

# Washington

## State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

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October 2016 - September 2017

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Department of Services for the Blind  
[www.dsb.wa.gov](http://www.dsb.wa.gov) • [info@dsb.wa.gov](mailto:info@dsb.wa.gov) • (800) 552-7103

## 2017 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND ANNUAL REPORT

The State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB) presents our 2017 Annual Report. It highlights our collaboration and partnership efforts along with the accomplishments of our primary partner, the Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB).

The SRCB met 4 times in Seattle during 2017. All meetings were advertised in advance and open to the public in person or using a toll free phone conferencing system. In addition to special presentations and subcommittee updates, meetings included a report from the DSB Executive Director about progress towards goals outlined in the state plan and a report from the SRCB Chair summarizing Council activities. The agenda always offered an opportunity for public comment on subjects related to Council business including the Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living Programs, and issues impacting the employment or independence of blind Washington State citizens. The SRCB received public comment at each meeting and did not hold community forums on specific topics in 2017. Key agenda items this year included:

- Budget and fiscal presentation from DSB's CFO.
- DSB's role and relationship to the State Workforce Board; DSB is a required partner in the Workforce System but does not have representation on the Workforce Board.
- OTC Capstone Projects; the Council wanted to know how the Capstone projects were unique and how they challenged the students.
- An IT update on the business management system replacement including legislative budget request and implementation strategy. This system replaces the existing case management and business system which is no longer supported. It is an off-the-shelf system and will require many business and process changes for DSB.
- Staff recruitment to provide support for the SRCB after Deb Cook's upcoming retirement.
- BEP challenges and opportunities due to increased program costs, shortage of new locations, and BEP operator recruitment.
- Youth Transition activities in Seattle, Spokane and at the School for the Blind in Vancouver.
- Older Blind Program technical assistance opportunity sponsored by the Rehab Services Administration and administered by the RRTC on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University.
- WAC draft review and recommendations necessary to comply with WIOA.

Our DSB staff liaison, Deb Cook, is retiring soon. Following a nationwide recruitment, we recommended Meredith Stannard for this position.

Finally, we said good-bye to Sue Ammeter who has completed her terms on the SRCB, and welcomed new members Corry Grandstaff and Linda Wilder.

Looking ahead to 2018, we anticipate that DSB will adopt revised state regulations for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program with our input, we will continue to interact with the Washington Workforce Board over important issues that impact services for blind and low vision citizens seeking training and employment, we will survey customer satisfaction with DSB services, we will continue to recruit new members, we will have new staff support, and we will tell our story through an annual report.

### WHAT IS THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND (SRCB?)

The SRCB is appointed by the Washington State Governor to provide counsel and guidance to the DSB. The SRCB reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations to DSB on its plans, policies, and activities to insure that blind or visually impaired people in our state receive the most effective and efficient rehabilitation services possible. In addition to providing direction to the Director of DSB on behalf of the public and consumers, the SRCB also advises and reports to the Governor; makes recommendations to the State Legislature about services that impact the lives of blind people; and, works closely with other state councils, agencies and organizations to enhance the services, opportunities, and rights of Washingtonians who are blind. The SRCB is required in the federal Rehabilitation Act under the federal Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, and in Washington State statute (RCW 74.18.070-74.18.100).

SRCB members are passionate volunteers who represent recipients of rehabilitation services, their families, service providers, educators, advocates, and policy makers. We work together and alongside the DSB to promote excellence in service, leading to independence and meaningful employment for blind and visually impaired people in Washington State.

If you would like to be considered for appointment to the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, complete the online application at:

<https://fortress.wa.gov/es/governor/boardsapplication>. Be sure to select "Blind, Rehabilitation Council for". Applications may be submitted at any time. For more information or assistance regarding the application process, please contact Meredith Stannard, SRC for the Blind Liaison, [Meredith.stannard@dsb.wa.gov](mailto:Meredith.stannard@dsb.wa.gov).

GET TO KNOW OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS FOR 2017

SRCB members are appointed by the Governor for no more than two 3-year consecutive terms. The Governor actively encourages us to seek demographic and ethnic diversity in addition to meeting the federal requirements for representation. The Council currently has vacancies for a representative of the State Workforce Board, a Community Rehabilitation provider, and two Labor or Business Representatives.

