



Employment, Independence & Equality

**Department of Rehabilitation
Biennial Report**

on

**Programs and Activities of the Division of Specialized
Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired and
Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

July 1, 2017

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1. Executive Summary

The Department of Rehabilitation (DOR) presents this biennial report to the Legislature on Programs and Activities of the Specialized Services Division (SSD) providing services to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Pursuant to the requirements of Senate Bill 105, Chapter 1102, Statutes of 2002 (hereafter referred to as SB 105), this report provides statistics on competitive employment placements for persons who are blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing, as well as an update on the programs administered by the SSD. This is the DOR's seventh biennial report to the Legislature. The first six reports, dated July 1, 2005, July 1, 2007, July 1, 2009, July 1, 2011, July 1, 2013 and July 1, 2015, are available upon request.

For the seventh biennium, the total competitive employment placements continued to be consistently higher than before the SB 105 implementation for consumers who are blind and visually impaired. In all years, the average weekly earnings for blind and visually impaired consumers served by the Blind Field Services (BFS) District is higher than the total departmental caseload. The average weekly BFS earnings have consistently remained approximately one-third higher than the weekly DOR wage for the last ten years. This indicates that specialized services aid in more successful transition of the blind and visually impaired consumers from dependence on social services and public benefits to independence and competitive employment.

Since State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2003-04, the average weekly earnings for deaf and hard of hearing consumers remained higher than the total departmental caseload. The Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf continue to account, on average, more than 70 percent of the competitive employment placements for deaf and hard of hearing consumers. This suggests that specialized services also aid in successful transition of deaf and hard of hearing consumers from dependence on social services and public benefits to independence and gainful employment.

From Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2002-03 to FFY 2015-16, the Business Enterprises Program (BEP) has experienced an increase of \$11.5 million in sales, an increase of \$3 million in net profit income to vendors, and an increase of \$55,000 in average annual vendor income. While the total number of facilities has dropped by 84 since FFY 2002-03, there were a total of 66 new facilities established over the years. The financial gains reflect the benefits of closing less profitable facilities. Noticeably, the number of facilities continues to outpace vendors operating facilities.

Through December 2016 the Orientation Center for the Blind (OCB) has served 549 participants since SFY 2002-03. Length of services for each participant averages seven months. The participants who received OCB services have been positioned to advance their employment goals, increase their independence, and further their individual pursuit of equality.

The Title VII, Chapter 2, Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) program continues to see a small increase in the number of individuals aged 55 or older with severe visual impairments that receive services. Most notably, over 6,700 persons were served in FFY 2015-16.

2. Background

The DOR's mission is to work in partnership with consumers and other stakeholders to provide services and advocacy resulting in employment, independent living, and equality to individuals with disabilities. The primary program administered by DOR is the Vocational Rehabilitation program, which provides a wide range of services designed to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and engage in meaningful employment consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

The Specialized Services Division (SSD) was established with the enactment of SB 105, which recognized the need for a more formalized and tailored approach to providing vocational rehabilitation, job training, and placement services to individuals with sensory disabilities. The goals of the SSD are:

- (1) To assist persons who are blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing to gain competitive employment.
- (2) To enlarge economic opportunities for persons who are blind or visually impaired and deaf or hard of hearing.
- (3) To enhance the independence and self-sufficiency of blind and visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing persons.

Under the SSD, management, counselors, and support staff were realigned to create the Blind Field Services (BFS) District and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS) program. Staff within the BFS District and the DHHS program are located throughout the state and provide specialized services to their respective consumer groups. The BFS District staff report to the SSD Deputy Director. In contrast, the DHHS administrative program staff report to the SSD Deputy Director, while field staff (i.e., Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf) report to local supervisors, administrators and the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division Deputy Director.

In addition to the realignment, SSD assumed oversight of the Business Enterprises Program, the Orientation Center for the Blind, and the Older Individuals who are Blind program.

3. Blind Field Services (BFS)

The BFS is a statewide District that provides specialized and comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to Californians who are legally blind or visually impaired. The BFS utilizes a service delivery team approach through nine units of Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind and paraprofessional staff managed by the Team Managers and a District Administrator, all of whom have specialized knowledge and training in serving this population.

Since the last biennial reporting period, BFS has made additional organizational changes, including absorbing five redirected positions to create a procurement unit to handle the more complex assistive technology equipment and service procurement requests. The procurement unit will ensure that BFS consumers receive equipment and services more quickly in support of their rehabilitation programs. With the new procurement unit, BFS's allocation increased to 106 positions.

