

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Division of Services for the Blind

**DSB**

# Building careers and enhancing lives!



*2018 Annual Report*

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES &  
THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT



Services include, *but are not limited to:*



*Vocational  
Rehabilitation*



*Business  
Engagement*



*Medical  
Eye Care*



*Independent  
Living*



*Assistive  
Technology*



*Business  
Enterprise*

*As part of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) strongly supports the department's mission, which is, in collaboration with its partners, to protect the health and safety of all North Carolinians, especially those with visual impairments, blindness or deaf-blindness, and provide essential human services.*

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# NC Division Services for the Blind

## *State Rehabilitation Council 2017-18*

**Vacant,**  
Community Rehabilitation Services Provider

**David M. Horton, *Chair***  
Representative of Business, Labor and Industry

**Helene C. Wells,**  
Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

**Anastasia S. Powell,**  
Advocacy Group for Persons with Disabilities

**Agreta Limerick,**  
NC Division of Workforce Development

**Vacant,**  
Parent of a Child with a Disability

**Joshua Denton,**  
Statewide Independent Living Council

**Celeste Hunt,**  
Director of Projects Carried out under  
Section 121 of Rehabilitation Act

**Debra T. Pickens,**  
Parent Training and Information Center

**Tania Bowers,**  
Director of the NC Client Assistance Program  
(NCCAP)

**Dorothy Snyder,**  
Representative from the Department of  
Public Instruction

## Ex-Officio Members

**Cynthia Speight, *Director***  
Division of Services for the Blind

**Jordan D. Thomas,**  
*Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor*  
Division of Services for the Blind

# State Rehabilitation Council

## *Chairperson's Message*



*I am honored to present the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind's 2017-2018 Annual Report. As Chairperson, I believe this year's theme truly represents the mission of this organization: "Building Careers and Enhancing Lives." It is our privilege to offer the blind and visually impaired residents of North Carolina opportunities to acquire the necessary skills to succeed in their careers and in their lives as a whole. The services and programs we provide significantly aid them in fulfilling their potential and realizing their dreams.*

*The strides we have made by providing training opportunities through innovation have a profound effect on those we serve. With our world changing at such a rapid pace, particularly in the area of technology, the opportunities and services we offer are more important than ever. I am pleased to announce that last year, 2,770 individuals who are blind or visually impaired were served by DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services and DSB VR achieved 309 successful employment closures. Average wages were \$13.42 per hour. DSB VR assistive technology field staff provided services to over 620 clients. This school year approximately 25 students with the Transition Program are graduating from high school and DSB is prepared to support them as they transition to work, job training or post-secondary education. The Adapting to Blindness in a Learning Environment Program provided training for 48 VR-eligible individuals and DSB's Evaluation Unit provided services for 50 clients. 24 individuals received low vision evaluations and/or low vision therapy, and 317 class assessments were completed. Independent Living Older Blind Programs and Independent Living Rehabilitation served 1,115 eligible individuals.*

*We are grateful to the staff and all those who assisted the North Carolina Division for the Blind in reaching our goals again this year. Your support truly makes a difference in affording opportunities for the blind and visually impaired to build their careers and enhance their lives.*

**David Horton, Chairperson**  
North Carolina State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

## Division of Services for the Blind *Director's Message*



*North Carolina's Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has experienced another successful year and is appreciative of the contributions and support of our State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). During the year, the SRC worked with our staff on vocational rehabilitation program policy revisions, the development and implementation of enhanced procedures to obtain consumer information regarding the effectiveness of our programs and satisfaction with services rendered and assisted the division in preparing for the Rehabilitation Services Administration on-site monitoring visit.*

*We welcome you to review our 2018 Annual Report in which you will learn about the various services and supports that dedicated DSB staff have provided to help individuals who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind build successful careers and enhance their lives. Staff efforts produced a rehabilitation rate of 70% and 92% of consumers surveyed reported overall satisfaction with their experience with our VR program. It is an honor and a privilege to present this report of NC DSB's performance and stories of consumers' achievements!*

**Cynthia Speight, Director**

NC Division of Services for the Blind

## 2017-18 Consumer Satisfaction Survey

The consumer satisfaction survey was initiated to meet the mandate of Section 105 (c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which states that the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) shall, among performing other required functions:

Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of and client satisfaction with:

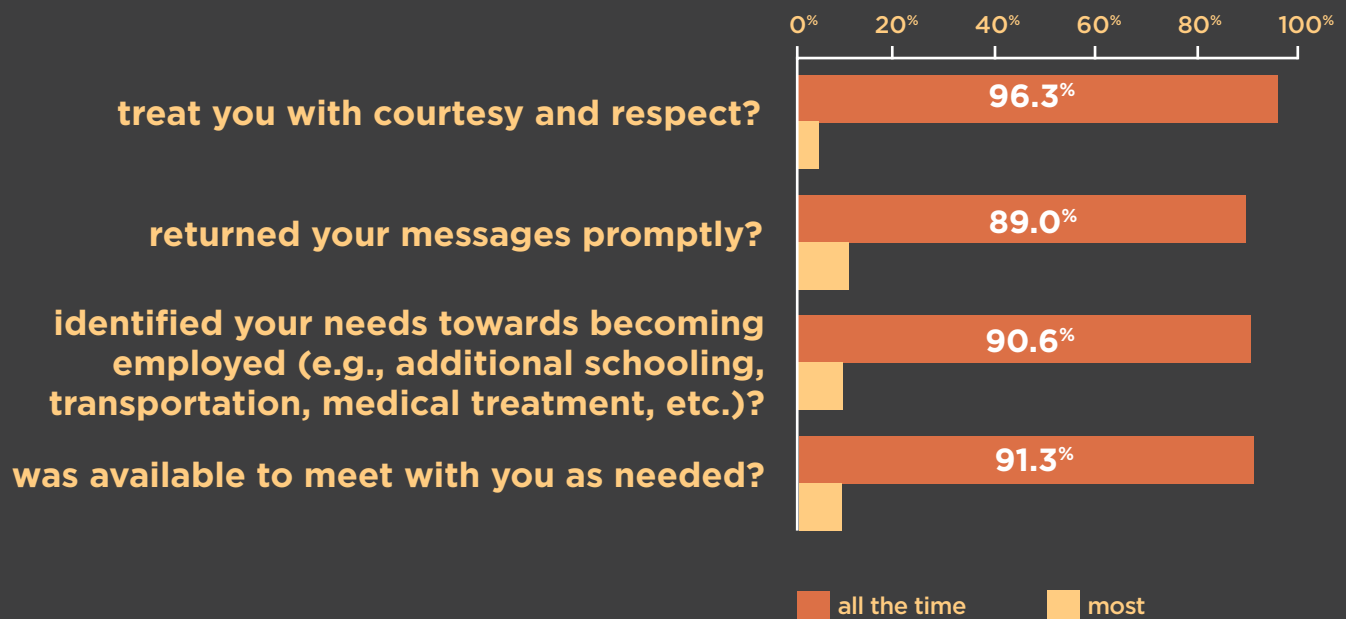
(A) the functions performed by the designated State agency;

(B) vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this Act;

(C) employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.

Here is what our consumers had to say:

### Did DSB Staff...

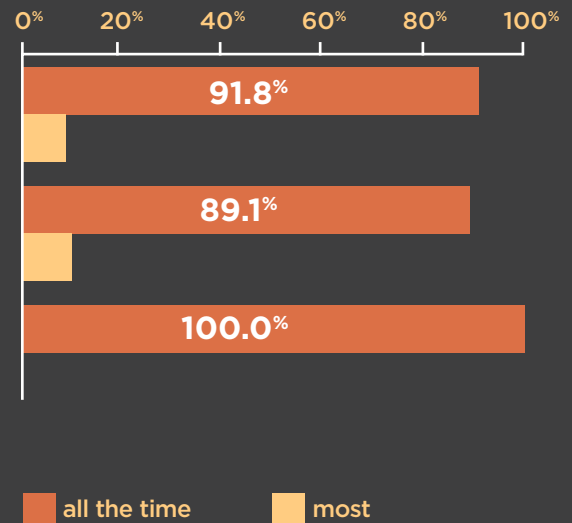


### Did DSB Rehabilitation Counselor...

worked with you in selecting available services and providers to meet your VR needs?

helped you learn about services provided by other programs or agencies?

helped you keep your job and followed-up with you after you went to work?  
(statuses 26+ from 22)

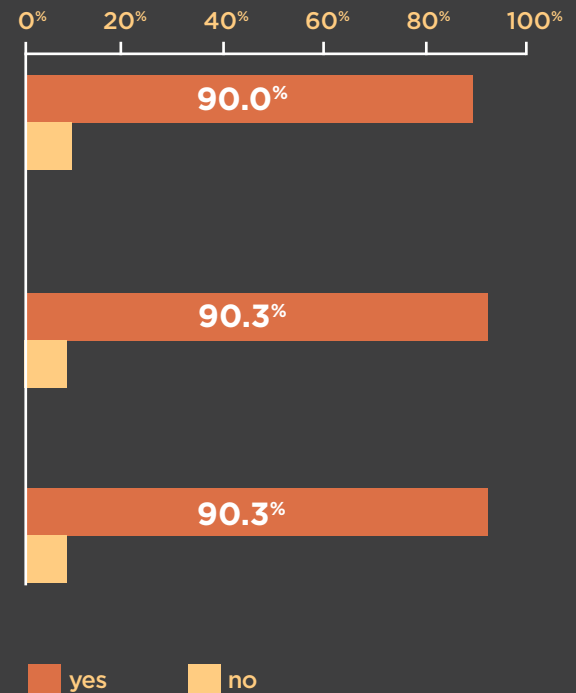


### When developing your Individual Plan for Employment (IPE), how fast did your counselor...

provide VR services under your plan for employment, including job development and placement? (statuses 22+)

take to develop your plan for employment?  
(status 12+)

