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# Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

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## Annual Report

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1986 - 1987

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Human Services

Michael S. Dukakis, Governor  
Philip W. Johnston, Secretary

Charles H. Crawford, Commissioner

## ADVISORY BOARD

Carmine A. Guida, O.D.

Arnold Katz, O.D.

Robert E. Segal

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind was established in 1906. The Commission provides a wide range of social and vocational rehabilitation services to legally blind Massachusetts residents of all ages. Referrals to the agency are made by ophthalmologists and optometrists, hospitals and low vision clinics, public and private institutions, and by interested individuals.

## COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE

Fiscal years 1986 and 1987 were years of continued growth and development in the programs and services offered at the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. One of the important elements which made this possible was the collaboration between different units and programs in the agency.

Industries for the Blind was updated with a new name as modernization efforts continued with the new employee's wage scale changes and a new contract for the

Governor's Awards pen sets. The agency developed a viable plan for serving a portion of the elderly population in crisis and at risk for nursing home placement, which was evidenced by the award of a grant to the agency. Services for clients at the other end of the age range were expanded with recreational opportunities for elementary and high school age students. With the celebration of its 8th and 9th anniversaries, Radio Reading Services continued to provide excellent programming for clients of all ages.

Without the shared care and concern of all MCB employees, the successes of these past years would not have occurred and the mandate of the agency could not have been met. The people at MCB knew how to balance immediate needs and plan for future growth as the changes and increase in the client population occurred. The following report details the continued dedication and concern that MCB has for its clients.



GOVERNMENT'S  
COLLECTOR  
1988  
MASSACHUSETTS  
TREASURY DEPT.

