



Kentucky Office for the Blind
Building Working Relationships

2009 Comprehensive
Statewide Needs Assessment
State Rehabilitation Council
Kentucky Office for the Blind

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I. Introduction

Purpose of the Needs Assessment

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment is conducted annually over a three-year period and the Attachment 4.11 (a) submitted triennially. The agency utilizes existing internal data as well as external data obtained through different methods to determine the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired in the state. The results of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment are used by the Agency and the SRC for planning purposes, the identification of unmet needs, service trends that may result in policy and procedural revisions or potential services changes. The compiled results of the assessment are used in development of goals, priorities, and strategies for the state agency contained in the State Plan and implemented by the agency.

The agency in collaboration with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), developed and conducted a comprehensive statewide needs assessment. The Special Projects Committee of the SRC was instrumental in the design, development and implementation of the needs assessment. The assessment was conducted for the purpose of identifying the needs of individuals who are blind or significantly visually impaired in the State of Kentucky specifically for:

- Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including the need for supported employment services;
- Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program
- Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system
- An assessment of the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State

This information gained from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment is used in formulating the stated Goals and Priorities of Attachment 4.11 (c)(1) of this FFY 2010 State Plan.

II. Methodology

Design

The design of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment began in August of 2007. The Special Projects Committee of the SRC began the process of working on the design of the assessment that would target RSA priority areas. Dr. Ron L. Milliman, Professor of Marketing at Western Kentucky University a committee member played a key role in the design of the project. The committee came up with the following project design for obtaining information regarding the needs of the blind and visually impaired.

Identification of Potential Clients	Determination of the Best Methods to Reach Potential Clients	Create an Instrument or Design Other Medium Formats
<p>Target Population</p> <p>Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired</p> <p>Viable stakeholders and partners</p>	<p>What medium will we utilize?</p> <p>surveys forums focus groups state chapter affiliates and conferences mailings newsletters media</p>	<p>Topic Areas to be covered</p> <p>Adaptive Devices Housing Employment Areas of Independent Living Access to Mainstream Education</p>
<p>Age Categories</p> <p>Preschool elementary middle school high school college adults</p>	<p>Stakeholders and Collaborative Partners</p> <p>Visually Impaired Preschool Services, Visually Impaired Teachers, Talking Book Library, Central Radio Eye. Independent Living Centers, Employers, LC Industries, OFB Staff, Kentucky School for the Blind, American Council for the Blind, National Federation for the Blind, Public School Systems, Ophthalmologists Optometrists, Constituent Services, CAP & P & A, One Stops, Developmental Disabilities Council, Deaf – Blind Services Disability Coalition, CRP's</p>	<p>Design of Medium Formats</p> <p>Survey Development</p> <p>Focus Groups held via advocacy organizations facilitated by SRC members</p> <p>Statewide Press Release through the Cabinet</p> <p>Other PR Media forms: postcards, newsletter articles, & disability list serves</p>

In addition to compiling the information gathered from external sources identified in the above chart the committee along with agency staff comprised a list of existing and internal data sources to be included in the assessment.

Internal Data Sources
Agency Performance on the Standards and Indicators
Consumer Satisfaction Surveys
RSA Monitoring Data Reports
Strategic Plan

The following sources of information, organizations and partners were targeted in order to assure that the RSA target priority areas were addressed.

Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities	Individuals from Minority Backgrounds	Individuals Served by Other Components of the Workforce Investment System
Statewide Press Release regarding the Needs Assessment	Statewide Press Release regarding the Needs Assessment	Statewide Press Release regarding the Needs Assessment
Deaf/Blind Services	Deaf/Blind Services	One Stop Managers
Protection & Advocacy	Protection & Advocacy	Protection & Advocacy
Client Assistance Program	Client Assistance Program	Client Assistance Program
Announcement through the different disability list serves	Announcement through the different disability list serves	Announcement through the different disability list serves
Agency Staff	Agency Staff	Agency Staff
IL Centers	IL Centers	IL Centers
Review of data	Review of data	Review of data
Individuals who are blind and visually impaired	Individuals who are blind and visually impaired	Individuals who are blind and visually impaired
Developmental Disabilities Council		

Media Outreach

The Committee and agency staff determined that a variety of methods and approaches would be utilized to inform the public at large, advocacy organizations and other partner organizations of the conducting of the statewide needs assessment. Statewide press releases were sent that encompasses all Kentucky newspapers in both small (weekly) and large (daily) areas plus all cities surrounding Kentucky such as Cincinnati. The announcement also went to all TV and radio stations across the state. The outreach would be estimated at about 350 outlets. Newsletters of partnering agencies were utilized as well as the medium of the advocacy groups for the blind and visually impaired.

In September of 2008, a statewide press release was sent out informing the public of the conducting of the needs assessment. The link to the agency website was contained in the press release in order to direct individuals to the survey that targeted specifically individuals who are blind and visually impaired. In addition, the toll free number as well as staff contact information was contained in the release for individuals who did not have access to a computer. The press release was also circulated through the different advocacy and disability organizations list serves that has a direct outreach to unserved and underserved populations (Kentucky Developmental Disabilities, Kentucky Disability Coalition).

Agency staff participated in two radio interviews regarding the conducting of the needs assessment from stations in Bowling Green and Louisville. These stations then ran brief excerpts from the interviews throughout the week informing the public of the purpose of the needs assessment and gave them instructions on how to participate in the assessment. Central Kentucky Radio Eye, a non-profit organization specific to broadcasts tailored to people who are blind, or have limited vision, or other disabilities making reading difficult, ran spots about the assessment.

A second statewide press release was distributed in February of 2009 informing the public of one of four focus groups to be held in Louisville at the Kentucky School for the Blind. This release also contained a link to the website for individuals desiring to participate in the survey as well as agency staff contact information.

The following partnering agencies ran articles in their monthly publications or newsletters.

- 1) Kentucky School for the Blind
- 2) American Printing House for the Blind

3) Visually Impaired Preschool Services

A post card "What are Your Needs?" was developed and distributed through a mass mailing campaign. The cards contained information about the needs assessment and directed individuals to the website or gave them the option to call agency contact staff through the tollfree number to give input. Sets of the cards were distributed to the following sources.

- 1) Eye physicians to place in their offices for placement in kiosks for patients.
- 2) Agency staff to distribute to consumers
- 3) Kentucky School for the Blind
- 4) American Printing House for the Blind
- 5) Visually Impaired Preschool Services
- 6) Disability Coalition
- 7) Advocacy Organizations
- 8) Deaf Blind Project

Surveys

The Comprehensive Needs Assessment utilized different surveys designed by the SRC through the Special Projects Committee in collaboration with agency staff. They are outlined in the grid below.

Survey Type	Target Population	Data Collection Method
Consumer Survey	Individuals who are Blind and Visually Impaired or parent, family members	Survey Monkey Link available on website or call toll free and participate in survey over the phone
Agency Staff Survey	VR Counselors Agency Staff in various positions	Survey Monkey Link sent through agency e-mail
One Stop Manager Survey (Jointly conducted with General Agency OVR)	One Stop Management Staff	Survey Monkey Link sent through agency e-mail
Eye Physician Survey	Optometrist Ophthalmologists	Survey pen and paper via regular mail
CRP's	SE providers	Survey via email through VR Counselors

The Consumer Survey Instrument was designed by the Special Projects Committee along with agency staff. The committee utilized the expertise of Dr. Ron Milliman in the design of the survey instrument. Survey Monkey is an accessible online survey tool for creating surveys quickly and easily. The tool is

very user friendly and it compiles the data allowing for the user to compile reports on different levels in order to analyze the results.

The survey had seven sections with a total of thirty-nine (39) questions. The sections were as follows: 1) Demographics (#1-14), 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices (#15-17), 3) Housing (#18-21), 4) Employment (#22-25), 5) Independent Living (#26-29), 6) Mainstream Education (#30-35), and 7) A set of open-ended questions (#36-39).