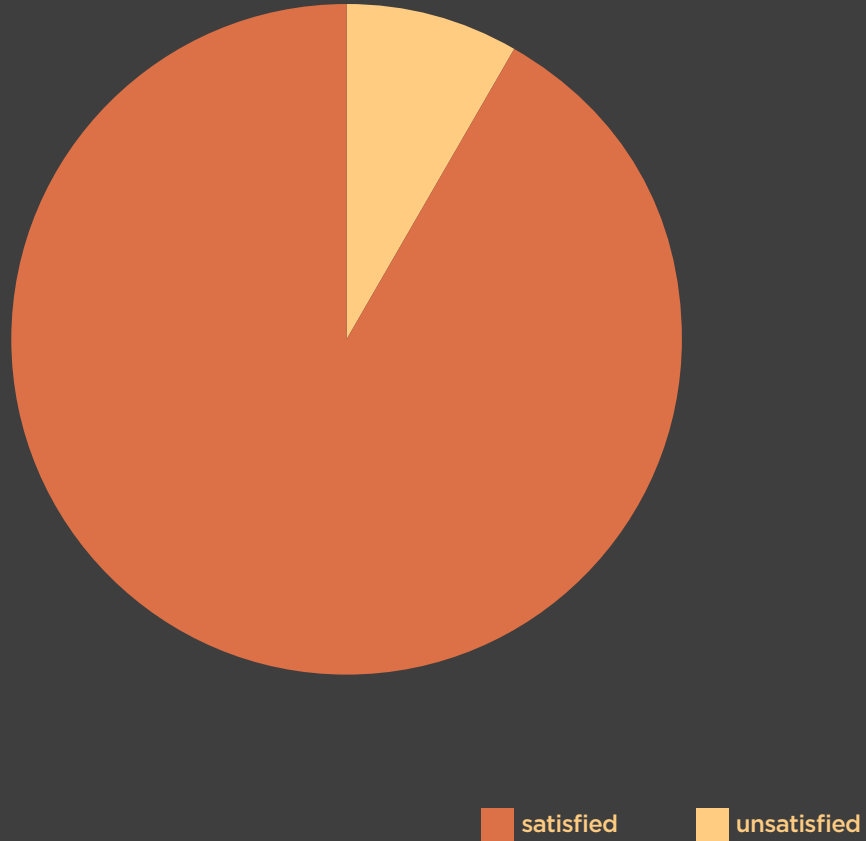
provide VR services under your plan for employment (statuses 18-20; 28 from 18-20)





**Satisfaction with Overall Experience:**

**91.9** percent of survey respondents reported being satisfied with their overall experience with DSB.



## DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services

People with blindness or visual impairment who want to work may be eligible for Division of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation (DSB VR) services. DSB provides vocational rehabilitation to help individuals obtain, maintain, or regain employment. All services provided by this program are geared toward gainful employment that results in self-support and independence. Eligible people develop an individualized plan of services to help them reach their vocational goal, which may include guidance and counseling, medical, training, and job search and development services that best suit their individual vocational needs.

DSB's Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and specialized Transition Rehabilitation Counselors serve as counselors and case managers for people requesting vocational rehabilitation services. They are responsible for providing and coordinating the services necessary to go to work. Teamwork with specialists in specific areas - *DSB Business Services Representatives, Community Employment Specialists, a Rehabilitation Engineer, Assistive Technology Consultants, Assistive Technology Instructors, a Vocational Evaluator and various Rehabilitation Center staff, as well as Deaf-Blind Specialists who work with people with both blindness and*

hearing loss - is coordinated through the DSB VR staff. In addition, all support staff in the area and district offices, as well as the team of administrators in the state office, strive to find ways to assist people achieve

successful employment outcomes. Services are coordinated with DSB *Social Workers for the Blind, Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and Nurse Eye Care Consultants as needed.*

Accessible services are planned according to each person's employment goals and needs. Some services provided are based on economic need, while others are provided regardless of income. DSB VR services may include:

- Independent living training at the residential training DSB's Rehabilitation Center for the Blind or through local staff
- Assistive technology required for the vocational goal, such as low-vision evaluations and equipment purchase, assistive technology evaluations and purchase of equipment, video magnification (CCTV) evaluations, or training in use of the equipment either locally or at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind

*DSB strives to find ways to assist people achieve successful employment outcomes.*



*Areatha Dixon (above), gave her testimony highlighting her desire to touch lives, determination, and the expert assistance she received from the DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Program prior to her successful career opportunity with a domestic violence shelter.*

- School to work services, such as counseling with students beginning at age 14 as they plan their future and providing the Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) program at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind, Youth Mini-Centers, various specialized programming for youth.
- Pre-Employment Transition Services for all Students with Disabilities, which includes:
  - (1) Job exploration counseling
  - (2) Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible
  - (3) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
  - (4) Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
  - (5) Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

- **Guidance and Counseling services**, such as vocational/career counseling, job retention counseling, adjustment to vision loss counseling, and supportive counseling
- **Career Training services**, such as vocational and/or job specific or academic training, orientation and mobility services to teach individuals safe travel skills (use of a sighted guide and white cane, and safety techniques to travel independently), on-the-job training, supported employment, or work adjustment job coaching
- **Job placement services**, such as job matching, job search skills training, work experiences, job modification, and follow-up services offered in the form of direct client assistance, specialized job fairs and assistance with applications, interview preparation and job search materials
- **Medical services** that are required for eligible people to obtain, maintain or regain employment, such as diagnostic eye examinations, eye glasses, or other types of corrective lens, eye treatment, eye care education and eye surgery.



*John "Artie" Stewart recently graduated from Robeson Community College as student of the year. Moving on to his Bachelor's degree at UNC Pembroke with DSB supports and sponsorship.*

## NC DSB 2018 Job Fairs

In 2018, DSB held several job fairs that were tailored to include employers from various job fields, including state government, university and school employers, food services, retail, and various computer and health/human service fields. The DSB VR clients, as well as the participating employers, came to each event prepared and ready to make successful job matches. These successful employer/DSB partnerships are essential to assisting DSB VR clients with visual impairment, blindness and deaf-blindness in their goal to achieve successful, competitive, integrated employment. Robert Sorochack, General Manager of NC State University Athletic Dining Services and NC DSB Job Fair participating employer described his longstanding partnership with DSB VR Services as having enabled him to receive “excellent workers” and he has enjoyed being made aware ahead of time by DSB of the worker’s strengths, interests and abilities when matching them to the needs of his business.



*NC employers participate in DSB 2018 Job Fairs to encourage hiring of North Carolinians with visual impairment, blindness and deaf-blindness.*

## DSB *School to Work Transition Services*

DSB VR program provides eligible North Carolina high school students with visual impairments a personalized set of services for successful movement through secondary school, post-secondary school, post-school activities and successful employment outcomes. The services can start as early as age 14, and include vocational counseling, career exploration, post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), independent living or community participation.

The services take into account the student's preferences and interests, and include counseling, community experiences, development of plans for employment and other post-school adult living objectives, and if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

In 10 school systems, specialized third-party agreements have been established and specialized programs are in place to serve students at the Governor Morehead School for the Blind. These programs provide trained DSB VR Counselors and community employment specialists to work with students, as well as with school systems, to enhance opportunities in students' home communities. These students participate in summer jobs,

World of Work (WOW) internships and other summer programs, such as learning independent living skills at available Mini Centers, STEM programs or summer camps.

Students needing education after high school to reach their vocational goals are assisted by a DSB VR counselor in planning and obtaining the required training. The counselor can assist in locating a vocational

or post-secondary training site featuring classes that prepare them for their job goal, help identify financial resources to cover part or all of the training costs, including financial assistance from DSB, and in obtaining assistive technology required to complete the training. The counselor continues working with the student throughout the post-secondary program to ensure success.

Students planning to go to work after high school receive assistance in job exploration, job seeking, job development and

placement from a DSB Community Employment Specialist and counselor. If the student requires additional one-on-one assistance, specialized job seeking and training programs, such as community-based work adjustment or supported employment, is available to help in many cases.

*These programs  
provide trained  
DSB VR  
Counselors  
and community  
employment  
specialists  
to work  
with students...*

DSB Transition Services provide summer programs for students who are blind or visually impaired, in collaboration with DSB's Rehabilitation Center for the Blind's Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital for Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY) programs in Raleigh. This program includes three focus areas: a WOW internship program, training for independent living skills, and career exploration for younger youth and college preparation for older students.

Twenty-five students participating in the Transition Program are graduating from high school this year, and DSB is prepared to support them as they transition to work, school-to-job training or post-secondary training.

