physical restoration, and placement services.

The Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936 authorized the Commission to license qualified blind people to operate vending stands in federal and federally sponsored buildings, which was later broadened to include state, municipal and private buildings. There are presently 38 Commission-sponsored newsstands, snack bars, coffee shops, and full-service cafeterias in facilities throughout the state, with several more planned.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services were formally organized in 1941 under the supervision of Carl Pirrups-Hvarre. Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided a wider range of training, placement, counseling and guidance to prepare blind people for employment, and to further immerse them in the business arena.

From 1911 to 1918, the Commission, concerned citizens, and private organizations such as the New Jersey Association for the Blind, pooled their resources to secure legislation to promote research into blindness prevention. Eye Health Services were formally established in 1943 under the supervision of the late Emma Howe, which included the nation's first traveling eye unit and a glaucoma registry. These Commission services have continued to grow over the years with the Better Eye-Health Services and Treatment (Project BEST) program, which provides services in the areas of eye health and eye safety by offering free vision screenings for adults and children, with a concerted effort to provide these services to historically underserved sectors of the population (low income, elderly, minorities, people with Diabetes, and individuals with special needs).

Under the direction of Joseph Kohn, (1964-1976), the size and scope of the Commission's staff and service programs more than doubled. Significant expansions occurred in many departments: social services, rehabilitation teaching, eye health nursing, the home industries program, vocational rehabilitation, an expanded contract workshop program, the opening of the George Meyer Textbook and Materials Center, preschool eye screening programs, and many more.

With the establishment of the first Consumer Forum in 1964, under the auspices of Governor Richard Hughes, consumers and other interested individuals began to take active participation in the Commission's decision and policy-making procedures. Now the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, advises and works in partnership with CBVI administration and staff.

CBVI, known as the Commission for the Blind until 1982, was at the forefront of that movement and still works diligently toward the realization of new levels of achievement in the quest for equal opportunity in education, employment, and community integration.

Although the Commission's scope of services has significantly expanded since 1910, the established direction is still an integral part of today's programs and policies as well as tomorrow's goals and aspirations.

Statewide Impact of CBVI Services

Numbers indicate total individuals served by Commission services and/or programs.
(Please note that individuals may be served in multiple programs at CBVI):

	COUNTY	ED	IL	IL-OB	VR	PP	JKTC
1	Atlantic	93	38	100	78	11	8
2	Bergen	155	38	120	193	10	12
3	Burlington	148	32	108	167	5	11
4	Camden	174	97	169	170	13	14
5	Cape May	20	6	36	11	3	1
6	Cumberland	43	24	29	51	3	3
7	Essex	156	72	217	296	17	47
8	Gloucester	106	33	62	78	2	4
9	Hudson	88	49	76	147	16	10
10	Hunterdon	22	5	18	29	3	6
11	Mercer	88	35	65	122	13	9
12	Middlesex	188	87	169	286	28	24
13	Monmouth	145	86	161	193	29	14
14	Morris	100	41	93	87	7	8
15	Ocean	197	74	238	172	28	8
16	Passaic	102	34	71	136	32	6
17	Salem	27	13	14	18	3	2
18	Somerset	87	33	53	87	10	15
19	Sussex	40	18	22	34	1	2
20	Union	135	63	128	211	29	24
21	Warren	20	6	26	26	1	5
22	Out of State	0	0	0	2	0	0
23	Not identified	1	0	0	1	2	0
	Total	2135	884	1975	2595	266	233

* Explanation of Abbreviations

ED – Education (Ages: 0-21 years),

IL – Independent Living (Ages: 54 years and younger)

ILOB – Independent Living for Older Individuals who are Blind (Ages: 55 years +)

VR – Vocational Rehabilitation (Ages: 14 years and older)

PB – Project BEST (Serving all age groups)

JKTC – Joseph Kohn Training Center (VR consumers 18+)

Employment Outcomes

*102 total employment outcomes

Management Occupations	4.9%
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	4.9%
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	1.0%
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	1.0%
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	0.0%
Community and Social Service Occupations	6.9%
Legal Occupations	2.0%
Education, Training, and Library Occupations	6.9%
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	3.9%
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	2.9%
Healthcare Support Occupations	9.8%
Protective Service Occupations	1.0%
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	5.9%
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	7.8%
Personal Care and Service Occupations	2.9%
Sales and Related Occupations	5.9%
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	18.6%
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	0.0%
Construction and Extraction Occupations	2.0%
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	2.0%
Production Occupations	3.9%
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	5.9%
Military Specific Occupations	0.0%
BENJ Operator	0.0%

Education Services

Education Services are provided to eligible children (from birth through grade 12) by certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs). The TVIs worked closely with children, family members, and local school personnel to provide high-quality services that foster access to learning, enabling all service recipients who are blind, deaf-blind, and visually impaired to participate fully in the classroom and school and compete equally with their sighted peers. Infants and toddlers through 2 years of age receive home-based services in collaboration with private early intervention providers, focusing on play-based functional assessment and activities designed to foster the development of early concepts and pre-literacy skills. Our early childhood TVIs also provide training for parents and early intervention providers as part of our services for infants and toddlers. For students in preschool through grade 12, TVIs provide school-based services that include participation in the IEP process, consultation with parents and school teams, training to parents and school personnel, and specialized instruction to students. Education Services include the provision of accessible books and materials, as well as specialized devices and equipment, to enable access to classroom learning, the general curriculum, and full participation in school activities. Pre-Braille skills development, formal Braille instruction, low-vision device instruction, other specialized instruction, technology support and reinforcement, functional skills assessments, and in-class observations form the basis of school-based instruction and support.

Pre-High School Upwardly Mobile Program

PUMP (Pre-High School Upwardly Mobile Program) is our summer learning experience for middle school students, and the program (in its fourth year) took place August 4, 5, and 6th, 2025. This program focused on building greater independence, self-advocacy, and awareness of transition as students in grades 7 and 8 prepare for transition to high school in the very near future. The program occurred at the CBVI JKTC in New Brunswick during the last week of the Life 101 Program. The theme of this program was independence and setting your sights on a productive future. This year's PUMP program included enthusiastic, eager-to-learn students from across New Jersey. Sometimes, middle school students can be challenged when asked to interact with unfamiliar peers. This was not the case with these students. Within the first hour of the first day, they shared cell numbers and friended each other on social media. The students were inquisitive, engaged in all activities, and especially enjoyed shared activities with the students in Life Skills 101. The students and their families have asked that the PUMP program be extended to two weeks in the summer of 2026. This year, the program lasted only 3 days, but we noticed growth in each student, even in that short period (12 students).

We remain fully committed to educating our students in the least restricted environment. All our CBVI teachers and their supervisors recognize the value of programs like PUMP and our high school programs for our students to make friends with peers who share the experience of blindness/visual impairment. Year after year, as we conduct these programs, our students and their parents continue to remark that the strongest element is the opportunity to be with other blind or visually impaired students. Many of our students are the only ones in their schools with this life experience. They have often expressed feeling isolated. Some of our older students have shared with our younger students that they must put themselves "out there" by participating in clubs, sports, choir, or instrumental music. They have also stressed the need to be true to themselves and to ask for help when it is needed. For our students, these opportunities to share experiences and life lessons are vital to their self-image, self-esteem, and overall well-being, as well as to the more specific activities intended to prepare them for a successful transition to adulthood.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

In FFY 2025, the Commission continued to develop and expand its Pre-Employment Transition Services in alignment with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The Commission has a long history of providing Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services to students and youth with disabilities, with dedicated programs going back nearly 50 years. CBVI currently has six Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors dedicated to working with high school students, three Counselors dedicated to our consumers enrolled in college full-time, and several programs and services that have been developed and continue to evolve to meet the needs of our consumers and the federal regulations that govern the VR program.

