

The Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CBVI) is a private, not-for-profit agency, located in Chester, Pennsylvania. The agency has provided 9,632 Pennsylvania residents with public education and referral services. We provided direct service to an additional 844 people with blindness or visual impairments in Fiscal Year 03-04. Agency clients come from throughout eastern Pennsylvania. The agency is administered by a 24-member board of directors.

The agency was founded in 1941 by the Chester Lions Club as a workshop for the blind. The Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired gradually developed social services, rehabilitation and prevention of blindness programs. The workshop closed in December 1993, at which time agency efforts were redirected toward placing clients in community employment. Fifteen agency employees with blindness or visual impairments also work at remote job sites under service contracts obtained through the National Industries for the Blind and Pennsylvania Industries for the Blind and Handicap.

**Agency Mission:** The Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired is dedicated to helping individuals in the Greater Delaware Valley area prevent, prepare for, and adapt to vision loss in order to achieve independence. We believe that blindness is not a handicap but an inconvenience that can be overcome with proper training and support. At the Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired we provide tools for independence.

### **Geographic Area Served**

State-Wide

### **Contact Information:**

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### **Accessibility Of Facilities Where Services Are To Be Provided**

Handicap Accessible

### **Duration Of Services**

Hourly Modules Based On Assessment Of Needs

## Types Of Services

Computer Access Technology Training (CAT) – Joe McCloskey, Director CBVI's Computer Access Technology Program for all blind and visually impaired qualified residents of Pennsylvania. CBVI's program, established in 1992, is the largest and most comprehensive computer training program for the blind and visually impaired in Pennsylvania. Over 271 students have graduated from the program since its inception. Clients with an aptitude for technology, but lack keyboarding skills of fifteen words per minute, start with the agency's communications course where keyboarding training (touch typing) on computers equipped with adaptive software is taught. Clients who successfully complete communications training or who already have keyboarding skills of 15 words per minute move on to the Computer Access Technology Program that uses IBM-compatible computer systems that are equipped with speech synthesizers and screen magnification. The program also uses a variety of cutting edge access technology including, reader/scanners, modems, printers and braille printers. Program curricula include, Windows XP usage, Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, speech synthesizer adaptation, screen magnification interaction, modem use, online skills, trouble shooting and related computer skills.

The Computer Access Technology Program provides three primary services. These services include two intensive instructional programs, Computer Literacy and Advanced Computer Concepts. These programs meet six hours a day five times a week for ten weeks of instruction; however, Advanced Computer Concepts may last up to 30 weeks. The third primary service is Individualized Evaluation and Technical Support. This service includes equipment evaluation, software training, individual computer setup/configuration and topical short-term services. Services provided through Individualized Evaluation and Technical Support typically last one week.

For the Advanced Computer Applications and Technical Support component, entry level requirements include the same communication skill levels required by Computer Literacy, as well as a defined and selected employment goal and a demonstrated general knowledge of computer technology and access technology. These areas are addressed and evaluated in a pre-training assessment conducted by program staff.

**Residential Services** The Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides residential services, in the form of temporary housing, to customers who live outside of the agency's commuting area. The dormitory is comprised of six bedrooms, which can accommodate a maximum of 14 people. Full-time 24-hour supervision is provided. The centrally air-conditioned and heated rooms have electrical outlets, a bed, locker, and chest-of-drawers. Students also have access to a common living room area and a modern kitchen, which is marked for accessibility. Coin-operated laundry machines are also marked to facilitate usage. All meals are included.

**Employment Services** Since 1941, when the agency was founded, CBVI has provided Specialized Employment Services for the blind. Employment Services instructor works with clients who are completing their program of instruction and employers as well, to insure that successful employment outcomes are achieved for both. Instruction for program participants include job seeking skills, resume writing, job interview techniques, on the job training and job maintenance practices.

Rehabilitation Training Program - Christine Iannelli, BA, Director

Provides individual instruction and training for working age people in each area of need. As an educational institution, Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired shares the same goals as all educational institutions in that it aims to prepare its students for success and productivity in their communities and future work environments.

In the Nevil Program, each student's program begins with an in-depth assessment to determine strengths and needs. Individualization is paramount. The program builds on strengths and remedies weaknesses and introduces skills as necessary. The curriculum of instruction for the Nevil program is as follows:

Communications – Sylvia Rider, BA, Instructors.

Includes evaluation and training in simple and complex communication skills. Simple communication skills include money identification, utilizing the telephone, telling time, money handling, operating cassette machines, use of a calculator and effective listening techniques. Complex communication skills include keyboarding, and reading and writing non-contracted and contracted braille. Remedial academic skills instruction is also offered in math, spelling, vocabulary building, and writing.

