

# SERVICE TO THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED

## VISIONS NEWSLETTER WINTER 2015



In this Edition of the VISIONS Newsletter

- ✓ Director's Comments
- ✓ Employment Works Task Force
- ✓ Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act
- ✓ Assistive Technology Access Project
- ✓ Technology Training Options at SDRC
- ✓ Telecommunications Adaptive Device Program
- ✓ Person Centered Thinking Activities
- ✓ SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind Transition Week
- ✓ Coming and Going in the Business Enterprise Program
- ✓ Update on Accessible Prescription Labels
- ✓ Air Canada Improves Access for People with Vision Impairments
- ✓ Federal Vision Requirements for Truck Drivers
- ✓ Announcements

### **Director's Comments by Gaye Mattke**

We're approaching spring and that means not only warmer weather but also SBVI public forums. The Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired will be sponsoring these public forums; the dates and locations are in announcements later in this edition of VISIONS. Please plan to join us to discuss services and make suggestions for future priorities.

We are looking for people to serve on the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired to fill vacancies that will occur with term expirations in June. Representatives of business and industry and citizens who are blind or visually impaired are needed to fill impending vacancies. If you or someone you know is interested in serving in this capacity, please contact my office to request a nomination form.

Each year the Board of SBVI, in conjunction with the Division, is required to prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration. This report covers the status of the SBVI vocational rehabilitation program and contains information on the division's performance in the

past year. You may access the 2014 annual report on the SBVI web site at: <http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/documents/Final2014BSBVIAnnualReport.pdf>. There is also a text only version available for better access with screen readers. Other formats are available upon request.

Access to assistive technology is an ongoing need for citizens with vision loss. There are several opportunities to participate in training and obtain devices through a variety of programs. Please see articles related to assistive technology devices and training in this edition of VISIONS.

### **Employment Works Task Force Annual Report**

Governor Dugaard created the Employment Works Task Force to make recommendations to increase employment of South Dakota citizens with disabilities. The original task force report with recommendations was released in January 2014. Since then a number of activities have occurred to address the recommendations from the task force. Some examples include:

The hiring of a business specialist by the Division of Rehabilitation Services;  
Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act for Bureau of Human Resources staff and managers in state government;  
Providing Project Skills opportunities in state government for transition aged high school students with disabilities; and  
Increase rates for Employment Specialists with professional certification.

Contact us if you would like a copy of the report or go to:  
<http://dhs.sd.gov/EWTF/EWTF2014AnnualReport.pdf>

### **Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act**

Title IV of the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act (WIOA) addresses reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Rehabilitation Act is an important law for individuals living with disabilities, including people who are blind or visually impaired who seek services from SBVI. This legislation authorizes programs to assist those with disabilities, including vocational rehabilitation programs, independent living programs, and research on new technology to assist those with disabilities.

WIOA requires state vocational rehabilitation agencies to make “pre-employment transition services” available to all students with disabilities, and to coordinate those services with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. State vocational rehabilitation programs are required to set aside at least 15 percent of the federal vocational rehabilitation allotment to help young people with disabilities transition from secondary school to postsecondary education programs and employment.

## **Assistive Technology Access Project**

The Assistive Technology Access Project pilot program provides individualized instruction to address built-in accessibility options for personal computers and mobile devices through an agreement with SBVI and Dakota Link, the state's assistive technology project. No devices, applications or software are purchased through the program. Training requests have ranged from assistance with built in magnification features to utilizing speech for screen access for personal computers and mobile devices. To request training through this project, contact any SBVI office.

## **Technology Training Options at SDRC**

Do you experience difficulties using your computer because you can't see? Sign up to attend the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) Saturday computer classes. Classes are offered one Saturday each month and cover a variety of assistive technology to help you access your computer. Class topics include an introduction to assistive technology, JAWS (Jobs Access with Speech) speech software, and iPad or iPhone basics with VoiceOver. JoMarie Laughlin, Assistive Technology Instructor at the SDRC is also available to answer questions through email, FaceTime, telephone, or Skype. Walk-in assistance is also available the first Friday of each month between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m. To set up an appointment to meet with JoMarie, call 800-658-5441 or 367-5260 in Sioux Falls. Watch for announcements about the upcoming Saturday computer classes and call in to sign up.

## **Telecommunications Adaptive Device Program**

The Telecommunications Adaptive Devices (TAD) Programs provides telecommunication devices to any South Dakota resident who has a disability other than hearing loss, which prevents them from using the telephone. Telephones through TAD have traditionally included picture dialing telephones, large button telephones, cordless phones, and emergency message phones. Beginning January 5, 2015, TAD began offering iDevices to eligible participants. Income guidelines will apply to the latest advancements in equipment and technology available through TAD, including certain smart phones and other hand-held communication devices. The traditional types of adaptive telephones are still also available for people because they are the best solution in many instances.

The program is made possible through funding from the state's Telecommunication Relay Service fund. TAD matches those in need of telecommunication with the correct specialized telephone equipment. To qualify for TAD you must meet the following criteria:

- (1) Be a resident of South Dakota;
- (2) Have a disability other than deafness, deaf/blind, hard of hearing, or speech impairment;

- (3) Have a household income at or below 300% of the federal poverty level, if applicable (devices over \$250);
- (4) Have a demonstrated need for specialized telecommunication equipment;
- (5) Have access to telecommunication services, and;
- (6) Have not received a telecommunication device or services from this program within three years prior to the date of application unless independent living status has changed or the severity of the disability has made previous equipment or services inadequate to meet their telecommunication needs.