The BFS has also focused on implementing the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), passed in 2014, which places significant emphasis on providing pre-employment transition to youth with disabilities. The BFS has been aggressively conducting outreach to ensure that at least one third of its caseload include youth, specifically students who are blind and visually impaired in the 16-21 age range. The WIOA also places greater emphasis on job driven training and employer engagement to further support outcomes for individuals seeking employment. In response, BFS, in collaboration with the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division (VRED) staff and other stakeholders, has been engaging the business community to provide a menu of services, including but not limited to disability etiquette training, assistive technology consultations, and referring qualified consumers to fill their workforce needs.

The BFS continues to provide ongoing in-service education, at least annually, to all BFS staff and their community partners to increase their expertise and remain current on trends and innovations leading to successful employment outcomes for blind and visually impaired consumers. In 2015, BFS staff met for a three-day training in Northern California, and again in 2016, in Southern California. Training topics included: an overview of WIOA, providing better customer service to

consumers, working with transition aged youth, medical and psychological aspects in serving individuals with vision loss, work experience and business engagement, increasing referrals and outreach, collaborating with Veteran’s Affairs, utilizing Work Incentive Planners, assessments and evaluations, and updates on Assistive Technology.

The following table provides data on the total number of competitive employment placements of blind and visually impaired consumers for the DOR as a whole compared to those served just by BFS, as well as average weekly earnings for the total DOR caseload and BFS consumers.

State Fiscal Year (SFY)	Total Competitive Placements	BFS Placements	BFS Placements % of Total	DOR Average Weekly Earnings**	BFS Average Weekly Earnings
2001-02	389	N/A	N/A	\$334	N/A
2002-03	390	N/A	N/A	\$340	N/A
2003-04	347	214	61.6%	\$340	\$497
2004-05	363	242	66.7%	\$344	\$513
2005-06	452	355	78.5%	\$351	\$484
2006-07	445	363	81.5%	\$363	\$565
2007-08	404	323	80.8%	\$372	\$554
2008-09	406	347	85.5%	\$374	\$619
2009-10	278	235	84.5%	\$355	\$578
2010-11	368	309	83.9%	\$367	\$629
2011-12	354	306	86.4%	\$351	\$556
2012-13	344	281	81.7%	\$388	\$585
2013-14	402	335	83.3%	\$386	\$609
2014-15	387	316	82%	\$390	\$622
2015-16	443	376	85%	\$390	\$570

State Fiscal Year (SFY)	Total Competitive Placements	BFS Placements	BFS Placements % of Total	DOR Average Weekly Earnings**	BFS Average Weekly Earnings
2016-17*	150	121	81%	\$395	\$554

Source: Adhoc Reports-Field Computer System (pre SFY 2010-11), AWARE (post SFY 2010-11)

*As of December 31, 2016

**DOR average weekly earnings are comprised of competitive weekly earnings of all consumers served including the BFS consumers.

N/A-BFS District implemented July 1, 2003.

As referenced in the table, the number of successful employment closures in SFY 2015-16 was 376, which is the most annual closures since SB 105 was established and almost double the number of employment closures since tracking was initiated in SFY 2003-04. Furthermore, the average weekly earnings for blind and visually impaired consumers continue to steadily increase since SB 105 was established and are higher than the average weekly earnings for all consumers served by the DOR.

While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. The BFS consumer success stories can be found in section 8.1.

For the next biennium, BFS will continue its efforts increasing applications for youth as well as working individuals who are experiencing difficulties with job retention or interested in advancing in employment. In collaboration with VRED staff and stakeholders, BFS will focus on activities to better prepare consumers towards job readiness and successful placement. BFS will also continue to develop additional relationships with employers and foster partnerships with the local Workforce Development Boards, training programs, and employment programs.

4. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services (DHHS)

Although the DHHS program has been aligned within the SSD, the Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (RCDs) and their supervisors do not report to the Deputy Director of the SSD. Rather, they report to administrators over the districts in which they serve. While most of the RCDs receive supervision from generalist supervisors, administrators have placed their RCDs under specialty supervisors to focus expertise and promote consistency of service-delivery in two districts. The DHHS program provides technical guidance and consultation to these administrators and supervisors who manage the RCDs as well as support services, such as the annual SB 105 training and regional training for the RCDs and DOR staff.