These recurring transition programs include Life 101 (Learning Independence for Future Employment), EDGE 1.0 and 2.0 (Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement), STEPS (Successful Transition Experiences Preparing Students), CREATE (Career Research, Exploration and Awareness for Transition to Employment), and SUCCESS (Students Understanding College and Career expectations for Excellence in School and Society). In addition, the PASS program (Promoting Academic and Student Success) was renewed for FY2025 and will now include programming specific to college students, with a component for high school students added. PASS is an advocacy and leadership workshop series, powered by Sky's the Limit Communications. Its goals include the following: assisting college and high school students with gaining confidence in identifying as a person with a visual impairment, speaking with others about their disability, networking, and building connections. In addition, students will discover powerful tools of advocacy, technology, and independent living, career exploration, learn to secure an internship, scholarship, or volunteer opportunity, and learn how to communicate accommodation needs in a variety of educational, vocational, and community settings.

Pre-Employment Transition Services continue to be available for eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities, ages 14 to 21. These services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training, instruction in self-advocacy, and counseling on post-secondary enrollment opportunities.

EDGE (Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement) 1.0

Now in its 10th year, the EDGE program helps prepare blind and visually impaired high school students receiving transition services from the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired to become successful professionals. EDGE continues to hold monthly in-person workshops throughout New Jersey, including at CBVI's JKTC, where students sharpen their professional, advocacy, social, and independent living skills. EDGE staff and mentors host virtual weekly meetings for students that focus on topics such as technology, school stress and how to deal with it, time management, exploring college options and opportunities, and more. In addition, EDGE also hosts Parent Calls covering SSI, college resources, independence resources, and more. EDGE provides ample opportunities for students to speak with and learn from successful blind professionals across various fields, helping them develop their career paths and gain work-based learning experience. The program is run and staffed by successful blind and visually impaired individuals who understand the importance of instilling independence and confidence in blind youth to become successful adults, professionals, and members of their communities.

LIFE 101 (Learning Independence for Future Employment)

LIFE 101 is a two-week Pre-Employment Transition Services program designed for ninth and tenth-grade students, conducted by staff at the Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) in the summer. High school students participate in various group classes designed to promote independence, develop and improve social skills, enhance self-advocacy, and foster career planning and decision-making. Students receive preparation for the world of college, employment, and post-secondary life. Each student works with a peer mentor who assists them as needed throughout the program. In addition, each student completes a workbook, with the assistance of their Transition Counselor, designed to help solidify the learning activities.

In the summer of 2025, fourteen high school students participated in this program.

Students Understanding College and Career Expectations for Excellence in School and Society (SUCCESS)

The SUCCESS Program is a pre-employment transition residential program designed to prepare blind and visually impaired high school students who have expressed interest in entering college or university. In FY2025, the Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities at The College of New Jersey administered this program and assisted students with their adjustment to college life.

In SUCCESS, students participate in college-related academic workshops that provide opportunities to assess their self-advocacy and independent living skills. Students network, receive peer mentoring, work on community integration, and journey through career and college exploration. Students also engage in Person-Centered Planning workshops and activities to help create a vision and plan for their future. Throughout the program, staff collectively evaluated students' skills and helped them develop the skills needed for a successful college life. Transition and College counselors receive a description of the skills developed and recommendations for the future development of those skills for each student. During the program, students experience living in a college dorm, having a roommate, developing independence skills, gaining the ability and confidence to travel independently around the college campus, and acquiring knowledge and practice in knowing when and how to request accommodations as needed, among other things.

Successful Transition Experiences Preparing Students (STEPS)

The STEPS Program is a pre-employment transition program facilitated by the Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities at the College of New Jersey in FY 2025. It is for high school students (ages 16-21) who are blind or visually impaired and have additional disabilities, and who would benefit from an employment outcome upon high school completion—consumers who attend the program desire to work and can do so with or without support. STEPS prepares consumers for post-secondary life by providing opportunities to practice work-related, academic, and soft skills, as well as employment and independent living skills. Students create resumes, begin the Customized Employment Discovery process, experience virtual community-based instruction, engage in recreation and leisure activities with their peers, and begin planning their futures with support from Person-Centered Planning workshops and activities. Throughout the program, staff collectively evaluate the students' skills and ensure they have the skills necessary for a successful employment life. Transition Counselors are provided with a description of the skills exhibited and recommendations for developing those skills.

Career Research Exploration and Awareness for Transition to Employment (CREATE)

CREATE is a pre-employment transition program that was facilitated by the Center for Sensory and Complex Disabilities at the College of New Jersey in FY2025. It allows students ages 16-21 who are unsure of their career path to explore their strengths, abilities, capabilities, and interests—enabling students to identify or better define their employment goals and next steps upon high school completion.

In CREATE, students complete career assessments, such as interest inventories, which help them understand how their interests relate to possible career options. The Holland code helps determine student personality types, enabling them to identify suitable career paths based on their individual interests and strengths. Students receive travel training and instruction, participate in hands-on experiences and job shadowing, and live independently with a roommate. Additionally, exposure to various employment opportunities through in-person presentations, tours with local businesses, and online research is provided throughout the program to help students shape their future employment or educational goals. In the summer of 2025, SUCCESS, STEPS, and CREATE collectively served 25 students.

EDGE (Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement) 2.0

EDGE 2.0 serves over thirty college undergraduates across New Jersey and Pennsylvania who are blind and visually impaired. Students learn how to maximize their college experience through an individualized assimilation plan. The assimilation plan addresses barriers on campus and sets academic and social goals that help foster campus and community engagement. As upper-level students in the EDGE program, students have career development plans, which provide a map to graduation and a guide to careers in their fields of interest. In addition, students visit campus with a career advisor, meet monthly with a mentor, and attend peer meetings with career-centered activities. Using these resources and a career-focused approach, students enhance their ability to secure employment competitively in their field of choice.

In FY2025, EDGE 1.0 and EDGE 2.0 collectively served 118 students.

The Fellowship Program

Now in its third year, the Fellowship Program is a mentorship program designed to address the needs of individuals with vision loss residing in New Jersey. In FY2025, VLANJ (Vision Loss Alliance of NJ) facilitated the Fellowship program. Individuals are identified and referred to the program by CBVI VRCs (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors); however, they must be active consumers of CBVI services.

The program's goal is to foster a sense of community and mutual mentorship by building meaningful connections between college students aged 18-21 and individuals aged 54 and older (ILOB—Independent Living Older Blind) who are experiencing vision loss. ILOB participants share their employment knowledge, professionalism skills, and life experiences. College students share their life experiences, skills, current employment, and technology knowledge. Objectives foster mutual respect, independence, resilience, and advocacy through educational and skills-based activities, as well as supervised discussions about living with vision loss. Collectively, participants share knowledge, wisdom, address communication skills, discuss professionalism, and explore each other's unique skill sets, interests, and life experiences. In FY2025, Fellowship participants attended bi-monthly virtual meetings and three in-person workshops to foster

community and learn new skills. These skills include orientation and mobility, budgeting and managing finances, using artificial intelligence, effective communication, building social relationships, kitchen skills, self-advocacy, job exploration and counseling, workplace readiness training, adjusting to vision loss, navigating transitions and changes, making sound decisions, and more.

Program evaluations are completed with each participant. The first, a pre-participation survey, was to gather baseline information, interests, and goals from participants; the second, a post-participation survey, was to gather feedback on participants' experiences and progress towards their personal goals.

In FY2025, Fellowship served 22 consumers collectively.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

VR services provided by the Commission are designed to assist individuals who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired in preparing for, securing, retaining, or advancing in employment that is consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, interests, and informed choice. The scope of Vocational Rehabilitation Services includes, but is not limited to:

- Assessment for determining eligibility and VR needs by qualified personnel.
- VR counseling and guidance, including information and support services to assist an individual in exercising informed choice, including referral and services from other agencies.
- Physical and mental restoration services.
- Vocational and other training services.
- Maintenance and transportation related to the rendering of VR services.
- Vocational Rehabilitation services to family members, to assist in achieving the employment goal for an individual with a disability, e.g., family counseling.
- Interpreter services, including sign language and oral interpreter services, for individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, and tactile interpreting services for individuals who are deaf-blind.
- Independent Living skills instruction, including personal and home management.
- Orientation and Mobility services to instruct in methods of independent community travel.
- Services to assist students in transitioning from school to work.
- Job-related services, including job search and placement assistance, job retention services, follow-up services, and follow-along services.
- Supported employment services, including customized employment.
- Personal assistance services, including reader services.
- Occupational licenses, tools, equipment, initial stocks, and supplies.
- Technical assistance to individuals who are pursuing self-employment.
- Rehabilitation technology services and devices.