Members who served during 2017 include:

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SUE AMMETER: CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

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*Port Hadlock, WA*

Sue is a disability civil rights advocate. She worked for the City of Seattle, Washington State, and King County in various advocacy roles before retiring. Sue was SRCB Chair from 2011 through 2016 and is leaving the council after completing two full terms.

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MARCY CARPENTER: CONSUMER ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION

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*Seattle, WA*

Marci is President of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) of Washington. She also serves as Chairperson of the Seattle Transit Advisory Board. She is elected SRCB Chair for 2018.

More information about the NFB of Washington can be found at: <https://www.nfbw.org/>.

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KIM CONNER: WASHINGTON STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC)

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*Olympia, WA*

Kim is Executive Director of the SILC. She previously worked as a consultant providing strategic planning, program development, and partnership building for non-profits and small businesses.

More information about the SILC can be found at: <http://www.wasilc.org/>.

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LOU OMA DURAND: DSB EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (EX-OFFICIO MEMBER)

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*Seattle, WA*

Lou Oma was appointed Executive Director of the DSB in July 2005. Previously she served as Deputy Director, and held other executive and administrative positions at DSB and in industry.

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STEVE FIKSDAL, 2017 SRCB CHAIR: BUSINESS, LABOR AND INDUSTRY

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*Federal Way, WA*

Steve is the owner of ConnectEd Institute, which provides character strength assessment and education to individuals and teams. He is President of Washington Council of the Blind (WCB).

More information about the WCB can be found at: <http://wcbinfo.org/>.

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COREY GRANDSTAFF: CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

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*Vancouver WA*

Corey is a graduate of the University of Northern Colorado. Since 2012, he has been employed at the Washington State School for the Blind (WSSB) as a Residential Program Assistant and teacher. Corey is joining us as we end 2017.

More information about the WSSB can be found at: <https://www.wssb.wa.gov>.

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JERRY JOHNSEN: CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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*Seattle, WA*

Jerry has been Client Assistance Program (CAP) director for 38 years. He also serves on the DVR SRC and the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE.).

More information about the CAP can be found at: <http://www.washingtoncap.org/>.

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TRACY KAHLO: PARENT INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTER

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*Tacoma, WA*

Tracy has a Master's in Not-for-Profit Leadership from Seattle University. She has served as the Executive Director of Partnerships for Action, Voices for Empowerment (PAVE) since 2008.

More information about PAVE can be found at: <https://wapave.org/>.

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EVA L. DE LEON: QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

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*Seattle, WA*

Eva worked at DSB as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor nearly 14 years. She now works at the University of Washington, Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER) as a Training and Information Specialist. Eva chose not to apply for a second term on the SRCB due to other commitments.

More information about CCER can be found at: <http://ccer.org/>.

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NATE MARSHALL: COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM

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*Tacoma, WA*

Nate has served two full terms as the CRP representative. We will miss his enthusiasm and his thoughtful contributions. We are actively recruiting for someone to serve in this position.

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TIM PAULDING: CURRENT OR FORMER RECIPIENT OF VR SERVICES

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*Spokane, WA*

Tim is an Orientation and Mobility instructor at the Lighthouse for the Blind in Spokane. He also contracts with the states of Washington and Idaho, teaching adaptive technology and O&M to children and adults.

More information about the Lighthouse for the Blind can be found at:

<http://thelighthousefortheblindinc.org/>.

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YVONNE THOMAS-MILLER: NATIVE AMERICAN TRIBAL REPRESENTATIVE

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*Bellingham, WA*

Yvonne is employed at the Lummi Vocational Rehabilitation Program as an Outreach Specialist and is certified by the PET-AIR (Post Employment Training-American Indian Rehabilitation program.) Yvonne graduated from Evergreen State University and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

More information about the Lummi Vocational Rehabilitation Program can be found at:

[http://www.lummi-nsn.org/website/dept\\_pages/health/voc\\_rehab.shtml](http://www.lummi-nsn.org/website/dept_pages/health/voc_rehab.shtml).