For the past two years, the DHHS program focused on implementing technology to improve the accessibility of services to deaf and hard of hearing consumers. The DHHS provided training on the use of Ubi Duo, a face-to-face text based communication device, in all of the districts to enhance communication with deaf and hard of hearing consumers as appropriate. Another key accessibility effort includes the development and implementation of videophone in a public kiosk mode for every job club room throughout DOR. This service will help deaf and hard of hearing consumers to conduct phone interviews, intake interviews, one-on-one meetings with RCDs or their DOR teams, or make phone calls to obtain additional information for the RCDs without delay.

The DHHS has continued to provide in-service training annually to the RCDs and their DOR teams. Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) and partners continue to be invited to the training to support the ongoing collaboration with the RCDs and their DOR teams leading to improved services for the deaf and hard of hearing population.

The table below provides data on the total number of the DOR's competitive employment placements of deaf and hard of hearing consumers compared to those served by the DHHS program, and the average weekly earnings for the total DOR caseload and DHHS consumers.

State Fiscal Year (SFY)	Total Competitive Placements	DHHS Placements	DHHS Placements % of Total	DOR Average Weekly Earnings**	DHHS Average Weekly Earnings
2001-02	757	N/A	N/A	\$334	N/A
2002-03	824	N/A	N/A	\$340	N/A
2003-04	872	760	87.2%	\$340	\$411
2004-05	785	729	92.9%	\$344	\$406
2005-06	826	772	93.5%	\$351	\$417
2006-07	737	728	98.8%	\$363	\$432
2007-08	740	695	93.9%	\$372	\$464
2008-09	710	596	83.9%	\$374	\$477
2009-10	560	536	95.7%	\$355	\$553
2010-11	652	432	66.3%	\$367	\$482
2011-12	614	454	73.9%	\$351	\$486
2012-13	606	414	68.3%	\$388	\$450
2013-14	610	512	83.9%	\$386	\$469
2014-15	813	575	71.4%	\$394	\$472
2015-16	855	589	68.9%	\$390	\$467
2016-17*	419	319	76.1%	\$395	\$464

Source: Adhoc Reports - Field Computer System (pre SFY 2010-11), AWARE (post SFY 2010-11)

*As of December 31, 2016

**DOR average weekly earnings are comprised of competitive weekly earnings of all consumers served including the DHHS consumers

N/A - DHHS program implemented July 1, 2003

In the July 1, 2011 report, it was noted that DOR recognized the number of DHHS placements was higher than was achieved. Recent implementation of the new case management system has allowed DOR to refine and report actual competitive placements.

While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer success stories, on deaf and hard of hearing services, can be found in section 8.2.

For the next biennium, DHHS will enhance opportunities for deaf and hard of hearing consumers to use videophone in public kiosk mode in job club rooms. The DHHS will continue to provide training to RCDs, DOR teams, and CRPs to support ongoing collaboration and improved employment outcomes. The DHHS will work to expand the availability of specialized CRP services to this population. Furthermore, DHHS will continue to work in collaboration with the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division on responding to changes as required under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

5. Business Enterprises Program (BEP)

The BEP was created through the Federal Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936, which authorized a priority for BEP in placing vending facilities on federal property. California State law, enacted in 1945, expanded the federal program to give priority to the BEP vending facilities on State property.

The BEP provides training and support to enhance self-employment for visually impaired Californians. Twenty-five trainees have completed the BEP course since 2012. The curriculum is evolving to be computer based learning with more emphasis on occupational skills to better prepare the trainees to operate a food service business. Other BEP services include: developing new facilities; overseeing the selection process for placement of vendors into these facilities; providing technical assistance to vendors; purchasing and maintaining all vendor equipment; and managing the funding for new and existing facilities.

The BEP vendors operate facilities including cafeterias, snack bars, convenience type stores, coffee carts, vending machine routes, and Department of Defense contracts on federal, state, county, and city property. As of December 2016, there are 101 BEP facilities at 248 addresses operated by 87 vendors throughout the State.

The following table provides an overview of the BEP activities since Federal Fiscal Year 2002-03.

Federal Fiscal Year	Vendor Person Years of Employment	Gross Sales	Net Profit to Vendors	Average Vendor Earnings	Total Facilities	Number of New Locations
2002-03	138.3	\$38,141,507	\$5,052,869	\$36,536	185	17
2003-04	128.2	\$37,035,071	\$4,564,908	\$35,608	182	13
2004-05	122.6	\$41,545,828	\$5,012,233	\$40,883	178	10
2005-06	129.1	\$48,707,789	\$5,318,684	\$41,198	167	5