- Post-employment services, i.e., short-term services required to keep a job.
- Eye Health services for assisting consumers in accessing medical care, including surgery, which may be necessary to restore vision and/or prevent further vision loss as part of the employment plan.
- Education related to eye disorders and their treatment.
- Joseph Kohn Training Center – to obtain comprehensive training in skills of independent living that will enable consumers to be integrated into their community.
- Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ) to help consumers become independent business operators; and
- Assistive Technology Services are to allow consumers to develop usable methods of accessing computer equipment and other information technology.

Youth Employment Solution (YES) Program

The Youth Employment Solutions (YES) Program serves students as they transition to adulthood. In FY2025, this program was conducted in partnership with TCNJ. Through person-centered approaches, a YES Support Specialist will work with and on behalf of the consumer to assess/improve work readiness as well as provide technical assistance. In addition, the YES Support specialist will support the consumer’s transition to employment. Consumers in the YES program must have attended SUCCESS, CREATE, or STEPS. The YES Support Specialist communicates with CBVI staff, supported employment agencies, and any support staff who are part of the consumer's network to ensure the consumer's and family's goals guide the process. Additionally, deliverables are created and shared along with ongoing technical assistance as needed, to communicate the outcomes in the following topic areas:

1. Discovery Process/Exploration: (Get to know the consumer)
2. Job Developing/Job Exploration/Job Carving (“Pounding the Pavement”)
3. Job Acquisition/Transition
4. Job Retention/Short Term Follow-up

In virtual YES workshops, consumers discuss various topics including but not limited to the following:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ❖ Discovering interests/and identifying possible workplaces | ❖ Assistive Technology |
| ❖ Finding a part time job | ❖ State Agency Applications (What's available?) |
| ❖ Creating a Personal Pitch (How to talk about skills/strengths) | ❖ Planning for "Next Steps" |
| ❖ Interview Preparation | ❖ Creating/Updating Resume |
| ❖ Soft Skills - Social Skills | ❖ Websites/Apps for Learning (educational) |
| ❖ Learning how to organize a schedule | ❖ Websites/Apps for Learning (leisure/games) |
| ❖ Setting up a Daily Routine | ❖ Health, Nutrition & Fitness |
| ❖ Transportation Options (Navigating the NJ Transit Website/Access Link Info) | ❖ Wellness (stress relief, meditation, relaxation strategies, etc.) |
| ❖ Social/Recreational Activities | ❖ Cyber Safety |
| | ❖ Social Media Safety |
| | ❖ Cooking |

CBVI served 9 consumers in the YES program in FY2025.

Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC)

The Joseph Kohn Training Center, or (JKTC), is a comprehensive vocational rehabilitation funded program, under the umbrella of The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI). It provides intense training on a wide range of blindness skills related to independent living, travel techniques, accessing one's world around them, adaptive technology, and career exploration and development. This comprehensive approach brings a person closer to achieving their employment goal.

A consumer must apply and be determined eligible for CBVI's VR services. Upon request, the consumer is then referred to JKTC by their VR Counselor. The consumer must complete an application and submit the required medical forms to be considered for the program. The JKTC's main program is designed to be flexible, running between 16 and 20 weeks. It includes intensive training in all the blindness skills a person needs to obtain and retain successful employment, live independently, and be an active member of their community. At the end of the program, a work experience option is offered to the consumer to gain practical experience working in the community with vision loss. A 2-week assessment is available to evaluate an individual's skills and abilities and to determine whether the JKTC program will meet their needs. This option is also used for assessing the consumer's eligibility for the BENJ program. Targeted training, over a 4 to 8-week period, is offered to individuals who may need a refresher due to a significant decrease in vision loss or to updated training because of innovative technology recently available to the blind and visually impaired community.

At the JKTC, students are not just participants; they are part of a supportive community. They will be expected to participate in classes that instruct in meal preparation, home and personal management, in-person and online shopping, accessing the sighted world around them, safety and independent travel techniques, Career exploration and job-seeking skills, and adaptive technology for accessing a computer and its applications. Students looking to pursue post-secondary education to achieve their employment goals receive guidance and support through the application and accommodations request process.

The JKTC is a New Jersey State facility and operates during typical state hours. In-person instruction takes place Monday through Thursday; from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm. Students may reside at the center during in-person training. Virtual instruction takes place on Fridays, allowing students to practice what they are learning in their home environment. The consumer must be at least 18 years of age. Otherwise, if they are pursuing an employment goal and are determined eligible for CBV's VR services, they will be considered for participation in the JKTC program.

Business Relations Unit (BRU)

The Business Relations Unit (BRU) provides services to public- and private sector businesses. BRU assists employers in meeting their diversity initiatives by providing them with job-ready individuals with disabilities. BRU collaborates with companies to address their needs, including education and technical assistance on recruiting, hiring, and retaining employees who are blind, deaf-blind, or visually impaired. BRU endeavors to present an alternative pool of candidates to businesses while working to break down barriers to employment for people with disabilities, including through assistive technology and accessibility consultation.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic of 2019, there has been a significant shift toward virtual interviews, driven by technological advancements such as Zoom. Through virtual interviews, employers can conduct multiple

interviews in a day and save money by eliminating travel and the need to set up physical interview rooms. To meet this need, BRU will be hosting a Virtual Job Fair - Practice Sessions and a Virtual Job Fair in FY2026. The practice sessions will ensure consumers can navigate breakout rooms independently, research the company they are applying to, show confidence, ensure their computer camera and microphone are in working order, have up-to-date resumes, dress appropriately, ask appropriate questions, and follow online interviewing etiquette. Following the practice sessions, the virtual career fair will connect consumers directly with employers who have open positions.

While BRU often shares employment opportunities with referred consumers, these opportunities do not always result in successful hires. As a result, the BRU hosts a bi-monthly virtual Job club. In the Job club, the BRU works with consumers in a group setting to discuss improving their basic employment skills, application techniques, interviewing skills, and more. In addition, the BRU facilitates sharing experiences, discussing concerns, and solutions to common scenarios, so individuals are more assertive and positive in their job searches.

Over the spring/summer of FY2025, three college students were accepted into the NextGen Leadership sponsored by Disability: In. This is an opportunity for college students or recent graduates to gain mentorship in national corporations for six months. As a result of participating in this mentorship, these three individuals were invited to attend an in-person conference in July. The Business Relations Unit is still working with management to formulate on-the-job training and internship policies to assist and encourage employers to hire our consumers. BRU collaborates with the ICI (Institute for Community Inclusion) to implement the Progressive Employment Pilot. The Progressive Employment Pilot is a program that believes there is a job for everyone. It helps individuals explore employment opportunities even as they determine what type of work they want to pursue. This is accomplished through informational interviews with employers, job tours, job shadows, and/or short-term employment. In 2023, BRU began collaborating with the JKTC (Joseph Kohn Training Center) on a Progressive Employment program. The Institute for Community Inclusion, a part of UMass Boston, designed this project as a dual-customer, team approach that uses work-based learning strategies to meet the needs of both local businesses and job seekers. The idea is that students at Joseph Kohn Training Center will participate in many smaller experiences, such as informational interviews, mock interviews, job shadows, job tours, and mini-work experiences, to help prepare them for future employment.

As a result of this project, over the last year, BRU has developed new employer contacts in various industries, including food services through an ice cream shop, the transportation industry, the medical field, specifically in the area of eye health, and non-profit agencies across the state. Progressive Employment has also given BRU a pathway to maintain and further develop existing employer relationships, including those in the justice system, government agencies such as the Office of Innovation, the food service and retail field, and local hospitals. In FY2025, job tours and informational interviews were held at Best Works, Shop Rite, a Courthouse, medical facilities, and at companies throughout the technology field. There was also work experience partnered with various departments at Rutgers University, and some retail and restaurant/food service establishments."

