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Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
Virtual Town Hall – June 5, 2020

Massachusetts State Seal

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Welcome

MCB logo with braille above each letter in M C B and Massachusetts Commission for the Blind written underneath

Commissioner David D’Arcangelo

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OVERVIEW

* MCB provides social and vocational rehabilitation services to almost 26,000 consumers.
* We aim to provide quality services that enhance the lives of our consumers by promoting independence, dignity and self-determination.
* We achieve this by partnering with community agencies, healthcare providers, employers and, most importantly, our consumers and their families.

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AGENDA

* VR Update: Deputy Commissioner John Oliveira
* Randolph-Sheppard Program: Jay Rufo
* Rehabilitation Teaching: Carolyn Ovesen
* Social Rehabilitation: Kathi White
* Older Independent Blind: Karen Hatcher
* Orientation & Mobility: Meg Robertson
* Assistive Technology: Alexander Pooler
* Employment Services: Joe Buizon
* Children’s Services: Susan Lavin
* Questions & Answers

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Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Update

Deputy Commissioner

John Oliveira

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VR Services at MCB

* VR services assist older students and adults to prepare for, achieve, retain, or regain employment. The VR program is federally funded with a State match. (950 consumers actively receiving services)

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VR Success Stories during COVID-19

* Consumer hired in the computer science field
* Consumer hired at a major hospital
* Consumer hired at AllWays Health Partners
* Consumer hired at Dunkin’ Donuts Headquarters

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Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facilities

Program

Director

Jay Rufo

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RANDOLPH-SHEPPARD PROGRAM

* Program Overview
* Consumer Qualifications
* Vendor Training
* Average Work Day
* Becoming a Vendor
* COVID-19 Impact
* Success Story

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Rehabilitation Teaching

Rehabilitation Supervisor

Carolyn Ovesen

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REHABILITATION TEACHING (RT)

* Definition of RT
* Individual Assessment
* Who Receives RT?

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REHABILITATION TEACHING (RT)

COVID-19 and RT

* In-Home Service Changes
* What technology is available?
* What about adaptive equipment?
* Talking books and magnifiers
* Tactile markings
* Timepieces

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REHABILITATION TEACHING (RT)

RT Tips & Techniques:

* Contrast
* Lighting
* Dark pens/bold paper
* Multi-sensory approach to task
* Use markings/tape/stickers (tactile/contrast/color)

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Social Rehabilitation

Social Service Supervisor

Region 6

Kathi White

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SOCIAL REHABILITATION (SR)

* Who receives SR services?
* What is the mission of SR?
* What is the role of a Social Work Case Manager at MCB?
* How do you receive referrals?
* What happens after registration?

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SOCIAL REHABILITATION (SR)

SR Questions during COVID-19:

1. When will MCB make home visits?
2. Can you help me to learn to use BARD for downloading talking books?
3. Can you teach me to use Zoom?

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Older-Independent Blind Program

Director

Karen Hatcher

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Older-Independent Blind Program (OIB)

* What is the goal of the OIB Program?
* How is the OIB Program funded?
* Who is eligible?
* How does OIB work with The Carroll Center for the Blind?
* What are OIB Peer Support Groups?

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Older-Independent Blind Program (OIB)

OIB and COVID-19:

* Low vision peer support groups continue to meet monthly via phone conference calls
* Diabetic Management Support Network - Carroll Center
* MCB “check-in” phone calls have proven to be successful

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Older-Independent Blind Program (OIB)

OIB Questions during COVID-19:

1. What is the status of Perkins Library?
2. How will consumers be notified when home visits can resume?
3. What is the status of MA Equipment Distribution Program for LG Button Telephones?

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Orientation & Mobility

MCB Director of O & M

Certified O & M Specialist

Meg Robertson

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How Has COVID-19 Impacted O&M Skills?

New O&M Travel Supplies

* Mask/s
* Hand sanitizer
* Disposable Gloves
* Disposable Arm sleeves
* Plastic zip lock bags
	+ New personal procedures: Sanitize hands when entering and/or leaving a new setting or touching items, clean cane or dog harness; Wash hands upon return home

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Orientation & Mobility

Guiding Assistance

* + - * Don’t assume, that having a guide dog or cane, makes people aware of your vision loss
			* Wearing masks makes it difficult to hear
			* Standard guiding
			* Adaptive Guiding

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Orientation & Mobility

Environments

* + - No waiting areas
		- One-way store aisles and sidewalks One-way entrances and exits
		- Queues to get into a store
		- Limited seating areas

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Orientation & Mobility

Pedestrian Environments

* + Construction
	+ Outdoor restaurant seating
	+ Expanded sidewalks
	+ Traffic volumes
	+ New bike lanes

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Orientation & Mobility

More preparation for trips

* Is this trip or errand needed? Is there another option?
* Call ahead
	+ Will there be a guide to assist?
* Practice wearing a mask before going out.

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Orientation & Mobility

Transportation

* Loading of bus
* Paratransit
* Subway
* Cabs/Uber/Lyfts

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Assistive Technology

Director

Alexander Pooler

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Assistive Technology (AT)

Top Questions Received during COVID-19

* How is MCB able to work with people in long term care facilities?
* Is MCB able to train on adaptive software remotely?
* Can MCB help with accessibility and video conferencing?  ​

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Employment Services

Supervisor

Joe Buizon

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Employment Services

What is the role of Employment Services at MCB?

* In Employment Services, we work with consumers in conjunction with VR counselors to assist individuals to prepare and eventually obtain gainful employment.  We also develop and maintain different programs that augment our work including MCB’s Internship Program, Virtual Mentoring, Employment Now, etc.

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Employment Services

What are the top questions for Employment Services?

* How do consumers or clients access services?
* What industries are hiring during this pandemic?
* How do employers engage with MCB or strengthen their relationship with us?

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Children’s Services

Director of Programs

Susan Lavin

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Children’s Services – Overview

Children’s Social Workers (CSW’s) promote the

education and wellness of legally blind children and

their families by providing:

* + - * Case management
			* Educational advocacy and parental support
			through the special education process
			* Socialization and recreational\* opportunities,
			* Information and referral for a variety of services and benefits

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Children’s Services – Overview

* + - * Information and referral for a variety of services and benefits
			* Assistance and advocacy in accessing public benefits and in-home support services
			* Respite\* and flexible family supports\*
			* Certifications for the Talking Book Library

*\*Title XX/income eligibility applies. These are promulgated yearly based on 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines.*

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Children’s Services

Top Questions for MCB Children’s Workers during COVID-19:

1. Available educational support and advocacy?

2. Available MCB Respite Funds?

3. Community financial resources for food, rent, and utilities?

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Discussion

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Connect with MCB

Website: [www.mass.gov/mcb](http://www.mass.gov/mcb)

Twitter/Instagram: @massblind

Facebook: @masscommblind

LinkedIn: Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

YouTube: Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

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Closing Music

Josh Pearson

MCB Consumer