Federal Fiscal Year	Vendor Person Years of Employment	Gross Sales	Net Profit to Vendors	Average Vendor Earnings	Total Facilities	Number of New Locations
2006-07	131.5	\$48,823,250	\$5,897,458	\$44,848	156	1
2007-08*	122	\$37,739,686	\$6,106,816	\$50,056	151	3
2008-09*	116	\$35,754,322	\$5,911,371	\$50,960	149	4
2009-10	112	\$48,629,881	\$6,372,221	\$56,895	140	1
2010-11	110	\$48,514,643	\$6,043,826	\$54,944	136	3
2011-12	114	\$47,742,039	\$6,688,849	\$64,316	134	1
2012-13	104	\$48,452,853	\$7,139,353	\$70,518	119	3
2013-14	96	\$47,315,041	\$7,319,353	\$76,164	114	1
2014-15	93	\$48,712,182	\$7,629,192	\$81,771	104	0
2015-16	88	\$49,641,741	\$8,055,668	\$91,542	101	4

* Data does not include Department of Defense

Source: RSA 15 Reports

While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer success stories on the BEP services can be found in section 8.3.

The BEP's focus for the next biennium is to become the preferred food service choice throughout the state. The BEP will continue to remodel vending facilities to meet the needs of today's customers, and train the BEP staff on current trends in food service marketing and management to provide technical assistance to the vendors.

Additionally, the BEP is exploring the possibility of developing micro market vending facilities to expand the number of BEP facilities. A micro market is a vending concept typically described as an unattended, self-checkout food facility, usually located inside a secured building and available to its

employees. Employees can access prepackaged and fresh foods directly, and then pay for those items at an automated payment kiosk. Micro markets reduce labor costs because they do not need to be staffed.

The BEP will also revise the BEP vendor training program in an effort to attract more consumers to the program. The goal is to provide a training curriculum that will incorporate both online and in person training to consumers in the areas where they live and reduce the amount of time away from family and loved ones.

6. Orientation Center for the Blind (OCB)

The OCB is a DOR owned and operated residential training facility that assists adults who are visually impaired and blind, adjust to their vision loss. Credentialed teachers, trainers, and qualified rehabilitation professionals provide a full curriculum of classes. Classes and experiences are individually tailored to assist each blind or visually impaired participant to reach their full potential for independence and to develop the skills necessary for employment. Length of training is individualized to meet the participants' needs, and the participants' length of stay averages seven months. The residential facility is available to support up to 36 participants at any given time.

Training classes and course work are scheduled from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday, to allow participants to prepare for and experience the demands of a full-time post-secondary training or job. With a fully loaded high tech lab, staff is available around the clock to reinforce and support the practical application of newly acquired skills. Direct-service staff continually assess the effectiveness of the training and identify gaps in learning that may not be evident in a less intensive setting, with the goal of adjusting a participant's individual program to best meet their needs. Consistent daily contact with participants permits staff to address soft skills development and job-readiness in addition to the concrete skills of Braille, Orientation and Mobility, Computers and Related Technologies, Cooking and Daily Living Skills. Changes in the curriculum has refocused the training from the classroom to real life applications of skills learned in work or community based settings.

During SFY 2014-15 and SFY 2015-16, OCB served 70 and 63 participants, respectively. Through the first two quarters of SFY 2016-17, 43 DOR consumers have been served. While statistics can be useful in measuring performance, they do not reflect the personal impact and meaningful benefit on each individual. Consumer testimonials on OCB services can be found in section 8.4.

For the next biennium, the OCB administrators and staff will continue to advance opportunities for each individual consumer to participate in work-based learning and gain experience that will support the participants' transition to work and school upon graduating from the OCB program.

7. Independent Living Skills for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB)

Title VII, Chapter 2 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, authorizes and funds independent living services to individuals age 55 or older, whose severe visual impairment makes competitive employment difficult to attain, but for whom independent living goals are feasible.

With the new funding methodology, implemented in October of 2014, of allocating OIB funds based on a formula of the geographic size and age 55-plus population of each county, 57 of the 58 California counties are covered by OIB provider agencies. This shift toward providing county based funding to OIB provider agencies has helped reach new OIB consumers in some of the geographically remote communities, as the old funding methodology distributed funds to “service areas” to serve mostly the large population centers. This has resulted in bringing in six additional provider agencies to the program.

This biennium, the OIB program oriented provider agencies new to the program, conducted program reviews to ensure quality OIB services, and provided technical assistance as necessary. The OIB program also awarded approximately \$3 million in one-time only program income generated from reimbursements received from Social Security Administration to OIB provider agencies for capacity building. The funds were utilized to purchase office equipment, agency vehicles, and equipment for OIB consumers.