Our Assistive Technology consultants provide AT assessments to youth transitioning from high school to post-secondary educational institutions. AT assessments are also performed for consumers who need accommoda-

tions at their worksite in order for them to maintain employment. For consumers already enrolled in college, DSB purchased the recommended technology needed to be successful in college, including computers, printers, portable CCTV's and JAWS or Zoomtext software.

Transition counselors and community employment specialist throughout the state continue to seek job-shadowing opportunities and trial work experiences tailored to each student's vocational interest and career goals. DSB transition counselors and community employment specialists also continue to seek internship opportunities with employers.

The goal of the transition program is to work with the student as early as possible to assist in the development of independence and a career path of their choice, and to be successful in reaching their goal of competitive integrated employment.

*DSB Transition Services provide summer programs for students who are blind or visually impaired*



*Transition students learning essential skills to obtain overall independence during DSB youth mini-centers*

## DSB Transition Services 2017-2018 Outcomes

- ***DSB Total youth (ages 14 - 24): 492***
- ***DSB Total students with disabilities (ages 14 - 21): 251***
- ***DSB sponsored youth/SWD unpaid community Work Experiences: 79***

DSB's Transition Program has continued to provide exceptional transition and pre-employment transition services to youth with visual impairments in North Carolina via DSB's Vocational Rehabilitation program. The program's continued partnerships with high school visual impairment instructors, and exceptional children staff at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), multiple state and national vendors, and in various school systems remains very strong. These partnerships have been invigorating, and the support of the administrative staff, guidance counselors, EC case managers and EC teachers has proven beneficial in the growth of the Transition Program.



## DSB *Pre-Employment Transition Services*

With the passing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act that was signed into law July 22, 2014, DSB has begun a program of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students with disabilities (including potentially eligible students) so they can successfully obtain competitive integrated employment. The law defines student with a disability as: “student with a disability” applies to all students enrolled in educational programs, including postsecondary education programs, so long as they satisfy the age requirements set forth in final §361.5(c) (51) (ages 14-21). The definition is also inclusive of secondary students who are homeschooled, as well as students in other non-traditional secondary educational programs.

There are five Pre-ETS services that the act requires to be provided. They are:

- (1) Job exploration counseling
- (2) Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible)
- (3) Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or post-secondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- (4) Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- (5) Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

DSB continues to implement methods to ensure that these services are provided to students with visual disabilities across

North Carolina with the highest of quality. DSB as an agency has provided extensive PETS training to the DSB VR staff and PETS Associates annually.

DSB has also created PETS Associates positions in each district office across the state to provide direct PETS services to those areas not presently served by a DSB Transition Counselor. These PETS Associates have been thoroughly trained and provide only direct PETS services. These positions are directed to identify potentially eligible students in the various applicable school systems in their area and deliver a specific WINTAC-approved PETS curriculum to them. Approximately 85 public schools, charter schools, community colleges and universities have been presented with this DSB PETS Associate delivered program. Over 28 students have been served by this method to date.

DSB has also partnered with the NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to develop and post a Request for Application for the provision of Pre-ETS. The team has reviewed approximately over 40 proposals to date. At this point, seven contracts were executed during the 2017-2018 fiscal year with five renewals (two programs had two contracts each that were combined into one) and two new contracts for the 2018 - 2019 fiscal year. However, the RFA is ongoing and many more PETS vendors are anticipated.

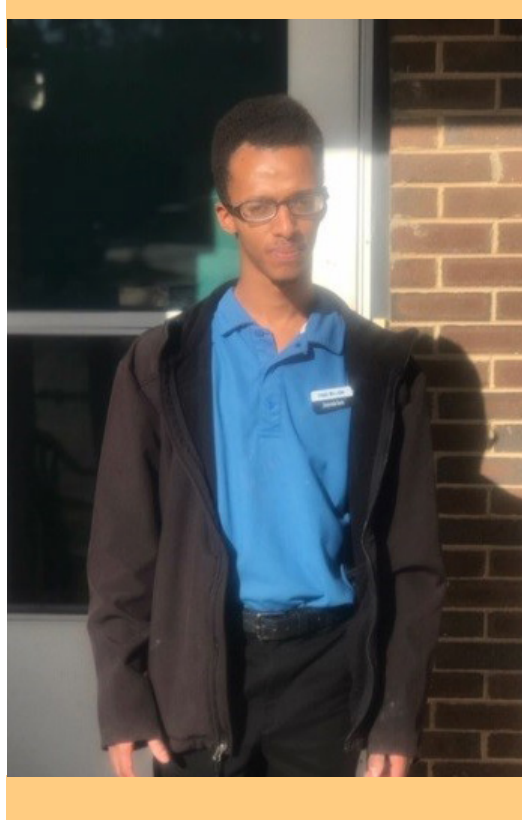
Five Youth/PETS mini-centers were provided statewide by DSB staff, and community participants and mentors in the 2017-2018 year with 39 Youth (27 SWD) successfully served.

## DSB Supported Employment Services

DSB Supported Employment (SE) services are designed for people with the most significant disabilities who may be having difficulty finding and maintaining competitive employment. With the assistance of supported employment services, these individuals are able to obtain competitive work in integrated work settings, receive specialized on-site job training, then receive time-limited ongoing support services in order to perform their job. Supported employment is a way to move people from dependence on a service delivery system to independence via competitive, integrated employment.

The DSB VR program provides supported employment services for those with the most significant disabilities to achieve competitive employment. Services include assessment, direct job placement, intensive individualized on-site job training and coaching, and extended follow-up on the job site with the person and the employer to ensure a good job match. Supported employment services are purchased from various Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP), serving all 100 counties in North Carolina. Job coaches

are employed by the facilities to provide specialized on-site training to assist the employee with a disability in learning and performing the job.



*Jayaires Arrington receives DSB Supported Employment Services and is now successfully employed as a Quality Assurance Specialist at Food Lion.*

SE job coaches work with the employer to train the visually impaired staff person regarding job specific tasks and develop natural supports at the job site. Natural supports are provided by supervisors and co-workers, and include mentoring, friendships, socializing at breaks and/ or after work, providing feedback on job performance, or learning a new skill when required. These natural supports are particularly effective for enhancing social integration between an employee with a disability, and his/her coworkers and supervisor. Natural supports are more permanent, consistently and readily available, and greatly facilitate long-term job retention.

### Customized Employment Services Approach

With WIOA, customized employment was added to the list of ways that a client with the most significant disabilities can work to accomplish their employment goals even

when supported employment efforts have proven unsuccessful. To address this need, DSB has offered a more customized approach. This involves the construction of a very individualized and diverse team of professional partners from varying agencies, working together to support the counselor and the client in reaching the final goal of competitive integrated employment. This process has many team members, and is inspired by the client's employment goal and determination to succeed.

### Community-Based Work Adjustment Services

DSB created a community-based work adjustment training program in 2010 with services purchased from Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP). The outcome-based program involves a brief situational or community base

assessment, work adjustment plan development, job placement services and job coaching services.

This program is designed for eligible people ready to go to work but need intensive job placement services and initial on-the-job supports to be successful in employment. All services, such as medical, adjustment to blindness, low vision and access technology, safe traveling skills training (outside of learning safe travel at the job site), and training services must be completed prior to referral for this service.

This program does not provide extended services, such as those provided through a Supported Employment (SE) program. Community-based employment is competitive, integrated employment with employers in the community and is outside any type of community rehabilitation facility.

## DSB VR Supported Employment Outcomes for FY 2018

- ***Four Community Rehabilitation Programs were added as vendors for SE services over the past year.***
- ***Ten Community Rehabilitation Programs were granted contracts to provide Supported Employment Extended Services.***

***Please Note: The number of individuals receiving services in community-based assessments, job development, placement, job coaching and training has doubled over the past year.***

# *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act* (WIOA) Prompts Continued Efforts

President Barack Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law on July 22, 2014. The law was passed by Congress with wide bipartisan majority (The Senate voted 93-5 and the House of Representatives voted 415-6). The law speaks loudly in support of quality employment services for those with disabilities and was noted to reaffirm the ongoing role of American Job Centers and promotes program coordination and alignment of key employment, education, and training programs at the federal, state, local and regional levels.

The Opportunity Act builds on proven practices such as sector strategies, career pathways, regional economic approaches and work-based training. WIOA increases individuals with disabilities' access to high quality workforce services and prepares them for competitive integrated employment. Secondary to WIOA, there will be a unified state plan that includes all the core programs, including DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Services. WIOA also introduced the concept of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students with disabilities aged 14-21. It

also mandated setting aside 15 percent for the delivery of those very specific services.

DSB continues to intensify its efforts to meet the innovation and opportunity challenges of WIOA and beyond! DSB has concentrated on strengthening its Pre-

Employment Transition Services through the activity of PETS Associates to go out and find our students with blindness visual impairment and deaf-blindness that are not presently served by a dedicated Transition Counselor, use of the American Printing House Transition Tote System as an accessible curriculum for initiating some PETS services, intensively training our VR staff regarding the delivery and accessibility of PETS services. DSB has also initiated a Request For Applications for vendors that can provide appropriate

PETS services and have begun using these services accordingly.