Charles H. Crawford  
Commissioner

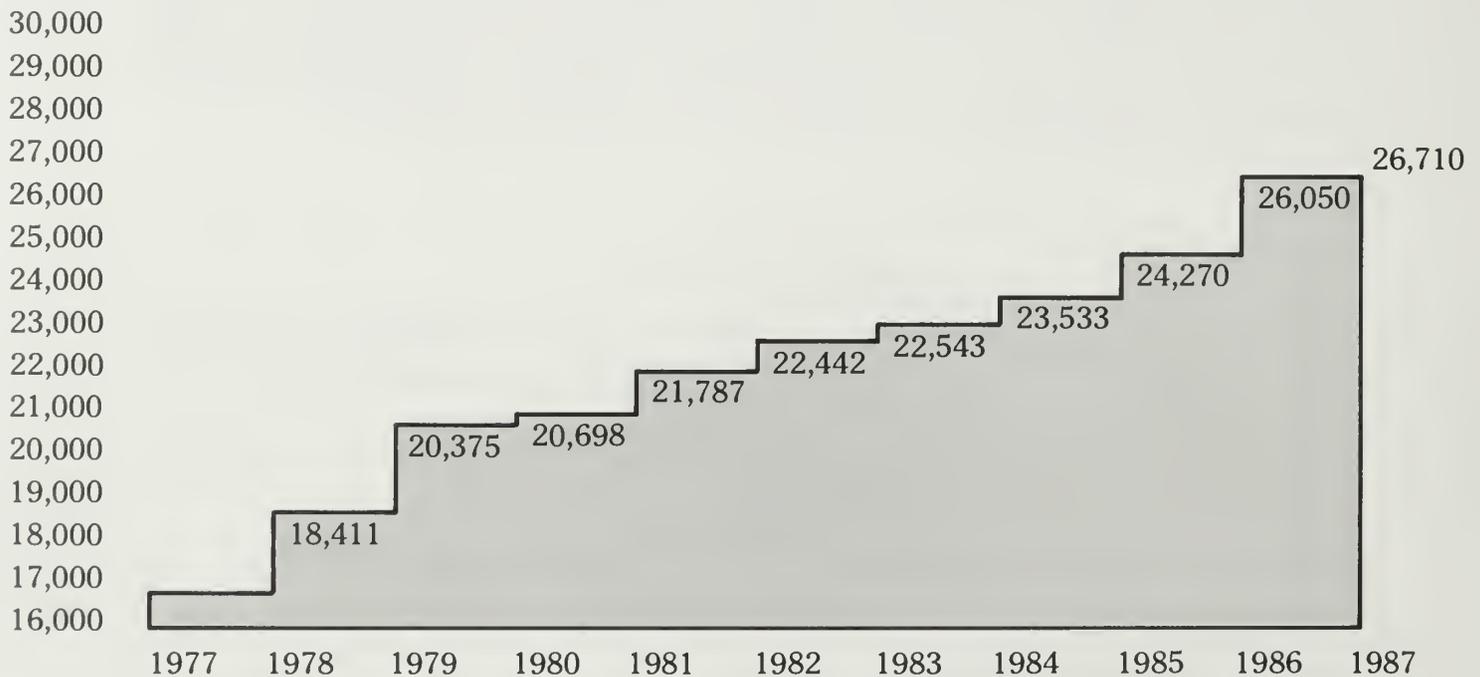
# REPORT OF THE REGISTER

The 1987 Register of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind represented a total of 26,710 legally blind persons. This total reflected an overall increase of 2.5 percent. The same trend was evident in 1986 with the total for the registry increasing 7.3 percent to 26,050. The regional distribution of the register remained essentially the same as in previous years. Region IV, the 495 belt, included the largest number of blind persons or 23.2 percent and Region II, the Worcester area, the smallest or 11.4 percent of the total blind population. The rate of increase was lowest, 0.5 percent, in Region III and highest, 4.3 percent, in Region V.

The aging factor continued to be a significant characteristic among both the total and new registrants with persons ages 65 and over representing 64.7 percent of the total register in FY '86 and 65.1 percent in FY '87. 74.4 percent of new registrants were age 65 or over in FY '86. In comparison with the total blind population, the aging trend continues to be even greater among new registrants as evidenced by the fact that 59.1 percent of those registered in 1987 were age 75 and over at the time of registration and 44.3 percent were age 80 and over at registration.