The following table shows the growth since FFY 1999-00 in grant dollars awarded and the number of individuals who received OIB services.

Federal Fiscal Year	Federal Award	Number Served
1999-00	\$1,004,368	680
2000-01	\$1,713,782	2,162
2001-02	\$2,290,501	2,332
2002-03	\$2,604,141	2,874
2003-04	\$3,086,561	3,326

Federal Fiscal Year	Federal Award	Number Served
2004-05	\$3,367,434	3,701
2005-06	\$3,260,338	4,113
2006-07	\$3,258,596	4,349
2007-08	\$3,168,533	4,715
2008-09	\$3,381,947	5,272
2009-10	\$3,386,393	5,509
2010-11	\$3,379,345	5,874
2011-12	\$3,397,041	7,268*
2012-13	\$3,283,627	6,228
2013-14	\$3,279,751	6,553
2014-15	\$3,238,001	7,178
2015-16	\$3,238,001	6,737

Source: RSA-7-OB Reports

*Increase due to one-time American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding.

For the next biennium, the OIB program will conduct a competitive process to secure OIB provider agencies for the new grant cycle beginning on October 1, 2017. The OIB program will assist provider agencies, particularly those that may be new to the program, with reporting and invoicing processes. The OIB program anticipates monitoring and providing technical assistance to all of the provider agencies, once the new grant cycle has begun.

8. Consumer Success Stories

All names have been altered to protect the privacy of the consumers and recipients of SSD services.

8.1. BFS Success Stories

Elise is a 27 year old woman who is legally blind due to inherited retinitis pigmentosa. She came to DOR as a high school student in 2007. Her interest was in physical therapy and given her strong academic prowess, was accepted into Cal Poly's Physical Therapy (PT)/Kinesiology program. Elise graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree, maintaining a high grade point average (GPA) while volunteering and working part-time as a PT Aide. She was accepted into University of California San Francisco's (UCSF) graduate PT program. At UCSF, Elise was the recipient of the University of California Regents' Scholarship awarded for outstanding academic achievement, and promise. Elise obtained employment as a PT and the BFS team ensured she had the necessary assistive technology to complete the documentation and file review required for her position. She is working 40 hours per week earning \$25 per hour.

Katie is a 31 year old woman with low vision due to retinopathy of prematurity as well as myopia, astigmatism, strabismus, and glaucoma. Katie had a prior case with BFS that was closed successfully when she obtained employment away from her community. She gained important work experience, but nevertheless missed her family and friends. She requested BFS services to assist in securing employment closer to her home community. She obtained a Limited Examination Appointment Program certification from the State of California and concentrated on finding a state job closer to her community. With the assistance of her BFS team, Katie prepared for and was offered a position as an Office Assistant with the California Highway Patrol (CHP). Her position is located at a substation in her community. Her BFS Counselor, Service Coordinator and Employment Coordinator were instrumental in providing disability training, support and technical assistance to CHP staff. They collaborated with Katie to ensure her assistive technology needs were met to perform the necessary functions of her position. She works 40 hours per week with full benefits, earning \$17.56 per hour.

Desiree is a 36 year old woman who is legally blind due to Horada's disease, which affects light/shadow distinction. After losing her vision, she applied for BFS services to receive services to return to work. Given her past work experience in helping occupations, Desiree expressed an interest in becoming a therapist. She participated in training to build her independent living skills, orientation and mobility skills and her knowledge of assistive technology. She then participated in college level training toward a goal of a Marriage and Family Therapist. Despite a serious health condition requiring months of difficult treatment, she persevered by completing her studies and securing employment in her desired goal. She works 20 hours per week earning \$25 per hour. She now enjoys employment, spending time with family, and her good health.

Joe is a 57 year old man with a history of cone dystrophy resulting in legal blindness. For many years, he has served people in need as a Pastor in a rural California community. He additionally provides pastoral services at the local university and oversees and coordinates a successful food bank. Joe came to BFS because his vision had deteriorated to the extent that he feared he could no longer continue working. He experienced difficulty reading the print material used for his sermons and for his duties at the university. With the assistance of his BFS counselor, Joe was able to test and train in the use of assistive technology devices and low vision aids that magnified print material, thus enabling him to continue his work serving his communities. He works 35 hours per week earning \$18.51 per hour.

