



Kentucky Office for the Blind
Building Working Relationships

KENTUCKY OFFICE FOR THE BLIND AN OVERVIEW OF SERVICES

Department for Workforce Investment
Education and Workforce Development Cabinet



OUR MISSION

**“TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR
EMPLOYMENT AND
INDEPENDENCE TO INDIVIDUALS
WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES”.**

Programs & Services



The Kentucky Office for the Blind (OFB) offers a wide variety of programs and services to assist eligible individuals with a significant visual disability that limits their ability to function independently and/or enter the workforce.

Agency Overview

- ✓ 106 Staff Statewide
- ✓ 15 Central Office Administrative Staff
- ✓ 91 Program Staff providing direct services
- ✓ Ten Offices Across the State
- ✓ Majority of Funding from Federal dollars
- ✓ Services Offered Statewide

Website: <http://blind.ky.gov>

Eligibility



The Office for the Blind provides Vocational Rehabilitation services to individuals with a significant visual disability that limits their ability to function independently and/or enter the workforce. Eligibility is determined by a vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Individual needs vary widely, depending upon individual goals, as well as the severity of vision loss.

During intake, the medical, social, financial, educational, and vocational experiences of the individual are discussed. Individuals are asked if possible to share in the cost of services; however, there are no fees for our services.

In 2011 the VR Program provided services to 1,799 consumers placing 354 individuals into competitive employment. Services offered are:

- Assessment to determine eligibility and needs
- Vocational Guidance and Counseling
- Job Development
- Job Placement Services
- Assistive Technology Services and Devices
- Orientation and Mobility
- Work Experience
- Bioptic Driving
- Other Support Services

Regionalized Teams

The Kentucky Office for the Blind central office is located in Frankfort with ten field offices located throughout the state. Each field office is staffed with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and other support persons that serve their local geographic area.

- ✓ VR Counseling Staff
- ✓ IL/OIB Counseling Staff
- ✓ Bioptic Driving Staff
- ✓ Orientation and Mobility Staff
- ✓ Assistive Technology Staff

A Closer Look ...

**The Office for the Blind
Provides Orientation and
Mobility Services through
Certified orientation and
mobility specialists.**



The Independent Living and Older Blind Programs



These Programs assists individuals who are blind and visually impaired to function independently in their homes and the community who are having trouble with daily living skills due to a change in their visual abilities. Services are provided in the person's home.. There is no age limit, and a person's income and financial resources do not matter.



The Office for the Blind Assistive Technology Services support individuals who are blind and visually impaired in the selection, training and use of adaptive devices.

Assistive Technology-
Promotes greater independence by enabling people to perform tasks that they were formerly unable to accomplish, or had great difficulty accomplishing, by providing the technology needed to accomplish such tasks.

The Charles W. McDowell Center

Empowering individuals who are blind and visually impaired to achieve greater outcomes, become more effective in the workplace and enjoy participation in community life.



Other OFB Programs



❑ **Deaf-Blind Program-Consumers with dual disabilities are offered specialized services to meet their needs. This is a collaborative program with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.**

❑ **Bioptic Driving Program- Provides specialized training to qualified individuals to obtain a drivers license.**