## GROWTH OF REGISTER

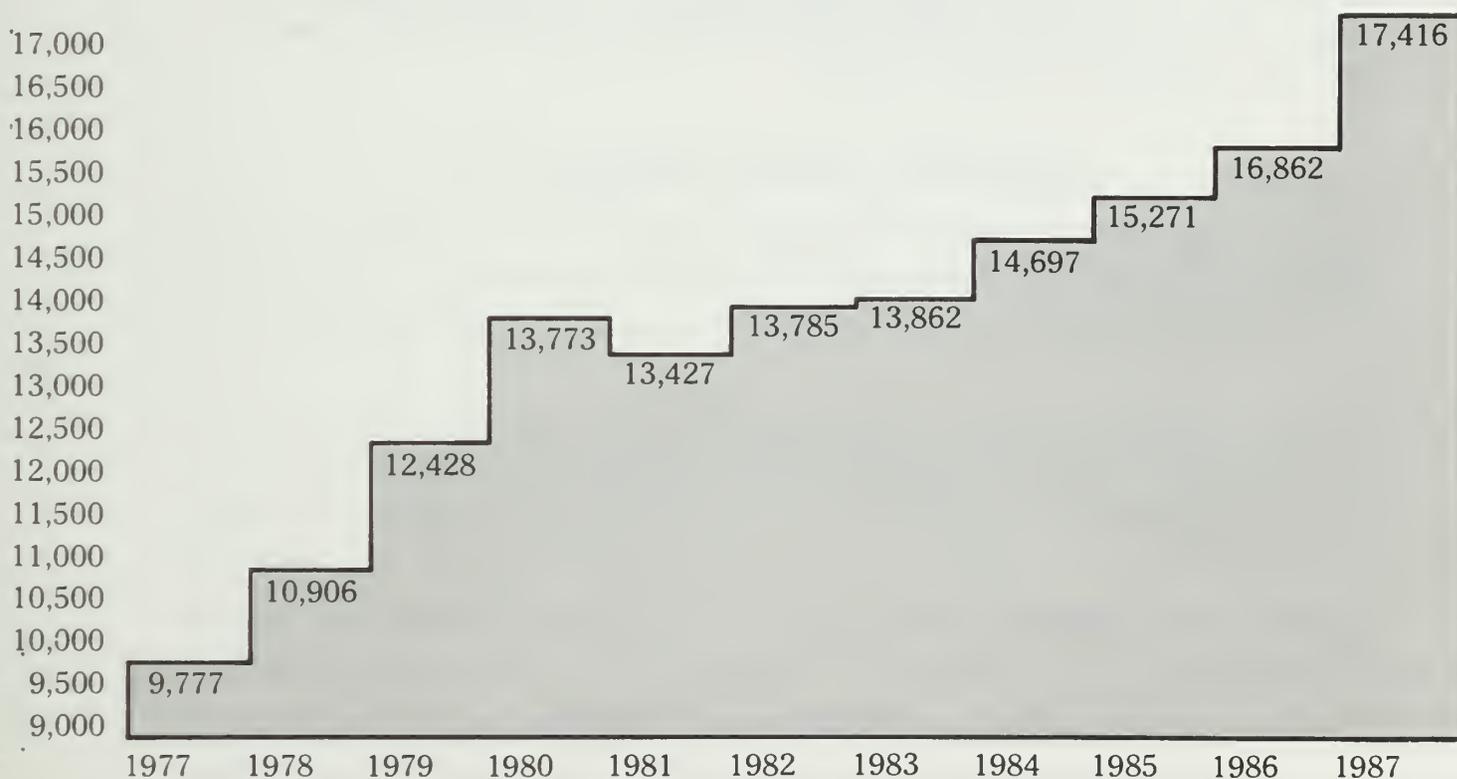
### POPULATION OF REGISTERED MASS. RESIDENTS



# BUDGET

	1986	1987
Administration	\$ 878,896	\$ 887,478
Medical Assistance	28,798,097	37,697,548
Social Services	2,348,441	3,341,206
Vocational Rehabilitation	1,651,728	3,087,531
Industries	1,292,589	1,300,000

## POPULATION OF CLIENTS OVER 65



# HIGHLIGHTS

## GRANT FOR THE ELDERLY

On January 9, 1986, a press conference was held in the Worcester Public Library which featured Congressman Joseph Early from the Third Congressional District. Congressman Early was instrumental in the awarding of a grant for \$199,475.00 under section C, Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act to the Commission for the Blind. This grant enabled the Commission to expand outreach to the elderly blind; the primary purpose being to decrease inappropriate nursing home placement. The new program is called BRIDGE - Blind Reintegration for Independence, Development and Growth for Elders. Currently staff consists of a director and three liaison workers. Each liaison worker covers a third of the state and provides intensive rehabilitation teaching, support and referral, and intensive, basic mobility skills.

## SPECIAL FOCUS ON MINORITY AFFAIRS

Commissioner Crawford recognized the importance of reaching out to all minority groups by providing comprehensive services to every legally blind citizen of the Commonwealth. With that goal in mind he appointed a Special Assistant Commissioner for Minority Affairs. Working closely with community leaders, health clinics and church groups to inform them of the various services that the Commission offers are some of the duties Tania Garcia, the new appointee, will perform. She will also work with minority MCB clients who can help encourage others to receive much needed services.

## RADIO READING ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

State officials and local dignitaries celebrated the eighth anniversary of the provision of Radio Reading Services to the blind, visually impaired and print handicapped individuals in a special State House ceremony. Governor Dukakis expressed his support of the statewide network of the private, non-profit services. Radio Reading is transmitted through seven radio stations and sixty cable television systems. A minimum of 17 hours of various reading material, i.e. local newspapers, magazines, and best selling books is taped daily.



