



EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HUMAN SERVICES

MASSACHUSETTS
COMMISSION
FOR THE
BLIND

ANNUAL REPORT 1985

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS
COLLECTION

NOV 26 1986

City of Massachusetts
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COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

Fiscal 1985 was a year in which the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind reached out to the community in which we live and shared our mission and purpose with an openness to the new while honoring the old.

The agency restructured itself with the creation of Office Information Services. Not only was this a more efficient way to inform the general public, but also it provided a focus for other information functions such

as Talking Books and Radio Reading Services. The office has been most successful in providing direction and substance to the agency's information as exemplified by its success with the Open Houses.

The agency's openness brought increased program success and the recognition that much work remained to be done if the agency was to serve new and rising client needs in the community. During FY 85 we increased rehabilitation by eleven percent, began Industries for the Blind modernization, and expanded services to children, multihandicapped, and the elderly blind.

The agency performed well in Fiscal 1985, yet the enormity of its mission is indeed humbled because of its impact upon the lives of those who use our service. The people of MCB are both its greatest resource and its magic. This report reflects their dedication and investment in the enterprise of public service.



Charles H. Crawford
Commissioner

Michael S. Dukakis,
Governor
Philip W. Johnston
Secretary, Executive Office of Human Services

MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

— Yesterday and Today —

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind was originally founded in 1906. Miss Helen Keller was a dominant influence in establishing the organization. Miss Keller felt strongly that the blind and deaf/blind should have a government agency in Massachusetts, primarily devoted to seeking beneficial legislation and affording them the opportunity to gain self-determination.

In 1919 the Commission was renamed the Division of the Blind and established as a part of the Department of Education. For the first several years the Director of the Department of Education was also the Director of the Division of the Blind.

In 1966, the Division of the Blind was abolished and the Commission for the Blind was once again established as an autonomous body. It currently belongs to the family of Human Service agencies under the direction of the Executive Office of Human Services.



*Executive Secretary of Human Services, Philip W. Johnston (left)
Commissioner, Commission for The Blind, Charles H. Crawford (right)*

HIGHLIGHTS 1985

OFFICE OF INFORMATION FORMED

In August of 1984, the Office of Information Services was established as a new unit of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

The responsibilities of this unit are to direct, expand and plan the new Talking Book Library Program, and all communications functions. The unit also directs and monitors the Radio Reading Service contracts which provides radio reading services to the blind and print handicapped of the Commonwealth.

O.I.S. produces publications for use within as well as out of the agency. MCB's quarterly newsletter "Focal Point" is available to any interested subscriber. There is an informational tape which people can call for blindness related matters. The tape operates every evening from 5:00 p.m. to 8:45 a.m. and all day Saturdays and Sundays on both the local and toll free phone numbers.

STATE WIDE OPEN HOUSES HELD

The end of October saw the culmination of much hard work which resulted with Open Houses being held in all the regional offices and the Boston central office.

Our goal was to welcome and educate the public as to our services and the capabilities of the blind people.



With more than 700 people visiting and taking part in the many displays, we know our goal was achieved. Many thanks to all MCB staff whose continued professional dedication contributed to this successful event.

FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND POSTAL SUBSIDY IN JEOPARDY

For the fourth year in succession the Federal Administration failed to include the "revenue foregone postal subsidy" in the budget.

If this subsidy were not restored it would affect 695,000 blind and physically impaired people throughout the country. The proposal change would necessitate the Regional Library in Massachusetts to spend about sixty-six percent of its budget for mailing of books, records, and cassettes to its subscribers, and it would cost the subscriber an average of \$1.07 to return these materials to the library.

A press conference was held with Secretary Philip Johnston, Executive Office of Human Services, and Commissioner Charles H. Crawford of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind to alert the general public to the situation and to enlist their help in restoring the subsidy. There was a tremendous response by the news media to the press conference.

Along with MCB efforts and individual letter writing campaigns, the subsidy was restored by Congress.

STAYING AFTER SCHOOL IS FUN!

In response to Advisory Board input, the Region VI staff (Boston area) began planning an after-school program for 12 blind children.

The program was held at the Murphy school in Dorchester and met two afternoons a week. Activities ranged from swimming, gymnastics, arts and crafts, and field trips.

By school year's end consensus from parents and teachers was that the children had benefited socially, and interacted with their peers more freely and confidently.

Final proof of the program's success comes from the kids who over the last year had close to 100% attendance.

Plans for 1986 include expanding "After School" to more kids and adding a third day of activities.

THE ROBERT SCOTT AWARD



November 1984 Mr. Robert J. Scott retired after 32 years with MCB. Mr. Scott began his career as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and over the years used his wealth of knowledge to enrich many areas of MCB services. He retired as the Assistant Director of Rehabilitation Services.

As a result of his arduous and zealous performance in his various positions, the Robert J. Scott Awards were established to celebrate outstanding achievements in the field of vocational rehabilitation. The first recipients are to be honored in November 1985.

SERVICES

The Commission serves any legally blind person within the Commonwealth regardless of age, race, sex, ethnic background. The blind population of Massachusetts at the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 1985) was 23,891. Of the new registrants, 61.5% were over 65 years of age, and 50% of this group was 75 or older.

Referrals to the Commission come from such sources as ophthalmologists, optometrists, hospitals, low vision clinics, private and public agencies, relatives and interested citizens. The Commission offers the following services:

- Services to blind children and their parents
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Self-employment opportunities in state owned vending facilities
- Orientation & Mobility instruction (cane travel)
- Social Services
- Volunteer Assistance
- Rehabilitation Teaching
- Medical Assistance
- Financial Assistance (SSI)
- Talking Book Program
- Radio Reading Services
- Advocacy Services
- Independent Living Program

FISCAL YEAR 1985 DATA

BUDGET

Administration	\$ 764,028
Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	7,717,583
Medical Assistance	29,951,180
Social Services	2,707,146
Vocational Rehabilitation	1,419,360
Industries	1,110,887
TOTAL BUDGET	\$46,970,184

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Total number served 6,268

SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME

Total number served 5,200

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Number placed in employment 210

Number served Fy 85 977

SOCIAL SERVICES

Number closed cases 1,139

Number served 2,800

Information and Referral 1,593

Cases completed 2,732

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Cases closed 39

Cases active 251

ORIENTATION & MOBILITY SERVICES

Cases served 956

REGIONAL OFFICES

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1-800-332-2772 Toll Free

REGION 2: CENTRAL MA
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REGION 3: NORTHEASTERN MA
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REGION 5: SOUTHEASTERN MA
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Fall River, MA 02720
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REGION 6: BOSTON AND BROOKLINE
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