For more information go to: [http://dhs.sd.gov/drs/deafserv/TAD\\_drs.aspx](http://dhs.sd.gov/drs/deafserv/TAD_drs.aspx) or contact DHS at 773-4644 or (800) 265-9684 voice/text telephone (TTY)

### **Person Centered Thinking Activities**

The Department of Human Services kicked off an initiative to become a Person Centered Organization on May 28, 2014, with training provided by Support Development Associates. Staff from SBVI will receive ongoing training in Person Centered Thinking (PCT) which promotes that all people have positive control over the lives they have chosen for themselves. Training will focus on implementation of concepts, reviewing best practices and continually using the PCT processes to develop plans that support choice for the people that we work with and share successes along the way. By utilizing PCT concepts, people receiving services from SBVI will have better outcomes and increased success in their lives.

### **SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind Transition Week 2015**

If you are a high school student in South Dakota, come join the fun at the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind for summer Transition Week. The fun will begin Sunday, June 14th and conclude Thursday, June 18th at noon. You will experience college life through staying in the Augustana College dorms, learn about work opportunities, and meet new friends. Joey Strechay from American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) will be a special guest and will present on topics related to pre-employment skills and strategies on navigating the employment process specific to persons with vision loss. The workshop will be based on content from AFB CareerConnect and the experience of persons with vision loss. Attendees will participate in activities and work in small groups on activities designed to support the content. Transition Week is sponsored by SD Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the cost for students to attend is provided for each student. For more information contact Dawn Backer at 800-658-5441.

### **Coming and Going in the Business Enterprise Program**

Amy Chappelle has been a vendor operator with the Business Enterprise Program since December 1, 1976. She is planning a well-earned retirement in late March or April. Richard Jangula has moved to Pierre and begun training to prepare to take over

the Kneip Coffee Shop and vending in Pierre upon Amy's retirement. We wish Amy health and happiness in her retirement. We also welcome Richard to the program and look forward to working with him.

### **Update on Accessible Prescriptions Labels**

Walmart has made ScripTalk available to its mail order pharmacy customers for the past 2 years and will now implement ScripTalk at any of their local pharmacies when a customer requests it. All the customer has to do is ask their local pharmacist for audible prescription labels. If the pharmacist is not familiar with the program, the customer should tell the pharmacist to "Search for ScripTalk on The WIRE." The pharmacist will know that The WIRE is Walmart's internal communication system for its pharmacists and that they just need to search for the term "ScripTalk" to find instructions on how to get it implemented locally.

Walgreens is now offering a Talking Pill Reminder via its mail order pharmacy and at its local pharmacies. Customers make a request for the Talking Pill Reminder directly to their local pharmacist or by calling Walgreens' national customer service number, 1-800-925-4733.

CVS has been offering audible prescriptions via its mail order pharmacy for the past year. Nothing is currently being offered for locally-filled CVS prescriptions, but this may change with increased demand by customers.

From the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind

### **Air Canada Improves Access for People with Vision Impairments**

Air Canada has become the first airline in the world to introduce 'text-to-speech' functionality on its in-flight entertainment system, making it easier for blind and vision impaired passengers to navigate. The feature is available on Boeing 787s, which have recently been introduced to Air Canada's fleet. An Air Canada spokesman, Peter Fitzpatrick, said, "We use a female voice in English and male voice in French. Voices are fed from the text-to-speech software that Air Canada licenses to operate its content management system."

Air Canada has also been looking at the possibility of adding audio description to its in-flight movies. In August 2014, Emirates became the first airline to provide audio description, with the service made available on 17 Disney movies.

These developments come in the wake of a US Department of Transportation notice of proposed rulemaking about accessible in-flight entertainment systems, which it intends to implement in 2015. For more information about Air Canada's accessibility initiatives, see this article on Runway Girl Network (link is external).

<http://www.runwaygirlnetwork.com/2014/09/08/air-canada-enhances-ife-options-visually-impaired-passengers/> Article from National Council of State Agencies for the Blind

## **Federal Vision Requirements for Truck Drivers**

Federal vision requirements prohibit truck drivers with poor sight from operating commercial motor vehicles, and there are exceptions under which the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has issued license to drivers who can only see out of one eye. Disability advocates are praising the move by the FMCSA, but truck safety groups are up in arms over the issuance of these licenses. Since August, the FMCSA has approved or is in the process of approving commercial drivers' licenses for more than 100 truck drivers who are partially blind. The FMCSA has also issued exemptions and licenses to drivers who are deaf and prone to seizures from rules that would otherwise prevent them from driving. While safety experts are challenging the actions of the FMCSA, disability advocates are praising it. Marilyn Golden, a senior policy analyst at the Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, pointed to a study that found truck drivers with FMCSA vision exemptions are 20 percent less likely to be involved in crashes.

From the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation

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### **Announcements**

- Statewide Independent Living Council Meeting, Pierre, SD, March 18<sup>th</sup>
- Board of SBVI Meeting, Pierre, SD, March 27<sup>th</sup>
- Public Gathering/Disability Summit at Sinte Gleska University, Mission, SD, April 28<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Central Time, in conjunction with the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Statewide Independent Living Council
- SBVI Public Meetings via DDN from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Central Time, April 30, 2015 with sites at SBVI offices in Aberdeen, Pierre and Sioux Falls (SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind)
- Public Meeting, Adoba Eco Hotel, Rapid City, May 1<sup>st</sup> from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Mountain Time
- National Federation of the Blind State Convention, Adoba Eco Hotel, Rapid City, SD, May 1 – 3, 2015
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Celebration, Hilton Garden Inn, July 13<sup>th</sup>, Sioux Falls

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Contact us toll free at 1-800-265-9684 or (605) 773-4644  
Visit our web site at: <http://dhs.sd.gov/sbvi/>