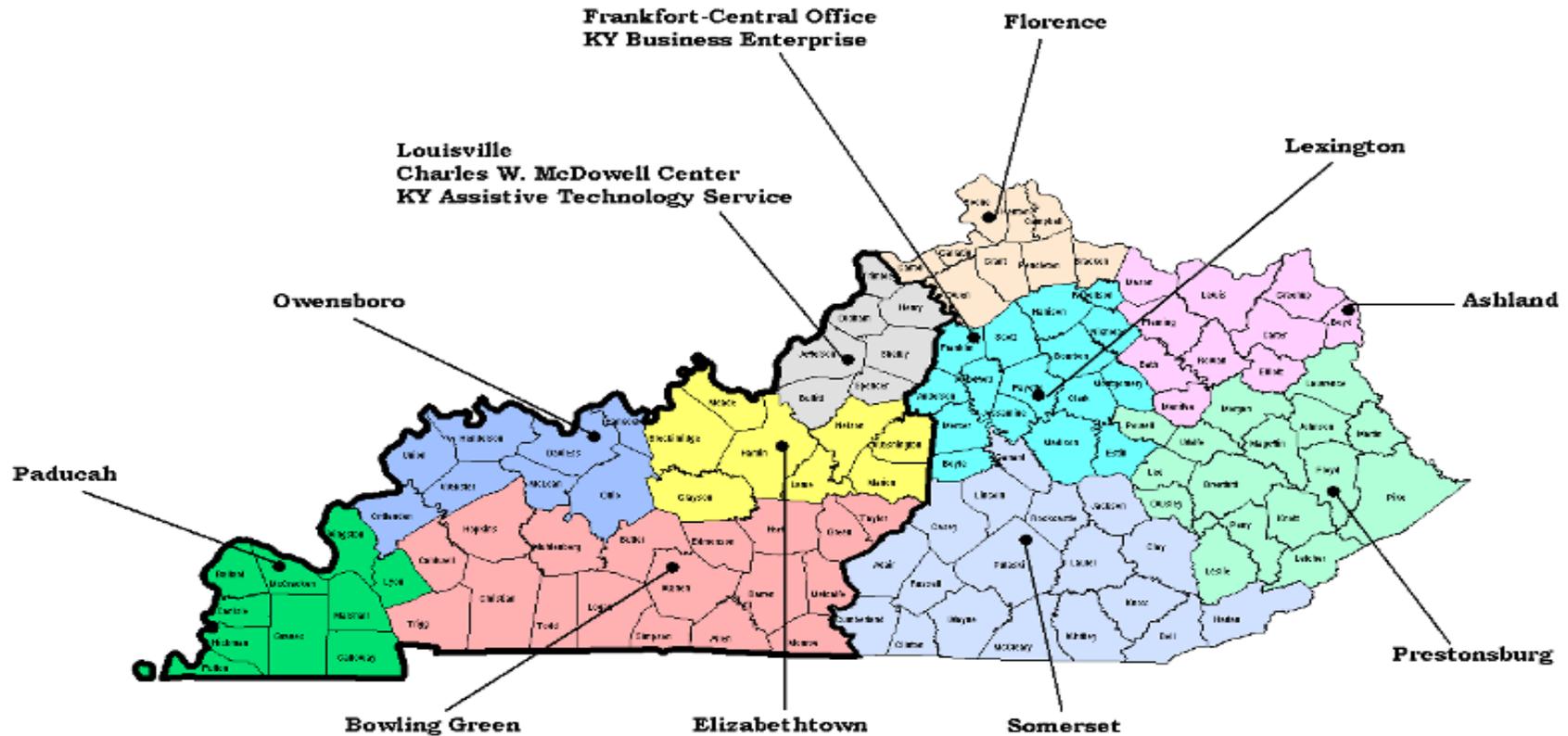


AND.....

- Accessible Textbook Program- provides audio versions of books for students and others with a vision loss. In 2011, 161 received services.
- Kentucky Business Enterprises-Trains and places individuals for self-employment in vending and food service facilities. Individuals must be legally blind to participate. Currently there are 65 vendors across the state supported through this program.



Kentucky Office for the Blind



Western Regional Manager
Nancy Tooley
1-800-222-1215

Eastern Regional Manager
Erica Smith
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Myth: Most blind people are proficient in braille and own a dog guide.

Reality: Only a small percentage of blind or visually impaired readers are completely fluent in braille; many know enough braille for functional use, such as reading notes and labels. Most people who learn braille as adults do not develop the skill to read rapidly. Only a small percentage of blind or visually impaired people use a dog guide. They are invaluable tools and companions for those who do use them. Dog guides are trained to lead the person safely through crowds, across streets, and around obstructions. When the dog guide is harnessed, it's on duty. Once out of harness, the dog relaxes because it's off duty.

Myth: People who are blind or severely visually impaired can't do most jobs.

Reality: People who are blind or have low vision are currently doing many jobs, some which may astound you.



Myth: Employees who are blind or visually impaired need more supervision than others.

Reality: Studies have proven that employees who are blind or visually impaired do not need more supervision. They may need different supervision to perform specific tasks. Most have a high desire and motivation to succeed. Given proper instruction, employees who are blind or visually impaired will perform competitively.

Myth: Studies show that hiring blind or visually impaired employees causes insurance rates to increase.

Reality: Insurance premiums are based on overall actuarial events. A single individual, even if he or she is blind or visually impaired, does not make an impact. Many states have passed regulations prohibiting differentiation in premiums on the basis of blindness without full actuarial evidence to support the distinction. A study by DuPont as validated by others, documented that 97 percent of employees with physical disabilities were rated average or above average on safety, compared with 92 percent of unimpaired employees.

Myth: Accommodations are too expensive.

Reality: The cost of accommodation is typically low (88 percent of complete employee accommodations cost less than \$1000) and easy to implement. The value—to morale, to loyalty in the workforce, and in retaining highly qualified people—can be very high.

Myth: Blind people have special gifts: a "sixth sense."

Reality: People who are blind or visually impaired are not endowed with a sharper sense of touch, hearing, taste, or smell. To compensate for their loss of vision, many learn to listen more carefully, or remember without taking notes, or increase directional acumen to compensate for their lack of functional vision.

Myth: People who are blind or visually impaired cannot read printed or handwritten materials.

Reality: The advent of computers and technology has made nearly any kind of print accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Computer software can translate print into speech, magnify screen images, and enlarge text to a readable size. Occasionally human readers take care of the rest.