In late 2017, DSB hosted an event, *Unwrapping PETS Opportunities*, designed to prepare Vocational Rehabilitation, Transition Counselors, Business Service Reps and Community Employment Specialists in

*WIOA  
increases  
individuals with  
disabilities'  
access to high  
quality  
workforce  
services...*

providing effective Pre-ETS services. The 40 DSB staff attending this highly interactive three-day training gained firsthand information about ten national and state training sites for Pre-ETS. Through guided activities, counselors learned how to evaluate different training programs to determine which of the five PETS services they provide. Additionally, over the course of the training, staff met the DSB PETS contracted vendors and had an opportunity to develop a working relationship to support future collaborations that ultimately benefit DSB's PETS clients.

DSB has been a long-term partner on the planning committee of the annual NC Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness (NCCVIB). The conference attracts Teachers of the Visually Impaired, post-

secondary educational institutions, O&M Specialists, parents and consumers. In recognition of the need for increased training and partnership, DSB advocated for the addition of a PETS track on the session schedule. This PETS track offers a new platform for DSB staff to build relationships with educators, while increasing their knowledge and skills in the PETS arena. The PETS track will continue to be an option on the 2019 NCCVIB conference schedule.

DSB has also begun working with Technical Assistance Centers to assist us in better addressing issues in the state of poverty among our target group, pre-employment transition services as a whole, WIOA implementation and policy development, as well as strengthening our relationship with the



*DSB staff participating in the Unwrapping PETS Opportunities learning event*

One Stop Centers. In February, the National Research and Training Center on Blindness and Visual Impairment provided Improving Business Development Skills training to 50 DSB VR program staff, including Rehabilitation Supervisors, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Business Service Representatives, Community Employment Specialists and Deaf-Blind Specialists. Instructors from Mississippi State University and the Texas Workforce Solutions provided this week-long training as a part of a research project in which NC DSB was one of four state participants. This comprehensive training on developing effective relationships with business partners will have long-reaching impact on

successful job placements within NC, in addition to farther reaching geographical benefits to VR clients who are Blind or Visually Impaired through the compiled best practice research documentation. Outcomes and results from the “Effectiveness of a Business Development Training for Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind” project will be highlighted at the upcoming 2019 State of the Science Conference, affiliated with the AFB Leadership Conference.



DSB has made great strides in better meeting the needs of our clients through continued compliance with WIOA and our efforts continue. Building careers and enhancing lives is definitely the way of DSB!

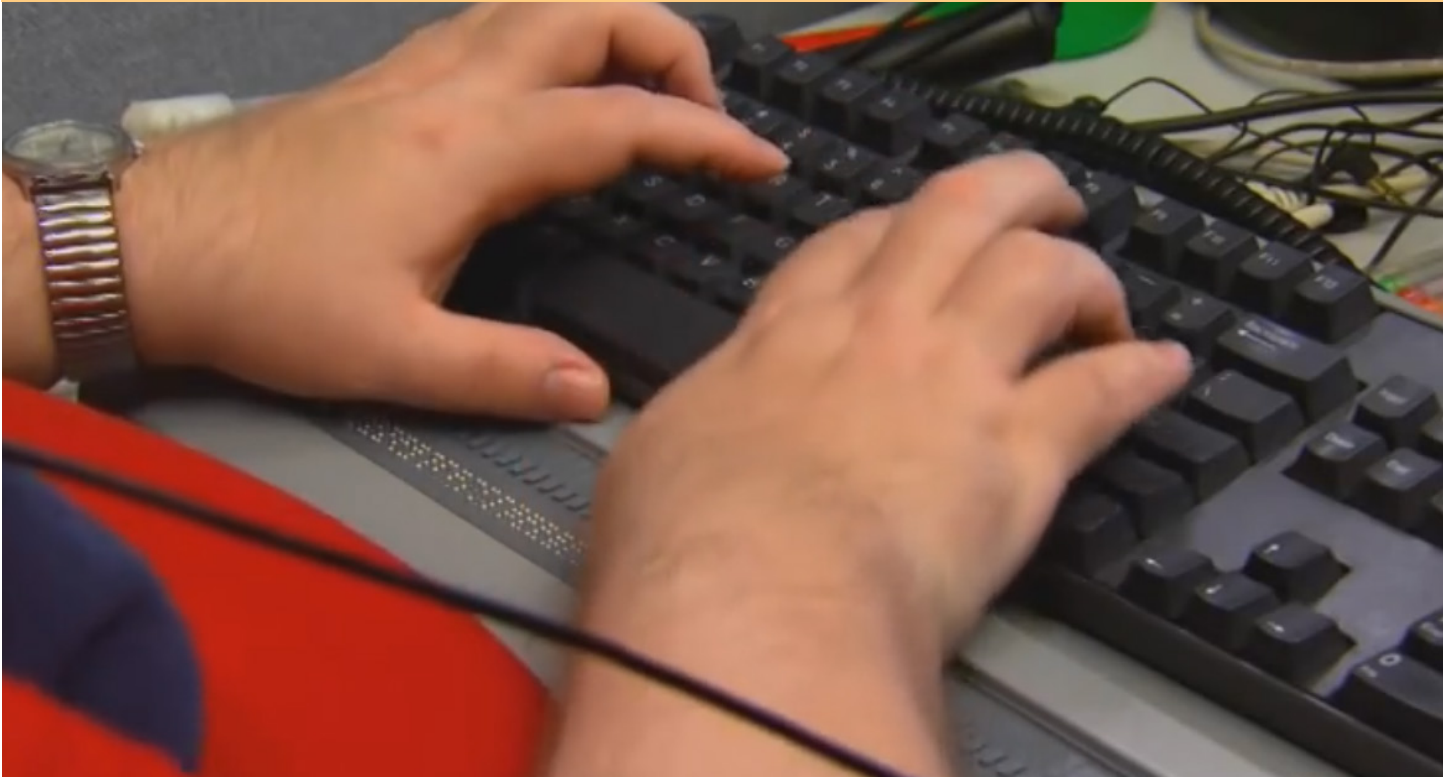


*Improving Business Development Skills training NC DSB staff participants and presenters.*

## DSB VR Outcomes for SFY 2017-2018

- ***DSB Vocational Rehabilitation Services were provided to 2,770 individuals with blindness or low vision***
- ***DSB VR has achieved 309 successful employment closures***
- ***Average wages for successfully employed consumers: \$13.42 per hour***
- ***One-hundred and seventeen VR consumers; to include transition-aged youth were supported through sponsorship to participate in Unpaid Work Experiences to prepare them for their chosen profession.***

## DSB *Assistive Technology* Services



*DSB AT Consultants & Instructors are available to guide those with visual impairment, blindness and deaf-blindness in maximizing their ability to utilize adaptive equipment to achieve their goals of employment and independence.*

DSB offers assistive technology services through its seven district offices, as well as the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind to assist people who require assistive technology (AT) to be successful with employment, training, education, and independent living goals.

DSB has six Assistive Technology (AT) Consultants, four Assistive Technology Instructors and one Rehabilitation Engineer. These staff are based in district offices and provide individualized technology assess-

ments and services at a person's job site, school setting or home. AT Consultants conduct assessments, recommend equipment, facilitate the purchase of equipment, deliver and set up the equipment either in the home or at a job, and follow-up to make sure the equipment is being used as designed. Equipment and adaptations addressed may include computers, Braille displays, high tech low vision devices, mobile devices, lighting adaptations, and safety concerns. Consultation to employers of individuals who are visually impaired,



blind or deaf-blind is also provided. Four Assistive Technology Instructors are available to provide individualized assessments of AT instruction needs, as well as one-on-one and small group instruction across the state. AT Instructors are available to guide people in maximizing their ability to utilize adaptive equipment. Each district office contains a selection of equipment for evaluation and training purposes.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind offers numerous classes on various types of technology including computers, mobile technologies and Braille technology. A Technology Resource Center based at the center has adaptive equipment for large print, speech and Braille access. This equipment is available by appointment for demonstration and evaluation.

*Accessible services are planned according to each person's employment goals and needs.*

## DSB VR Assistive Technology Outcomes for FY 2018

***Assistive Technology is constantly evolving. Assistive Technology staff meets yearly for in-service training to maintain expertise in providing AT services to blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind consumers.***

***This year, training was provided on the impact of refractive errors, Echo Dot, NVDA, Windows 10 Narrator, impact of Pre-Employment Transition Services on AT services, new low vision devices, JAWS refresher and Zoom Text Fusion highlights.***

***There were **over 620** DSB VR clients served by Assistive Technology field staff.***

## DSB *Deaf-Blind* Services

Each year, DSB serves individuals with vision and hearing loss through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, and our Independent Living programs. Since the inception of the agency in 1935, with assistance from Helen Keller, DSB has provided support, training, and other services to people with hearing and vision loss. DSB's goal is to empower individuals with hearing and vision loss to achieve their goals of independence and employment.

When someone experiences both vision and hearing loss, serious issues and self-doubt can arise. Many times, initial assessments are conducted with people who are skeptical of services since dealing with a dual sensory loss can be overwhelming. With the help of DSB services, individuals can feel empowered and thrive again. DSB has five deaf-blind specialist positions that serve all 100 counties in North Carolina and provide leadership in the provision of services to deaf-blind consumers, by engaging in both direct services to consumers and serving as consultants to other staff. Two new Deaf-Blind Specialists were hired this year after extended vacancies. During this fiscal year, Deaf-Blind Specialists provided services to 111 qualified individuals served by our programs.

