

Blind Services Foundation of Florida Inc.

Annual Report 2019-2020

The membership of the Foundation Board did not change this year. In spite of the pandemic, we kept to a schedule that saw us meet, on average, every three months. In addition, subcommittees met to work on specific issues.

Our primary work this year constituted overseeing the third year of a project concerning the development of a vocational evaluation tool and ancillary products.

As a first step during this year, a small group of specialists and consumers met in Tampa to work on a number of things. First, during a two day meeting we explored the final version of the instrument and made some substantial changes based on the feedback from previous iterations of the test. We also worked to outline other components of the project. These included the development of a manual to accompany the test, the creation of a listing of related tests that could be used in conjunction with the instrument and an outline of the specific value of this approach to assessing the vocational readiness of people who are blind or have low vision. Essentially, this meeting created a roadmap for the rest of our year's work on this project.

A major development occurred soon after this initial meeting. Interest was shown in utilizing our instrument and related documents all across Canada. It took a little time to get the appropriate language and approach accepted so that we met all of Florida's requirements. However, by January the agreement was in place. Unfortunately, the pandemic is as much of a problem in Canada as it is here and the volume of responses we had received from there has been limited.

During the pandemic, work has continued on the development of ancillary materials. The first draft of the manual has been completed and we have contacted a number of those who took the test by telephone to get feedback. We have also received written and telephonic feedback from a number of evaluators who have used the test which are being incorporated into our final product.

We have actually received a few more completed instruments even during the pandemic and work continues on the other ancillary documents. We have also reached out to a number of national leaders in the field for feedback on our instrument and received valuable input which has been incorporated into our latest iteration of the instrument. We are continuing to make adjustments on automating the scoring system and are working with Survey Monkey to see how we can make the whole user interface as friendly as we can make it!

As has been indicated in previous annual reports, we continued to try to find the best way to make our instrument available to evaluators throughout the world at no cost while, at the same time, protecting Florida's authorship. Our interest had been to make the instrument and other

documents available as part of the "creative commons" rule on the internet. Our discussions with legal representatives of the Department of Education led us to identify a barrier. In order to qualify under the Creative Commons regulations, all components must first be copyrighted and then appropriately registered. There is currently no easy, legal way to copyright the components of our project. Legislation was put forward during this session that might have created a way forward, but it is not yet in place. We are continuing to work on this issue.

Earlier this year, we created a committee to seek a bid to create a new version of our web site. While most of the available bids were too high, we entered into an arrangement with two individuals who had experience both with similar projects and with the creation of fully accessible sites. We have registered our new web page and a virtually finished version of the site is now being reviewed by our subcommittee and the developers for final changes. We believe the new site will make the Foundation more visible and will drive more traffic to our site so that more people will know about the work we are doing to make Florida a better place for people who are blind to live.

We have completed work on a new brochure and have begun to distribute them throughout the state. We believe it will help us encourage more individuals to consider Biker Tags as a way to support our work.

We are currently at work to develop one or two different posters which we hope to place at license offices and with motor cycle dealers.

We utilized one of our meetings to explore a whole range of general areas where funding from the Foundation could be useful. These included working on projects for people who are blind and aging; working to develop a special Florida collection at the Library; contributing to a specific project for people who had additional disabilities along with blindness; and working to develop an approach to help measure the value of rehabilitation services.

The novel Coronavirus has unquestionably had effects on service delivery to people who are blind in Florida. Our Foundation is proud that our members, the majority of whom are blind, can contribute to making things better! We believe that, as the consequences of the virus become clearer, there will be more roles for our foundation to fill. We appreciate the opportunity to serve and will continue to make Florida a better place for people who are blind!