

**Indiana School for the Blind  
and Visually Impaired**  
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To: Mr. Adam Horst  
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Via: Mr. Don Koors  
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Thru: Mr. John Hill  
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From: James R. Durst  
Superintendent  
Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
7725 North College Avenue  
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Date: September 20, 2010

Re: Transmittal Letter

The purpose of this transmittal letter is to represent the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ISBVI) budget request and to provide supplemental information to accompany the biennial budget request.

**ISBVI Mission and Description of Program**

Agency Mission: The mission of the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is to serve as a benchmark for educating students who are blind or have low vision by guiding each student down his/her unique path to meaningful adulthood through appropriate on and off campus learning opportunities and statewide outreach services that promote high standards of academic/vocational achievement, independent and healthy living skills, development of vision specific (expanded core curriculum) skills, use and application of technology, and respect for others.

**Agency Programs and Functions:** Established in 1847, the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, located in Indianapolis, offers both on campus and off campus programs to students who are blind or have low vision residing in Indiana. ISBVI is accredited by state, regional, and national certifying organizations. The school provides students with instruction in the same course work required of all school aged children in Indiana. Additional specialized classes include orientation and mobility, adaptive physical education, independent living skills, vocational

education, music instruction, Braille and specially adapted computer technology. Also available are experiences and opportunities to participate in recreational activities, on and off campus jobs, band, chorus, piano, scouting, and creative dance, as well as involvement in competitive speech, track and field, wrestling, cheerleading and swimming.

The school is comprised of 31 buildings located on a 63 acre campus. All of the buildings and grounds are owned by the State of Indiana and administered through the Department of Administration. The school receives approximately 97% of its funding from the State of Indiana, 2% from federal sources, and 1% from various gifts, bequests, and donations.

Students are placed at the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired through a state-mandated process known as a case conference, in accordance with Article 7, Special Education Rules. This process ensures that each student is eligible for special education services. A comprehensive Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is developed to ensure that each student's individual needs and learning style are met. In addition, Article 7 mandates that each student's progress be reviewed at an annual case review where the parents, the local school agency, and ISBVI staff members develop appropriate goals and objectives. A comprehensive triennial multi-disciplinary evaluation is also conducted on each student. Each assessment is designed for the student and may include, but not be limited to, the following areas: social history; psychological testing; physical and occupational therapy; speech; hearing; language; Braille skills; vocational aptitude; medical/ophthalmologic review; functional vision; functional literacy; orientation and mobility; and daily living.

The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has developed numerous collaborative relationships with other schools, agencies, service groups, and providers to improve and enhance services in a more efficient and cost effective manner. ISBVI partners with the Indiana Department of Education to operate the Indiana Education Resource Center (IERC), which offers Braille, large print and other education materials statewide to all of Indiana's students who are blind or visually impaired, as needed. This innovative and collaborative initiative saves the State of Indiana in excess of \$800,000 per year by re-using materials, supplies and equipment.

The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has developed a cooperative/collaborative relationship with the Department of Education and the Department of Corrections by establishing a Braille and Large Print Production Project at the Miami Correctional Facility. This project, which has trained offenders in transcribing print into Braille, large print and accessible formats has: saved the State of Indiana significant dollars; provided more timely access to information for Indiana's students who are blind or have low vision; decreased the need to outsource to other states; provided marketable skills for offenders upon release. In addition, the project will provide profitability to the Department of Corrections in the near future by providing the opportunity to sell books and files to other states.

Additionally, in collaboration with Bosma Enterprises, the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides a comprehensive job skills program for students 16 years of age and older, who are blind or have low vision from throughout the state. The Student Training Employment Program (STEP) has had a positive impact on participants as well as employers in identifying the skills of the students, accommodations needed for employment and breaking down barriers and misconceptions in hiring individuals who are blind or have low vision.

The Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is fully committed to respecting each student as a unique individual; designing programs and expectations tailored to individual student needs; providing appropriate, challenging, and realistic learning experiences in a safe and positive atmosphere for maximum student achievement; and supporting and working cooperatively with local education agencies, parents, families, and the community.

ISBVI stakeholders include students who are blind or have low vision enrolled at ISBVI or in their local public schools; parents of students who are blind or have low vision enrolled at ISBVI or at local public schools; local education agencies (superintendents, special education directors, and

teachers); the Governor and members of the state administration; the Indiana legislature; the ISBVI Board; the Indiana Department of Education; alumni of ISBVI; ISBVI staff; professional, consumer, and advocacy organizations for the blind; service clubs for the blind; the business community and foundations.

### **Data Indicators and Performance Indicators**

ISBVI continues to improve efforts to collect empirical information to be used to plan and improve programs in the most cost-efficient and effective manner. The enrollment numbers at ISBVI have remained stable, averaging between 160-180 students over the past 10 years. The needs of the enrolled students, however, have become significantly more complex. Over fifty-seven (57%) of the students enrolled during the 2009-2010 school year have additional handicapping conditions in addition to their blindness or visual impairment, as well as more significant medical needs.

