

**DELAWARE DIVISION
FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED
COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE
NEEDS ASSESSMENT 2018**

DELAWARE DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

July 31, 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- ❖ Blindsight Delaware Peer Support Group, Newark Senior Center Peer Support Group, La Esperanza Community Center, Department of Health and Social Services staff and other Division for The Visually Impaired stakeholders who generously offered their time to speak with us for interviews;
- ❖ Delaware's employers, both individual and corporate, who have hired blind or visually impaired workers through the Division for the Visually Impaired or the Division's Community Rehabilitation Partners; and
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Division for the Visually Impaired is an agency located within the Department of Health and Social Services whose mission is to provide educational, vocational, and technical support to empower and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments. The Division provides services across the lifespan of an individual through a variety of programs. These programs consist of Independent Living Skills, Vocational Rehabilitation, Educational Services, Business Enterprise Program, Low Vision Program, Instructional Materials and Resource Center, Orientation and Mobility Program, Pathways to Employment, Technology Training Services, and Volunteer Services.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 calls for periodic comprehensive statewide needs assessments to be conducted jointly by each state's vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency and State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to inform the State Plan. This report is designed to fulfill those requirements and provide the Division for the Visually Impaired and the State Rehabilitation Council with information and evidence to guide their strategic planning and program implementation efforts.

The goals of the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment include:

- ◆ Identify the rehabilitation needs of blind and severely visually impaired Delaware residents, with particular attention to service needs related to vocational rehabilitation and employment;
- ◆ Examine rehabilitation needs within a number of subgroups, including those with the most significant disabilities, those who are unserved or underserved by available Vocational Rehabilitation services and those who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system. These groups may also include people with mental illness, traumatic brain injury, deaf-blindness, low incidence disabilities, low-income, veterans, students in transition,

older workers, the Amish community, Latino community and rural residents;

- ◆ Discover needs related to the establishment, development or improvement of Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs);
- ◆ Prioritize potential improvements to currently available community rehabilitation programs within the State and development needs unmet by current programs or services;
- ◆ Adhere to the model Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and satisfy requirements in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;
- ◆ Be structured to enable comparisons to future needs assessments, consumer satisfaction or consumer outcome research.

METHODOLOGY

A number of data sources are used in this report. The primary data collected for this project includes a telephone survey of 58 Division for the Visually Impaired consumers, interviews with 29 Division for the Visually Impaired staff, interviews with key stakeholders, and focus groups with Blind Sight Delaware, Newark Senior Center, La Esperanza, Department of Health and Social Services staff.

The secondary data collected for this project came from two sources: Division for the Visually Impaired, national and state population-based data sources. Several reports and publications created by the Division for the Visually Impaired provided overall direction for the research and the development of this report including collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council on the Division for the Visually Impaired 2017 Needs Assessment Charter. We collaborated based on the development of the 2017 Needs Assessment Document and the development and implementation of strategies to resolve issues identified in the 2013 Comprehensive Needs Assessment. The data provided by the Division for the Visually Impaired 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (State Rehabilitation Council and Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired), State Plan 2018, 2016 Annual Report, and the 2016 Strategic Plan were incorporated into this report.

In order to provide some context to our analysis of the needs of Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired, this Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment also examines a number of statistics and estimates provided at the state and national levels. These include the American Community Survey (ACS), the Delaware Population Consortium (DPC) Annual Population Projections, Bureau of Labor Statistics and other sources included in detail in the report.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information gathered for this Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, the Division for the Visually Impaired can anticipate that the population of blind and visually impaired residents will continue to grow and the demand for services will likely increase. At this time, despite growing demand, funding is being cut nationwide for social services and programs. Delaware currently does not anticipate a decrease in funding for services with regards to the federal grants for the Vocational Rehabilitation program nor for the Independent Living program. If funding does become a concern, prioritization will be the key to maintaining service delivery.