All the questions allowed for open-ended remarks that were captured and analyzed. The link for the survey was posted on the agency website and sent out through different mediums making it available to the public, consumers and other stakeholders.

Agency Staff Surveys were designed to be more specific to service delivery. There were two surveys similar in nature with one distributed to all staff for participation and one specific to VR Counselors.

The VR Counselor survey contained three questions that were specific to: 1) Community Rehabilitation Providers and Supported Employment, 2) Services provided to consumers through the One Stop System and 3) the three top services requested by consumers based on their needs.

The all agency survey contained three questions that were somewhat different in nature. They are as follows: 1) List the three top services requested by consumers based on their needs, 2) identification of primary concerns facing the consumer population, and 3) identify one single action the agency could take to improve services to meet the needs of consumers.

The One Stop Manager Survey was developed jointly by OFB and OVR staff in Survey Monkey. The survey consisted of six questions that addressed the following: 1) Perception of gaps in services for persons with disabilities, 2) number of persons with disabilities seeking services, 3) training needs of staff, 4) knowledge of differing disability topics, and 4) partner relationships with OVR and OFB.

The Eye Physician Survey targeted Optometrists and Ophthalmologist across the state. This was a pen and paper survey sent via regular mail that included copies of the needs assessment cards for placement in the offices across the state. The survey contained five pertinent questions for the areas of 1) the doctors' awareness of the agency services and field office locations, 2) their needs for information regarding OFB services, 3) their method for referring patients to the agency for needed services, and 4) identification of the greatest unmet needs of their patients.

The Community Rehabilitation Provider Survey was distributed through the VR Counselors with the objective of that yielding a higher return rate. This survey was a short pen and paper survey containing four (4) questions that was distributed via e-mail and regular mail. The questions on the survey were for the following areas: 1) the provision of services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired, 2) consumer referral process, 3), specialized training areas for the blind and visually impaired and, 4) areas of concern in serving this population.

Focus Groups

A sub-committee was formed from the SRC to work on the design and conducting of the focus groups. Four of the SRC members volunteered to steer this committee. Historically, attendance at open forums, public meetings or focus groups has been very low. The decision was made to engage state and local chapters of the advocacy organizations to increase participation. Four focus groups were decided upon. Three would be held in conjunction with other activities of the advocacy organizations as outlined in the grid below. The State Conventions were selected as individuals from all areas of the state would be in attendance at them. Another location chosen was the Kentucky School for the Blind for its proximity to the American Printing House for the Blind as well as the large community of blind residents in that area.

Focus Group	Location
Kentucky NFB State Convention	Louisville /September 2008
Kentucky ACB State Convention	Louisville/November 2008
Kentucky School for the Blind	Louisville/February 2009
Blue Grass Council for the Blind	Lexington/March 2009

The sub-committee came up with a design for the sessions and designated two SRC members as facilitators. The objective of each session was: "To gather information regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired" for the five target areas decided upon by the Council. They were: 1) Housing, 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices, 3) Independent Living, 4) Mainstream Education and 5) Employment. The facilitators would introduce the topic areas and invite discussion using questions from the survey design. The facilitators would then carefully reflect back a summary of what was discussed assuring accuracy in capturing the information. One of the SRC members would record the session or capture it on paper while the other was the main facilitator of the session. The information was then put in an electronic format and shared with agency staff.

Data Analysis Summary

External Data Sources

The Consumer Survey Instrument

The survey was specific to individuals who are blind and visually impaired. It was to be filled out by an individual who was blind or visually impaired or answered by a parent, family member or friend on behalf of the individual.

Demographics

There were 54 respondents to the survey with 52% of individuals filling out the survey reporting that they were blind or visually impaired and 48% were a parent, family member or friend completing the survey on behalf of an individual. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the individuals that the survey pertained to who were blind and visually impaired were forty years of age or older. Fifty-eight percent (58%) were female and 42% were males for the gender reported of the individual who is blind or visually impaired. Ninety-eight percent (98%) reported their race/ethnicity as White, Non-Hispanic with 4% reporting Asian/Pacific Islander or other. Fifteen percent (15%) of the respondents were Veterans.

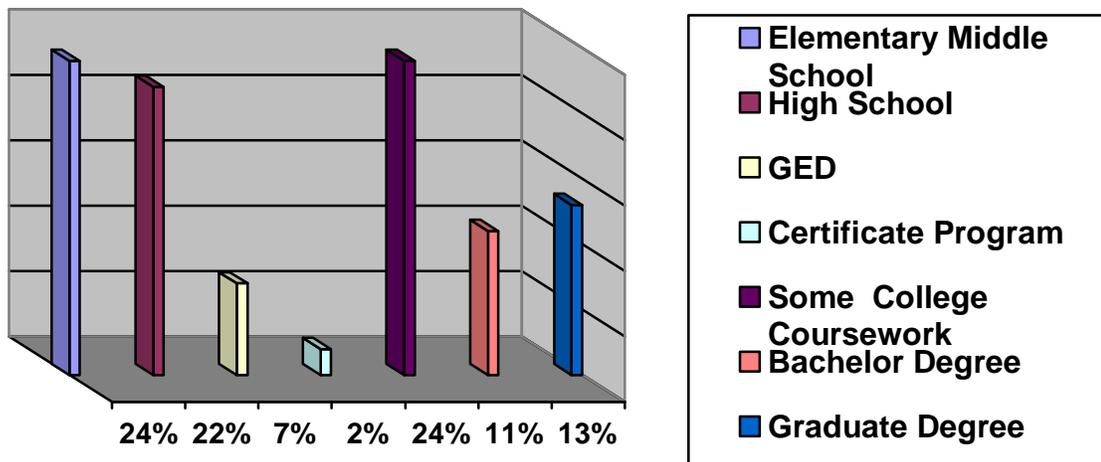
Thirty-six percent (36%) of the respondents reported living alone, 30% with a spouse or partner, 16% with a spouse, partner and children. Only 2% reported being a single parent. Sixteen percent (16%) reported living with parents or friends. Respondents represented 31 of the 120 counties in the state (25%).

Thirty-three percent (33%) reported having some useable eyesight but not enough to read even large print. Twenty-seven percent (27%) reported being able to read large print and 12%, although they were legally blind, could read regular sized print. Ten percent (10%) were totally blind and 12% reported limited eyesight being able to see only shadows and light and dark. The other 6% of respondents reported having what is generally considered normal eyesight.

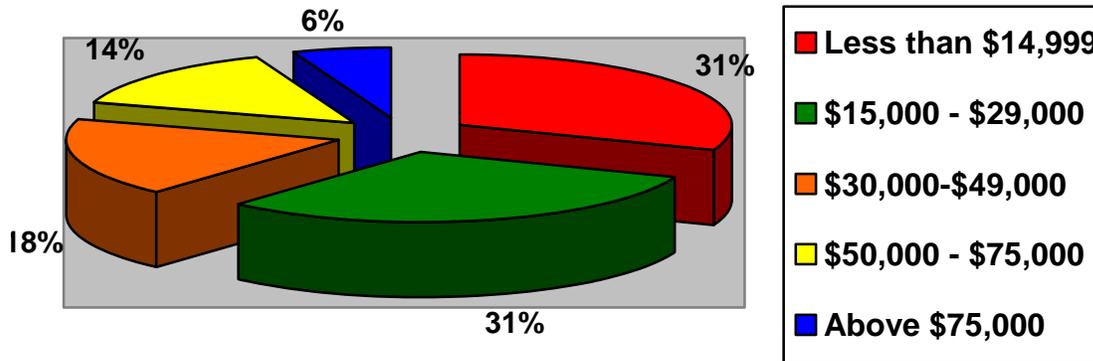
Sixty percent (60%) of the respondents reported the cause of their vision loss for the "other" category that included various causes such as Retinitis Pigmentosa, Toxoplasmosis, Optic Nerve Hypoplasia, and war related injuries. Twenty-two percent (22%) reported the cause as Macular Degeneration while the other 20% indicated Cataracts, Glaucoma and Diabetic Retinopathy. These numbers are not exact numbers as often the respondent would report the cause for one category choices and then would choose the "other" category where they made detailed comments regarding the cause of their vision loss. As a result there were duplicate counts in this section.

