

Older Blind Independent Living Program

For many older men and women the significant loss of vision turns their Golden Years into lonely, fearful ones.

The Independent Living Program(IL) is the only state-wide program providing training, counseling, adapted devices, and information to enable older people to maintain or increase independence in their homes and community.

The program, administered by the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), serves people 55 years of age and older whose vision loss is interfering with their normal activities.

Last year the Program assisted 976 individuals in gaining the confidence and skills to perform tasks such as meal preparation, managing medications, household chores, getting around at home and in the community, reading and writing, banking, recreational and other activities; in other words, to live full, independent and meaningful lives.

Last year, 63% of those served were at least 80 years of age, with 23% over 90 years old. 87% of IL participants lived in a retirement community or in their own home. With the assistance of the IL services all of these individuals were able to remain in the community.

The cost for this assistance is less than \$1,000 per individual. The major share of this money is Federal dollars.

Our Concern:

Recent budget cuts have already strained the IL Program. Today some parts of our state are not being served, and now DSB has been directed to cut over \$100,000 from the Older Independent Living budget. This is state only dollars and amounts to a 20% reduction in funding. This means that a growing number of older blind people will not receive services. Unable to remain independent, they will be forced to turn to more restrictive and costly options, such as nursing homes and adult group homes.

It is our belief that the Department of Services for the Blind would be the logical place to most effectively and efficiently manage any budget cuts. Therefore we would ask the Legislature to direct the determination of any such cuts to DSB allowing the agency to leverage their resources to create the least impact on direct services to the Older Blind Program.