Home and Personal Management – Barbara Davis, BA, Instructor.

The home economics course of the Nevil programs. Skills to live independently, including cooking, laundry, appliances, table etiquette, budgeting/personal record keeping, shopping and house cleaning are taught.

Orientation and Mobility - Chet Lubecki, BA, Instructor.

Safe and independent travel, public transportation, uses of white cane and low vision training.

Vocational Evaluation – Marvin Price, BA, Evaluator.

Evaluation utilizing standardized tests, interest inventories, behavioral observations and work samples to identify vocational functioning level, aptitudes and interests. This will help to determine which occupations would afford the student the most satisfaction and success. Students explore career choices using adaptive computer equipment. Career counseling is provided throughout evaluation. It focuses is on educating the individual to make informed choices based on occupational outlook, required education, wage and benefit data, tasks associated with the job and ability to use access technology.

This is the only vocational evaluation program for the blind and visually impaired in the state of Pennsylvania.

In-Home Rehabilitation for Seniors - Jodie Barnett, BA, Instructor.

Instruction in the home for clients aged 55 and above, to help clients maintain their independence and safety in their own homes.

In-service Instruction - Agency staff provided 28 in-service sessions for staff in senior centers, hospitals, retirement villages, etc. on the best ways to accommodate clients or residents who have blindness or vision impairment

Low Vision Service and prevention of blindness- Candy Bantum, Coordinator.

A comprehensive low vision service that involves an initial interview to assist in the planning of the senior's program, a thorough eye examination, optic aid evaluation and training sessions. Generally, the list of professionals involved in this low vision service will include a doctor of optometry, an orientation and mobility specialist, an educator, a counselor, and a social worker. The client also may see an ophthalmologist for a medical diagnosis of his/her visual condition. A total of 241 patients were seen for low vision service in FY 03-04. There were 291 patient visits, including initial evaluations and follow-up visits for training. The agency goal is to service 250 patients this year.

In the Prevention of Blindness Program, we work to prevent unnecessary blindness through remedial eye care and referral services and vision screenings. Annual mailings to senior centers and churches with agency information and flyers for posting are distributed to locate seniors in need of our services.

Escort Transportation/Chore Service – Gwen Cole, Coordinator.

Transportation to medical appointments, essential shopping, banking, social service agencies, etc. Drivers are trained for blind escort and assist clients in shopping decisions, placing purchases in proper location in client's home and with banking procedures.

Life Skills Education Classes/Support Groups - Rod Powell, BA, Instructor.

Practical life skills education and braille classes provided in a support group setting. Additional recreation groups are also scheduled.

**Degree To Which Services Are Integrated**

Fully Integrated

**Qualification Of Service Provider**

CBVI staff have certifications in education, orientation and mobility.

## Available Information On Consumer Satisfaction With Provider And Services

The following testimonials are from recent graduates of the CBVI program.

1. “Over the years, I obtained computer training from several individuals and agencies without significant results. Joe McCloskey and his staff at the CBVI provided effective training that was tailored to my needs and schedule. I now use Microsoft Outlook and Word, Internet Explorer, JAWS, and a Braille Lite effectively at home and in my career as a trusts and estates attorney.”

Richard Nenno  
Attorney

2. “I credit my teachers and the computer instruction that I received at CBVI with the success I’m having in College. The assistive technology and alternative technique skills, which I mastered in the CAT program, allow me to be as computer savvy as my sighted classmates. Living in the dorm during my training and being with other visually impaired people was a great experience.”

Roosevelt Mitchell  
College Student

3. “The CAT program taught me how to successfully navigate the computer, its many programs, and the internet with enthusiasm and confidence. With the knowledge, skills and equipment I gleaned, I have been able to complete my education, launch my career, and keep up with today’s fast paced world.

Laura Matthews-Szweda  
Massage Therapist

4. “I approached the first day of class at CBVI with a great deal of trepidation. But with the skilled approach and caring attitude of the instructor my fears were soon allayed. By the end of the first ten week course I had become a confident computer user. I was encouraged to take the Advanced Computer course. As a result of these classes, I am able to use the computer as a word processor, send and receive e-mails, do searches on the Internet and utilize all the functions of the computer just as a sighted user would.”

I am compelled to share that CBVI has literally changed my life.

Kay Davis  
Registered Nurse

### Cost Of Services

Hourly Modules based on skill sets