## MCB CO-SPONSORS BANKING CONFERENCES

An important link between the banking community and blind and visually impaired consumers was established during 1986. Two conferences, one held in Boston and the other in Springfield, were co-sponsored by the Division of Banks and the Commission for the Blind.

Panel members, which included staff from the Client Assistance Program, aired concerns about accessibility of automatic teller machines, acceptance by bank tellers of raised line checks and the currently limited availability of cassette bank statements.

Members of the banking community who attended were impressed by the significant turnout of consumers.

As a direct result of the conferences, several banks have begun exploring possible expansion of their services to directly benefit the blind and visually impaired.

## DEDICATION TO JOHN E. FERGUSON

On January 3, 1986 Commissioner Crawford dedicated the newly named Industries Program to the memory of the late John E. Ferguson.

Mr. Ferguson worked at the then Division of the Blind from February 4, 1952 until his retirement on November 30, 1977. He labored tirelessly and arduously for any piece of legislation he believed would benefit the blind people of the Commonwealth.

Commissioner Crawford delivered the welcoming remarks, and Secretary of the Executive Office of Human Services, Philip W. Johnston, gave the keynote address. James Ferguson, brother of the late John Ferguson and Aide to former Speaker O'Neill, expressed his remembrances most eloquently. Mr. Gordon Shaw, a 50 year employee, also spoke at the ceremony. A luncheon and tour of the Cambridge facility followed.



## MCB EMPLOYEES HONORED

Adelaide Mickey, who served the Commission for the past 30 years, was one of 10 state employees awarded the Manuel Carballo Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service. Adelaide Mickey, who retired this past year, worked as a Chief Supervisor of the Blind and before that as a Rehabilitation Teacher. She served as a model for two generations of blind clients.

In addition to Adelaide Mickey, other MCB employees have been recognized by the Commonwealth. Eileen Ginnetty, Assist. Commissioner for Independent Living/Social Services, Willie Davis, Contracts, Peter Parke, Placement Specialist, Gail Whittemore, Independent Living Counselor, and Arthur Singer, Client Assistance Program Counselor, received Commonwealth Citations for Outstanding Performance.

## NEW STATE FUNDING ESTABLISHES DEAF-BLIND UNIT

The Commission for the Blind was awarded 1.7 million by the state to establish a Deaf-Blind/Multihandicapped Services Unit. The program provides coordinated services to the ever-increasing deaf-blind and deaf-blind retarded population. Commissioner Crawford notes that many people are responsible for arranging the funding for this new unit, including the leadership of Governor Dukakis, Secretary Philip W. Johnston, and the Legislature. This funding enables the agency to greatly expand existing services and meet additional needs of those now turning age 22 who are leaving the educational system.

The new unit has 9 staff members to coordinate, plan, supervise, and provide direct services. They will also contract with other public and private agencies to establish community residences. There is also a position through the Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-blind Children and Adults that has been awarded to the Commission. This person works closely with the other MCB staff to coordinate services.

## TALKING BOOK LIBRARY AUTOMATED

The Regional Talking Book Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped has computerized its operations. The Regional Library receives state funding through the Commission with additional support from Perkins School for the Blind. The Library's computerization was jointly funded by MCB and the Board of Library Commissioners.

The regional library has 25,000 separate book titles represented by 20,000 volumes of braille and recorded materials which are produced for distribution by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (Library of Congress). The Commission for the Blind is responsible for the program in this state and for distribution of the special talking book machines and cassette players. The machines and books are mailed free of charge and are on loan to blind, visually impaired and print handicapped residents of the Commonwealth.

# PHOTO



Carballo Award recipient, Adelaide Mickey is congratulated by Governor Dukakis.



Dedication ceremonies at Ferguson Industries.



Youngsters enjoy the MCB afterschool program.