For the area of age of onset of vision loss the highest age range was Birth to 20 years at 49%. Second highest area for age of onset was the 60-80 years and above age bracket at 24%. Forty (40) to sixty (60) years of age was at 16% and twenty (20) to forty (40) years was 11% of the respondents. Sixty-eight percent (68%) of the respondents indicated that their vision loss was likely to deteriorate while 32% indicated that it would not. One effecting factor to take into consideration when looking at these numbers is that individuals who are blind are included in the 32% reporting their vision loss was not likely to deteriorate.

The chart below outlines the Educational levels of respondents. Forty-six percent (46%) of the respondents reported having a High School Diploma or below. Forty-eight percent (48%) report having some course work toward a college degree or a bachelors or doctorate degree.



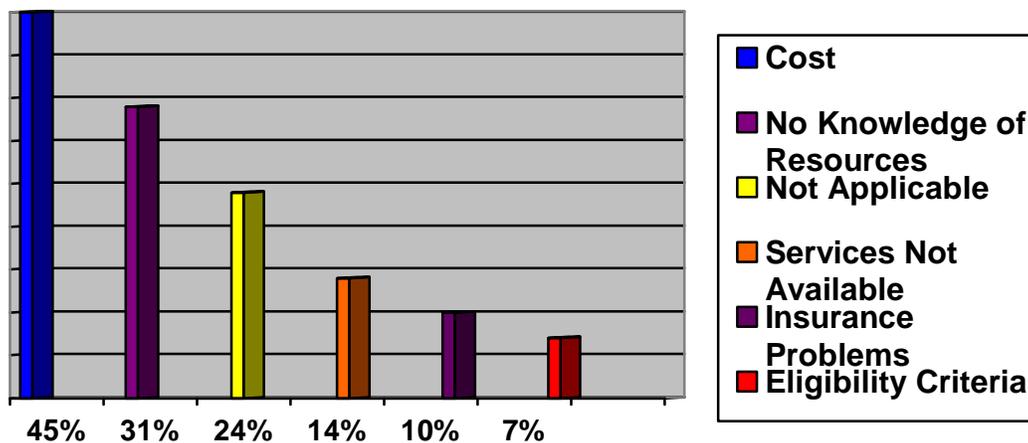
The chart below outlines the household income levels of respondents. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the respondents report an income of \$29,000 or less.



Adaptive Equipment

There were four questions for the area of adaptive equipment, tools and devices. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the respondents indicated they had a need for adaptive equipment in the past year. Twenty-three percent (23%) indicated they did not. Of note is the fact that within that 23% reporting they did not have a need for adaptive equipment, many of the respondents indicated they did not have knowledge that this type of resource existed. Forty-seven percent (47%) indicated they had no difficulty in obtaining needed devices. Forty percent (40%) indicated that they did have difficulty in obtaining needed devices with 13% indicating this category was not applicable for them.

The chart below outlines the varying types of issues the respondents indicated in not being able to obtain the needed adaptive equipment, tools, and devices within the past year. Of note is the lack of knowledge of resources for this need area at 31%.



Housing

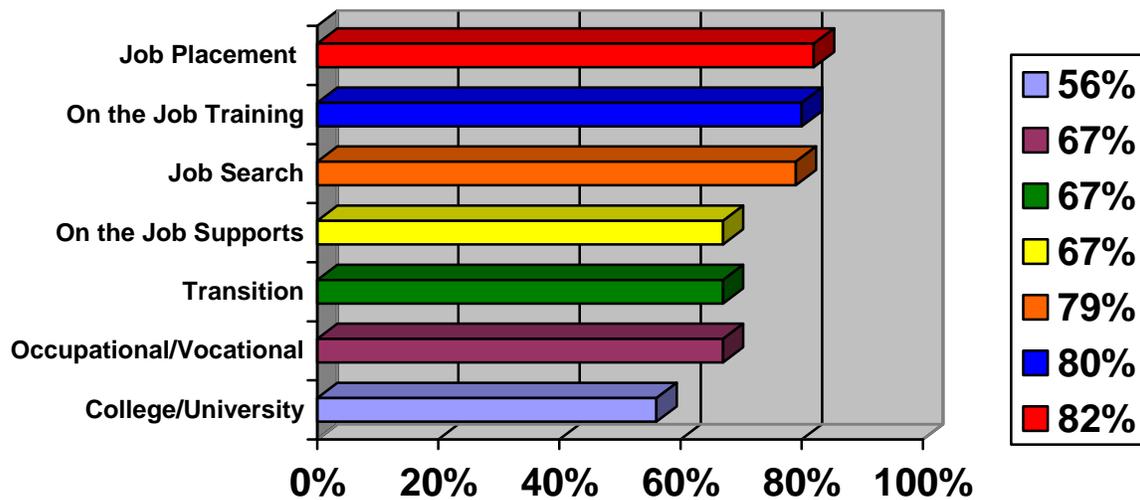
There were four questions for the area of Housing. Sixty-five percent (65%) of respondents reporting that they are either currently purchasing or they own their home. Twenty percent (20%) are renting a house, duplex, or townhouse and 15% an apartment. Of these 75% reported that they are happy with their current living situation. Twenty-five percent (25%) reported that they are not happy citing issues that are common to individuals that rent such as affordability, noise level, and location. Seventy-six percent (76%) indicated their homes were accessible and 25% indicated they were not accessible due to transportation or home modification needs (accessible ramp). When asked what hindered accessibility for them, 37% indicated affordable costs, 25% stated the location of their residents with 51% indicating they were not knowledgeable of resources in regards to housing assistance, or in solving problems with landlords or utility companies.

Employment

Forty-six percent (46%) of individuals responding to the survey indicated that they were not currently employed. Twenty-nine percent (29%) were employed with 22% of them working full-time and 7% part-time. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the respondents were retired and 12% were enrolled in school.

When asked how many had looked for vocational services in the past year to assist them in becoming employed 76% reported no and only 24% reported yes. For the 24% that answered yes to this questions 60% of them were working with the Office for the Blind, 30% were working with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, 10% an Independent Living Center and 10% through the One Stop System.

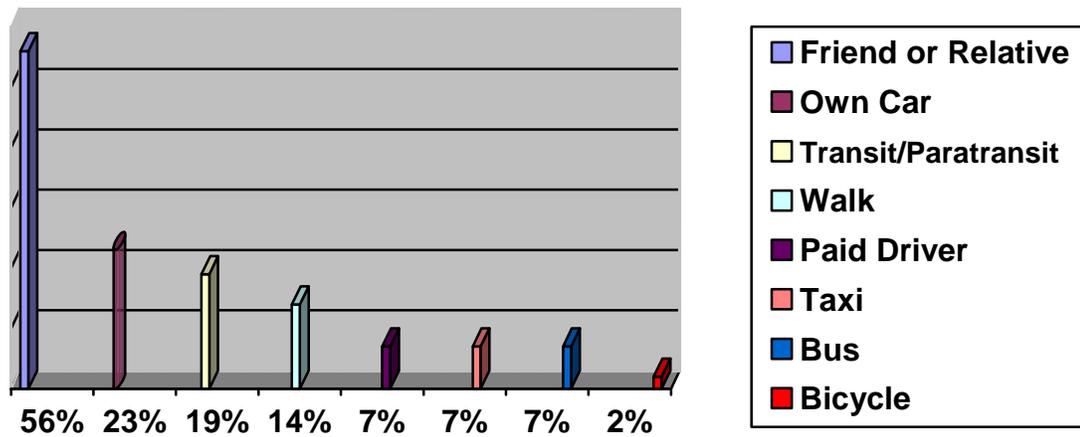
The Chart below indicates the respondents identified areas of need in gaining employment.



