

# JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE HEARING FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET



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DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED  
Department of Health and Social Services  
February 23, 2021  
Virtual, conducted via Zoom

Comments available online at <https://dhss.delaware.gov/>

Good Afternoon Representative Carson, Senator Paradee, members of the Joint Finance Committee and members of the public.

I am Sandi Miller, Director of the Division for the Visually Impaired and with me today are Debbie Talley, my Deputy Director, and Mark Ridenour, Fiscal Administrative Officer.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and present our accomplishments and Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Governor's Recommended Budget.

## ABOUT DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED (DVI)

### **DVI's Mission**

**To provide educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.**



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While the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) is small, the resources provided to nearly 3,300 Delawareans are life-altering. The things many sighted people take for granted – reading a newspaper, going to work, or dressing ourselves – often have added layers of obstacles for people who are blind or visually impaired.

Our mission is to provide educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.

# DVI SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

## CORE SERVICES

### Education Services

- Itinerant educational model and Braille Instruction
- The cost of purchasing a single book in Braille can range from \$2,500 to \$25,000

### Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

- Individualized, comprehensive career preparation and placement

### Independent Living Services/Older Individuals who are Blind Program (ILS/OIB)

- Maximize independence and aging in place



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DVI provides assessments, education, training and equipment that assist people to live independently. I will do my best to give you a comprehensive, yet abbreviated version of our core services.

- People who meet program eligibility guidelines may access services as early as birth and may last across their lifespan.
- Through an itinerant model, Teachers of the Visually Impaired work with K-12 students statewide to ensure they have access to Braille instruction, assistive technology, accessible materials and expanded core curriculum activities. \*You may be surprised to know that it costs anywhere from \$2,500 to \$25,000 to purchase a single Braille book.
- The DVI Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program offers individualized services to support people as they prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. VR may assist students as young as fourteen as well as adults.
- Vision Rehabilitation Therapists in our Independent Living/Older Blind Program teach adaptive techniques and use of low-tech devices that help improve independence and allow people to age in place. They serve all ages with the largest group being seniors affected by increasingly common eye diseases.

## DVI SERVICES AND ACCOMMODATIONS ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

### SUPPORT SERVICES

#### Instructional Materials & Resource Center (IMRC)

- Production facility and library for accessible instructional materials for K-12 students

#### Orientation and Mobility (O&M)

- Instruction in traveling as independently as possible through home, school, community, or office environments

#### Assistive Technology (AT)

- Live or virtual AT support to maximize use of technology



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DVI provides an array of support services in addition to the core services. For instance:

- Most people are not aware that we operate a production facility where we convert educational materials into Braille, large print and audio formats for K-12 students. The **Instructional Materials & Resource Center** also maintains a repository of assistive technology devices, adaptive equipment, educational materials, and accessible schoolbooks.
- Getting around is often taken for granted by sighted people but can be extremely challenging for people who are blind or visually impaired. DVI's Certified **Orientation & Mobility** Specialists provide instruction to help individuals move as independently as possible through their home, school, community, or office environments. They routinely work with mass transportation and purchase white canes to aid in their mobility training.
- **Assistive Technology (AT)** can greatly improve the lives of people with visual impairments. Our trainers provide live or virtual services such as, one on one (1:1) instruction, demonstrations, individual and group training, and worksite AT support to maximize the use of technology.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **COVID-19 Response**
- **New Partnership to Improve Access**
- **Released from Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee Review**



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The pandemic has provided us the opportunity to realize new options for delivering essential services. DVI quickly pivoted to a virtual format for many, while continuing to provide critical in-person services for those who needed them. Using a hybrid approach has increased access and choice for many people and is a practice DVI will continue going forward.

DVI addressed a critical accessibility issue at our Sussex AT training center by developing a community-based option on a fixed bus route. Through a partnership with the Georgetown Library, our trainers can meet with consumers to provide services at the library.

And finally, on February 9<sup>th</sup>, DVI was released from review by the Joint Legislative Oversight and Sunset Committee after demonstrating our progress on the thirteen recommendations.

## LOOKING AHEAD

- **Accessibility**
- **Strategic Planning**
- **Vocational Rehabilitation**



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The **accessibility** needs of people who are blind or visually impaired are not always on the minds of those who develop materials and systems used by the general public. The DVI Council on the Blind recently partnered with the State Council for Persons with Disabilities to assist with addressing statewide accessibility concerns and ensure the collective voices of all Delaware residents are heard.