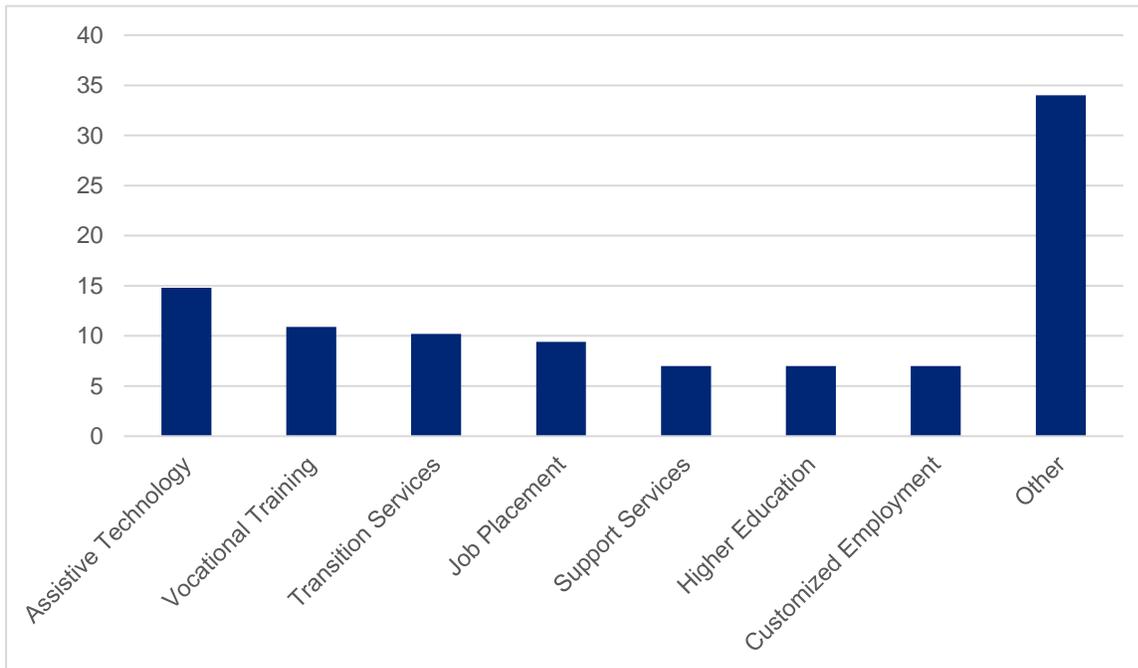
It can be concluded that, while the Division for the Visually Impaired provides statewide services, there are areas of improvement as indicated through the various focus groups and survey information obtained. Access to services (whether due to lack of transportation, financial or education of services), education of the medical community, and employment are three of the areas that stood out the most in this needs assessment. Community members state having difficulties obtaining needed assistive devices, dissemination of information about the Division for the Visually Impaired, available services to the Latino community, the Amish community, and Veterans and education of hospitals, social workers and other state agencies regarding the services provided by the Division for the Visually Impaired as other areas where improvement is sought. Furthermore, focus group members stated that ophthalmologists, optometrists, social workers, hospitals and rehabilitation centers need to be informed of the Division for the Visually Impaired services in order to pass this information to the community.

DVI TEAM SURVEY

Several services within the division emerged as needs for consumers. The chart below compares staff and consumer responses.

Services

Results from the Division for the Visually Impaired team survey showed the following services most in demand.



This illustrates the needs of the Division for the Visually Impaired which will allow the agency to tailor its services to the needs of the consumers.

Staff also indicated which barriers were the most influential on the consumers' ability to gain and/or maintain employment. Response from staff is as follows:

Topic	Staff Response	Consumer Response
Local Employment Opportunities	24.1%	75%
Employer Attitudes	27.6%	50%
Low consumer Self-confidence	31.0%	75%
Low consumer Insight to the Value of Work	20.7%	50%
Lack of Family Support	27.6%	62.5%
Lack of Available Rehabilitation Services	27.6%	75%
Lack of Qualified Service Providers	24.1%	62.5%
Lack of Physical Access to Services	24.1%	50%
Lack of Physical Access to Employers	24.1%	62.5%
Lack of Personal Attendant Care Attendants	20.7%	50%
Lack of Adequate Housing	20.7%	50%
Lack of Mental Health Care	24.1%	62.5%

CONSUMER ACCESS AND INTERACTION

Several suggestions emerged regarding consumer services and consumer access to the Division for the Visually Impaired services from the community focus groups.