Eighty-two percent (82%) indicated that assistance with Job Placement as the highest need defined as help with referral to and hiring by an employer. Eighty percent (80%) indicated On the Job Training as a need area defined as learning how to apply your skills in your new job setting. The third highest area was Job Search Assistance as indicated by 79% of the respondents defined as resume writing, identifying job openings, interviewing skills and making employer contacts. Sixty-seven percent (67%) found the areas of Occupational/Vocational Classes, On the Job Supports (such as a job coach) and Transition Services equally important. College or University (getting the right degree for the job you want) was indicated as a need area by 56% of the respondents.

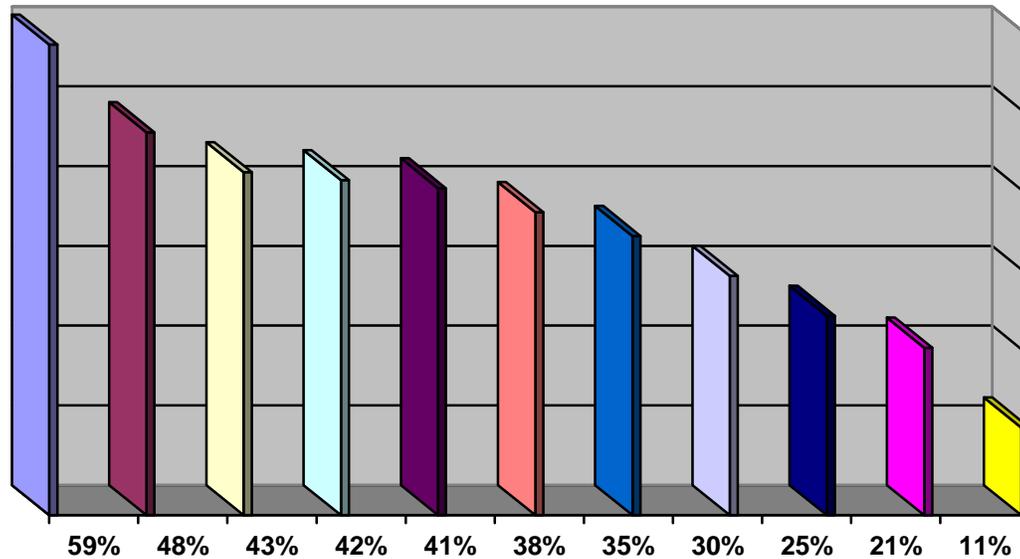
Independent Living

There were four questions for the area of Independent Living. Sixty-four percent (64%) of them indicated that they had not used public transportation in the past year. Thirty-six percent (36%) indicated that they had used public transportation. Fifty-six percent (56%) indicated that the most common form of transportation for them is a friend or relative (not paid). The chart below contains the reported means of Transportation.



When asked if there are adequate programs, services and supports in place to assist you in living independently in your home and community, 59% of the respondents indicated no while 41% said there were adequate resources. Most of the comments in this area dealt with access to transportation in order to be more independent in the community. There were 22 comments for this question and of those 13 or 59% were related to lack of transportation.

The chart below outlines the areas of need identified for the area of independent living.



Mainstream Education

There were six questions for the area of Mainstream Education. There was a lower response rate for this area of the survey as the results showed a high percentage of individuals skipped these questions finding them not applicable to their situation. Due to the low response rate this section does not yield strong data.

For the area of assessing whether or not the public school systems are accommodating to students who are blind and visually impaired 71% of the respondents marked not applicable. Twenty-seven percent (27%) indicated yes and 3% indicated no. Respondents were asked if they responded no to indicate in what way they were not accommodating. Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents marked not applicable. For those answering this question 8% indicated services were difficult to obtain, 4% indicated that the appropriate services are not provided, 4% felt staff were not qualified or trained, and 4% felt the appropriate services were not provided.

For the question on transition from high school to college and the provision of adequate supports, 82% of the respondent marked not applicable. For those answering, 13% indicated their needs were not met and 5% said adequate

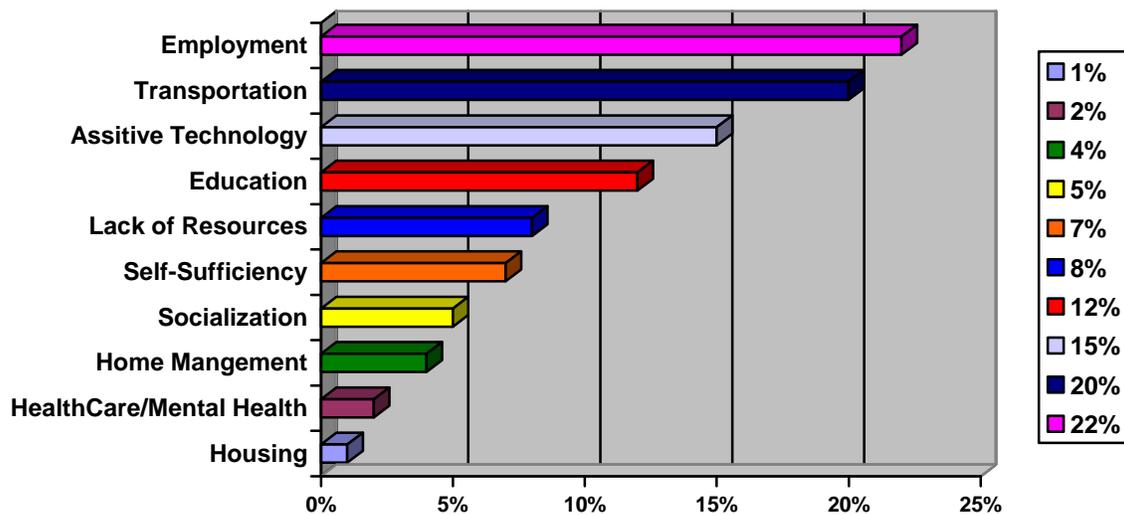
supports were in place. Forty-five percent (45%) indicated they had pursued education after high school, 10% did not and 45% marked non applicable. When asked if higher educational institutions had been accommodating to them, 33% said yes and 12% replied no to the question. Fifty-five percent (55%) marked not applicable. For those answering no to this question 17% indicated services are difficult to obtain, 8% indicated there are not enough trained or qualified staff, 8% felt that there is a lack of appropriate services and 8% indicated they are not sensitive to issues. Seventy-five percent (75%) marked not applicable for this area.

Open Ended Needs Questions

The last part of the survey contained four open ended questions. These questions received a variety of responses and were answered by 70% of the respondents. Approximately 30% of individuals completing the survey skipped the open ended response questions. The results are outlined below.

Question # 1: What do you think are the top three concerns facing individuals with a vision impairment over the next five years?

The top three areas of need indicated were: 1) Employment, 2) Transportation, and 3) Assitive Technology. All areas are outlined in the chart below.