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DOUG TRIMBLE: STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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*Vancouver, WA*

Doug works at the Washington State School for the Blind teaching Orientation & Mobility to middle and high school students. Doug is also a contracted service provider with the DSB Independent Living Program.

More information about the WSSB can be found at: <https://www.wssb.wa.gov>.

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SHEILA TURNER: REPRESENTING BLIND PEOPLE WHO ARE UNABLE TO REPRESENT THEMSELVES

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*Pasco, WA*

Sheila is employed as the Independent Living Skills teacher at the Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Kennewick. She is working towards dual certification as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialist at the University of Northern Colorado. She is the parent of two children who are blind; one has multiple disabilities.

More information about Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired can be found at: <http://edithbishelcenter.org/>.

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GLORIA WALLING: BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND LABOR

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*Olympia, WA*

Gloria is a licensed operator in the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) where she has managed cafeterias and other locations since 2008. Gloria is also active on the BEP Vender's committee.

More information about the BEP can be found at: <https://dsb.wa.gov/about/business-enterprise-program.shtml-0>.

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LINDA WILDER: QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR

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*Tacoma, WA*

Linda has a Bachelor's degree from Seattle University and a Master's degree from Chapman University. In 2017, Linda retired from DSB after working 30 years as a Vocational rehabilitation Counselor.



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STAFF

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DEBBIE COOK: OUTGOING DSB APPOINTED LIAISON

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*Seattle, WA*

Debbie works for the University of Washington Center on Technology and Disability Studies where she manages several technology and service delivery programs. She also serves on DSB's Executive Team as a consultant. Prior to that, Debbie worked at DSB as a VR Counselor, rehabilitation teacher and program manager. She will retire in March, 2018.

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MEREDITH STANNARD: INCOMING DSB APPOINTED LIAISON

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*Seattle, WA*

Meredith retired recently from DSB as a Regional Area Manager for VR. Prior to this, she was a VR counselor at DSB and at DVR, and served as a supervisor at DVR. She is now bringing her wealth of experience to the SRCB as the new staff liaison.

## COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2017

The SRCB has four standing committees that do the work of the Council. Every member is expected to serve on a committee.

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### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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This committee provides overall leadership, vision, and guidance. It includes the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Chairs of the standing committees. Responsibilities include: coordinating and prioritizing tasks with SRCB staff; monitoring use of resources; planning meeting agendas; strategic planning and work plan development for the SRCB; meeting federal and state mandates on time and within budget; and submitting this Annual Report.

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### MEMBERSHIP AND COLLABORATION COMMITTEE

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This committee works to maintain a strong, active, and high-functioning Council. This includes: member recruitment, training and support; public relations and outreach; and coordination of collaborative activities with partner councils.

In 2017, this committee made recommendations to fill two SRCB vacancies. There will be at least four vacancies to recruit in 2018. They are currently working on a recruitment brochure targeted to potential representatives of business and labor.

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### PROGRAM AND EVALUATION COMMITTEE

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This committee evaluates customer satisfaction and other DSB performance measures, and makes suggestions for program improvement based on findings; coordinates opportunities for public feedback; and drafts the SRCB Annual Report.

This committee oversaw the anonymous satisfaction survey for VR customers closed in the federal fiscal year, conducted on behalf of the SRCB by The University of Washington Center on Technology and Disability Studies. Surveys were completed online or by phone. Questions address categories identified in the Governor's Results Washington initiatives. The target for all satisfaction measures is 80%.

Overall satisfaction: for 2017 was 83%; for 2016 was 78%; for 2015 was 80%

Training offered: for 2017 was 84%; for 2016 was 78%; for 2015 was 80%

Accuracy of staff: for 2017 was 86%; for 2016 was 83%; for 2015 was 84%

Respectfulness of staff: for 2017 was 84%; for 2016 was 83%; for 2015 was 84%

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POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

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This committee provides input to DSB's internal policies and practices by: identifying opportunities to engage in DSB internal workgroups; giving input on policy changes affecting DSB participants; and supporting DSB's State Plan forums.