Brian is a 55 year old man with vision loss secondary to a childhood traumatic brain injury. He had worked as a teacher's assistant for more than 20 years but was finding it increasingly difficult to perform the essential functions of his job. Brian came to BFS because he realized he was limited in his mobility at work, at home and in the community. He wanted to learn how to use public transportation because he was losing the ability to drive. He reported getting lost frequently when walking and having difficulty navigating slopes, steps, and curbs. He wanted to overcome his fears and self-identify as a person with a visual impairment. Following counseling and guidance, as well as orientation and mobility training, Brian was able to maintain his long term employment as a teacher's assistant earning \$17.69 per hour, working 30 hours per week. His ability to safely navigate his worksite, home and community improved his quality of life.

Robert is a 57 year old man with a history of panuveitis and resultant sudden vision loss. When he applied for BFS services, he was employed

as a contract project manager with a mobile network. Neither he nor his employer knew whether he would be able to retain employment given the rapid onset of vision loss. He and his BFS counselor collaborated in developing an Individualized Plan for Employment based on his unique needs from employment and independence perspectives. In addition to receiving assessments and training in independent living skills, orientation and mobility, and adjustment to blindness, Robert also trained in the use of assistive technology devices. He was unable to retain his employment, but persevered with the encouragement of his BFS Employment Coordinator and Counselor, ultimately securing a new position as a contractor for a broadcast construction company delivering solutions for communication infrastructures. He works from a home office, traveling 50 – 75% of the time. He earns \$102,000 a year.

Carlos is a 22 year old man with a history of optic nerve hyperplasia resulting in visual impairment. He applied for DOR services following graduation from high school. With a 4.04 GPA, he was accepted to UC San Diego's Chemical Engineering Program and graduated in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering. He secured employment as a project engineer designing headsets used in electroencephalogram studies. He leads a team in the development of biosensor technology and manages all 3D printing projects for his bio-engineering firm. He earns \$28 per hour and works full-time.

Daniel is a 63 year old man with a history of Fuchs' endothelial dystrophy, leading to visual impairment. He applied for BFS services after relocating from another state. He had no employment history, but expressed an interest in becoming an account clerk or bookkeeper. He was provided with low vision aids which enabled him to participate in vocational training courses jointly funded by both the Employment Development Department Career Center and BFS. Daniel was extremely diligent in his job search utilizing all resources available to him, including his BFS Employment Coordinator. With the assistance of his Employment Coordinator, he secured two temporary work assignments including one paid on-the-job training opportunity prior to being hired by the Department of Defense under the Federal Schedule A program. He earns \$18 per hours and works 40 hours per week as a bookkeeping clerk.

8.2. DHHS Success Stories

Jessica, a deaf female who uses American Sign Language (ASL) as her primary language, applied for DOR services and received counseling and guidance services, transportation allowance, optometric exam, new eyeglasses and other assistive devices. With assistance from her RCD, she is now employed as a General Office Clerk at a bank file warehouse with full benefits. Jessica earns \$12.00 an hour. She is required to work overtime, a minimum two Saturdays per month, at \$18.00 per hour.

Savannah, who is profoundly deaf and fluent in ASL, graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology in May 2013, with a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a GPA of 3.985. In August 2013, Savannah was accepted into a law school in San Francisco and applied for DOR services to receive assistance with tuition, fees, books, supplies, transportation, and clothing. She also received assistance with the fee and preparation to take the Bar exam. In June 2016, Savannah graduated from the law school with honors. In October 2016, she became a full-time attorney for a law firm in San Francisco earning \$160,000 salary.

Clarity, a deaf female who uses ASL as her primary language, applied for DOR services to receive assistance in attending California State University, Northridge, and then Gallaudet University. Her RCD and team arranged for her to receive interpreting services and benefits counseling through DOR's Work Incentives Planner. Clarity is now employed as a Parent Educator for a private, non-profit social service agency that serves individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and late-deafened, their families, friends, and community service providers. She runs a program that focuses on assisting hearing parents learn how to communicate with their deaf or hard of hearing children, and at the same time serves as a mentor to deaf and hard of hearing children. Her starting wage was \$15.00 an hour.

Cason, a deaf man, applied for DOR services after he struggled with entering the job market since his graduation from high school. With assistance from his RCD, he was able to attend and graduate from a community college with an Associate of Arts degree. Cason met with his RCD and Employment Coordinator for training and assistance in finding a state job. After diligently applying for over 300 statewide jobs, he was called for his first interview with a state department where he was hired as an Office Assistant. After nine months, Cason interviewed and promoted to Program Technician. He is currently earning \$2,628 per month.