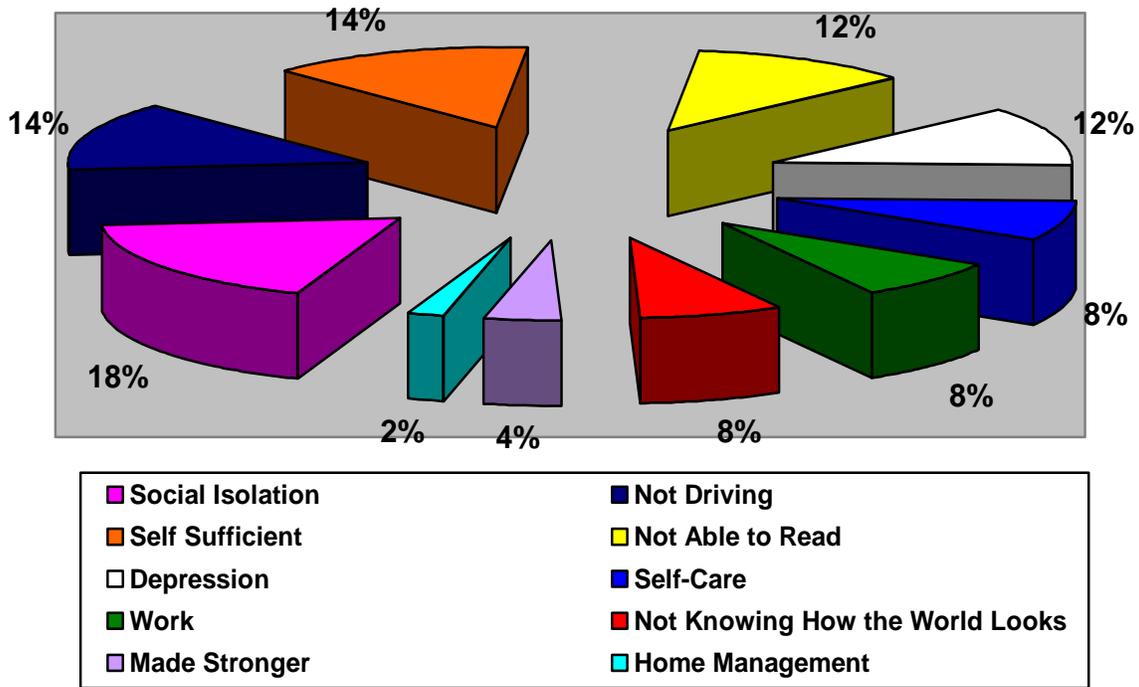
Question #2: What is the most significant unmet need in your life at this time relating to your vision loss?

The top five most significant unmet needs identified were: 1) Transportation, 2) Employment, 3) Unable to Read, 4) Self-Sufficiency and 5) AT, Social Isolation and Home Management (3 areas had equal scoring). Most of the open ended responses for this area dealt with areas of life that effect an individuals independence such as social isolation and a lack of available resources.

Question #3: What has been the most significant impact your vision loss has had on your life?

The top four areas identified as having a significant impact on the individual's life were: 1) Social Isolation (29%), 2) All areas of my life (20%), 3) Not being able to drive (15%) and 4) Not being able to read, as well as the area of self-sufficiency (18%).

In looking at the individual responses for these areas they are further broken out and defined for the overall life areas and self sufficiency in the chart below.



Question #4: What role has your culture, religion, race or ethic background played in helping or hindering you in meeting your needs in regard to your vision impairment?

Thirty-five percent (35%) of individuals that answered this question indicated that religion and their faith played an active role in how they dealt with their vision loss. Thirty-five percent (35%) indicated that none of the factors had an impact on them and 21% marked this as not applicable to them. Three percent (3%) of the respondents indicated that all of them had a positive impact on them, 3% indicated that their family was an influential factor and 3% indicated that socio economic status was more of a factor than culture, religion, race or ethnic background.

Agency Staff Surveys

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Survey

Staff were surveyed by the two regions. Results were tabulated by Region I and Region II and then jointly for a combined result. For some areas there were two services with an equal amount of tabulated votes. Three questions were asked in the survey. Seven responses were tabulated from Region I and 8 from Region II (83% of Counseling staff responded).

Question #1: What are the top three services requested by individuals?

Region I	Region II	Combined Regional Results
Assistive Technology	Assistive Technology	Assistive Technology
Educational Assistance Orientation and Mobility	Medical Educational Assistance	Educational Assistance Medical
Job Placement	Job Placement	Job Placement

Question #2: How would you rate the level of services provided to consumers through Community Rehabilitation Providers in the provision of Supported Employment? How many CRP's do you refer to on a regular basis?

Region I	Region II	Combined Regional Results
63% rated good to very good	75% rated good to very good	73% rated good to very good
37% rated poor	25% rated poor	27% rated poor
71% referred average of 2-3 CRP's	88% referred an average of 3 or more	80% referred an average of 3 or more

Question #3: How would you rate the level of services provided to consumers through the local One Stop? What services available do your consumers access or take advantage of?

Region I	Region II	Combined Regional Results
67% rated good to very Good	63% rated good to very good	60% rated good to very good
17% rated poor	25% rated poor	20% rated poor
16% no answer	12% no answer	20% no answer

Counseling staff reported that the following services are typically accessed:

Employment Opportunities/Register EKOS
 Testing for Employment
 College Information
 Child Care Services
 Resume Services
 Workshops for Employment Education
 Veteran Services

Agency Wide Staff Survey

Survey Monkey was used for the agency wide survey of staff that contained three questions. Forty-two staff responded (approximately 45%).

Question #1: What would you say are the top three services requested by individuals?

1. Medical Restoration
2. Job Placement
3. Assistive Technology

Orientation and Mobility, Educational Assistance and Independent Living Services were the next three services staff scored as requested.

Question #2: What do you think are the primary concerns facing individuals who are blind and visually impaired over the next five (5) years?

1. Employment
2. Transportation
3. Technology

Affordable Medical Care, a lack of resources and services and the needs of the aging population "Baby Boomers" were the next three primary concerns staff noted.

Questions #3: What single action could the Office for the Blind take to improve services in our state?

Sixty-three percent (63%) of the tabulated scores indicated the following top three categories:

1. Increased Marketing and Outreach (24%)
2. Recruitment, Training, and Leadership Development of Staff (20%)
3. Increased funding for Services (9%)

One Stop Managers Survey

This survey was done jointly with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. The survey contained ten (10) questions. For reporting purposes three of those questions will be omitted from this report that pertains specifically to Vocational Rehabilitation. There were eighteen (18) respondents from across the State.

Question #1: Do you feel there are gaps in services for persons with disabilities in the One Stop?

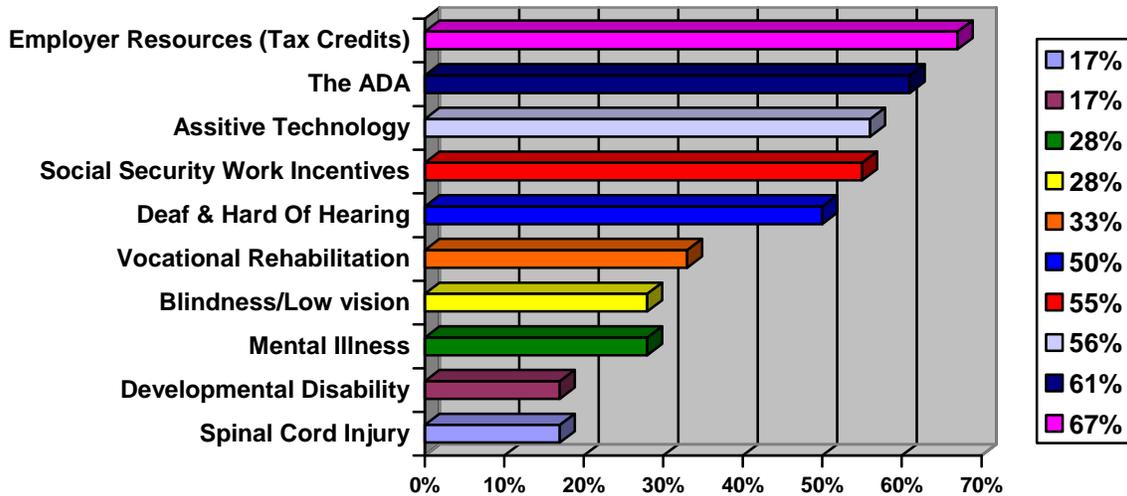
Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents indicated no and 17% felt there were gaps in services.