In 2017, this committee reviewed and commented on draft revisions proposed by DSB for the VR section of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC.) This committee also wrote a letter to the State Workforce Board on behalf of the SRCB regarding DSB's status on the board as a full Workforce partner. They received a response from the Workforce Board indicating that DSB would not be considered for Board membership. The Policy Committee plans to send a follow-up letter requesting that the Board at least consider meeting its federal requirement to appoint a representative to the SRCB.

## DSB PROGRAMS MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITY

### BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR EMPLOYMENT THROUGH SERVICES TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The DSB serves children and youth who are blind or have low vision from birth through their teenage years. DSB provides services geared towards building the foundation for a productive, independent and successful childhood and onto into adulthood. In 2017, 11 children from birth to age 8 received services, including counseling, family consultations, and basic independent living skills. An additional 62 children, age 9 through 13, received services, including job explorations and self-advocacy opportunities. DSB sponsored week-long camps in Mt. Vernon, Seattle, Spokane, and Vancouver for more than a dozen students ages 9 through 13. The focus of the camps were on the expanded core curriculum: independent living skills, recreation, technology, and orientation and mobility.

Children and Families webpage: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/children-and-families.shtml>.

### A NATIONWIDE EMPHASIS ON YOUTH TRANSITION

A national emphasis in the VR program includes services to ensure smooth transition for youth who are moving from school to post-secondary activities. DSB helps students, age 9 to 24, and their families think about and plan for life after high school. The DSB provides:

- Career counseling including part-time employment and internships
- Assessments to help students determine their interests for future careers.
- Information regarding services for adults, including job counseling and training in the adaptive skills of blindness such as Braille, use of computer adaptations, independent travel, personal management skills etc.
- Collaboration with students, parents, and high school staff on IEP development and post-school activities
- 4 summer programs are available for students in transition, as well as a growing handful of day long programs. Programs have different focuses depending on the age of the participants. The youngest participants are working on social skills and the oldest participants are taking college classes and working part time while living on campus.

In 2017, DSB provided a variety of services in addition to the summer programs to 82 youth. Of all individuals who currently have an open VR Transition case, the average age at the time of application is 17 years old, with more than half of them applying at age 16 or younger. DSB assisted 156 participants with their higher education tuition.

School to Work Transition webpage: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/school-work-transition.shtml>

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## PEOPLE WORKING AND KEEPING THEIR JOBS

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DSB's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is for blind and low vision people who are interested in getting a job or keeping one. The comprehensive program considers the needs of each individual and provides quality services to customers rather than just placing people in jobs. DSB consistently gets higher wages than most other VR programs and consistently has the highest ratio of individuals who earn enough to reduce or eliminate Social Security financial benefits. Services are wide-ranging and participants are expected to take an active role. Participants often need training in adaptive skills of blindness, computer technology for on-the-job success, career exploration and matching, or internships and other work experiences.

At the end of 2017, 133 participants achieved successful employment outcomes with an average hourly wage of \$19.14. 7 of them are Honorably Discharged Veterans. 65 participants now have all of their medical health insurance paid by their employers. And, the oldest participant, who needed help retaining employment as a real estate broker, was 83 years old.

A complete list of jobs and employers can be found online; a few examples of employers include Boeing; Boundless Assistive Technology; Community Colleges of Spokane; Federal Way Public Schools; Lowe's Company, Inc.; Northwest Access Fund, Ocean Gold Seafood, Port Townsend Homeless Shelter, U.S. Postal Service, and Wenatchee Wild Hockey.

VR Services Website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/services/employment.shtml>

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## OTC GRADUATES GET SKILLS TO BECOME CONFIDENT, INDEPENDENT, AND SUCCESSFUL

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The Orientation and Training Center offers both residential and day programs for VR customers who need intensive instruction in adaptive skills of blindness and employment-related experiences in order to achieve their employment goals. Students participate in a variety of classes, including Home Management, using computer applications, and independent travel. Challenge Activities, like tandem bike riding, help students apply their skills and build confidence. These skills and experiences help them prepare for independence and success at home, in school, on the job, and in their communities. In 2017, the OTC served 65 students, including 2 students who studied English as a Second Language.