Joseph, a late-deafened man, was diagnosed with having two brain tumors wrapped around each auditory nerve. At that time, he was working as a high school math teacher, but his hearing level decreased little by little each day as the tumors continued to grow. For that reason, Joseph stopped working as a teacher and became a consumer of DOR in August 2010. He and his RCD developed a plan for employment but it had to be put on hold for a surgery to remove the tumors. After surgery, Joseph became completely deaf and was despondent about what this would mean for his future. However, his RCD provided counseling and guidance and taught him how to advocate for himself. With the assistance from the RCD, he was able to attend and graduate from a graduate school with a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. In November 2015, Joseph began his employment as a RCD starting at \$3,900 per month.

8.3. BEP Success Stories

Mark spent about six months at the Orientation Center for the Blind (OCB) where he learned new skills, such as orientation and mobility, assistive technology, and independent living skills to help him learn to live with his much diminished sight. While at OCB, Mark learned about possibilities available through BEP. Mark graduated from the BEP Training Program during the early part of September 2016. Less than two months later, he was awarded a Safety Roadside Rest Area (SRRA) vending route in Southern California. For a young man who had been unsure of his job prospects, he suddenly had a lot of planning to do: find a place to live, move from northern California to the southern part of the state, find a vehicle to operate the vending route, hire an employee, and rent a warehouse. The outgoing BEP vendor, who had operated that SRRA for several years, had been awarded a new location and was ready to turn it over to Mark. Upon hearing Mark's challenges, the outgoing vendor agreed to operate the SRRA for the few months until Mark could move to Southern California. The outgoing vendor also allowed his driver to work for Mark until another was hired. He let Mark use his warehouse, reducing overhead for the new vendor, and provided housing until Mark found the right place to live. Mark plans to extend a helping hand to a new BEP graduate as his way of giving thanks.

Ben lost his sight during an accident he experienced as a teenager. In spite of his vision loss, his spirit remained bright and his "can do attitude" carried him forward. He began a clean-up and hauling business where he and his

crew cleaned houses or cleared landscape and hauled away the debris. He later worked at a cafeteria operated by a BEP vendor who encouraged him to consider a career through BEP. After several years, Ben decided to apply to the BEP Training Program. He successfully completed the required pre-requisites but did not secure a place in the class because he did not do well during the interview conducted by the Applicant Review Panel. The BEP Trainer kept contact with Ben over the next two years, encouraging him to work on his interviewing skills, confident that Ben could become a successful BEP vendor. Eventually, the BEP Trainer coached Ben on his interviewing skills and conducted mock interview exercises. Ben applied to the next BEP Training class, aced the interview, and successfully completed the course. He is now a successful BEP vendor and his customers rave about the food served at his facility. Shortly after opening his location, Ben remarked, "For the first time in my working life, I can now even save money every month!"

Jeremy worked for many years as a supervising mechanic. He loved the work and was very successful. In his spare time, he created striking portraits depicting famous people. He had raised two sons as a single parent, and then his life changed dramatically: his vision suddenly diminished rapidly, putting an end to his career and to his art. Jeremy had to learn a new way to live. He spent many months at OCB obtaining training in independent living skills, orientation and mobility, and assistive technology to learn to live life as a blind person. At OCB, he heard about BEP. After graduating from OCB, Jeremy spoke to several BEP vendors to learn about the opportunities in the program. He became hopeful that he could again earn a living and applied to the next training class. Upon completion of the training, Jeremy accepted a position working for a BEP vendor where he continued to hone his skills. Today, Jeremy is a proud BEP vendor operating his own facility. And, when he can find the time, he continues to create beautiful artwork with the help of assistive technology.

8.4. OCB Success Stories

Anna is a thirty-year-old woman with retinitis pigmentosa. When Anna began the program at OCB, she felt directionless and unsure of herself. Once Anna learned some basic adaptive skills, and interned with OCB's computer teacher as an aide, Anna better understood what was possible despite her vision loss. With the encouragement of the OCB staff, Anna attended World Services for the Blind (WSB) in Arkansas. In May of 2016, Anna graduated from the program with a certification in Desktop Support.

Anna is CompTIA A+ certified and will soon be Network+ certified. She is currently working at WSB as an Information Technology (IT) Systems Administrator and teaches a course in IT Fundamentals. Anna says, "It was the guidance from my teachers, the mentoring I received from my computer instructor, and the internship that was created for me that gave me the self-confidence to pursue a career in technology. Thank you OCB. You gave me the fundamental skills of blindness and made me see what was possible."

