



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL  
AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

Don Jordan, Secretary

**Senate Ways and Means  
February 12, 2010**

**Kansas Advisory Committee  
for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

**Integrated Service Delivery  
Michael Donnelly  
Director of Rehabilitation Services**

For Additional Information Contact:  
Patrick Woods, Director of Governmental Affairs  
Docking State Office Building, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor North  
(785) 296-3271



# **Kansas Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

## Senate Ways and Means February 12, 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before your Committee today to update you on several important initiatives which impact the service delivery system for adults who are blind or visually impaired in Kansas. My name is Michael Donnelly and I am the Director of Kansas Rehabilitation Services for SRS.

In November 2009, following an intensive review process and public hearings, the Facilities Closure and Realignment Commission (FCRC) made two recommendations:

1. That "RCBVI (the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired) will be closed and SRS will reinvest savings from the closure of the facility into outreach programs to better serve the blind and visually impaired population in Kansas."
2. That "an Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired be created either through Executive Order or statutory change."

On January 26, 2010, Governor Mark Parkinson announced his decision to accept the recommendation regarding closure of RCBVI. He also issued Executive Order 10-02 to establish the Kansas Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Per the Governor's order, SRS is working toward an efficient closure of RCBVI. Staff are planning with the few remaining consumers to wrap up their training plans and assure a smooth transition to their home communities and the pursuit of their employment goals.

SRS is taking a two-fold approach to increasing the capacity of community-based agencies to serve persons who are blind or visually impaired and to assuring ongoing access to those services. First, SRS will issue a Request for Proposals for contracts to build capacity statewide. SRS has committed \$500,000 in stimulus funding through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to partner with community organizations and service providers to hire



credentialed staff, improve outreach to persons who are blind or visually impaired, and to provide the variety of direct services necessary to assist individuals to be successful in their employment and independent living goals. Second, SRS will establish ongoing service provider contracts to immediately ensure access to necessary services and, in the long-term, purchase services once stimulus funding ends. Input received from a Stakeholder Meeting on January 14, attended by about 75 people, is guiding these efforts.

Finally, in partnership with Governor's Office, SRS is currently soliciting applications from individuals interested in serving on the Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Information about the opportunity to serve on this Committee has been distributed to interested stakeholders and is also posted on our website at [www.srskansas.org/rehab/text/Advisory.html](http://www.srskansas.org/rehab/text/Advisory.html).

Here is an excerpt from the Executive Order which describes the purpose of the Committee:

The Committee will provide advice and counsel to the Secretary of SRS on issues that improve opportunities for employment and independent living of Kansans who are blind or visually impaired.

The Committee will serve as an advisory body for SRS and, as such, will advise the Secretary and the staff of SRS in matters affecting policies, programs, priorities and a long-term, strategic direction for the state's services to Kansans who are blind or visually impaired.

The Committee shall act in an advisory capacity and shall do the following:

- Advise the Secretary of SRS on development and implementation of programs, services and initiatives affecting the employment and independent living of Kansans who are blind or visually impaired.
- Review and advise the Secretary of SRS on strategic plans affecting employment and independent living of Kansans who are blind or visually impaired.
- Review the status of services provided to Kansans who are blind or visually impaired and make recommendations for needed improvements.
- Provide other information or advice as requested by the Secretary of SRS.

On an annual basis, the Committee will submit to the Governor and the Secretary of SRS, a report that overviews the prior year's accomplishments and



Committee activities, and outlines recommendations made, actions taken by SRS and priorities for the upcoming year.

SRS is committed to a quality services to meet the employment and independent living needs of persons who are blind or visually impaired, to statewide access to services, and to the meaningful involvement of the Advisory Committee. Thank you.