

### COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY HANDICAPPED EXECUTIVE BOARD ISSUES FIRST REPORT ON SERVICES

The Executive Board of the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH) has released its first report on services and programs for New Yorkers who have visual impairment or blindness.

The board was created by the Governor and Legislature in 2007 to examine services provided to legally blind or visually impaired New Yorkers by CBVH and other state agencies, and to make recommendations to enhance or improve services, where needed. The members of the board are appointed by the Governor and legislative leaders and are representative of the state's ethnic and geographic diversity. A majority of the members of the board are blind.

"We're pleased to have reached the first step in our efforts to improve the access, delivery, and comprehensiveness of programs and services for blind and visually impaired New Yorkers," said board Co-chairman Alan R. Morse, JD, PhD.

Co-chairman Charles Richardson said: "It's been a pleasure to have worked with a group that is so passionate about the potential of making so many positive changes."

The report suggests the following:

- Creating a system of mandatory reporting of diagnoses of functional vision loss.
- Expanding awareness of -- and referral for -- health, education and rehabilitation by better publicizing available services.
- Improving access to services by promoting prompt referrals, reducing paperwork, and making materials about services available in accessible formats.
- Assuring sufficient rehabilitation service delivery capacity in order to provide prompt intervention for persons diagnosed with visual impairments who need referrals and rehabilitative services.
- More effectively integrating the delivery of services to children and adolescents that impact vocational rehabilitation success.
- Assuring that all New Yorkers who have vision limitations have access to technology that can improve independence and employability.

- Continuing to strengthen and expand existing programs for persons who are blind or visually impaired.

The board also called for certification of vision rehabilitation professionals, to assure quality and establish standards for practice.

Co-chair Morse said: “In the future, we plan to look at issues that span all age groups -- for example, pre-natal, early childhood and school-age on the one hand, and adult, elderly and society’s oldest old on the other. In all cases, we will be focusing on subjects and categories where the state can bring about positive change in the lives of blind and visually impaired persons of all ages.”

The report is available on the [CBVH](#) website [here](#).

Braille or large-print copies are available upon request by calling 518 474-6812. CBVH is located within the New York State Office of Children and Family Services at 52 Washington St. in Rensselaer, and has eight district offices located throughout the state.

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