

As requested by the Secretary of Health and Human Resources, the following is being submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired to fulfill its reporting requirements for HB 110. Questions concerning this report may be addressed to Bob Burton, Deputy Commissioner for Services. (bob.burton@dbvi.virginia.gov 804-371-3146)

1. To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74, 75-84 and 85 and older.

The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired served the following number of consumers in the specified age ranges through its Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living program for FY's 2004, 2005 and 2006:

	<i>SFY2006</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>65-74</i>	<i>392</i>	<i>401</i>	<i>385</i>
<i>75-84</i>	<i>833</i>	<i>856</i>	<i>877</i>
<i>85></i>	<i>822</i>	<i>823</i>	<i>728</i>

2. Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency's capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?

DBVI offers a wide array of independent living services that benefit our senior population such as personal and home management, daily living skills training, adjustment to blindness counseling, communication skills (handwriting, keyboarding, Braille, personal recording devices and assistive technology for computer use), crafts and leisure skills, and training in the use of prescription low vision aids. The services that are most often planned as part of an individual's independent living program are adjustment counseling, daily living skills training and assessment and training in the use of low vision aids designed to maximize an individual's ability to use any functional vision that they have. The department does not utilize waiting lists for services at this time. Because we do not utilize waiting lists some seniors who need our services experience delays in eligibility determination and the frequency with which our teachers can provide direct instruction due to the number of consumers that each Rehabilitation Teacher serves. Additionally, estimates of the number of older Virginians experiencing vision loss far exceeds the actual number of consumers referred for services. We believe there are many more senior Virginians with significant vision loss that could benefit from DBVI services if they were aware that the services existed. Finally, in light of the fact that the leading causes of vision loss are age related, projections of a significant increase in the number of older Virginians in the coming years will lead to a significant increase in the number of individuals who will require services from our agency.

3. Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories:

The agency's Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living program provides individualized services identified through a

thorough functional assessment of the consumer. Many of these services can be categorized under the following categories:

Health Care/Wellness – diabetic management including the use of non-visual methods to obtain blood glucose readings and administer insulin injections; evaluation of and provision of adaptive equipment related to secondary disabilities; alternative methods to identify and administer medications; training on alternative methods of food preparation to insure proper nutrition; adjustment to blindness counseling to reduce depression and improve self-esteem

Education – Braille instruction; communication skills instruction (such as use of recording devices or writing guides); registration for Library of Congress Talking Book Program and use of playback devices; information on correspondence courses designed especially for blind individuals

Recreation – leisure skills training including the use of tactual methods to complete crafts projects and accessing board/card games that have been adapted for use by the blind

Financial Security (including Housing) – training in the use of alternative methods for maintaining financial records such as large print checks/check registers and using assistive technology to access financial related computer programs

Transportation – Orientation and Mobility instruction designed to provide consumers with the skills necessary to safely utilize public transportation and provide information on locally available transportation resources.

4. Identify the extent to which your agency provides “consumer-oriented” publications and websites online that are designed to be “senior-friendly”. If the information you

currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.

The agency website meets accessibility standards and all consumer oriented publications are provided in alternative media including large print, Braille or tape upon request.

5. Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

A significant challenge that the agency has identified is the growing demand by seniors for technology. Tomorrow's seniors who lose vision will consist of individuals who have used technology such as the personal computer and other devices for professional and personal use. We anticipate a significant increase in the demand for assistive technology training from seniors with vision loss. With appropriate equipment and training seniors who become blind or visually impaired can use the computer for communication with family and friends, to shop over the Internet, conduct business transactions, do research, access health and other information, and maintain a greater level of independence and a better quality of life. The agency will need additional resources to cover the cost of personnel and technology required to meet this emerging need.