Access To Services

1. Community members mentioned difficulties obtaining needed assistive devices. The Division for the Visually Impaired may wish to evaluate the process for disseminating information regarding ordering and obtaining equipment for consumers.
2. The Latino community members expressed concern over the fact that they are unaware of the Division for the Visually Impaired, its services and the resources it has to offer to the community. They would like to see more outreach events for the public to attend in order to learn more about the division and what it has to offer.
3. Members from the Latino community expressed concern over not only being aware of the Division for the Visually Impaired and its services, but being able to access the services. The individuals from the Latino population stated that they do not take advantage of most social services available in the community due to the need to access the services through government-related agencies.
4. Focus groups also mentioned they would also like to see more education of hospitals, social workers and other state agencies with regards to our services so the information can be passed on as people access other community resources.

Education of the Medical Community

Focus group members stated that ophthalmologists, optometrists, social workers, hospitals and rehabilitation centers need to be informed of the Division for the Visually Impaired services in order to pass this information to the community. Often people who are recovering from strokes or other life-changing events are in need of services from the Division for the Visually Impaired but no one is advising them of the services and how they can access these services.

Employment

The needs associated with consumers and employment included:

1. Many employers are unaware of the skills and talents offered by potential employees who are blind or visually impaired.
2. Some employers need to update commonly used software in order to provide compatibility with adaptive equipment. The Division for the Visually Impaired may wish to explore the options available to help employers overcome this challenge.
3. Focus group participants felt that if employers were more aware of the accommodations available to employ people with visual impairments, more would be employed.
4. Participants also felt educating to themselves in regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act and what their rights are when disclosing their disability to an employer was needed.

Underserved Communities

The Division for the Visually Impaired discovered through this needs assessment that there are still underserved populations such as the Amish, veteran, and Latino communities.

Unmet Consumer Needs

The most frequently mentioned unmet need, was being unaware of the Division for the Visually Impaired and what services it offers, followed closely by access to the services, whether due to lack of transportation, financial or awareness of services. Although transportation is outside of the purview of the Division, expanding the working relationship with DART and other transportation providers may help to increase the influence of the Division for the Visually Impaired consumers and their ability to impact transportation services.

METHODOLOGY

This project followed the guidelines established for a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and the Vocational Rehabilitation Needs Assessment Guide established by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

OVERVIEW

Due to a Federal mandate for the Division for the Visually Impaired to conduct a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, this document is a collection of data and robust analysis of the current environment within the Division. The opportunity exists to improve upon historical productions of the Needs Assessment to achieve accurate, measurable and results oriented initiative that align with the issues identified through this data analysis.

Accordingly, a number of data sources are used in this report. The primary data collected for this project includes:

1. Focus groups with Department of Health and Social Services staff and three community support groups
2. Telephone survey of 58 Division for the Visually Impaired consumers
3. Interviews with 29 Division for the Visually Impaired staff

Several reports and publications created by the Division for the Visually Impaired provided overall direction for the research and the development of this report. These included:

1. 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment
2. State Plan 2018
3. 2016 Annual Report of the State Rehabilitation Council (VRAC)
4. 2016 Strategic Plan for the Division for the Visually Impaired

In order to provide some context to our analysis of the needs of Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired, this CSNA also examines a number of statistics and estimates provided at the state and national levels. These include:

1. 2017 Disability Statistics Annual Report
2. The Delaware Population Consortium Annual Population Projections
3. 2017 Delaware Department of Labor statistics
4. American Community Survey 2016

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The 2018 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment for the Division for the Visually Impaired found that the most frequently mentioned needs among consumers surveyed were employment, transportation, assistive technology and education. In that study, staff cited medical restoration, job placement and assistive technology as the most requested services. These topics provided some of the primary focus points for this study. The lines of inquiry also included:

- ◆ Employment and job placement services
- ◆ Transportation
- ◆ Assistive technology and adaptive devices
- ◆ DVI educational services
- ◆ Information needs
- ◆ Independent Living services

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Qualitative interviews with staff and Division for the Visually Impaired stakeholders, a consumer survey and a number of secondary data sources form the basis of this report. The interview guides for each of the data collection efforts are included as appendices to this report.