# GALLERY



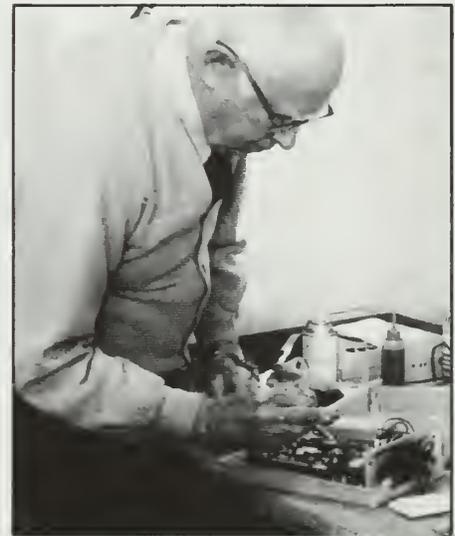
Donna Fannelle using adapted switchboard at MCB Message Center.



Radio Reading Services Anniversary ceremonies.



Retired Deputy Commissioner, Fred Greehan.

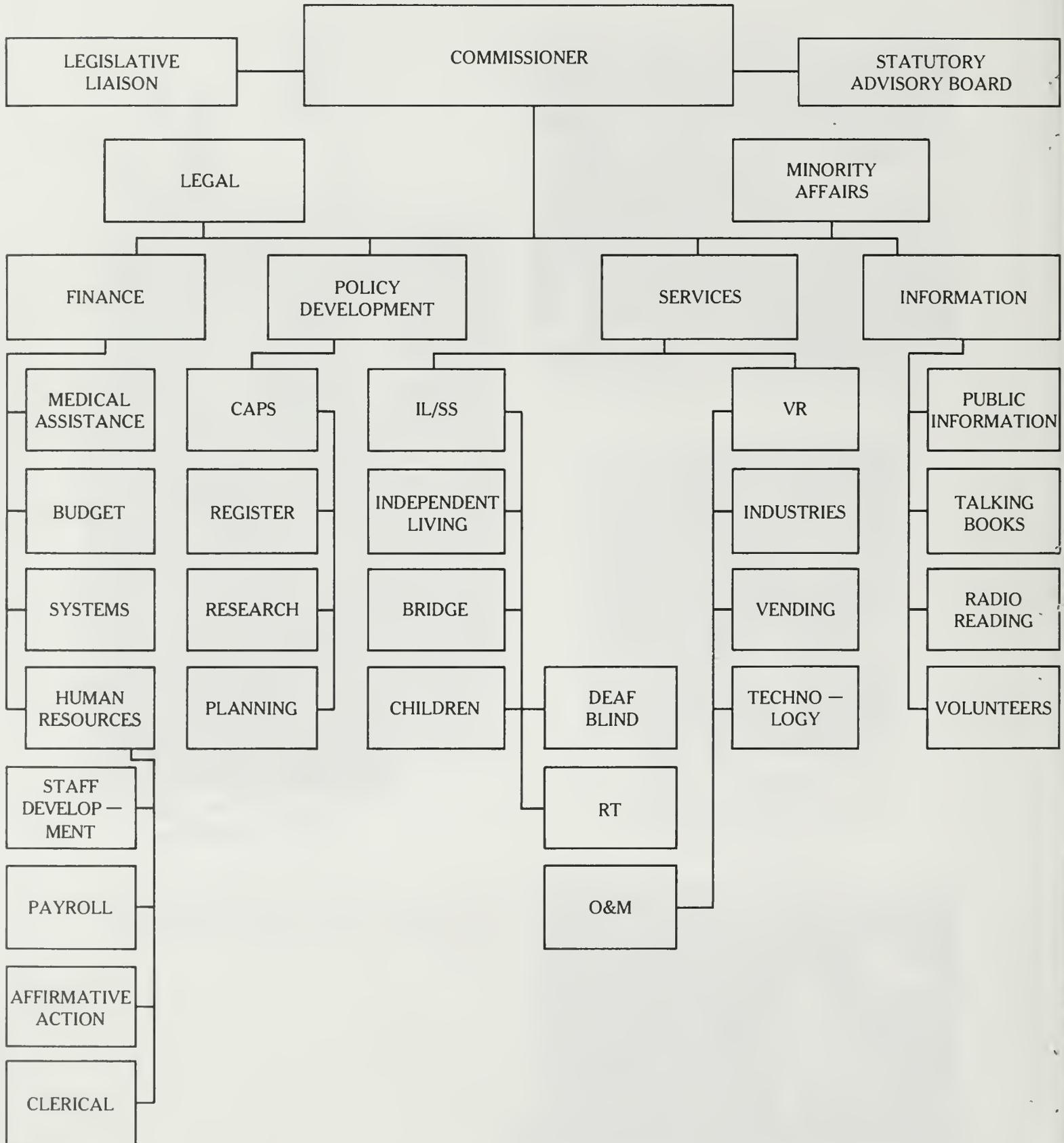


Telephone Pioneer repairs Talking Book Machine.



Commissioner Crawford presents Elaine Saunders the Bob Scott award for Vocational Rehabilitation excellence.

# M.C.B. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



# SERVICES

## ADVOCACY

The Client Assistance and Program Support Unit (CAPS) assists consumers with individual problems they may encounter while seeking appropriate services from MCB or other agencies. CAPS also identifies service gaps and makes recommendations for systemic improvements.

## INDEPENDENT LIVING/SOCIAL SERVICES

Services were provided by Social Rehabilitation Counselors for 2,963 clients in FY '86. In FY '87 that number increased to 3,419 clients receiving services. 75% of all new referrals have been for clients 65 and older. Individual and family counseling, information and referral, case management, and teaching home and personal management skills are some of the services clients may receive from IL/SS. Other IL/SS services follow.

### Services to Children and Their Families

Children's services are available to all legally blind children up to age 14 and their families. Counselors offer support and counseling for problems and concerns related to visual impairment or any additional disabilities, interpretation of infant development, advocacy, recreation services, activities for daily living skills, and prevocational counseling. 614 children were served in FY '87 and 551 in FY '86.