Students have expressed enthusiasm for the project because it allows them to explore their interests on a smaller scale before entering the job market. So far, three students have received employment offers based on connections made through the Progressive Employment project. The business relations unit and Joseph Kohn Training Center will continue this collaboration to create additional employer relationships and career exploration opportunities for students.

Technological Support Service

Assistive technology support is available to consumers to train, gain, retain, or advance their employment. Assistive technology is defined as any item, piece of equipment, or system, whether acquired commercially, modified, or customized, that is commonly used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities. The Agency's Technological Support Services department assists consumers in gaining direct access to computer equipment and other technology through a comprehensive assessment of skill and accessibility needs. The purpose of the unit is to minimize barriers while also taking into account the consumers' unique situation, making recommendations for equipment and training that would enable the individual to address their professional or academic responsibilities efficiently. Technological Services Specialists (TSSs) are responsible for maintaining and staffing multiple comprehensive and up-to-date Regional Technology Assistance Centers (RTACs) located throughout New Jersey in Newark, Freehold, Cherry Hill, and New Brunswick.

The past few years have brought several new challenges and innovative solutions as Technology Services Specialists adapted to providing services both during and after the Pandemic. Staff quickly adapted to the successful implementation of remote instructional options to continue providing training, support, and assessments to CBVI clients through the Pandemic. As this approach has proven quite effective in providing service, it remains a possible option for those clients for whom virtual instruction is a good fit. CBVI clients may now receive technological services in-person, virtually, or in a combination of both. Each situation is evaluated to help the consumer determine which path will help them succeed.

QWERTY Program

Technological Support Services introduced a new program in 2019 for VR consumers to help fill a needed gap in typing instruction called QWERTY (Quality Work Experience Related to You). This program has proven quite effective in supplementing training for those who need to increase or develop their typing skills before they can successfully begin additional training. Participants are provided instruction on how to use 1 of 2 typing programs and receive support and guidance from a QWERTY mentor throughout their participation. We are in the process of restructuring our support options for participants to ensure the most success possible. The program is self-directed to meet expectations, with support from the QWERTY mentors. We have added a new typing program option that we feel is more accessible and will help participants learn the necessary typing skills more efficiently, while also providing us with data to support their progress. Individual expectations for practice and improvement are reviewed, and participants commit to meeting those expectations so they can progress to other technology training upon completion. Solid typing skills are an important, fundamental skill consumer's need before learning additional Assistive Technology, and the QWERTY program is the first step in Assistive Technology Training success. We are pleased to offer this program for the seventh consecutive year.

Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ)

The New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is the State Licensing Agency (SLA) for the Federal Randolph-Sheppard program. Business Enterprises New Jersey (BENJ), a unit within CBVI, directly oversees New Jersey's Randolph Sheppard program. As such, BENJ is responsible for coordinating the operation of thirty-two (32) Randolph Sheppard food locations across the state. The types of operations include: five (5) cafeterias, three (3) micro markets, five (5) single-person sites (dry stands), two (2) military cafeterias, four (4) snack bars, and thirteen (13) vending sites.

Individuals who wish to enter BENJ are required to: be at least eighteen (18) years of age, be legally blind, have a high school diploma (or GED), pass a background check, and be a United States citizen. The BENJ unit comprises one Supervising Community Program Specialist, six Field Representatives, and one Administrative Assistant.

BENJ 2024 Highlights

- Total gross sales: \$ 20,534,799
- Manager average net income: \$ 65,546
- Total number of Managers served: 28
- Total number of consumers evaluated for Small Business Program: 3
- Total number of consumers who received assistance for their Small Business Program: 1
- Total number of consumers evaluated for BENJ: 2
- Total number of consumers trained: 3
- Total number of consumers receiving placements: 1

New Locations Setup:

- Opened a new vending location, Cannabis Regulatory- Trenton
- Opened a new location, Menlo Park Veterans Home – Menlo Park
- Opened a new micro market location, Department of Children & Family Training Center- New Brunswick
- Converted a micro market location at the Department of Environmental Protection- Trenton

BENJ 2024 Initiatives:

- BENJ continues to develop partnerships with New Jersey State & County Colleges for vending.
- BENJ is looking to continue the internship program with transition-aged students of the Commission.
- BENJ will work with our consumers to provide supported employment services.
- BENJ is working on developing a strategy to enter the state prison commissaries
- BENJ continues to work with the elected Committee on developing marketing for the program to obtain additional participants and new locations.

Deaf-Blind Services

iCanConnect NJ

iCanConnect is a national, federally funded program (www.icanconnect.org) that provides telecommunications equipment to eligible Individuals with combined vision and hearing loss. As of October 1, 2025, the New Jersey Commission now manages this program for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and all iCanConnect services are provided in-house.

The program provides a range of devices and software, including braille displays, smartphones, screen readers, iPads, and computers. Individuals who meet eligibility requirements will meet with a technology specialist who will conduct an assessment to determine which equipment best meets their telecommunications needs.

Support Services Providers of New Jersey (SSP-NJ)

The Support Services Providers of New Jersey Program, or SSP-NJ, is a consumer-driven program that provides qualified, trained professionals who support our Deaf-Blind residents by promoting independence. SSPs (Support Service Providers) provide visual and environmental information and human guidance to help consumers acclimate to their environment. This acclimation to their environment allows consumers to make informed decisions. The program supports consumers in various activities, including post-secondary education, household management, employment, health/well-being, and community integration. The relationship between the Deaf-Blind person and the SSP is a partnership based on trust and open, honest, and comfortable communication.

As of October 1, 2025, management of the Support Services Program (SSP-NJ) has transitioned from The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) to SHORE Consulting, Training and Equipment (SHORE CTE). While management of the program has shifted to a new organization, the program qualifications and policies remain the same. As with any new program, there will be transitions during implementation. The program currently maintains fifty-five active SSP recipients who receive ten hours each month. While the program does not currently have the capacity to take on new recipients, a wait list is being maintained should an opportunity become available.

Independent Living Services

Independent Living services are designed to assist individuals of all ages (Independent Living - 54 years of age and under, and Independent Living Older Blind – 55 years of age and better) who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind to gain and adapt the skills needed to lead whole and productive lives. CBVI provides assistance and instruction in daily living, communication, orientation and mobility, assistive technology, Braille instruction, eye health education, and low vision services. The Independent Living Services Department works with community partners to provide information and education to help them best serve blind and visually impaired members of their communities. All IL services are offered in person at the residence, school, community, or place of employment.

Library Equal Access Program (LEAP)

The LEAP initiative targets adults 55 and older experiencing a change in their vision. It provides basic computer skills training on assistive software, such as magnification and audio reading tools; to help visually impaired users read websites, emails, and other documents. Training also includes an introduction to using assistive technology features now available on iPads. LEAP represents a unique partnership between CBVI, the State Library's Talking Book & Braille Center (TBBC), and Assistive Technology Specialists. Classes are provided at the following locations: Atlantic City – Richmond Street Library; Toms River; Cherry Hill; Mullica Hill; Talking Book and Braille Center; East Brunswick; Hackensack; and Newark. With assistive technology now available at local libraries across the state, blind and visually impaired seniors may visit a LEAP library and take advantage of classes and resources. When classes are not in session, the equipment provided - computers (with speech and magnification software), iPads, and a Closed-Circuit Television System (CCTVS) - may be used by library members. In 2024, a total of 36 LEAP classes were held at libraries across the state. Since the inception of the LEAP program in 2019, 267 classes have been held at libraries statewide.

Senior Hands-On Retreat Experience (SHORE)

The Independent Living Older Blind program provides specialized, comprehensive training to 12 seniors aged 55 and older who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf blind. These participants and their companions are invited to attend a weeklong overnight program sponsored and staffed by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Our Senior Hands-On Retreat Experience (SHORE) provides rigorous independent living skills training and fun from 8:00 AM to 7:00 PM each day of the week. A Support Service Provider (SSP) is available every evening from 5:00 to 11:00 PM to assist the participants as needed. Consumers are nominated for this program by their CBVI caseworkers based on their needs and qualifications.