Interviews

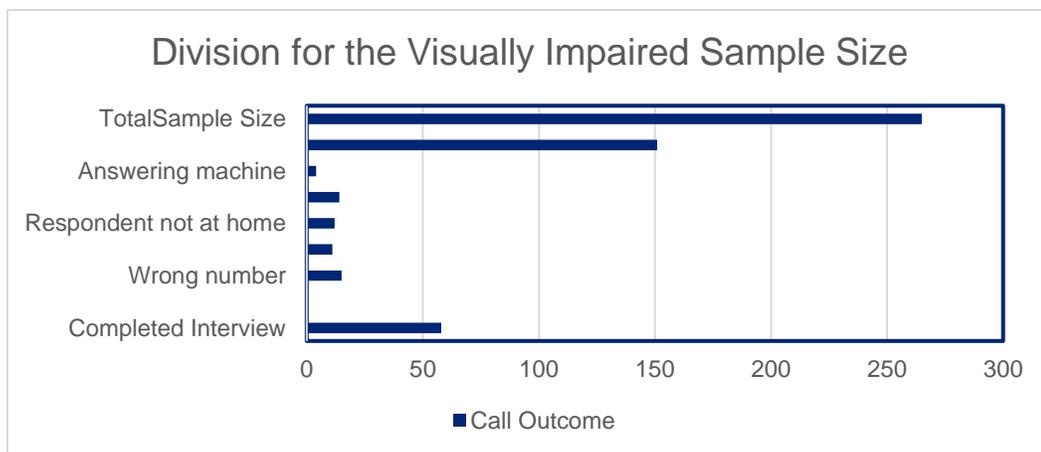
Interviews were conducted among Division for the Visually Impaired staff from programs and services including Independent Living, Orientation and

Mobility, Assistive Technology, Administrative and Vocational Rehabilitation field staff. In addition, several community members were included in focus groups with the Division for the Visually Impaired. The State Rehab Council (SRC/VRAC) was consulted in regard to the survey questions that became the Consumer Survey and Team Survey conducted through Survey Monkey an electronic survey tool. In total, 29 Division for the Visually Impaired staff were interviewed through Survey Monkey, 31 consumers participated in the Consumer Survey through Survey Monkey, and 58 individuals responded over the telephone. There were also 35 individuals who provided feedback through community focus groups.

These interviews helped shaped the methodological plan and informed the subsequent research.

Quantitative Surveys

A telephone survey was conducted of 506 blind or visually impaired Delaware residents who utilized the services of the Division for the Visually Impaired within the past three years. There were 58 respondents. The following table shows the result of the survey efforts. The response rate, calculated using the American Association for Public Opinion Research formula was 11.5%.



* Communication issues i.e.: don't verbally speak

** After 2 attempts

Focus Group

One focus group session was conducted with Department of Health and Social Services staff. The purpose of this group was to gather participants' observations and experiences in regard to the Division for the Visually Impaired services and consumer needs.

Two focus groups were conducted with Peer Support Groups and one was held with a community partner. One was associated with BlindSight Delaware the while the other was associated with the Newark Senior Center and finally, one was conducted with the community group, La Esperanza in the Latino Community in Sussex County.

DATA LIMITATIONS

Each information source has its own strengths and limitations for use in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This underlies the strategy of using a number of data sources and types in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Although each has unique strengths and weaknesses, together they provide a balanced portrait of the available services and service gaps in the state.

The following table shows the strengths and limitations associated with each of the data sources used in this report.