### Deaf-Blind Community Partnerships Enhance Services

The Division works closely with our sister agency, DSDHH, on the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program (NDBEDP). This program exists to provide 21st century telecommunication assistive technology to individuals who are Deaf-Blind.

Our five Deaf-Blind Specialists are uniquely qualified to provide assessments on assistive technology needs based on the goals, communication mode and the level of assistive technology knowledge of Deaf-Blind individuals. DSB has been an active partner working with DSDHH since the NDBEDP pilot and will continue to assist with completing assessments as this ongoing program became permanently funded by the Federal Communications Commission. Our specialists complete the assessment, deliver the equipment to the consumer's home, coordinate trainers and provide a 90-day follow up session. In FFY 2018, our Deaf-Blind Specialists served six out of the 11 deaf-blind individuals who were newly referred for NDBEDP services.

The agency also collaborates with other organizations that serve individuals who are Deaf-Blind. DSB collaborates with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Deaf-Blind Project and has an active member on the Deaf-Blind Advisory Council facilitated by the DPI Deaf-Blind Project Director. We work together on issues and concerns related to Deaf-Blind consumers and their families that are in the school systems aged 14 and above.

In addition, the Division of Services for the Blind is a member of the National Community of Partners (NCOP) sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). This national forum discusses issues and concerns related to deaf-blind consumers and their families. We also collaborate with the HKNC Regional Representative for North Carolina as appropriate.

DSB has been an active supporter of the North Carolina Deaf-Blind Associates (NCDBA) since its inception. We assist Deaf-Blind individuals across the state with finding sponsorship to the annual Camp Dogwood Deaf-Blind Weekend. We work closely with our local NC Lions clubs who sponsor many of our deaf-blind campers based on what county they live in. Our Deaf-Blind Specialists also assist with transporting our campers and working as a Support Service Provider (SSP) while at Camp. That means we serve as the eyes and ears of our deaf-blind campers as

needed. In FFY 2018, 50 Deaf-Blind campers were scheduled to attend Camp Dogwood Deaf-Blind Weekend. Unfortunately, Hurricanes Florence and Michael caused the camp to be cancelled this year. NCDBA has many additional activities throughout the year that we support, including the NCDBA Conference, the NCDBA Helen Keller Deaf-Blind Awareness Day, the NCDBA Holiday Party and quarterly board meetings. DSB is honored to actively better the lives of our deaf-blind consumers in employment, independent living and full participation in society.

*DSB is honored to actively better the lives of our deaf-blind consumers in employment, independent living and full participation in society.*

## DSB *Business Enterprises Services*

During FFY 2017-18, gross sales from all BEP food service and vending facilities increased to \$10,869,835, compared to 2016-17 FFY \$10,811,989. There was a slight decrease in gross profit percentage, 38 percent for FFY 2017-18 compared to 41 percent for FFY 2016-17. Operators' net proceeds paid totaled \$3,481,080 during FFY 2017-18, compared to \$3,231,307 paid during FFY 2016-17. Because of a policy change, guaranteed minimum return for the FFY 2017-18 significantly declined to \$170, compared to \$30,540 for FFY 2016-17.

North Carolina Business Enterprises currently has 59 licensed blind operators who manage 146 food and vending

facilities on state, federal and private properties. The NC Business Enterprises administration consists of 11 employees. The administration, in collaboration with the Elected Committee of Blind Vendors, continue to focus on the overall growth of NC Business Enterprises. In 2017, a licensed blind operator with the support of North Carolina Business Enterprises teamed with Orion Foods to introduce a new food service model at the Camp Lejeune Naval Hospital. This model is designed to better meet the shifting eating habits of on-the-go

customers while still providing restaurant quality food. This partnership has resulted in an 11 percent increase in sales for the operator.

*This model is designed to better meet the shifting eating habits of on-the-go customers while still providing restaurant quality food.*



*DSB's Business Enterprises Program has re-established the BEP training facility which also serves as a functional café on the Dorothea Dix Campus in Raleigh, NC!*

The NC DSB Business Enterprise Program Training Facility, The Dix Cafe, held its grand opening on Friday, Aug. 10, 2018 on the Dorothea Dix Campus in Raleigh. NC Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mandy Cohen, MD, was onsite to assist NC DSB Director Cynthia Speight and DSB Business Enterprise Chief William Webb at the Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.

The Cafe is a project of the Division of Services for the Blind's Business Enterprises Program and will be used to provide classroom and hands-on training for individuals who are legally blind to prepare them for a career in the foodservice and vending industry.

DSB Director Cynthia Speight describes the cafe as, "a venue for the hands-on portion of the Business Enterprises Program training that also serves as a great food option for Dix campus staff and visitors."

Cafe hours are 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on state work days. Its menu includes smoothies, wraps, salads and sandwiches. The first group of students is expected to begin training at the Dix Café in January 2019.

## DSB *Rehabilitation Center for the Blind* and Evaluation Unit



*Students at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (College Prep program)*

The North Carolina Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (the Center) and Evaluation Unit are located on the campus of the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh. Consumers at the Center receive the opportunity to participate in assessments of their rehabilitation needs, general vocational evaluations and hands-on training to help them develop personal and pre-vocational goals, and skills needed to obtain, regain, maintain and advance employment, as well as increase independent living skills. Evaluation and skills training areas available at the Center

include specialized vocational and psychological testing, work readiness skills, low vision services, assistive technology assessments and training in the use of adaptive equipment, personal and home management skills, safe travel skills, recreation therapy, leisure education, and community awareness and integration, among others.

### The DSB Evaluation Unit

The DSB Evaluation Unit (EU) continues to serve the needs of DSB VR field staff and their consumers. The EU provides valuable psychological, vocational, and low vision

evaluations to aide consumers and their VR Counselors in determining their employment goals. These evaluations give consumers, many who lack confidence in their ability to return to employment, insight into their skills and abilities, and guidance regarding the employment options that may be available to them, with or without accommodations. The EU utilizes computer-based, “paper and pencil” and hands-on evaluations to provide this information. The EU serves consumers here at the Center and in their home communities.

## ABLE2 WORK

We re-established our relationship with the NC Works program and revitalized the ABLE2 Work program. Participants attended several job fairs and a Wake Tech Employment workshop. Additionally, we began a partnership with Red Hat, Easter Seals UCP and Transitions Lifecare, who have agreed to participate in informational interviews, mock interviews, job shadows, work experiences, etc. The Center started a “careers” closet where students can learn about professional and interview clothing. Those who do not have access to appropriate clothing can pick out an outfit to wear during special events and job interviews. These partnerships and experiences allow the students to practice their employment skills, so they are prepared for employment when they return to their home community. Three consumers participated in work experiences through the ABLE2 Work program and engaged in the following job duties:

- Pre-School Assistant—Assisting teachers with monitoring and interacting with children. Learn about caring for and teaching pre-school age children with disabilities.

- Housekeeping—Vacuuming, dusting, trash collection and other light cleaning duties. Consumer learned a significant amount about what it takes to work in his chosen field and learned skills needed to potentially find employment in this area.
- Assistive Technology Instructor—learned how to develop lesson plans for individuals with various learning abilities and then had an opportunity to test those lesson plans with students.

While completing work experiences, consumers meet with the careers teacher regularly to review their experience and expectations and are given support through O&M, technology and other skill areas as needed. Each consumer learned valuable skills related to their specific vocational goals and general employment skills that can be applied to any career.

## ABLE College Prep

Fourteen ABLE students participated in the college prep class. They were given the opportunity to attend a school tour to NC State University to learn more about disability services and how to advocate for themselves in higher education. Many of these former students have moved on to colleges, including: Wake Tech Community College, Johnston Community College, Fayetteville Tech Community College, UNC-Asheville, and Barton University. College Prep utilizes the textbook *On Course: Strategies for Creating Success in College and in Life*.

## Star ABLE Student:

Our star ABLE student chose to come to the Rehabilitation Center for the ABLE

program to learn the skills she needed to continue to manage a business with her husband after losing vision. This consumer knew her goals from the moment she entered the program and did not waiver from them. She was an active participant in all of her classes and regularly practiced skills while not at the Center. While at the Center, she demonstrated leadership skills. She was a skilled advocate for her needs, as well as the needs of others. Staff regularly observed her providing guidance to new consumers when they arrived to the Center, whether it was physical guidance around the campus or providing emotional support. This individual graduated from the ABL program in the spring with the skills she needs to achieve her goals.

## SAVVY

The 2018 SAVVY Summer program theme was “An Incredible Adventure.” Participants were provided opportunities to engage in classes, workshops and recreation activities that promoted creativity, accountability, teamwork, and self-advocacy. Opportunities for innovative thinking, self-responsibility, leadership development, conflict resolution and effective communication were bountiful, and woven into the daily schedule of activities. Participants also worked on enhancing goal setting, time management,

interpersonal skills and daily living skills in a fun, exciting and educational setting. These skills were reinforced during the afternoon workshops and evening recreational activities.