Jenna, having rapidly lost her vision to diabetic retinopathy at the age of thirty-four, found that she could no longer perform the duties of her job as a claims processor with a major insurance company. Jenna's employer gave Jenna less than one year to acquire the adaptive skills she would need to retain her position. After touring the OCB campus and learning about its immersion program, Jenna knew OCB was the program she needed. Having successfully returned to work in the summer of 2015, Jenna says, "When I came to OCB, I was in such a hard place. But the teachers were my cheerleaders from day one. I had so many concerns, fears, and questions. The teachers were not only able to address them, but they were able to help me understand why I felt the way I did. They taught me things I thought I would never learn - Braille, mobility, and how to use a computer non-visually. Then they provided me with some additional assistance when I transitioned back to work. I'm so grateful to OCB. This program made all the difference."

Sam was twenty-three years old, received no services or training since he left high school, and admitted to living an "unproductive life." Sam's progressive vision loss was the result of childhood cancer and a genetic condition. Sam was facing an uncertain future when he entered OCB where a spark was ignited. Sam discovered that his love of machinery and working with his hands did not have to end just because he was losing his vision. Sam gained the skills he needed in computers and related technologies, reinforced the Braille skills learned in high school, became a confident traveler through orientation and mobility skills training, and most importantly, learned from other blind adults and the sighted members of staff that full employment was possible. Sam completed OCB and moved directly to a vocational training program where he is happily engaged in learning to build and repair motorcycles.

Ricardo was a high school senior when he was referred to the OCB by his BFS counselor. Ricardo notified the OCB staff that he had a plan: graduate

from high school, get training at OCB, and go to college. When he began training at OCB, it was clear that his retinitis pigmentosa condition had progressed and that the methods he had used to access text books in high school would no longer work. He would need to master using the computer non-visually. Ricardo took his classes seriously, quickly learning everything from using GPS in mobility to basic mathematics in Braille. With support from OCB staff, Ricardo learned to use screen-reader software to access a laptop computer and successfully registered for classes, ordered textbooks, and learned to use the online learning environment at the community college. Ricardo is now in his second year at Sacramento City College and a member of the Dean's List. He is interested in political science, English, and sociology.

8.5. OIB Success Stories

Pat visited the Community Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CCBVI) in Stockton. Pat is a 90 year-old widow who lost her vision due to macular degeneration. She contacted CCBVI to learn about services that would help her remain in her home instead of selling her longtime residence and moving to a senior living community. The independent living skills instructor offered nonvisual techniques to perform household tasks and marked appliances with Bump Dots; the OIB program provided a talking clock, 20/20 pens, Bump Dots, low vision notebooks, and other devices to enhance safety in the home and enable Pat to manage her household. Pat appreciates being able to use her oven and microwave, and manage her finances independently - her checkbook balances to the penny.

Monica relied on a cane instead of a guide dog for her mobility. As such, it was critical for her to continually redevelop a mental map of her neighborhood and surrounding community. The orientation and mobility instruction she received from Visually Impaired Persons Support (VIPS) in Merced gave her greater ease in traveling and improved her safety skills. Monica reported that this was what she needed to keep her independence. She had thought none of that was possible, until the OIB services provided by VIPS changed her life.

Sue, a 102 year old with age-related macular degeneration requested a stronger magnifier from Disability Action Center (DAC) in Redding. The DAC was able to provide a 7x LED handheld to assist her in reading her prescription labels and recipes. She also uses a closed circuited television

(CCTV) provided by DAC to read her mail. Sue still lives independently at home, in part to the services provided by DAC.

Karen, an 84-year-old woman with vision impairment from age-related macular degeneration, was a retired school teacher living with her husband in Terra Linda. She contacted LightHouse for the Blind in San Francisco to express difficulties due to her vision loss: reading, writing, using her iPad, and cooking. Independent living skills training was recommended, and she enthusiastically participated in training. She immediately benefited from the CCTV Loan Program; LightHouse was able to loan her a Merlin Desktop Video Magnifier. After the assessment, Karen followed through with the task lighting recommendations, which she found very helpful in multiple areas in her home. By the end of training, Karen was able to access emails on her iPad, operate various kitchen appliances with tactile markers, access her paper files with large print labels, identify coins and bills using tactile methods, use the talking book machine to listen to books, and utilize the CCTV for reading and writing.

Paul called the Community Access Center (CAC) requesting assistance with reading and identifying objects in his environment. The CAC staff trained Paul to use a CCTV with a text to speech feature. This training helped him read mail, identify objects, and other common tasks around the home. Paul also applied this technology outside of his home, including to participate in a legal hearing where he was able to independently present his written information as evidence.