### Deaf-blind/Multihandicapped Unit

This newly centralized unit provides social and vocational rehabilitation services, coordinates services, and case manages for clients turning 22. Community residences are established for clients who are ready to live independently.

## **Independent Living Center**

Case management, advocacy, independent living skills training, peer counseling, as well as adaptive aids and equipment and the provision of certain funds for home modifications are part of the wide range of services offered statewide. From July 1985 through June 1986, a total of 175 active clients were served, 64 new referrals were made, and 59 cases were successfully closed through the Center's services. 129 referrals were received from July 1986 through June 1987 and 63 clients were successfully closed.

## **MEDICAL ASSISTANCE**

The Medical Assistance Program serves an estimated 7,000 legally blind clients who are entitled to receive Medicaid through Social Security. A simplified billing system has been implemented, resulting in faster claims processing and quicker payments. With the refinement of the administrative system within the Commission, quality assurance and efficiency has allowed easier, better services for the 507 new eligible applicants. 700 Social Security Income Recipients, totalling 700,000 claims and \$37 million in reimbursement to Medicaid participating providers, reflect the increased need for and importance of Medical Assistance.

## **ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY**

Orientation and Mobility Specialists teach independent travel skills to individuals who are blind. Individual assessments are made to determine goals, interests, needs, and capabilities. Services include orientation to home, neighborhood, and place of employment. 966 clients were served in FY '86, with an increase in FY '87 to 1051 served.

## POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The Policy Development Unit's foremost concern is to ensure that services provided to clients are of the best quality possible. The Unit develops client services policies for the provision of vocational rehabilitation and independent living social services and strives to ensure that policies which effect clients are equitable and truly meet their needs. The Unit monitors and evaluates the implementation and effectiveness of these policies through individual case reviews, statistical analyses, and client needs studies. The Unit also coordinates agency planning to improve services and to meet the changing needs of blind persons in the future.

## VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vocational rehabilitation services offer a variety of services designed to assist all eligible and interested blind persons to secure competitive employment, independent homemaker status, or non-competitive employment. Services include evaluation and assessment, individual and family counseling, physical restoration, training, and placement. During FY '86 1,029 consumers were served, with 137 case closures into competitive employment and 81 into homemakers. In FY '87 1,060 consumers were served, with 137 consumers securing employment and 96 case closures as homemakers. Additional services in vocational rehabilitation follow.

The Vending Facilities Program trains and places blind vendors in stands at federal, state, municipal and other business locations. There are more than 50 successful vending facilities operating in the Commonwealth.

The Small Business Grant Program allows qualified individuals to develop and plan their own small businesses with support from the Commission in the form of funding, equipment, or both.

Technology for the Blind Program makes previously inaccessible jobs accessible to blind consumers. The Program provides evaluation, training and equipment placement for vocational purposes. Equipment is provided to eligible clients if it is necessary to obtain or maintain employment.

Ferguson Industries for the Blind has four production facilities throughout the Commonwealth. The Cambridge facility handles the bulk of the production, making brooms, mops, pillowcases and bibs. Ferguson Industries also has a Homebound Program in which articles are made in the home and marketed through the Industries.

## **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION**

Affirmative action is a positive and aggressive approach to recruit, employ, train, and promote women, minorities, the handicapped, and Vietnam-Era Veterans in an effort to remedy past and present discrimination. Affirmative Action is an integral component of MCB's Human Resources Department and has the full and complete support and commitment of the Commissioner. This commitment is especially important in a human services agency as we serve communities and clients from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The past fiscal year personnel records reflect this agency's commitment through a steady progress in the recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion of Affirmative Action candidates.

## NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION

The Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) does not discriminate in terms or conditions of employment or in provision of services on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, handicap or veteran status.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning nondiscrimination in employment is directed to contact M. Eugene Rivers, MCB, 110 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108, (617) 727-5550, Extension 256 or toll-free 1-800-392-6450/voice; 1-800-392-6556/TDD.

Any person having inquiries or complaints concerning nondiscrimination in provision of services is directed to contact Robert A. Dowling, MCB, 110 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02108, (617) 727-5550, Extension 200 or toll-free 1-800-392-6450/voice; 1-800-392-6556/TDD.

Any person may also contact the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Region One, Boston, Massachusetts 02109, regarding MCB's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, 34 C.F.R. Part 100; Title IX, 34 C.F.R. Part 106; Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 45 C.F.R. 90; or Section 504, 34 C.F.R. Part 104.

# REGIONAL OFFICES

REGION 1:	<b>WESTERN MA</b> 1694 Main Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413) 781-1290 1-800-332-2772 Toll Free
REGION 2:	<b>CENTRAL MA</b> 340 Main Street Worcester, MA 01608 754-1148 1-800-392-6450 Toll Free
REGION 3:	<b>NORTHEASTERN MA</b> 110 Tremont Street Boston, MA 02108 727-5550 1-800-392-6450 Toll Free
REGION 4:	<b>GREATER BOSTON AREA</b> 110 Tremont Street Boston, MA 02108 727-5550 1-800-392-6450 Toll Free
REGION 5:	<b>SOUTHEASTERN MA</b> 85 North Main Street Fall River, MA 02720 676-1056 1-800-392-6450 Toll Free
REGION 6:	<b>BOSTON AND BROOKLINE</b> 110 Tremont Street Boston, MA 02108 727-5550 1-800-392-6450 Toll Free
TDD	<b>PHONE</b> 1-800-392-6556 Toll Free

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