Question #2: In your experience over the past three years, have you seen more or fewer individuals with disabilities seeking services at your One-Stop Center?

Eleven percent (11%) indicated there are more, 28% fewer and 61% reported about the same.

Question #3: What kinds of training needs would your staff have related to serving persons with disabilities? Check all that apply.

The grid below outlines the training needs indicated by respondents.



#Question #4: Rate your knowledge of the following topics.

Topic Area	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Assistive Technology	0%	33%	61%	6%
Employment Outcomes Strategies for customers with Disabilities	0%	61%	33%	6%
Job Accommodations	11%	44.5%	44.5%	0%
Materials in alternate formats	11%	39%	50%	0%
Self-Disclosure regarding disability/employers	6%	55%	28%	11%
Information about VR Services	17%	78%	5%	0%
Social Security/Impact on	0%	28%	44%	28%

working				
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Question #5: How would you rate your Center's working relationship with local staff of the Kentucky Office for the Blind?

Twenty-two percent (22%) reported the relationship as excellent, 61% good and 17% fair. Comments for this area were: 1) good working relationship, 2) good communications with partnering agency, and 3) excellent working relationship.

Question #6: If you rated the relationship with the Office for the Blind 'fair' or 'poor,' do you have any suggestions for improving the relationship?

Comments for this area were: 1) More contact needed as to services that are in the local area and 2) better sharing of services, presentation to staff on what you do.

Eye Physician Surveys

A survey was designed for the Optometrists (150) and Ophthalmologist (150) across the state. This was a pen and paper survey sent via regular mail to 300 offices across the state. The survey contained five pertinent questions.

Question #1: Are you aware of the services the Office for the Blind can provide to your patients?

Question #2: Do you need more information regarding services?

Question #3: Are you aware of the closest location of our field offices in your area?

Question #4: In order to ensure that you can refer patients to us with the least amount of difficulty what can our staff do to easily facilitate that process?

Question #5: What are the greatest unmet eye care needs in your community?

Forty-eight surveys were returned by the Optometrists (32%) and 63 from the ophthalmologists (42%). The results are as follows.

Question	Optometrist	Ophthalmologist
#1 Aware of Services	62% Yes 38% No	79% Yes 21% No
#2 Need for Services	62% Yes 38% No	68% Yes 32% No
#3 Aware of field office locations	55% Yes 45% No	64% Yes 36% No

For questions 4 and 5 the answers varied widely for the two different groups.

The following grid outlines the results of question four and the preference of the offices for materials for patients.

Information Processes for Patient referral	Optometrists	Ophthalmologists
Business cards and brochures	43%	20%
Directions/Maps	16%	0%
List of Services	19%	17%
Patient paperwork and referral forms	21%	0%
Addresses/contact numbers to offices	13%	30%
Explanation of processes/screening/eligibility	8%	0%
Other	22%	60%

Comments given in the 'Other' category mainly indicated that current processes for referral were very good and worked well for most of the physicians. They cited the user friendly web-site and professional staff that make the process easy for patients. Some physicians asked for follow up with them on referrals sent to the agency.

The following grid outlines the responses for question #5 on the greatest unmet eye care needs in their communities.

Unmet Needs	Optometrists	Ophthalmologists
Low Vision	37%	15%
Financial Needs	29%	33%
Routine Exams	15%	3%
Cataracts	5%	6%
Diabetes	10%	0%
Aids/Devices	5%	12%
Glaucoma	7%	6%
Training/Education	7%	6%
Other	44%	64%

Comments given in the 'Other' category were on a variety of themes. They are as follows: 1) preventative care and early diagnosis, 2) transportation needs, and 3) the needs of the aging population (available resources).

Community Rehabilitation Provider Survey

Eighteen (18) Community Rehabilitation Providers were surveyed. The surveys were distributed through e-mail and regular mail by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Eight of the eighteen or 44% returned surveys. This was a small sampling of CRP's. This survey contained four questions specific to the CRP and service delivery to the blind and visually impaired.

Question #1: Does your organization provide community employment services for individuals who are blind and visually impaired? If yes, please list any and all.

All eight agencies indicated that they provided services for the areas of: Supported Employment, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation, Work Adjustment, and Job Placement Services.

Question #2: Have you received a consumer referral from our organization for employment services within the past year?

Seventy-five percent (75%) or 6 of the 8 respondents indicated they had received 1-3 referrals in the past year.

Question #3: If you answered yes what specialized training have you had specific to serving the blind and visually impaired?

The table below outlines the answers for this question. Six of the eight (75%) reported some type of specialized training.

Specialized Training CRP's Reported Having	# of CRP's reporting Specialized Training or Skills
Basic Knowledge	1
College Course Work/no specialized training	1
Core Training UK Supported Employment Project	4

Question # 4: List three training needs you feel your organization or agency needs in order to provide employment services (supported employment) to this specific disability population.

The table below outlines the answers for this question. There were seven (7) respondents for this area.

Specialized Training CRP's Indicated as an Area of Need	# of CRP's Responding
Braille Related Training	3
Orientation and Mobility	4
Basic Knowledge or Blindness 101 Skills Characteristics/Cultural Differences	5
Assistive Technology	6
Supported Employment and working with individuals who are blind and visually impaired	4

For the area of other concerns in serving the blind and visually impaired providers reported a poor economy, a tightening job market, adjustment to blindness and the need for transportation supports.

Focus Groups

As stated in the methodology section, there were four focus groups held across the state. The objective of each session was: "To gather information regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired" for the five target areas decided upon by the Council. They were: 1) Housing, 2) Adaptive Equipment and Devices, 3) Independent Living, 4) Mainstream Education and 5) Employment. State Rehabilitation Council members Kenny Jones and Charles Allen facilitated at this session. They led discussion around questions pertaining to the five focus areas for the needs assessment as well as a couple of open ended questions. The same questions were used at each focus group. They were as follows:

Housing

1. What are the most critical areas of need in regards to housing?

2. Has anyone encountered any obstacles such as discrimination in regards to renting or owning your own home?

Adaptive Equipment and Devices

1. Are you able to obtain needed adaptive equipment and devices? If not, why not?
2. What needs in the area of adaptive equipment and devices do you have that are not being met?

Independent Living

1. In what areas are you lacking supportive services that would allow you to live more independently in your homes? In your Community?

Mainstream Education

1. What areas in the public school system and postsecondary educational settings do you feel you or a child experiences gaps in services?
2. Are there any educational needs that you or a child has that are not being met?

Employment

1. Identify what you feel are the primary barriers to employment?
2. What current unmet needs do you have or what vocational service areas could you benefit from in assisting you to achieve your employment goals?

Open Ended Discussion Questions

1. What do you think are the primary concerns facing individuals who are blind and visually impaired over the next five (5) years?
2. What single action could the Office for the Blind take to improve services in your community?

The information gained through the four focus groups for needs in the five focus areas and through the open ended questions is summarized below. The focus groups were well attended with a total of 138 participants for the four different groups.

For the area of Housing the ongoing theme from all four of the focus groups was the need for accessing information and resources for housing (44%). Individuals shared that often they are not aware of available resources that would assist them in finding housing or purchasing a home. Thirty-one percent (31%) indicated that housing that was accessible and affordable was important to them. When citing accessibility, transportation was included in this assuring that an individual can access needed resources and be able to get around in their communities. Twelve percent (12%) indicated that a personal finances course would be helpful for many new home buyers.