Source	Strength	Limitation
Population Statistics	General and reliable quantitative assessment	Broad definitions of disability and categories and not consistently including indicators of persons with blindness or visual impairment.
State MIS data	Objective indicators of outcome measures	Includes only those participating in the Division for the Visually Impaired or Vocational Rehabilitation registries.

<p>Department of Health and Social Services Staff, Division for the Visually Impaired Staff and community member focus group and Interviews</p>	<p>Rich, qualitative data direct from staff</p>	<p>Non-random sampling does not provide reliable error estimation. Potential sampling bias.</p>
<p>Consumer Survey</p>	<p>Quantitative, direct consumer feedback data</p>	<p>Includes only those who have participated in Division for the Visually Impaired services or programs within the past 3 years, not generalized.</p>

DELAWARE POPULATION STATISTICS AND PROJECTIONS

The prevalence of visual impairment in the State of Delaware is comparable to the average of the United States, according to the 2012-2016 American Community Survey (ACS) 5 year estimates and as shown in the table below¹.

Location	Estimate	Margin of Error (90%)	Base population with visual impairment
United States	2.3	± 0.01	7.2 mil
Delaware	2.2	± 0.01	19,865

Many of the states with high prevalence of visual impairment are also troubled by high rates of poverty and unemployment, rural populations and factors related to less access to healthcare prevention and treatment. It has been estimated that about half of all blindness is preventable². Eye exams, vision screenings, and attention to eye health can all help to prevent or delay the onset of many of the diseases leading to blindness and visual impairment.

¹ Erickson, W., Lee, C., von Schrader, S. (2013). Disability Statistics from the 2011 American Community Survey. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Demographics and Statistics (StatsRRTC). Retrieved Jan 02, 2013 from www.disabilitystatistics.org

² Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America:
<http://www.preventblindness.org/news/releases/pba-applauds-save-your-vision-week.html>

AGE

The aging population will steadily increase over the next several decades, and is projected to grow faster than the rest of the adult population of Delaware. Based on these expected shifts in the population, issues for all aging Delawareans will continue to rise through the next few decades.³ There will be an increasing demand for services for aging adults in general, and especially for smaller and underserved subgroups of the aging population, such as individuals who are visually impaired.

The leading causes of vision impairment and blindness in the United States are primarily age-related eye diseases. These conditions, including age-related macular degeneration, cataract, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma, are increasing in prevalence as the population ages. Largely as a result of the aging population, the number of Americans with age-related eye disease and resulting vision impairment is expected to double within the next 30 years.

Vision loss affects the quality of life for individuals, their families and communities and it also has a substantial economic impact at the state and county levels. The Alliance on Aging Research reports that visual impairment is one of the top four reasons for losing independence, contributing to new medical and long-term care costs exceeding \$26 billion

³ Source: The Delaware Population Consortium Annual Population Projections, October 25, 2012, Version 2012.0

RACE AND ETHNICITY

According to the 2016 General Population and Housing Characteristics, approximately 68.9% of the Delaware population is white, 21.4% of the population is black, and 8.2% is Hispanic (any race).

There are notable racial disparities evident in the rates of blindness and visual impairment. In the United States the overall rate of blindness due to diabetes is double for minority populations as compared with Caucasians⁴. In 2015, as per statistics from the National Federation for the Blind, the number of white individuals with a visual impairment is 5,270,000 (2.3% of the population nationwide), black/African American 1,154,900 (2.9% of the population nationwide), Hispanic 1,174,400 (2.1% of the population nationwide), Asian 230,300 (1.3% of the population nationwide), American Indian or Alaska Native 102,500 (4.0% of the population nationwide), and Other race(s) 538,900 (2.1% of the population nationwide).

INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT

Americans who are blind or visually impaired are almost three times more likely to live below poverty than those who are without visual impairment and half as likely to be employed full-time⁵.