## Youth in Transition (YIT)

The 2018 SAVVY Youth in Transition (YIT) program was another year of success. Thirteen students participated in four weeks of classes and activities aimed at increasing their independence. The students were given the opportunity to participate in all eight offered classes, attending two weeks in four classes and two weeks in the remaining four classes.

The classes offered included: Assistive Technology/Computers, Education, Braille, Cooking Skills, Techniques of Daily Living, Consumer Education, Orientation and Mobility and Careers. During the final day presentations, YIT students reported that participating in all eight classes exposed them to skills and ideas they thought they had already mastered, instead, they discovered there

was still much to learn and they were able to take these new skills back with them to their homes and schools.



*SAVVY student at museum presenting information to museum patrons*



## World of Work (WOW)

Nine teens participated in the WOW program. They spent three days preparing for work, participating in various activities learning about job expectations, time management, appropriate behaviors and inappropriate behaviors on the worksite, networking, communication, and transportation to the worksites.

### **2018 Summer Worksite Placements included:**

- **Carlie C's:** Involved organizing items on shelves, replacing misplaced items, assisting customers when needed, and light cleaning
- **RLCB:** Light assembly work
- **Habitat for Humanity Raleigh ReStore (two students):** Assisted customers bagging items at the register, answered store phone answering questions and directed calls, reorganized merchandise displays, dusted/cleaned furniture, unloaded trucks of donations, assembled and disassembled donations, as needed
- **NC Museum of Natural Science (two students):** Located and tested beacons throughout the museum, supported museum staff in updating accessibility for visually impaired museum patrons
- **Contemporary Art Museum (two students):** Consisted of light clerical work, prepared and provided support for school group activities visiting the museum
- **Amedeo's Restaurant:** Supported staff in preparation for lunch rush

## College Prep (CP)

Three teens participated in the 2018 SAVVY College Prep. The program emphasized exposure to soft skills that are vital to success in college and the work force, such as taking responsibility, making effective decisions, setting goals, managing time, prioritizing tasks, persevering, putting forth your best effort, working well in teams, communicating effectively, having empathy, knowing how to learn, exhibiting self-control, and believing in one's own self-worth. Students used the skills they were exposed to while participating in the Eye Retreat where they conducted a research project at NCSU on the accessibility of the Talley Student Union and presented their results and recommendations to the group. Field trips were taken to NC State University, Wake Technical Community College and Campbell University. All of those trips included visits to the institutions' various disability service centers and AT centers, if applicable.

During the evenings, the teens from YIT, WOW and CP participated in a variety of engaging activities and outings. The activities provided opportunities to build self-confidence, social skills and knowledge about society from the perspective of a visually impaired student. For the first time, the SAVVY students were able to attend a Durham Bulls baseball game. Many of the students utilized their adaptive equipment, which allowed them to follow the game play-by-play and enhance their overall experience. For many of the SAVVY students, this was their first time attending a professional sporting event.

## Star SAVVY Student:

One student stood out in both the Youth in Transition and College Prep programs of SAVVY. This young man participated in first two weeks of YIT and stood out as a young man who was well spoken and able to advocate for his needs in a positive and professional manner. He was open to new experiences, such as riding the train for the first time independently, was always friendly and polite with his peers, and willing to help anyone who needed it. Half-way through the SAVVY Program, he was given the opportunity to transition to the College Prep program, even though he was not yet a high school graduate. He jumped at this opportunity, and quickly was able to integrate himself into the already established College Prep Class, where he engaged in all discussions and completed the homework that was assigned. This highly motivated individual planned to use the skills he learned to help him in his senior year and prepare him for life after high school.

## Guest Speakers

During this past year, the Center invited a number of motivational speakers to address the consumers regarding visual impairments and vocational skills in the workplace. Speakers included Kelly Trimyer, Business Owner of Duck Donuts; Vicky Coerper, HRC Consultant with Learning and Organizational Development from UNC Rex Healthcare; Eddie Weaver, former DSB Director, and Ben Gerald, Accountant at BB&T Bank for 24 years. Topics included returning to college, interviewing skills, vocational skills, job readiness and employment. Consumers were provided opportunities to engage in lively exchange

and dialogue with speakers during and after sessions.

The Center also invited Pat Davis, Benefits Specialist, to speak with the Center students about returning to work while receiving SSI or SSDI. She provided information on the benefits of returning to employment and the work incentives available to support employment. Students were given an opportunity to ask questions in a group and meet with her one-on-one regarding their individual concerns.

## New Technology Acquisitions

Android accessibility has been added to the Mobile Devices class curriculum. AT is also incorporating more Bluetooth keyboard commands for iOS and Android devices. The O&M and AT staff were introduced to the APH (American Printing House for the Blind) Joy Player as a simple tool to assist clients with utilizing assistive technology through digital audio recordings to support programming, instructions and learning. An article entitled, *The Joy Player as an Adult Learning Tool*, was featured on APH's Fred's Head blog.

The Center recently purchased a P.I.A.F. (Pictures in a Flash) device. In conjunction with specialized, micro-encapsulated paper, the device serves to produce tactile graphics for clients to obtain information in an accessible manner through use of tactile sense. For example, the P.I.A.F. is a great way to produce simple tactile graphic maps of the campus or a section of a residential area that enables the client to get a preview or review of the area to be traveled on for O&M instructional practice.

The Center has offered instruction in Braille technology for a number of years. A new addition to our inventory this year was the APH Orbit Reader 20 Braille notetaker, which is much more accessible and less expensive than a classic Braille writer. This device serves as both a Braille writer and a computer. The notetaker may also be available for the students with quota funds. In class, the students are excited when they can feel the Braille on the display much easier than Braille-produced on paper. The machine is paired instantly to their iPads or iPhones, so there is access to all the apps in Braille on the display. Beginning students in Braille can save their work on a SD card on the device when they start learning Braille. Experienced Braille readers can save their college essays. It is an exciting time in the dot world of Braille.

## Technology Resource Center and Low Vision Technology

The Technology Resource Center acquired three new mobile digital magnifiers that blend the heartiness of desktop magnification with the mobility better suited for today's fast-paced college and vocational worlds. Included in this acquisition is the Freedom Scientific Onyx HD Portable (a device that connects to a laptop or external monitor to provide users the ability to magnify objects on their desktop and at a distance, and even translate printed materials in to audible OCR content for easier browsing), the HIMS e-Bot Advanced (providing a more stable table top camera with built in OCR that can be viewed through an external monitor, laptop computer, or iPad tablet), and the LVI MagniLink Zip Pro (a full sized desktop digital magnifier that can be folded up and

fit into a bag for easy transport and sporting a desktop and distance camera, a fully functioning XY-table, the option of Optical Character Recognition, and up to six-hour battery life). These cutting-edge devices will be demonstrated and recommended for consumers to broaden their opportunities for success.

The Low Vision Clinic, in partnership with the Technology Resource Center, acquired two new head-borne technologies, the OrCam and IrisVision. These technologies are worn on the head or over the eyes to provide enhanced visual and/or audio description of a person's environment. These items are being demonstrated to individuals referred for an assessment with them as part of a pilot project.

The Technology Resource Center also procured 12 new iPads that are being used to modernize how students access their instruction. Purchased for use with the SAVVY summer program to teach and reinforce the use of VoiceOver on Apple iOS devices, the iPads have already served as an access point for consumers in the ABLE program to read instructional materials and keep track of their personal progress in other AT classes. These will continue to be pivotal as the AT staff explore avenues for digital instruction to better prepare consumers to interact with today's technology-saturated workplaces.

## Independent Living Week

The Center held a residential week-long independent living program in April for adults that are visually impaired or blind. Sixteen participants received special train-

ing in techniques of daily living, cooking, orientation and mobility, Braille, assistive technology, self-defense, and much more. Informational and interactive workshops included: disability rights, self-advocacy, tai chi/yoga, and relaxation. The participants enjoyed attending various recreational activities, including arts and crafts, fitness and games, shopping, and bowling, which gave them opportunities to socialize and engage in community-based activities.

## NEST

Each year, the Center hosts the New Employee Sensitivity Training (NEST) in the fall and spring. The employees are provided the opportunity to experience aspects of the Center's training programs and are exposed to the skills essential for working with people with a visual impairment. The skills training included areas such as cooking and home management, orientation and mobility, Braille, adaptive computer usage, careers, college prep, consumer education and recreational therapy, as well as sessions on the psychological effects of visual impairment, diabetes, low vision concerns and adaptations, issues related to deaf-blindness, business enterprises and 1Touch (self-defense). The employees reside on campus and engage in evening campus and community activities of choice. This year, the Center hosted 21 participants during fall 2017 and 22 in spring 2018. For the first time, the Center hosted a special Mini Center Instructor NEST in May 2018 in order to accommodate the increasing numbers of individuals needing training.

## Training Highlights

The Rehabilitation Center recognized the need for additional trainings throughout the

year, due to the increase in consumers with secondary disabilities and increased barriers to employment. These were one-hour trainings on topics that included social, economic, and environmental barriers to educational and vocational progress; behaviors that impact learning and performance in education and employment (best practices for working with individuals with traumatic brain injuries (a collaboration with Community Partnerships Brain Injury Support Services). Additional trainings are scheduled for 2019.