Seniors participate in an all-inclusive program that demonstrates real-life experiential learning throughout the week. Participants receive intensive independent living instruction in safe travel, health and wellness, assistive technology, communication, and self-advocacy skills. Consumers also obtain information about and/or participate in adjustment to vision loss, community integration, and leisure activity options. Some specific activities/lessons include, but are not limited to, overall eye health and nutrition, diabetic education, community travel, food preparation/kitchen safety skills, dining at restaurants, and emergency preparedness. The week ends with a graduation ceremony where participants and their companions reflect on their experiences and successes.

This year's SHORE program was held October 26-31 at Resorts Casino and Hotel in Atlantic City, NJ. Twelve consumers and five companions participated in the program. Consumers enjoyed engaging presentations on service animals and services from The Seeing Eye, as well as Emergency Preparedness with Kelly Boyd from the NJ Office of Emergency Management. The group worked on Orientation & Mobility skills and travel planning, including a trip to the Atlantic City Airport, where they learned about support available to travelers with disabilities when flying. In small groups, participants learned about smartphone and tablet apps that can assist with activities of daily living. Consumers were also provided with and instructed on tools for use in communication and Activities of Daily Living. Eye Health Nurses got the group active and moving by demonstrating simple chair and standing exercises that can be done at home. Options for medication management and diabetes education were also discussed.

Community Outreach and Education

The NJ Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) Outreach and Education Unit shares information about CBVI's services and programs with the community-at-large. This is achieved through in-person and virtual presentations, through email outreach, and the distribution of electronic and hard copies of our agency's literature and outreach materials. We interact with individuals who contact our agency via our toll-free/main telephone line and with community members and providers statewide who submit general email inquiries.

One of CBVI's most unique forms of outreach is the Community Connection Call (CCC), first launched in mid-December 2020 by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. It is a monthly dynamic platform that fosters connections, disseminates valuable resources, and engages with consumers, agency staff, service providers, and community partners. Each session is carefully curated and delivered by the Community Outreach and Education Unit to highlight CBVI programs, feature presentations by professional staff that benefit the blindness community and share success stories from current and former consumers.

- The call serves to increase awareness of blindness and low vision, strengthen community ties, and enhance the overall quality of life for those receiving services from CBVI. Participants gain access to insights and information in a supportive space, allowing them to connect with others who are Helping Professionals.

Since the beginning of 2025, CBVI's community outreach team has attended 114+ events, including conferences, conventions, health fairs, education opportunities, community events, and more. We have reached an estimated 10,000 community members statewide. Through our community connection calls, we have reached an estimated 400-600 individuals.

[Assistive Support Programs for Independence Renewal and Education \(ASPIRE\)](#)

Established in 2015, ASPIRE is a statewide network of peer support groups designed to provide individuals living with vision loss the opportunity to gain the coping skills, information, and education needed to thrive. The ASPIRE Program has increased the number of Peer Support Groups in its network from 23 to 67, four of which were established specifically for Veterans. There are also new groups serving individuals aged 21-54, and two specifically for the deaf-blind population. Other specialized groups have named themselves, including Guide Dog Handlers, Tech. Geeks and the Parents group (a support group for Parents who are blind raising small children). ASPIRE connects with groups in all 21 New Jersey counties. Training for group facilitators is held annually.

The Independent Living Unit of CBVI administers ASPIRE, and although its groups are mostly geared towards those with vision loss aged 55 or older, they are available to all adults interested in attending. ASPIRE offers individuals with vision loss the opportunity to connect with others who share similar challenges and the same life experiences. Through attendance at monthly group meetings, program participants talk with one another, receive emotional support, exchange valuable information, and find practical solutions to the challenges that accompany low vision and blindness. ASPIRE helps people with vision loss to realize they are not alone and that they can achieve much more than they ever thought possible. Groups may meet in person, virtually, or via teleconference. In addition, twenty outreach events were conducted this year to raise public awareness about the programs and services offered by the New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired and how membership in an ASPIRE support group may benefit those with vision loss.

For more information about support Groups in the ASPIRE Network, please get in touch with the Community Outreach Supervisor, Susan Vanino, at 973 648 2821 / susan.vanino@dhs.nj.gov

[Project BEST \[Better Eye-health Services and Treatment\]](#)

The Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired continues to advance its mission of promoting independence, health, and opportunity for individuals who are blind or visually impaired through a wide range of programs and services. One of its flagship initiatives, the Better Eye-Health Services and Treatment Project (Project BEST), focuses on preventing avoidable blindness and reducing the impact of vision loss across New Jersey.

[Program Overview](#)

Project BEST delivers free vision screenings and eye health services directly in community settings, ensuring that residents can access care conveniently within their own neighborhoods. The program emphasizes prevention, early detection, and education, particularly among populations at greatest risk for unaddressed vision issues.

Fiscal Year 2025 Highlights

24,588 individuals screened statewide.

684 screening events were conducted statewide.

Referrals:

2,280 individuals were referred to physicians for further evaluation.

1,196 individuals were referred to other supportive services.

114 individuals were referred to CBVI programs for ongoing support.

Focus on Early Detection in Children

Childhood represents a critical period for visual development, making early screening and treatment essential. Uncorrected vision disorders can interfere with learning, delay development, and, in severe cases, result in permanent vision loss.

Last year, Project BEST screened more than 17,000 school children. Each child identified as having a potential issue was connected to appropriate eye care and follow-up services to ensure timely treatment and support academic success.

Serving Underserved Communities

Project BEST continues to expand access to essential eye health services for historically underserved and at-risk communities that often face barriers to care. In Fiscal Year 2025, the program strengthened its commitment to health equity and inclusion through partnerships with community organizations, schools, and local service providers. These collaborations ensure that individuals of all backgrounds—regardless of income, language, or location—have access to the vision care necessary to preserve their independence and enhance their quality of life.

Project BEST remains a cornerstone of CBVI's mission, demonstrating the agency's commitment to preventing avoidable blindness, promoting early intervention, and empowering New Jersey residents to achieve their full potential through improved eye health.

Success Throughout the Lifespan – Spotlight Stories

Consumer MC

MC is a 51-year-old female who has a visual impairment from a stroke two years ago. Her vision has gotten worse in the past few months, and she was referred to our services. She has been very open to using the long white cane, as she was having significant difficulty with depth perception. The stairs were a struggle for her. She was extremely nervous about learning to descend the stairs. Before getting the long white cane, she would actively avoid steps. MC would cancel plans to go out with friends and has been putting off visiting her son in Chicago because it would require her to navigate stairs. I gave MC a long white cane and taught her how to safely ascend and descend stairs. She can now ascend and descend with confidence. A few weeks ago, she went to Chicago independently to visit her son, attended a Yankees game, and navigated the stadium without issue. MC feels she has regained some independence now that she can navigate her environment safely, and on her own. She is still an open consumer, as we are now working on street crossing skills. MC is taking advantage of the O&M lessons CBVI is providing and is becoming more independent each day.

Consumer AA

A.A. is a grateful and determined client of the New Jersey Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired, who credits the agency's services with transforming his life. With the agency's support, A.A. successfully entered the workforce and has proudly maintained employment for over 2.5 years at Bestwork Inc.'s Montclair location, a role he not only enjoys but excels in. He continues to learn new skills on the job and has built strong connections with colleagues who have become both friends and mentors. A.A. attributes much of his success to his Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Madelaine Garcia, whose dedication and thoughtful referrals opened doors to essential services. Through her guidance, A.A. related to supported employment services at JVS, as well as Orientation and Mobility (O&M) and Rehabilitation Teaching (RT) programs. These services equipped him with the tools and confidence to navigate the world independently and safely as a visually impaired individual.

One of the most impactful supports A.A. received was a handheld magnifier recommended by CBVI's technology team and purchased through his VRC, which has significantly enhanced his ability to complete work tasks, read mail, grocery shop, and manage daily activities with greater ease. Reflecting on his journey, A.A. views every service provided as an essential instrument in his growth. He feels empowered, independent, and deeply thankful for the people and programs that helped shape the successful person he is today.