	Employed Adults DE	Employed Adults US	Median Salary DE	Median Salary US
With Visual Impairment	3,758	1,300,000	\$22,535	\$25,711
Without Visual Impairment	398,115	134,786,311	\$34,941	\$35,853

⁴ Delaware Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Diabetes Prevention and Control Program

⁵ American Community Survey, 2011

Current labor statistics show that the unemployment rate is 4.4% in Delaware.⁶ According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' projections for employment through the year 2020, the fastest growing segments of the job market will be those that require some form of post-secondary education (versus those that do not), and jobs that involve some form of on-the-job training or apprenticeship (versus those that do not).⁷ In light of the disproportionate access to post-secondary education and unmet needs in adaptive equipment among individuals with a visual impairment, this projection highlights the need for services and vocational rehabilitation.

DVI CONSUMERS

A total of 283 consumers have been served thus far by Vocational Rehabilitation in federal fiscal year 2017. The number of consumers served continues to increase every year.

	2015	2016	2017
Consumers Served	240	286	283*

* This number reflects 8 months into federal fiscal year 2017.

In fiscal year 2017, a total of 54 consumers developed an employment plan. From the start of FY17, the number of consumers implementing an employment plan was 50. Finally, the number of consumers who achieved employment outcomes was 36.

Transportation

Affordable, timely and reliable transportation is often a challenge for people who are blind or visually impaired. DART is an operating division of the Delaware Department of Transportation that offers paratransit services.

⁶ Delaware Department of Labor, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. February 2013.

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, Disability and Occupation Projections, 2010-2020

In rural areas in particular, DART service can be sparse and unreliable. Several staff mentioned that DART is highly utilized by so many people across the state, that access to it is impacted by the high demand. As the need for DART services increase, these challenges may also become more acute.

When asked how they currently get around, most Division for the Visually Impaired consumers said they get help from family members or friends (83.0%). Additional modes of transportation are DART or paratransit (69.8%). A much smaller proportion named a bus (12.6%) or their own car (9.4%). Very small percentages of respondents use a taxi (1.9%) or paid driver (1.9%), and very few report relying on walking to get around (1.3%).

Education Settings

Education services are a Division for the Visually Impaired strength and were described in positive terms. Some of the challenges to providing services to school-age consumers included working within students' busy schedules.

However, only 4.6% of those consumers who participated in the electronic survey through Survey Monkey stated that receipt of education services were of importance to them.

This is in contrast to results from consumer feedback regarding whether or not the Division for the Visually Impaired is meeting the needs of individuals with visual impairments regarding Pre-Employment Transition Services.

When customers were asked “Are current services meeting the needs for individuals with visual impairments?” the results are as such:

1. Transition from School 12.5% yes vs. 37.5% don't know
2. Pre-Employment Transition Services 12.5% yes vs. 50% don't know

When customers were asked to “Rate barriers you feel hinder people with visual impairments and blindness from gaining and maintaining employment” the results are as such:

1. For Young Adults Leaving High School 50% said it was a significant barrier vs. 12.5% who said it was not a barrier

- 2. Lack of Information about disability services 37.5% felt it was a significant barrier vs. 12.5% who said it was not a barrier