For the area of Adaptive Equipment and Devices 22% of those individuals participating indicated the need for ongoing training, technical support and upgrades to their equipment and devices. Seventeen percent (17%) indicated that a lending library or "trade swap" for equipment would be helpful along with an inventory of catalogues containing various types of AT equipment available through the agency. This would include various products that an individual could try out. Thirteen percent (13%) shared that affordability of products or that the cost of products hindered their ability to have what is needed for them to be more independent in their homes.

For the area of Independent Living 22% of individuals indicated that transportation was a need area for them. Individuals noted that the lack of transportation resources, the cost of transportation and having access to transportation in their communities was a need area. Twenty-two percent (22%) felt that training for consumers is needed on AT equipment, social appropriateness instruction, and organizational skills and planning and that training of staff for the area of multiple disabilities was needed. A reoccurring theme in all groups was connecting individuals with a mentoring program for different life skills areas. Peer supported mentoring in order to connect consumers with other individuals who can share their experiences and serve as a role model.

For the area of Mainstream Education forty percent (40%) felt that there was a need for more information sharing or knowledge of agency services for the transition population. The most prominent theme from the focus groups was the need for transition resources to assist the students transitioning from school to work and post secondary educational settings. Participants in the focus groups indicated the need for increased outreach and assistance to students that will

enable them to learn more about the agency at an earlier age. This includes having a greater awareness and knowledge of assistive technology and how that will allow for greater access to instruction. Tuition assistance for students was indicated as a high need area. Not only for those attending full time but for part time students as well. In addition the agency should make sure there is consistency of services provided to students for tuition and for the area of AT equipment.

For the area of Employment there were a variety of responses. One area that stood out was an increased need for developing employer relationships and soft job skills training for consumers. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of the focus group participants highlighted these two areas of need as well as a focus on the use technology in the workplace and additional training for the consumer. Suggestions for training topics for consumers included, interviewing skills, information regarding self employment, the importance of educational and vocational studies, assistive technology, Braille studies, Workplace etiquette, the ADA, and career development that promotes upward movement on the career ladder.

The open ended questions yielded the following responses. The top two primary concerns identified by the participants in the focus groups were: 1) assistive technology keeping up with changes and advances in the field of blindness and 2) the shrinking economy and job market. For the question regarding what single action the agency could take to improve services there was not a theme that came from the responses. The following input was given: 1) offer a grant writing course, 2) establish a resource database that a newly blinded individual or consumer can access through a website or by telephone for resources to address their specific needs, such as a job bank, adaptive equipment, 3) obtain increased funding, and 4) recognize consumer choice.

Internal Data Sources

Standards and Indicators

The agency will not meet indicator 1.1 in 2008 with a performance level of -31. In 2007 the agency had a -39. Although there was an increase in 2008 over the prior year of 17 positive employment outcomes, the average over the two years still yielded a negative 31. The agency has consistently met the remaining indicators for the calendar years of FFY 2003 through 2008.

2008 Satisfaction Survey

Consumer satisfaction is considered an important component of service quality. The Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) sought to determine the satisfaction level of people who have received services. At the request of the State Rehabilitation Council to the Kentucky Office for the Blind, the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky coordinated a telephone survey with people who had cases closed with the OFB in fiscal year 2008 (October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008). The University of Kentucky Survey Research Center contacted individuals between August 15 and August 27, 2008, as well as December 5, 2008 through January 6, 2009 using the survey instrument that had been developed by the Council and the OFB.

A total of 320 people from around the state participated in the survey. This represented a 92.8% response rate. Individuals were considered ineligible under several circumstances, including: disconnected phone number, incorrect phone number, no new phone number, and person deceased. The response rate for this telephone survey is considered high. The survey instrument is available in Appendix A. Survey results are primarily reported by status group; however, caseload results are presented in Appendix B. Overall results are presented only for the global item of overall satisfaction. The results are also presented in a variety of ways in this report: by narrative text, bar and pie charts, tables of frequencies (percentages), and means. The results are organized by item and are given in a variety of ways in recognition that people take in information in different ways.

Overall, the results of the study indicate that consumers expressed high degrees of satisfaction with their experiences. Eighty-four percent (84%) of all participating consumers felt that services they received through the Office of the Blind were "excellent" or "very good". Over 90% felt that their needs were met through the services they received. There was no statistically significant difference between the Regions of the state in terms of overall satisfaction with services.

Generally, participants had positive regard for their counselors and other staff at OFB. Additionally, satisfaction with specific services (McDowell Center, assistive technology, orientation and mobility, computer training and career development) was also high. As might be expected, those whose cases were closed successfully were somewhat more satisfied, on the whole, with all aspects of the OFB.

At the time of the survey, a little over half (52.8%) of all participating consumers reported that they were currently working in paid competitive employment status, with an additional 7.8% being self-employed. Approximately 13% were unemployed and currently seeking employment and about 17% reported that they were unemployed and not seeking employment. Those with cases closed

successfully had the highest competitive employment percentage at almost 60%. This was followed closely by those in the post-employment group with 57.7% being competitively employed.

RSA Monitoring Data Reports

The data report received from RSA through the monitoring process was reviewed for significant findings or trends. The agency felt that some of the data findings were internal coding issues. As a result, coding issues were identified and staff received instruction on how to correctly code certain areas such as information and referral. There was a significant amount of data for review. The following areas were identified for review for the purposes of the comprehensive needs assessment.

For the area of disability characteristics Kentucky had a higher percent with a sensory disability at 6.3% than the U.S. average of 4.3%.

In looking at individuals served by impairment codes for the area of blindness and other visual impairments the results for Kentucky were almost in reverse of other blind agencies with a higher incidence of coding for the area of "other visual impairments". At this time it is difficult to identify what factors are affecting this; however it does identify a need for the agency to place an emphasis on this in reviewing the data to determine what is impacting the numbers in this area.

Referral sources for individuals closed who received services showed numbers for the agency in relation to other blind agencies were higher for physicians or medical personnel or medical institution and lower for self referral. This may be due in part to an increased marketing effort over the past two years to area eye physicians. Given this referral relationship has increased there may be a need to assure that the eye physicians are knowledgeable regarding eligibility and services offered through the agency.

Employment status at application and closure for individuals showed a ten percent (10%) variance with the agency having a higher number for those employed at application than other blind agencies. The relevance of this is unknown at this time; however it may be an area of concentration for the agency in assuring new applicants to the agency.

For the area of transition there were some areas of need identified. The agency performance was not in keeping with the average of most blind agencies

for transition students for the area of employment status at application for both with and without employment. There is the need for the agency to look at these variances and identify and service area needs.

Staffing Patterns in view of other blind agencies indicate the need for additional counseling and counseling support staff and administrative staff.

VR Case Flow numbers overall show a decrease in the number of new applicants and those determined eligible over the past five years. However, of note, the agency numbers for this area of the RSA-113 are higher on an average than other blind agencies. In addition, for the area of Employment Outcomes there is a 6.2% increase and a 6.4% decrease in closures without an employment outcome.

For the area of Services Provided the agency is 15% higher for the area of "diagnosis and treatment of impairments" than most blind agencies which translate into costs that are 28% higher. There is the need to assess these services and the costs associated with them in looking at how these monies are expended and for what types of diagnosis and treatment.

Reasons for Closure showed a higher amount of individuals than other blind agencies exiting as an applicant with no impediment to employment and exiting without an employment outcome, after eligibility, but before an IPE was signed. These numbers have a direct correlation with performance and caseload expectations. The question arises here as to the need to look at internal expectations set and their impact on these numbers. In looking at employment status at closure for transition-aged individuals the agency has a higher number of homemaker closures as indicated by an 8.7% difference. The agency performance for closure as employed with supports in an integrated setting is lower than other blind agencies by 5.1% (however this only reflects services for one individual). Average hourly earnings for SSDI beneficiaries and transition aged youth showed a wage of \$5.10 less than the average of all blind agencies.