Consumer ZA

Thanks to the Commission's support, I can now perform my job more accurately and efficiently. My productivity has increased, and tasks that once took up a significant time and energy are now much more manageable. Beyond providing technology, the Commission allowed me to thrive—proving that with the proper support, nothing can hold me back. I am deeply grateful for their assistance, and I encourage anyone facing similar challenges to reach out. The right resources can make all the difference—and for me, they absolutely did.

Consumer WR

The Joseph Kohn Training Center (JKTC) in New Brunswick, New Jersey, is a residential training experience where adults across the state learn skills in independent living, orientation and mobility, Braille and Communication, Technology, and career readiness for approximately 5 months. Students live at the center during the week and return home only on weekends, making food service and the cafeteria integral parts of the residential experience. This experience would not be possible without WR, a Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ) operator who has run the cafeteria at JKTC for the past eighteen years. In WR's early life, he played semi-pro ball in Canada and studied martial arts for over thirteen years. When he came to the US for school in 2000, he never would have guessed he would soon become a successful businessman, but that is precisely what happened. He initially worked at the JKTC in a different capacity, teaching students adaptive skills. However, when he had the opportunity to manage the cafeteria in the current manager's absence, he decided to explore more of what the Business Enterprise Program in New Jersey had to offer. WR's first site was the Mercer County Board of Social Services, where he was successful for seven years. However, he knew when the site at JKTC came up for bid, he really wanted to be back there again. Competing with seven or eight people interviewing for the position, WR was given the location where he has happily worked ever since. At the center, WR manages three employees, makes purchasing decisions, prepares food, and oversees all day-to-day aspects of the business. Although the JKTC cafeteria is similar to other BENJ sites, it is also quite different in several ways. WR prepares three meals a day for the students and gets to know them throughout their time at the center. He explains that he gets to learn their likes and dislikes, have conversations with them, and share his journey as a visually impaired business owner with interested students. Just last month, WR assisted a student at the center who was interested in getting a dishwashing job by allowing him to practice on the dishes in the kitchen, creating a mini trial work experience. WR explains that being able to connect to the students like this and interact with them is "one of the best parts of the job."

In addition to the day-to-day schedule, WR is also responsible for creating events such as a yearly Holiday party and Thanksgiving feast, providing food for youth programs at the center over the summer, catering occasional Saturday events, and serving lunch to students and their families during quarterly family days throughout the year. In October 2024, the New Jersey Commission for the Blind Business Relations Unit created a Dining in the Dark experience for an excited group of local employers, during which WR also prepared the food and assisted with brainstorming menu details. WR attributes some of his success to the fact that he's "a numbers guy." He plans every detail and is always ready for last-minute alterations, such as running out of a product and needing to go to the store or preparing a last-minute bagged lunch for a student attending a community event. He also explains that it is essential to have good employees and ensure everyone knows their roles and is comfortable. Although he considers managing the staff one of the easiest parts, he also excels at placing orders, paying bills, and managing deliveries. Since this program has been so instrumental in WR's life, he is passionate about advocating for Business Enterprise programs nationwide and giving back to his community. He has served on New Jersey's Committee of Blind Managers, which has allowed him to travel to Washington, DC, to advocate for the program before senators and members of Congress. Likewise, he uses his experiences as an instrument to "give students hope because it is possible." WR is proud of his position at JKTC and explains that "the center is special because it's where (he) started and where (he) wants to finish." His attention to detail, passion for helping others, and excellent management skills allow the cafeteria to succeed, thus ensuring that the Joseph Kohn Training Center continues to run smoothly. WR's contributions consistently help the next generation of students learn about similar careers and have a stress-free, successful training experience.

Consumer TR

When I first began working with TR, she wanted to learn to use her computer to download audiobooks onto her book player. TR is a DDD client who recently acquired a computer; however, she did not know how to use it, was unfamiliar with her keyboard layout, and had never used screen-reading software. TR has light perception but cannot read print, even when enlarged. During her first RT lesson, TR was unable to log in to her computer because she could not enter her password. We began by installing NVDA, a program that allows the computer to be navigated using keyboard shortcuts. The program reads text on the screen aloud to the user and does not require sight to use. I first reviewed the keyboard layout with TR. I instructed TR to press a letter and listen to NVDA's speech output. I set up the software to read out each character typed, so it would be easier for TR to know what she was typing. I marked a few keys on TR's keyboard with bump dots to help her find the right keys to type her password, so she could log in between lessons and practice her typing. We reviewed the placement of these bump dots many times to ensure she could find them independently when I was not there to assist her.

Once the client was comfortable typing letters and numbers, we reviewed punctuation. After this, I began introducing the client to keys such as "Control," "Windows," and "Alt," which are integral to the keystrokes used to navigate with NVDA. Over the course of several lessons, TR learned to navigate to her desktop, launch Google Chrome, find the search bar, navigate a webpage by heading, and locate buttons, jump to text boxes, and switch between open windows. Once TR was familiar with the most important shortcut keys, we worked on logging in to the Bard website, where she would download her books. Using the keyboard shortcuts she learned, she was able to locate the login heading, find the text boxes for "username" and "password," enter her credentials into their respective boxes, and locate the login button. After three tries, TR was able to type her username and password and log in correctly. Then, with some verbal guidance, she was able to download her first book.

The next time I came out to see TR, I was excited to find out that, in between lessons, TR had taken the initiative to download several more books that she wanted to read. She was enthusiastic and expressed pride in being able to do this on her own. I told her how impressed I was by her efforts. Next, I taught TR how to locate her downloads folder and find the books she had downloaded. We went over the applications menu and how to extract the book's files from their zip folders. We went over cutting, copying, and pasting, since she would need to know these to transfer the unzipped book folders from Downloads to her flash drive.

TR plugged in her flash drive, and from there, with verbal guidance, she was able to cut an unzipped book folder from her Downloads and paste it into her flash drive. We tested it on her talking book player, and it worked. The player was reading the book correctly. During the following lesson, we worked on gradually reducing the amount of verbal guidance I provided during the process of downloading, extracting, cutting, and pasting. By the end of this lesson, TR was able to complete these steps independently. On my next visit, TR demonstrated even greater initiative and transferred several books onto her player completely by herself. It was such a rewarding experience to watch TR progress from not being able to use a computer at all to navigating it with NVDA, getting the books she wanted for herself with complete independence, and ultimately developing a sense of confidence and pride in her skills.

Consumer WB

73-year-old ILOB client, diagnosed with Optic Nerve Atrophy. The category of vision is hand motion OU with abnormal fields. Client suffers from Vertigo, Hypertension, and Lupus. The client lives in Gloucester County with her husband. When Rehab Teacher WB first met the client in 2023, she was going through a difficult time in her life due to decreased vision. The vision declined so quickly within 6 months that she did not adjust well. When WB entered the picture, the client was so depressed and wanted just to give up. Mentally and emotionally, the client was struggling to survive each day. There was much support from the husband, their two adult sons, and a host of family and friends, but without being able to continue with the life the client was accustomed to, it became harder to look ahead to better days. For reasons that could not be explained by any medical professionals, the client's vision continued to decrease. The usable vision continued to decline, leaving the client with very little light perception. Having no idea what possible outcomes lay ahead, the client had but one goal on that first visit from WB. The client wanted to learn to use the accessibility features on her Android phone. Cooking, cleaning, planting flowers, etc., were no longer possibilities as far as the client was concerned.

The first visit lasted about 2.5 hours. WB explained all the positive possibilities available to people who are losing or have lost their vision. WB explained what she (WB) could do to assist the client in regaining some of the independence that the client feels is now long gone. Before leaving the home, WB asked the client to allow WB to demonstrate what is possible with assistance. The client agreed, and below are some of the successes the client has achieved over the past year and a half. The client needed to purchase a new cell phone. Because we had worked with some accessibility features on an Android phone, and the client heard about some of the things WB was able to do with the iPhone, the client decided to go with the Apple product. The client has gone from not being able to use the cell phone to make a call, send/answer a text message, read emails, and read a book. These are all things the client did independently before losing their vision. The client has learned to use Siri, Apple's AI assistant, and to navigate independently using the Voiceover accessibility feature. The client can call friends and family, answer text messages, check emails, and use different apps to read (listen) to books.