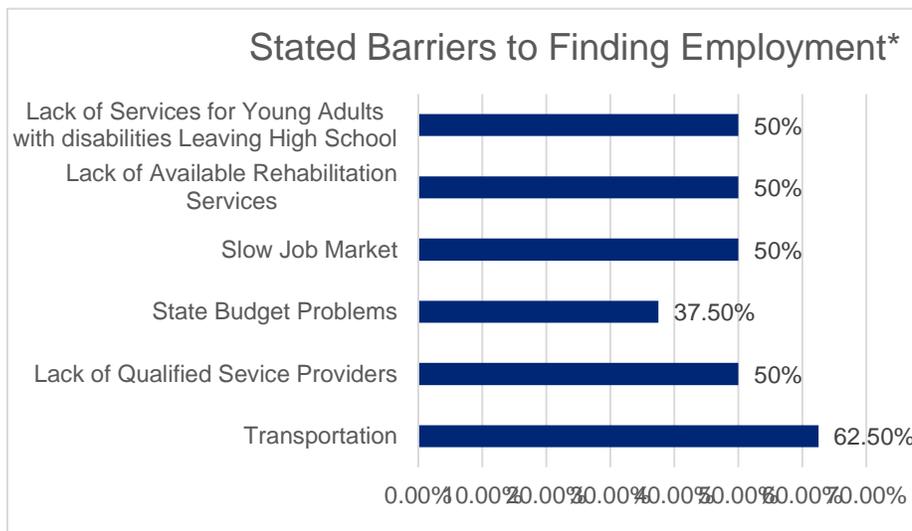
Employment

Employment is a subtle, complex issue for consumers. It is a challenge for consumers to become ready for work, and to compete in the job market. It is also a challenge to educate employers about working with people with blindness or visual impairments.

The challenges associated with employers include the misunderstandings employers may have regarding the needs and abilities of consumers seeking employment. In addition, employers may be using software in their workplace that is outdated or incompatible with the adaptive software needed for consumers.

Consumers also bring challenges, including the common concern that working will jeopardize a consumer's disability benefits.

Of those consumers who participated in the electronic survey through Survey Monkey (8 respondents), 37.5 percent were not working and not looking for employment versus 37.5 percent who were working full time and 12.5 percent who were not working but were looking for employment.



*Respondents had the option to select more than one barrier.

These same consumers stated that the main barrier to their finding employment was lack of transportation (62.5%). Other barriers to finding employment were: lack of qualified service providers (50%), state budget problems (37.5%), slow job market and lack of available rehabilitation services (50% respectively) and finally lack of services for young adults with disabilities leaving high school (50%).

Barriers to employment are interwoven with barriers to adaptive equipment. If a consumer needs equipment to obtain employment or even to complete assessments and training, then they are subject to the same issues noted above regarding access to adaptive equipment.

In this challenging economic climate, consumers are having an especially difficult time competing for employment against sighted employment-seekers. This is a challenge even in better economic climates, and has been amplified in the past few years.

Lastly, all respondents who are able to work were asked to describe the biggest barriers to finding or keeping employment, and were able to give multiple responses. Of those respondents who took part in the focus groups and electronic survey, most respondents cited a lack of adaptive equipment as a challenge. Another challenge was a lack of opportunities. A number of respondents have faced discrimination as a barrier to employment. Other factors that contribute to difficulty in finding or keeping employment include waiting for training, having another disability or illness, and disappointment or discouragement from previous rejection.

Underserved Communities

In general, services are provided equally across race, location and other factors traditionally impacting access to services.

Some consumers in the underserved communities such as the Latino population, the Amish population, the American Indian population and Veterans stated that knowledge of the services hindered their ability to access the services. They also stated, that lack of transportation and the fear of accessing services from government related agencies were major issues that impacted their access to services.

As a result of the feedback from the focus groups, the Division for the Visually Impaired has made a concentrated effort to participate in community events within these populations and ensure the dissemination of information about the various services offered through the Division for the Visually Impaired as well as making an attempt to take the services to the individuals.

Discrimination

Respondents were asked about whether they had faced discrimination as a result of their blindness or visual impairment, and to discuss in which settings discrimination had occurred. The individuals who participated in the focus group representative of the Latino population stated that they do not take advantage of most social services available in the community due to the need to access the services through government -related agencies.

THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROVIDERS

The Division for the Visually Impaired is currently in the process strengthening its relationships with Community Rehabilitation Providers. This should enhance the Division's ability to disseminate information to the public about available services and access to such services. These relationships will also enhance individual's ability to gain and maintain employment.

STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF THE DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The Division for the Visually Impaired has made some advancements with regards to the outcome from the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The Assistive Technology process has been streamlined in order to speed up the process of assessment, order and receipt of equipment. The Division for the Visually Impaired is doing more outreach events in order to reach the underserved populations listed in the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. However, some challenges still remain.

The challenges are seen as:

- ◆ Public Awareness
- ◆ Access to Services
- ◆ Education of the Medical Community
- ◆ Developing Relationships with Community Partners
- ◆ Division for the Visually Impaired Staff training

Communication

A lack of communication was the most frequently mentioned challenge facing the Division for the Visually Impaired. Consumers stated that they often were not informed about services through the Division for the Visually Impaired especially in settings such as hospitals, rehabilitation centers and doctor's offices. They felt better education and outreach to these referral sources would improve community knowledge of the services available and how to access them.

