

Relocation of the Department of Services for the Blind Will Save No Dollars

Governor Gregoire's 2010 budget includes a proposal to relocate the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) to the Department of Social and Health Services with no explanation of how this will save state dollars. In fact history has shown that as a standalone agency DSB has demonstrated strong fiscal and programmatic management.

As it now exists, DSB is a model agency. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) ranks DSB third in the nation among state agencies for the blind.

The blind are a minority among people with disabilities and society in general, and traditionally have received more cost-effective services under a separate state agency for the blind wherein accountability and the lines of authority are clear.

For 32 years DSB has served as a separate, effective agency developing and refining services for blind people of all ages.

DSB understands its responsibility to carefully use the taxpayers dollars. In the past few years, DSB has reduced administrative salary expenditures by 27% and IT contractor support by 58%.

A new automated case management system has saved the agency \$240,000 to date.

DSB has a unique, specialized staff who possess the knowledge and training to address the cultural bias's and personal misconceptions about blindness, providing a full range of specialized expertise to address and overcome barriers related to blindness and vision loss, including:

- Consultation to children, families and schools - starting at birth - to raise expectations and set the stage for successful development and education outcomes.
- Work experience, counseling and skills training for transition-age youth.
- Adjustment to blindness, vocational and career counseling for adults.
- Training in alternative, non-visual skills for independent living.
 - Assistive technology, including evaluation, training, school and work site assessments.
- Low vision evaluation, training and aids.
 - Communications training, including computers and access to the latest information technologies.
 - Intensive skills training in a residential setting (Orientation and Training Center located in Seattle).
 - Employment services, including career planning, assistance with job search, job development, on-the-job training, support for internships, self-employment and small business start-ups, and job retention.
 - Employer services, including job site analysis, assistance with reasonable accommodations and job modifications, employee training and follow-up.
- Independent Living services for older blind individuals.
- Support services to deaf-blind individuals through the Deaf-Blind Service Center.
 - Opportunities to manage food service operations in public buildings through the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).
- Telephonic reading services through Newslines.

In the 1970's blind Washingtonians fought long and hard to remove Services for the Blind from under DSHS. Returning to DSHS would serve no purpose; retain DSB's current placement and proven track record.

This fact sheet is endorsed by the following organizations and agencies serving and representing blind Washingtonians:

Blinded Veterans Association, Washington Regional Group
Community Services for the Blind and Partially Sighted
Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Helen Keller National Center, Northwest Region
Lilac Services for the Blind
Lighthouse for the Blind, Inc.
Louis Braille School
National Federation of the Blind of Washington
New Day Services for the Blind
Official Committee of the Washington State Business Enterprise Program
Pacific Northwest Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired
Peninsula Rehabilitation Services
Seagull Low Vision Services
State Rehabilitation Council, Washington Department of Services for the Blind
Tacoma Area Coalition of Individuals with Disabilities
Tri-County Low Vision Services
Vision Loss Center
Washington Council of the Blind