As part of the program, three students participated in a Student Training Employment Program (STEP) internship. One was as a cook at a Business Enterprise Program site, one was as a Production Worker at the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind, and the last was an assistant at the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library.

OTC's website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/orientation-and-training-center.shtml>

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#### LEGALLY-BLIND INDIVIDUALS ARE INDEPENDENT ENTREPRENEURS

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The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides training and opportunities for qualified legally blind individuals to become independent entrepreneurs who operate successful food service businesses, including delis, cafeterias, and espresso stands in government buildings. Participants complete training in all facets of food service facility operation to become BEP Licensees. The program provides the essential food service equipment along with ongoing guidance in business management. The Licensee of each location is solely responsible for the success of the business.

In 2017, there were 17 BEP operators. Of all individuals who currently have an open VR Transition case, the average age at the time of application is 17 years old, with more than half of them applying at age 16 or younger.

BEP website: <http://www.dsb.wa.gov/about/business-enterprise-program.shtml-1>

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#### LIVING INDEPENDENTLY WITH VISION LOSS

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The Independent Living (IL) Program provides resources and tools to help individuals with recent vision loss to get the skills and confidence they need to live independently in their home and community. The IL Program serves adults who are not planning to go to work.

In 2017, IL served 22 centenarians with the average age of participants being 86. The majority have macular degeneration and many have other limitations such as hearing loss and depression. IL providers offer a wide range of services including training, counseling about living with vision loss, info and referrals, and supplying special aids or devices. For most participants, the goal is simply to regain what was lost: the ability to call a friend on the telephone, heat up leftovers in the microwave, know what time it is to get to a doctor's appointment, use a magnifier to look at pictures of a loved one, or take a walk in the fresh air. Most participants live in their home or apartment rather than in a nursing or assisted living setting; in 2017, IL services were provided to 7 homeless people. The program's eight providers served 1510 individuals throughout the state, 155 of whom were age 54 or younger. Despite an emphasis on outreach to the Asian and Hispanic communities, these populations are still significantly underserved based on population data but overall, IL service delivery to underserved racial minority populations has increased.

A Letter of Recognition from the Department Of Services for the Blind Director

Dear Deputy Commissioner Finch and Governor Inslee,

Representing a broad spectrum of Washington citizens, the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRCB) is vitally important in our current economic environment. Council members actively seek and convey the input of their respective constituents. They are strong partners in helping the agency to clarify values; assess options regarding our budget, policies and strategies; and achieve our agency mission: Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Vitality for People with Visual Disabilities.

As a result, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) continues to demonstrate the positive impact our services have on children and families, youth transitioning from school to work, adults seeking competitive employment, employers who need qualified workers, and elderly citizens wishing to remain independent in their homes. The focus of the SRCB along with the successful outcomes achieved by our professional staff contribute to Washington's economic and cultural vitality by emphasizing the skills and abilities of all its citizens including those with disabilities. Every day, people in Washington with vision loss are going to work in competitive jobs, starting up their own businesses and employing others, or keeping their current jobs by acquiring new skills and assistive technology. These individuals have taken charge of their lives, can support their families, pay taxes, and contribute to the vitality of their communities.

We create these successes by being innovative in how we manage our resources, providing our state employees an environment of recognition and development, maintaining a strong relationship with our stakeholders, and keeping the public informed. As a state agency, we continue to emphasize accountability, performance outcome measures, and careful analysis of data as the drivers for strategic planning.

Our Council members, nine of whom are blind or have other disabilities, use those same key tools to be well-informed advisors and advocates. They continue to thoughtfully share their expertise, resources, and life experiences with our customers. Both as a group and individually, they function as role models for an engaged Washington committed to the well-being of all its citizens and are persistent on behalf of the economic and cultural vitality of our state.

Thank you for the opportunity to recognize the work of these dedicated volunteers.

Sincerely,

Lou Oma Durand, Director

2017 Outcomes website: <https://dsb.wa.gov/about/2017-outcomes-and-results.shtml>