Although a formal monitoring report has not been received at the time of this report, input received during the site visit indicated the need for the development and implementation of an improved outcome and performance measurement system for the agency across programs inclusive of a centralized location for program data.

Strategic Plan

In 2006 OFB began the Strategic Planning Process. A SWOT analysis was conducted for planning purposes to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the agency. In 2007, agency work teams were

formed to work on the focus areas of the plan derived from the SWOT analysis. Target date for implementation of the plan was January 2008. The implementation of the plan is in the early stages. Based on the SWOT analysis the following identified focus areas are the framework areas for the 3-year plan:

Staff Retirement

- Prepare for the 2008 retirement exodus and the depletion of experienced staff and management positions
- To promote and train the next generation of managers for the OFB

Personnel

- Staff recruitment, leadership development, and retention will encompass mentoring and skills building for existing staff- emphasizing management and leadership
- Managers will train new staff and continue to work with their staff to support decision-making.
- Managers in the field will be open-minded to new ideas and encourage creativity within the work environment
- Hire qualified staff, teach them skills to do their job, support as needed.
- Encourage Teamwork
- Focus on upgrading Staff Education, Training, and Qualifications in a standardized manner

Funding

- Budget cuts – so much of our success is based on dollars
- Lack of State Funding and “other funding sources”
- Increase funding sources
- Need to develop plan to maximize value of AT Act program to KY expansion of use of state contracts, grants and state funding opportunities with design that will benefit OFB and its consumers

Communication within the Agency

- Increase communication for building agency-wide cohesion
- Utilization of Central Office staff in working to find solutions-relative answers. Being a small agency we all wear many hats but we must all work together
- Development of a common knowledge across the agency on how funds are being used.
- Increase Communication of Steering Committee-Solve Problems and identify clearly the Role-Function of the group

Growing OFB programs in Alignment with National Trends

- OFB will grow nationally respected programs as the demand for our services grows in accordance to the impending populations trends
- McDowell Land Project

Relationship with Partners

- To increase opportunities for collaboration with other state agencies in programmatic and funding areas
- Good working relationships/partnerships with employers/business
 - To build relationships with employers/businesses for placement, PR, and funding opportunities to always ensure we provide specialized services by maintaining an agency with qualified staff.
- Support of consumer constituent groups statewide
- To better utilize our committees – SRC as problem solving versus reporting

McDowell Center

- The McDowell Center will become a national leader in training facilities, etc.
- Maximize utilization of staff and resources of the McDowell Center
- Revamp the Charles W. McDowell Center's curriculum and other programs, such as employment programs.

Summary of Findings

The agency gathered data and information from multiple sources and stakeholders. The following is a synthesis of common-themed findings from all the information gathered for the purpose of identifying key needs, concerns and issues in making recommendations for setting goals, strategies and priorities for the agency for the areas of:

- (A). Individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;**
- (B) Identified Needs of Minority Populations and the Underserved and Unserved Populations**
- (C) Identified Needs of the Statewide Workforce Investment System**
- (ii) Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs.**

The findings of the needs assessment yielded a theme throughout all of the data sources identifying the top areas of need as: assistive technology, employment, medical restoration, educational assistance and the area of independent living or self sufficiency.

The very fact that 98% of the respondents to the Consumer Survey Instrument were white, non-Hispanic indicates the need for outreach to minority populations. Although the agency and the SRC made every effort through different venues to reach minority populations there was limited information gleaned for the needs of this population group.

The Blind and Visually Impaired and the Deaf Blind population are an underserved and unserved population especially in the rural areas of the state. This was reflected in the open ended responses for the Consumer Survey Instrument that dealt with areas of life that effect an individuals independence such as social isolation and a lack of available resources. The assessment showed an overall lack of knowledge about available resources and services for the areas of independent living.

The Eye Physicians indicated a lack of proper preventative care and the availability for low vision services for individuals as a need area as well as the lack of financial resources for individuals to access proper eye care. There is a higher percentage of individuals with sensory impairments in certain areas of the Eastern part of the state (5% - 11%). This may be due in part to the lower social economic conditions in this area resulting in a lack of resources for preventive care and treatment for eye related diseases. The percentage rate of unemployed individuals with Sensory Disabilities in this area of the state ranges from 65% to 90%.

The results of the Needs Assessment show that overall Office for the Blind and the Office of Employment and Training staff feels that a good collaborative working relationship exists. Some staff indicated a need for improvement in resource sharing and there were several areas of training identified that staff could benefit from.

The Needs Assessment showed that community rehabilitation providers lack the needed knowledge, training and experience in working with this specific disability population. This is due in part to the fact that CRP's statewide have a focus on the MRDD population. This is understandable given that long term follow along funding and supports for Supported Employment is linked to individuals with a MR/DD diagnosis. CRP's indicated they have a lack of experience and expertise to work with the Blind and Visually Impaired and they lack the monetary resources to develop programs specific to serving the Blind and Visually Impaired. As a result there is a narrow service field for consumers of the OFB outside of the State Agency's own program design, services and expertise of the regionalized teams that provide categorized services.

Information gained through the assessment regarding the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired and deafblind centered on the following three focus areas: 1) Service Delivery, 2) Adequacy of Resources, and 3) Effectiveness and Efficiency of Operations.

Adequacy of Resources

Availability and knowledge of resources to meet the needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired for the area of independent living was a prevalent need area across all data sources. Most individuals reported a lack of knowledge or a lack of resources for the area of housing, transportation, and affordable medical care. This area was very personal for many of the respondents citing social isolation and the need for the very basic right to self-sufficiency in life.

Service Delivery

Adaptive equipment, tools and devices was the number one emerging and critical need though out the needs assessment from all data sources. A lack of resources, affordability, technological advances, maintenance and repair of devices and ongoing training needs associated with use of equipment.

Employment for individuals with disabilities in a struggling economy where individuals are competing with a highly skilled workforce. The provision of adequate training and opportunities for skills acquisition for individuals to obtain and maintain employment is a primary area of need. Sixty-two percent (62%) of the respondents for the consumer survey indicated an income of \$29,000 or less. Although the sampling was a small number of respondents, these statistics are staggering if they are reflective of most of the population across the Commonwealth. High need areas across all data sources were the areas of job placement, on the job training, job search assistance and soft skills acquisition for the areas of resume writing, identifying job openings, interviewing skills and making employer contacts.

Transition Services for individuals exiting high school as they enter employment or post secondary educational settings, training or technical schools.

Educational Supports for individuals was an area of need given that forty-six percent (46%) of the respondents reported having a High School Diploma or below. This also indicates a need for early intervention and counseling supports for students.

Medical Restoration services assuring that an individuals medical needs are met in order to assure the feasibility of employment.

Development and Expansion of Community Rehabilitation Provider Relationships for supported employment services. Providers expressed additional training needs for service delivery of the blind and visually impaired.

Increased Participation with One Stop Service Delivery System utilizing existing partnerships and the provision of information sharing and training initiatives.

Effectiveness and Efficiency of Operations

Design and Implementation of an internal performance measurement system with efficiency, effectiveness and satisfaction goal areas. The agency does not have a formal system or method in place in looking at agency performance.

Certain practices occur and managers have oversight of the performance of staff and service outcomes but there is not a standardized performance measurement system.

Maximize the current Case Management System (CMS) to collect data for all service operations. The new CMS start up date was October 1, 2008. At this time there are still kinks in the new system. The agency is working with the general agency in making needed corrections and adding additional modules to capture all program data.

Professional Development opportunities for staff for the area of continuing education and training in order to hire and retain qualified staff. The needs assessment indicated that in making sure staff received the necessary supports, training and skills acquisition is the most important thing the agency can do in assuring quality consumer services.