In January 2018, the Orientation and Mobility staff attended the inaugural International Orientation and Mobility Online Symposium. Professionals from the US, Canada, India and London presented on a variety of topics from a global perspective. The International O&M Online Symposium introduced O&M staff to the emerging technology specific to our field in the form of beacons. Beacons are small devices that use Bluetooth wireless signals to connect to user's phones via navigational apps, which allow the app user to receive information on their position relative to a fixed location. Staff learned about how to program these devices with information, costs and how they project out information for O&M purposes. The World of Work students in our SAVVY summer program assigned to the NC Science Museum were able to use this training to get beacons up and running for the museum. Orientation and Mobility instructors worked with these students on the beacons and then trained other SAVVY O&M students to use beacon systems through the BlindSquare app. Students traveled to the museum and were able to use the Beacons created by our students to navigate the museum.

International O&M Online Symposium sessions were presented by a panel of O&M Specialists on analyzing intersections with no traffic controls and the procedure for making judgments on whether to cross which utilized Dona Sauerburger's AER-adopted techniques. This presentation helped participants to apply relatively new techniques for handling these types of crossings. The experience in this workshop has informed guided instruction for Center consumers over the past year.

In April, one of our O&M instructors attended an Orientation and Mobility Seminar at Guiding Eyes for the Blind (GEB) located in Yorktown Heights, NY. This seminar included presentations by various GEB staff. Staff learned about their application process and requirements, their special needs program and their new running dog program. O&M's also had hands-on learning opportunities, where each participant walked several routes wearing a blindfold to experience guide dog travel. They learned what skills GEB is looking for when assessing individuals for a guide dog, so instructors can target these skills during their O&M lessons. O&M's have shared information regarding their running dog programs with clients. The blindfold experience provided participants the knowledge of techniques used when traveling with a dog guide and they were able to recognize bad habits with consumers and correct their technique to improve how they travel with their guide dog.

At this year's Center annual in-service training, staff learned a variety of skills to assist them in working with DSB consumers in the most effective manner. One topic was cultural competence training presented by

Fiorella Horna, owner of Fiorella Consulting and Training Services (FCTS). This training challenged the Center staff to analyze and consider their own biases in order to keep these from unknowingly impacting how they serve others. FCTS states that this training "helps organizations and people grow their capacity to build and sustain equitable, self-reliant, culturally/racially unified, viable communities."

Staff also participated in two Leading at All Level trainings, presented by OSHR trained staff. These included servicing customers in the public sector and ethics.

One-Touch Coaches renewed their annual certifications. They continue to provide One-Touch Self Defense for the Blind training to SAVVY and ABLE students, along with DSB staff during NEST and throughout the year, during other DSB sponsored trainings.

## University Partnerships

North Carolina Central University (NCCU) has initiated a new program for Orientation and Mobility, and we are collaborating with the university to provide field experiences for students and sponsor student interns at the Center for practical experiences. In spring 2018, the Rehabilitation Center hosted a student intern from NCCU.

The Center continues to partner with UNC-CH in providing opportunities for students to visit and tour the Center, and also observe the consumers as they participate in their programs. During the spring, the Medical Aspects of Disabilities class of 24 students were provided a tour of our training center and engaged in brief Q&As with the instructors. A short presentation

from the Low Vision Program Specialist was also provided. During the fall, four masters level rehabilitation counseling students observed “A Day in The Life” of our consumers participating in the ABLE program. Students were assigned a consumer to shadow in various classes, such as Braille, Techniques of Daily Living, Assistive Technology and Orientation and Mobility. Interviews were also conducted with staff regarding their vocational rehabilitation role at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind.

## Special Events

Each spring, the NCAA basketball tournament is held. For many fans, previewing and keeping up with the tournament is easy, simply by following the print bracket that is available through various news media outlets. But for those who experience either difficulty or impaired access to regular print, the traditional text version is not accessible. This situation is representative of the types of problems many of our Center ABLE students encounter. Staff and students worked together to develop

a large tactile graphic representation of the NCAA basketball tournament bracket. The tactile graphic utilized braille (uncontracted), large-print, raised lines, color and textures to allow clients with varying degrees of vision impairment and Braille knowledge to access the bracket. The Braille Instructor frequently took the students to the hallway to visit the bracket to practice reading braille. The NCAA tactile graphics bracket was recognized and featured on the Paths to Literacy website.

During the spring, staff participated in fund-raising for the Foundation Fighting Blindness Vision Walk. The fund-raising is capped off with a walk that brings together many Triangle VI community organizations and friends who strive to make a difference in supporting the research and development of treatment and cures for retina disease related visual impairments. Team DSB raised over \$1,300 topping its initial goal to raise \$1,000.

## DSB Rehabilitation Center for the Blind 2017-2018 Outcomes

### *DSB Evaluation Unit:*

- **50** *Total consumers received EU services*
- **35** *General evaluations*
- **26** *Low vision evaluations*
- **7** *Psychological-only evaluations*
- **3** *Vocational-only evaluations*
- **3** *Rehabilitation Center teacher evaluations*

### *DSB Rehabilitation Center:*

- **48** *VR eligible individuals received training in the Adapting to Blindness in a Learning Environment program*
- **26** *Teens were provided transition services through the SAVVY Youth in Transition, College Prep and World of Work programs*
- **39** *Individuals received assessments by classroom instructors*
- **317** *Psychological-only evaluations*
- **24** *Individuals received low vision evaluations and/or low vision therapy*

## *DSB Independent Living Rehabilitation and Independent Living Older Blind Programs*

The DSB ILR and ILOB programs have had a full and exciting year, and are now fully staffed with 14 Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselors (ILRC's) working across the state covering all 100 counties. As another year ends, the need for assistive technology training continues. Subsequently, we have more district offices offering iPad training to meet the growing demand of our consumers. This year, we had six iPad Mini Centers that served 70 consumers. There is a lot of interest from our consumers on voice-controlled smart speakers (Echo Dot, Google Home Mini). The introduction of these devices is driving the need for more technology training.

In April, 16 consumers participated in an Independent Living Week at the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind in Raleigh. This program allowed consumers to receive

training in assistive technology, orientation and mobility, self-defense, techniques of daily living, and much more. The consumers learned a lot in a short length of time and enjoyed their week. We are already planning to hold this program again in 2019.

This year, the ILRC's also received one-week training on several topics that are trending in human services today. Some of the topics were mental health first aid, opioids, naloxone and pain management, de-escalation training, and falls prevention.

The ILR and ILOB programs also collaborated with the Vocational Rehabilitation program on one Youth Mini Center for nine Pre-Employment Transition Services consumers.

### DSB ILR an ILOB 2018 Outcomes

- **115 eligible individuals served - 384 ILR and 731 ILOB**
- **401 eligible individuals rehabilitated**
- **34 Mini Centers held**
- **438 eligible individuals attended Mini Centers**



## *Moving Forward from a Catastrophic Injury*

After suffering a gunshot wound to the head in 2016, Chad was referred to DSB. Surviving and recovering from this ordeal involved regaining full control of his limbs and extremities, finding ways to be mobile in his community and emotionally coming to terms with the trauma. He did not, however, regain everything. He lost both of his eyes, presently has seizures and has undergone many difficult surgeries. In addition to the incident, he continues to deal with long-term mental health challenges including mood disorders, PTSD and ophophobia (fear of crowds).

His DSB Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor (ILRC) found him straightforward and forthcoming with his many struggles when she first met him in 2017. During an initial meeting with his ILRC, he described his life's passions, including his background in art and tattoo artistry. In the course of this home visit, his counselor noticed a considerable-sized slab of wood with art etchings and sketches throughout. When she inquired about the artist who created it, Chad indicated that it was an attempt he made to engage in artistic work since after his accident. His counselor recognized how critically important art work was to him and began exploring options for him to pursue these types of endeavors. She offered to research any assistive devices that may help him. As

his values were acknowledged, his comfort level increased and he engaged more freely with the process. He identified goals he wanted to address, including connecting to community resources and community integration, exploring leisure interests,

assistive technology, self-care, adaptive kitchen techniques, communication skills and more.

During a relatively short amount of time since his traumatic injury and connection to DSB, Chad has participated with orientation and mobility training to become more comfortable moving about his community. He has excelled in this training and has been referred for a guide dog. His willingness and ability to engage in the community, including attending his church, has increased. He continues to pursue artistic expres-

sions using various mediums, such as textured art and tactile paints, as well as using assistive devices. In his home, he increased his independence and can engage in basic food preparation and cleaning. Chad also participated in the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind's Independent Living Week, moved to a safer neighborhood and continues to engage resources for maintaining positive mental health. He is actively learning new skills, including the use of a screen reader on the computer, learning Braille and he acquired a smart phone which he uses for many purposes, including navigation assistance.



## DSB *Independent Living Services*

The Division of Services for the Blind is unique and fortunate to have 54 social workers on staff who are primarily located in the local Department of Social Services offices throughout the state. Social workers provide services to eligible individuals who are visually impaired, blind, and deaf/blind to assist them in managing daily living activities with the intent of reducing or preventing institutional care. The services are offered in all 100 counties of the state. During SFY 2018, 4,520 consumers received adjustment services (counseling, basic instruction in adaptive techniques for daily living and assistive devices), assistance in securing health services available through Medicaid, Medicare or other public/private providers and arranging in-home assistance provided by aides who assist with minor tasks within the home to enable eligible individuals to continue to live safely within

their homes. Most of the services provided are without regard to income and at no cost to the consumer. However, in-home aide assistance is a financial needs-based service. Twenty-five individuals benefited from this service during the 2018 SFY.