Another activity that the client felt they would never be able to do is bake. The stove/oven had been marked previously. No surprise to WB the client, along with WB (only observing for the most part), prepared a loaf of zucchini bread from scratch. This time, the bread did not come out as well, but the client attempted to buy a banana bread without WB present, and it was a success.

WB has had the privilege of observing the client's transformation from a depressed person who was giving up on life to a person who still struggles with the emotions of not having vision, but a determination to live life and not allow less vision to isolate and steal their independence completely. The client attended CBVI's 2024 SHORE program, a one-week residential experience for older individuals with vision loss. The program has an emphasis on independent living skills. In the time since that program, WB has seen another transformation. The client has played an important role in maintaining contact with the program participants. Making sure that each person is doing well and continuing to use the skills learned at the SHORE program, along with ensuring each other that they are not alone. The client has come so far that we are now setting up the client to facilitate a new support group. For WB, it has been wonderful to see how far this client has come.

Consumer LM

I have had glaucoma since I was 35 years old. My mother was supportive but did not really understand the degree of my vision loss. However, my mother has always been supportive. At first, I was in denial and did not seek out services. I did not want to stop driving. I have been with CBVI for about 10 years, and my counselor helped me to accept my vision loss and move forward to become independent and gainfully employed.

I learned about CBVI from my glaucoma specialist—I received guidance and support from my counselor. I received job search assistance from a job coach who found me the Home Depot job that I am currently working. The job coach continues to check in on me and provide support. My counselor has always been supportive, and we have worked together for several years. There have been some obstacles along the way, but CBVI has been there for me. I have received recognition at my Home Depot job for a job well done. I have a Bravo certificate.

I plan to move up at Home Depot. I have already been asked if I wanted a promotion. Success for me means being the best person you can be and taking pride in the work you do. I work hard to overcome any challenges. I do not let obstacles get in my way. I love working at Home Depot, and I am the best associate that I can be. The commission for the blind helped me see how successful I can be as a visually impaired person.

Finally, I would like to personally thank Madelaine Garcia, Carlos Sanchez, Kevin, Batya, and Carol. Each of them played a role in giving me the tools, skills, and support I needed—not only to be a better teacher, but also to become a more confident person overall.

Consumer RL

Mr. RL, a 62-year-old Newark resident, has long been an avid reader and a gifted writer. His profound spoken word poems and heartfelt literature have always been a source of joy and expression. However, as his vision began to deteriorate, even reading back his own words became a challenge. Relying on his limited peripheral vision, he struggled to continue the work he loved most. With the assistance of RT services, Mr. RL has regained his ability to both write and read his work. Through targeted training—writing exercises, identifying difficulties, using signature guides, and correcting spacing—he began to adapt. By incorporating smartphone assistive apps, he also gained the ability to have his phone read back what he wrote, a breakthrough that lifted his spirits and restored his confidence.

Thanks to RT's adaptive guidance, Mr. RL is once again writing with clarity and joy. In fact, he recently wrote his wife a heartfelt letter—beautifully crafted, legible, and full of love. For him, this was more than just words on a page; it was the return of independence, expression, and hope.

Consumer PS

When Hillsborough Township hired PS five years ago to produce and record podcasts, no one could have predicted the lasting impact he would have on the community—or the Health Department.

PS, who is visually impaired, came to the Township with a background in audio production and a passion for storytelling. Originally brought on to modernize communications by launching a podcast series, his deep voice, technical expertise, and creative flair quickly made the Township's podcasts a must-listen for residents.

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the need for public health response skyrocketed, and like many organizations, Hillsborough Township had to adapt. PS stepped up, shifting into a new role as a floater and ultimately joining the Health Department to support contact tracing and community outreach. What began as an unexpected turn soon became a defining chapter in his career. With support from the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Township provided PS with the accommodations and training he needed to thrive. Assistive technology helped him navigate databases, communicate effectively with residents, and stay on top of ever-changing guidelines during the height of the pandemic.

“PS’s adaptability and dedication were incredible,” said Township Health Officer Siobhan Spano. “He became a vital part of our response team. His empathy, professionalism, and ability to communicate clearly with residents, especially during uncertain times, were invaluable.”

Township Administrator and ADA Director Anthony Ferrera, a longtime advocate for workplace inclusion, was instrumental in supporting PS’s transition. “PS is an outstanding example of how ability and determination, when paired with the right support, can lead to great success,” said Ferrera. “From day one, he’s brought professionalism, passion, and a fresh perspective to every role he’s taken on. He’s proof that when you remove barriers, people thrive.” Mayor John Ciccarelli also praised PS’s contributions: “PS represents the very best of Hillsborough—resilience, dedication, and community spirit. His journey reminds us that our greatest strength as a Township lies in empowering individuals to reach their full potential. We’re proud to have him on our team.”

Reflecting on his journey, PS shared:

“I think it’s important for everyone to take a moment to celebrate their accomplishments. Too often, we focus on the negatives and overlook the milestones we have achieved. As someone who is visually impaired, I know firsthand how much you can lose, but thanks to the support of the Hillsborough administration, I have been able to gain a little bit back each day. None of this would be possible without the team behind me; it truly takes a village.”

Today, PS is a permanent member of the Health Department, where he continues to support public health programming, community education, and outreach initiatives. Known for his humor, work ethic, and unwavering commitment to service, he is a trusted colleague and valued team member. PS’s story is a powerful reminder of what is possible when talent meets opportunity and when organizations commit to accessibility and inclusion. Hillsborough Township is proud to have supported his growth and is even prouder to count him as part of its community. His journey shows that inclusion is not just the right thing to do—it makes us all stronger.

Consumer JH

The client I am writing about is named JH, who is 101 years old with an ocular history that includes dry age-related macular degeneration and glaucoma. The main goal for JH was to view articles on the Philadelphia Inquirer app on his iPad without help from a family member. During the rehabilitation teaching lessons, the client learned how to use the Zoom accessibility feature to magnify the screen with finger gestures. Apple’s virtual assistant Siri was also activated, and JH was able to get the information he needed, including the weather and his favorite sports team’s scores. JH also learned about using the Apple feature app switcher to close applications that continue to run in the background and drain the iPad’s battery. Toward the end of the lessons, JH was more confident with magnifying the iPad screen using Zoom without assistance. JH remembered the

gestures to increase the size of the newsstand section of the Philadelphia Inquirer to select an article to read. It was a pleasure assisting JH, who is always willing to learn new things.

Consumer LB

When LB lost his vision in 2012, he was not sure how he would complete daily living skills, much less continue his job as a security guard. He knew he needed training and a new plan for his life but was not quite sure how to get there. Luckily, he had an opportunity to attend the Joseph Kohn Training Center to gain skills in independent living, orientation and Mobility, and more. During his time at the center, one of the most impactful presentations was from someone working in the Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ) program. When he heard the presentation, he was not sure how he could get involved or what it would take, but he “felt like a lightbulb went off.”

From that point forward, LB was fully invested in succeeding in the program; after all, this was nothing other than an investment in himself. He attended and passed the training classes, completed trial experiences with existing operators, and even relocated to be closer to the train line, positioning himself geographically nearer to potential work sites. It would still be over a year before LB would have a business of his own, but he used this time wisely. He helped a friend set up his own location and assisted him in getting the business off the ground. Along with the invaluable training and inspiration he received during his time at the JKTC, he was set up for the abundant successes he would soon enjoy. When he began work at his first site at the Trenton Federal Courthouse, he was thrilled. However, after four years of work there, he knew he was ready for a bigger challenge. Transitioning to a bigger worksite in 2020, immediately before the start of the Pandemic, this challenge is precisely what he found.

While working at the Department of Environmental Protection, LB learned to hire staff, troubleshoot issues, and manage about 500 customers a day, compared to the 50 he was used to at the Courthouse. Additionally, he shifted to the new site during the Pandemic, where he faced challenges such as higher food costs and a hybrid schedule for employees, which meant they were less present to buy food. Despite these barriers, LB continued to succeed, and his site was chosen for one of the first self-checkout micro-markets in the state.