The DHSS **Strategic Plan** is a priority for all divisions. As such, DVI is working to align division goals with the Department plan so we may fully demonstrate our support and work towards improving division and community collaborations.

DVI is in the process of constituting the **Vocational Rehabilitation** Advisory Council (VRAC) in compliance with federal regulations and partnering with the University of Delaware to complete a comprehensive statewide needs assessment. Both initiatives are necessary steps for preparing to jointly develop goals and priorities with the VRAC for the next Delaware Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan.

## FY 2022 GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDED BUDGET

### FY 2022 Governor's Recommended Budget (\$ in thousands)

	GF	ASF	NSF	Total
FTEs	52.4	0	18.6	71
Dollars (\$)	\$5,444.9	\$1,050.0	\$1,484.0	\$7,978.9

**Budget Definitions:**

GF – General Funds  
ASF – Appropriated Special Funds  
NSF – Non-Appropriated Special Funds  
FTEs – Full Time Equivalent Positions



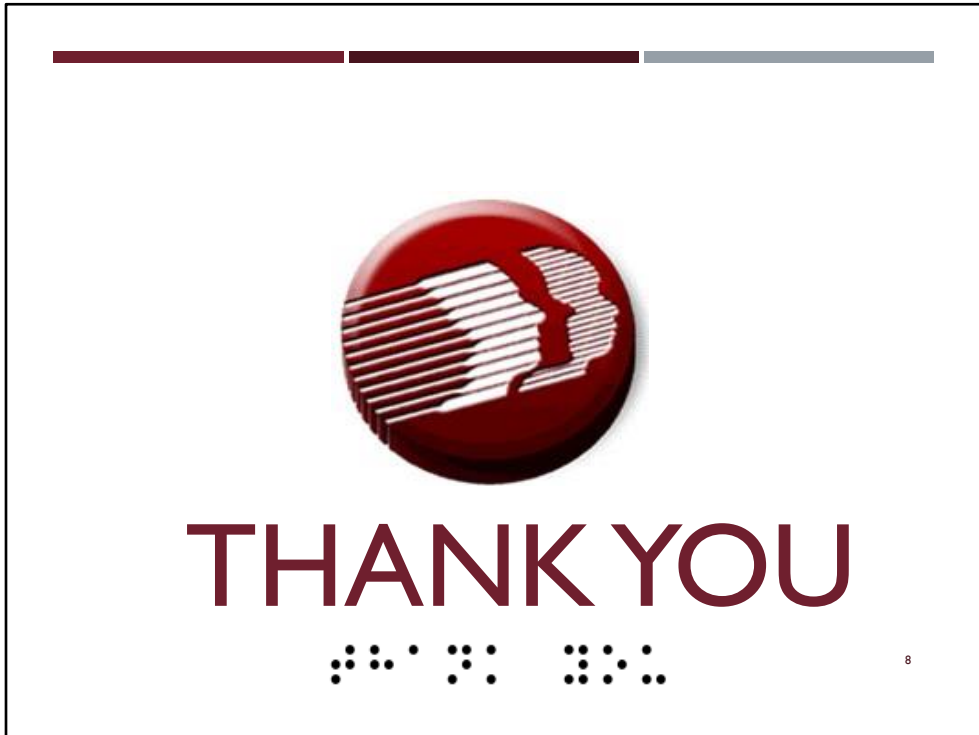
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The slide above shows DVI's budget included in the FY 2022 Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB).

Our Division's FY 2022 GRB is:

- \$5,444.9 [Five Million, Four Hundred Forty Four Thousand, Nine Hundred dollars] in General Funds (GF);
- \$1,050.0 [One Million, Fifty dollars] in Appropriated Special Fund (ASF) Spending Authority; and
- \$1,484.0 [One Million, Four Hundred Eighty Four Thousand dollars] in Non-Appropriated Special Funds (NSF).

This budget will allow us to continue to support the FY 2021 level of services. We will continue to work with our state and federal partners to provide services in flexible and creative ways as we continue to respond to the pandemic.



Thank you for the opportunity to share with you the challenges and opportunities facing the Division for the Visually Impaired.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.