Social workers also cultivate relationships with other agencies and organizations to advocate for the specialized needs of consumers and their families. They work with local agencies to identify resources and build support systems within the community that are so important for individuals who are blind, visually impaired or deaf-blind, such as home health, targeted housing and mental health agencies, support groups, civic groups, doctors, charities, disability advocates, senior centers, adult care facilities, hospitals, community colleges, food banks and local school systems.

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### Adjustment Services

The social workers for the blind are on the front line in DSB to find the people who are struggling with their vision loss within their respective communities and counties who have vision loss, and are no longer able to function in their homes by being totally reliant on their vision to do so. Little successes can have a huge impact on a person's quality of life, who are living and struggling with vision loss. So many times, the social workers are told how much of an impact being able to set the dials on their ovens, microwaves, thermostats and telling time have made in their lives because they are now able to prepare a meal and do laundry

without the assistance of another person. By utilizing basic cooking techniques and adaptive aids, preparing a meal is no longer something of the past. Being able to locate the numbers on a telephone and dial without the use of vision enables them to call and schedule their own medical appointments. The ability to learn to pay bills and manage money in private is an area of independence so often reported to the social workers as being important and missed after vision loss. These are just a few things we take for granted until lost.

With the help of social workers, people who might otherwise become isolated due to vision loss are able to interact with others in support group settings across the state. They learn to function more independently by taking on roles of responsibility within the group settings and establishing strong friendship bases with others who are ex-

periencing some of the same challenges. Throughout the group process, teaching and learning take place by the sharing of success stories. The social workers are often told by their consumers that feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, and isolation are alleviated or may have altogether become a thing of the past!

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## Success Stories

The stories below concerning our Social Workers for the Blind are examples of the dedication our SWB's have for the visually impaired consumers of the State of North Carolina. With minimal funding, the Social Workers often think outside the box to make sure the consumers do not fall through the cracks.



*Service Dog helps Kings Mountain Teacher, Shelby Star Newspaper in Shelby, NC*

### **DSB and Guide Dog Improved Outlook on Life**

Tina Mallén cannot always see what is right in front of her, but a new guide dog has changed the way she looks at life. Juno, her new black lab, helps her get around in a way a cane never could.

Mallén began working with the NC Services for the Blind through the NC Department of Health and Human Services in 2012. It was a big step, but one Mallén was skeptical to take since she was not totally blind.

The Kings Mountain teacher quickly found useful services. DSB helped her with resources for preparing food at home, keeping productive at work despite declining vision, and orientation mobility classes that taught her how to use a cane.

But even as she adapted to her visual obstacles, Mallén tried to avoid obstacles like crowded school hallways and stairs.

Lucy Plyler, a DSB social worker for the blind, suggested a guide dog. It was another idea that took Mallén time to warm up to but hearing about a friend's experience with one helped convince her.

Mallén worked with Guiding Eyes for the Blind for around a year. The process involved applications, interviews, studies, and training. Since working with Juno in October, Mallén's life has changed.

“Having the dog, she's been able to realize that, ‘Wow, I can do this by myself now. I've never been able to do that,’” Plyler said. Like many who experience losses in sight, Mallén initially had fears about how her life would be impacted. Plyler said her goal is to help people realize that they can adapt. “It's just a matter of changing your mindset,” Plyler said. “Instead of giving up and doing nothing, it means, ‘I can still do this. I just have to do things a little differently.’”

One of Mallén's major worries along the way was that retinitis pigmentosa would prevent her from continuing the job she loved at Kings Mountain High.

But now Mallén said she thanks God for the help that the Division of Services for the Blind have provided her, and the way her family, friends, school staff and administration and students have helped her through the process.

### **Independence at Home Equals Success!**

A consumer was at-risk for placement in a skilled nursing facility because she was not able to manage her medication properly (i.e. incorrect dosage or medication, taking her medication too early, etc.). The consumer was trying to be compliant with her medication, and the family was working with her as much as they could, but the consumer still had several hospitalizations from unregulated medication usage.

SWB, Greg Morgan was able to work with the family and acquired an automatic pill dispenser for the consumer. He was able to train the family on loading the medication in the pill dispenser and on setting the time on the alarm. Up to four times a day, the pill dispenser would sound an alarm, alerting the consumer that it was time to take that dose of medications. The alarm would sound, and the medication tray would open allowing the consumer to access the pre-loaded medication. The alarm would not cease until unit was flipped over, allowing the medication to be poured into the consumer's hand. The training for loading the medication and setting the initial medication schedule was extensive for the family and the consumer, but the consumer has not had any medication issues requiring hospitalization since the unit was provided and has been able to remain in her home.

## DSB *Medical Eye Care Program Services*

The Medical Eye Care Program's goal is to provide services to help save or restore sight and prevent blindness. The program offers financial assistance for individuals who have no comparable benefits and limited resources to pay for medication, eye treatments and surgeries. These services are rendered by our Nurse Eye Care Consultants. During SFY 2018, 865 Medical Eye Care

services were authorized for eligible North Carolinians. This program utilizes state funds only.

The Nurse Eye Care Consultants also provide additional services that are not based on income eligibility. The services include but are not limited to low vision screenings, evaluations for video magnification systems, and diabetes education.

*The program's goal is to provide services to help save or restore sight and prevent blindness.*

### DSB Medical Eye Care Program 2018 Outcomes

- **1,827** *individuals were provided low vision services*
- **865** *Eye Exams and Treatments and/or Surgeries sponsored*
- **27** *Eyeglasses Purchased*
- **1,989** *Children screened for Amblyopia and other vision defects*
- **473** *Diabetic Education sessions provided*
- **25** *Chore Served*
- **236** *Outreach Activities*
- **583** *Referred to Outside Counseling Agencies*

## NC Division of Services for the Blind VR Staff



## New DSB Staff



## How to Contact DSB

Administration:  
(866) 222-1546

Office of the Director:  
(919) 527-6700

Aids and Appliances:  
(919) 527-6770

Business Enterprises Program:  
(919) 527-6790

Communications Unit (for materials in  
alternate format):  
(919) 527-6760

Evaluation Unit:  
(919) 527-6800

Independent Living Services:  
(919) 527-6780

Medical Eye Care Program:  
(919) 527-6780

Rehabilitation Center for the Blind:  
(919) 527-6800

Rehabilitation Services:  
(919) 527-6711

- Vocational Rehabilitation Program
- Deaf/Blind Services
- Independent Living Rehabilitation Program
- Supported Employment Services
- VR Business Services
- School to Work Transition Services
- Rehabilitation Engineer
- Staff Development

Technology Resource Center:  
(919) 527-6698

DHHS Customer Call Center  
1-800-622-7030 for access to a  
Spanish Interpreter

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dsb>

## District Office Locations

### Asheville

50 South French Broad Avenue  
Asheville, NC 28801  
(828) 251 6732  
1 (800) 422 1881

### Charlotte

5501 Executive Center Drive,  
Suite 102  
Charlotte, NC 28212  
(704) 563-4168  
1 (800) 422 1895

### Fayetteville

225 Green Street  
Fayetteville, NC 28301  
(910) 486 1582  
1 (800) 422 1897

### Greenville

404 St. Andrews Drive  
Greenville, NC 27834  
(252) 355 9016  
1 (800) 422 1877

### Raleigh

307 Ashe Avenue  
Raleigh, NC 27606  
(919) 527 6740  
1 (800) 422 1871

### Wilmington

3240 Burnt Mill Road,  
Suite 7  
Wilmington, NC 28403  
(910) 251-5743  
1 (800) 422 1884

### Winston Salem

4265 Brownsboro Road,  
Suite 100  
Winston Salem, NC 27106  
(336) 896-2227  
1 (800) 422 0373  
TDD: (336) 896-7047



*Fisher Building, Governor Morehead Campus, Raleigh, NC*

The North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) has a long and rich history of providing specialized and individualized services to people who are blind, visually impaired and deaf-blind. Established in 1935, with the assistance of Helen Keller, the NC Lions Foundation, the Governor Morehead School for the Blind and others, DSB offers an array of programs and supportive services funded with federal, state and county resources. The division provides services statewide covering all 100 counties, through staff located in seven district offices, third party agreements with local Departments of Social Services offices and county school systems, and through the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind. DSB continues to strive to meet the needs of visually impaired, blind, and deaf-blind North Carolinians to assist them with reaching their goals of independence and employment. According to the American Federation for the Blind as of 2015, North Carolina was home to 270,685 citizens with some level of visual impairment or blindness. According to the Centers for Disease control (CDC), the leading causes of blindness and low vision in the United States is primarily “age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy, and glaucoma.” DSB works with clients that are dealing with all of these conditions and more. We are committed to making sure that such a diagnosis is not the end of a person’s story. It, instead, is a call to innovate.

A chance to create an opportunity. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act gives strength and structure to that mission and overall goal. DSB is on board and making lives better day by day!





NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**  
Division of Services for the Blind

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