With the new Micro Market model, LB has more freedom to focus on profits and customer satisfaction. He does not have to be present all day; he has reduced his staff to one part-time employee and can track inventory through a fully accessible database via an iPhone application. He explains that he loves the newly increased time to speak more with his customers and get to know them and their needs better, which is his favorite part of the business. Thanks to his time at the Joseph Kohn Training Center and his own initiative and adaptability, LB continues to be an outstanding success in the BENJ program, demonstrating what is possible when a self-starter and an intentional support system intersect.

Consumer JG

When JG graduated from college in 1992, he was overwhelmed by where to go next. Although he maintained a part-time job, it was not until he saw a Business Enterprise New Jersey (BENJ) site at the Hudson County Administration Building run by a friend of his that he decided the program might be for him. Clearly, he made the right decision, as he has been involved on and off for the last 30 years. JG operates one of the state's only micro-markets and trained the next operator to do the same based on his success. He has contributed to many sites across the state, maintained a profit with a 30 percent increase during the Pandemic, and still consistently sets personal goals for future business growth. When JG finished his training in 1994, he began work at his first

location, the Union County administration building. During his year and a half there, he hired his first employee, learned the intricacies of business, and developed a passion for always striving for more. This led to a journey of working in various areas, always seeking better and more lucrative locations. Before a break from the program in 2002, JG ran sites in Toms River, Trenton, Elizabeth, and Jersey City. Profits from the program allowed him to buy his first condominium and home, and to stay home and raise his children for twelve years.

As JG's children grew older, he found that he really missed the program and decided to get back involved. Because he was starting over, he took a site at the East Jersey State Prison, where he had to store most of his products at home, purchase a minivan, and think outside the box to make everything work smoothly. After a year and a half of vending there, he was fortunate enough to get a site at the Kearny Post Office. He worked there until it closed in 2024, maintaining profitability even as most other businesses struggled during the Pandemic.

Now JG runs one of the state's first micro-markets at the Department of Community Affairs in Trenton. He explains that this model is successful because "as vending faces challenges and becomes less successful, people want variety and a different experience. They want the new thing." Self-service kiosk interactions for customers provide shoppers with a more modern experience, enable operators to reduce labor costs, and allow data to be better organized and used to determine product success and future needs when ordering merchandise.

In the future, JG wants to train additional operators on the micro-market model as we build more successful sites throughout the state. He is passionate about innovation, attending conferences to learn about the latest products and seeking opportunities to try them, hoping to increase his profits by 10% in the coming year. Although he explains that one of the biggest challenges right now is the economy, he has developed a strategy of reviewing applications from local businesses, such as Wawa, to ensure his prices are either lower or comparable to those of his competitors.

When asked what led to his success, JG explains that he enjoys talking to people, discovering which products they like, and incorporating their critiques into future product choices and location upgrades. Furthermore, he explains that he has been working with the New Jersey Commission for the Blind since grammar school, and he "can't say enough how helpful they've been. I tell everyone they need to get support from the Commission for the Blind when they are ready." Aspects such as receiving orientation and mobility instruction, support and advocacy during schooling and college, training, and backing from Field Reps in the BENJ Program have been vital to his ultimate success. JG takes every opportunity he can to help people get started with blindness services at NJCBVI and supports future vending operators in succeeding in their businesses, just as he has over the past three decades.

Did you know?

The NJ State Library Talking Book and Braille Center offer an array of leisure reading and magazines in digital audio, Braille, and large print. Call 1-800-792-8322 or visit: www.njsltbbc.org

Bookshare.org offers thousands of leisure reading and academic materials in text to speech and embossed Braille formats. www.bookshare.org

Learning Ally is a major provider of academic books on all levels in DAISY-format CD or download. www.learningally.org

Newspaper reader services from NFB – NEWSLINE, sponsored by CBVI at 1-888-882-1629

NFB-NEWSLINE is a free service available to anyone who is blind, deaf-blind, vision impaired or print-disabled. Funded by state sponsors, NFB-NEWSLINE offers over 400 publications to choose from, including ten national newspapers like the Wall Street Journal and USA Today, sixteen breaking news sources such as CNN, BBC, and ESPN Online, fourteen international newspapers including Financial Times and Vancouver Sun, and countless state newspapers, as well as fifty magazines like Family Circle, Time, Consumer Reports, Jet, Guideposts, Smithsonian and more.

The Commission may be able to assist with*:

*Based on eligibility

- Vocational Rehabilitation to help you obtain employment.
- Rehabilitation teaching to help you perform daily living tasks.
- Orientation and Mobility instruction to assist you in traveling independently.
- Referral to community resources for housing, financial assistance, and other supported services.

The Commission will respond to your concerns if you are dissatisfied with the services you receive. Call the Office of the Executive Director at 973-648-3161.

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) can assist you in resolving any disputes regarding provision of Vocational Rehabilitation services by calling: 1-800-922-7233. Disability Rights New Jersey administers the CAP program.

Para-transit can provide transportation to work, medical appointments, etc. Call the NJ Transit Office of Special Services at 1-800-772-2287 to get the phone number for your County.

SRC Meeting Dates – 2026

SRC meetings are held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and comply with the NJ Open Public Meeting Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6.

The public is invited to all meetings, which will start at 9:30 a.m. on the following dates in 2026:

February 6

June 5

October 2

December 4

Service Centers and Facilities

For a complete description of CBVI services, please visit the web site at <http://www.cbvi.nj.gov>

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

153 Halsey Street, 6th Floor P.O. Box 47017
Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: (973) 648-3333 Fax: (973) 648-7364

Dr. Bernice Davis, Executive Director

bernice.davis@dhs.nj.gov

Charles McKenna, Esq., Assistant Division Director

charles.mckenna@dhs.nj.gov

Esther Lavarin, Coordinator of
Vocational Rehabilitation and Transition Services

esther.lavarin@dhs.nj.gov

Jessica J. Cubberley, Director of Education Services

jessica.cubberley@dhs.nj.gov

Allison Cohen, Independent Living Coordinator

Allison.Cohen@dhs.nj.gov

Susan Vanino, Community Outreach Supervisor

susan.vanino@dhs.nj.gov

JOSEPH KOHN TRAINING CENTER

130 Livingston Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08903
Phone: (732) 937-6363 Fax: (732) 247-6628

Acting Manager: Charles McKenna

charles.mckenna@dhs.nj.gov

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE NEW JERSEY

Joseph Kohn Training Center
130 Livingston Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08903
Phone: (732) 937-6363 Fax: (732) 247-6628

Manager: Deacon Truesdale

napoleon.truesdale@dhs.nj.gov

GEORGE F. MEYER INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

375 McCarter Highway, Newark, NJ 07114
Phone: (973) 648-2547

NORTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE (NRO)

153 Halsey Street, 5th Fl. Newark, NJ 07101
Phone: (973) 648-2111 Fax: (973) 648-7674

Manager: Aaliyah Dent

aaliyah.dent@dhs.nj.gov

CENTRAL REGIONAL OFFICE (CRO)

100 Daniels Way, Freehold Township, NJ 07728
Phone: (732) 308-4001 Fax: (732) 308-404

Manager: John Reiff

john.reiff@dhs.nj.gov

SOUTHERN REGIONAL OFFICE (SRO)

2201 Rt.38 East, Suite 600, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002
Phone (856) 482-3700 Fax: (856) 482-3770

Manager: Diana Cortez

diana.cortez@dhs.nj.gov

ATLANTIC CITY SERVICE CENTER (ACSC)

1300 Atlantic Ave, 3rd Fl. Atlantic City, NJ 08401
Phone: (609) 441-3074 Fax: (609) 441-3079

Manager: Diana Cortez

diana.cortez@dhs.nj.gov

DEAF-BLIND SERVICES

153 Halsey St, 5th Fl. Newark, NJ 07102
Phone: (973) 648-7504 Fax: (973) 648-7674

Supervisor: Andrea Ziemiak

andrea.ziemiak@dhs.nj.gov