Marketing

The Division for the Visually Impaired has been implementing efforts to improve marketing and public education efforts. At the time of the interviews however, there was perceived confusion among consumers, Community Rehabilitation Providers, employers and other agencies about what the Division for the Visually Impaired does. This, in part, stems from confusion regarding the role of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, which is where many consumers first go when seeking services. Although the Division for the Visually Impaired has a 100 year history, many are unaware of the Division for the Visually Impaired or do not know whether they should seek services from the Division for the Visually Impaired or the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. This confusion is compounded in the relationships the Division for the Visually Impaired has with Community Rehabilitation Providers and other community agencies, who are also unsure of the role of the Division for the Visually Impaired in serving the same clients.

Feedback for Improvement

Consumers, focus group participants and the Division for the Visually Impaired staff provided recommendations for improving communication and education regarding the Division of the Visually Impaired. More participation by the Division at community events, education of the medical

community and other State of Delaware agencies would increase the awareness of the agency. This in turn could lead to increased referrals to the Division for its various services. Based on the results from the Team Survey, internal training is warranted in order to improve the understanding by Division for the Visually Impaired staff regarding the uncertainty around consumer needs being met or not met.

Independent Living Services

The majority of respondents reported that they do not feel they need any help in terms of mobility in the home, community, school, or work. Those that feel they do require assistance at this time need help planning travel or walking routes, help crossing streets or getting around the community, help getting around school or work, help using a cane, or help getting around their home.

Respondents were also asked about personal care tasks they need help with, and the majority said they do not need any help with personal care tasks. Those that do need assistance require help with shopping, with laundry or home chores, with food preparation, banking or personal grooming.

Consumer Satisfaction

Overall, consumers expressed satisfaction with the services from the Division for the Visually Impaired. Of the participants of the electronic survey through Survey Monkey, 63% stated they would recommend the Division for the Visually Impaired to a friend or colleague. Since the creation of the Division for the Visually Impaired general survey in 2016, 62.16% of respondents stated their level of satisfaction with the Division for the Visually Impaired was “very satisfied”. In contrast, only 2.7% (1 respondent) was “very dissatisfied” with their overall experience with the Division.

Overall Conclusions

The input from consumers, staff, and members of the community focus groups demonstrates the breadth and quality of the assistance programs available for Delawareans who are blind and visually impaired. Ratings of consumers' satisfaction with the services provided are positive. There is

however, room for improvement; this report has identified several opportunities for improvement, including communication and education of the medical community and more engagement in events in the communities of our underserved populations. Overall, consumers, staff, and community partners provide a strong network that serves consumers effectively. The opportunities for improvement are procedural. Service improvements will focus on addressing unmet needs among individual consumers and underserved groups in order to strengthen and expand the current success of the Division for the Visually Impaired. Furthermore, the Division for the Visually Impaired will improve knowledge of and access to statewide services.

The areas of improvement as indicated through the various focus groups and survey information obtained, such as access to services, education of the medical community, and employment will be a primary focus of the Division for the Visually Impaired. Community members stated difficulties obtaining needed assistive devices, dissemination of information about the Division for the Visually Impaired, available services to the Latino community, the Amish community, and veterans. Increasing participation in outreach events that target these communities will improve knowledge of and access to the Division's many services.

More Delawareans will be able to benefit from services through the Independent Living program for life long independence, the Vocational Rehabilitation program for employment, Transition Services and Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth and through the Education program for children in grades K-12 for equal access to expanded core curriculum.

Education of hospitals, social workers and other state agencies regarding the services provided by the Division for the Visually Impaired will also strengthen the referral base to the Division for services. Overall, consumers, staff, vision care specialists, and community partners together provide a strong network of communication, information and assistance. The changes that will be made to address the needs of this comprehensive statewide needs assessment, will only strengthen the success of the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired.