Results show:

- ISBVI fulfilled desired outcomes per Individual Education Plans (IEP) with greater than 85% of all students meeting or showing progress on 75% of their IEP goals after one year of intervention (Attachment A).
- 85% of the AdvancEd Accreditation (previously North Central Association) cohort groups showed improvement in verbal or written communication skills after one year of intervention implementation (Attachment B).

The percentage of students with additional handicapping conditions placed at the school has increased several percentage points per year over the past few years. Based on national trends, we anticipate this percentage of increase will continue. Additionally, there has been an increase in the request for assistance from ISBVI by local school corporations, parents and other individuals providing services to students who are blind or have low vision not enrolled at ISBVI. Attached, please find data as it relates to enrolled students at ISBVI that identifies:

- the number of students who are blind or have low vision and additional handicapping conditions (Attachment C);
- county of residence 2005-2009 (Attachment D-D1);
- gender 2005-2009 (Attachment E);
- ethnic distribution 2005-2009 (Attachment F);
- age 2005-2009 (Attachment G);
- cognitive and adaptive levels 2005-2009 (Attachment H);
- residential status 2008-2009 (Attachment I);
- grade 2005-2009 (Attachment J); and
- graduate accomplishments 2005-2009 (Attachment K).

### **Accomplishments and Outcomes**

Through private benefactors and federal dollars totaling over \$3,000,000, ISBVI has improved technology infrastructure and technology opportunities, has continued and expanded the statewide low vision clinic and short-course program and completed major exterior and interior projects/renovations. ISBVI also purchased supplies, materials, equipment and Braille books through private service clubs totaling over \$100,000 and has begun implementation of a ten year strategic and public relations plan with the assistance of private funding totaling \$100,000.

Collaboration with the Indiana Department of Corrections has also greatly assisted the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired with routine maintenance, renovations and other projects with minimal impact on the operating budget. This collaboration not only has proven beneficial to the school but also to the Department of Corrections by providing work experience for offenders in a controlled environment.

In 2009 there were 973 students ages 3-21 identified as having a visual impairment as their primary handicapping condition in the State of Indiana. Students with blindness or low vision as a secondary handicapping condition, ages 3-21, totaled 315. ISBVI served:

- approximately 210 of Indiana's students who were blind or have low vision in its on-campus program;
- Indiana families by providing 7,548 contacts or services through the outreach program;
- 29 visually-disabled students by providing training in the 2009 Student Training Employment Program (STEP);
- 65 visually impaired infant and preschool students via outreach;
- 1,150 individuals during workshops through outreach training programs;
- 49 Short Course students; and
- 613 blind or low vision students by providing services through the Indiana Education Resource Center (IERC) in 2009.

Further accomplishments include the following: 46% of ISBVI students graduated with a diploma; 54% graduated with a certificate of completion (Attachment K). Additionally, ISBVI has expanded and improved services to blind and low vision students in the areas of additional disabilities, including those with dual-sensory impairment (deaf/blind). Career and vocational training has expanded and improved as part of the summer employment and training program (STEP). Low vision assessment, training, and follow-up have improved. ISBVI in conjunction with the Statewide Lions provides low vision assessments in local school districts throughout the state by utilizing the Lions Mobile Vision Screening Vehicle at no cost to the state. Staff development training to ensure that all employees are better able to meet student needs has been expanded and improved.

ISBVI continues to develop and expand partnerships with local businesses, service organizations, foundations, and non-profit community agencies. We assist many schools for the blind nationally who have used ISBVI programs and services for benchmarking purposes; and continue to excel in extracurricular activities such as sports, music, art, and speech activities both locally and nationally.

ISBVI has not filled numerous positions to make dollars available for school programs, operations and increased costs. On-campus enrollment, including Short Course, and requests for ISBVI outreach services continue to increase. ISBVI has the statewide challenge and statutory responsibility to assist Indiana's 302 school corporations to meet the needs of students with visual disabilities.

With regard to the Construction, Rehabilitation, and Repair Budget, ISBVI faces the challenge of maintaining, other than the aquatic center, many buildings constructed in the 1930's, which are now over 75 years old. It is important to provide for the safety and the specific needs of the students, many who have additional handicapping conditions, in addition to their blindness or low vision. The age of the buildings and the more complex needs of the students require significant maintenance and renovations to keep them up to standard. It is also important to protect and extend the initial investment in the buildings. Therefore, ISBVI will request CR&R dollars to adequately maintain the state's investment in their facility and address the needs of our students.

### **Goals for the Biennium**

1. ISBVI, through private dollars, has established a comprehensive strategic plan. As part of the process for this strategic plan, ISBVI met with various constituencies to determine how the needs of all of Indiana's students who are blind, visually impaired or blind/visually impaired multi-disabled could be addressed in a more timely/cost effective manner. Additionally, specific emphasis on program improvements were identified in the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired School Improvement Plan, which included goals specific to communication in the core curriculum area. Expanded core curriculum/vision specific skill training is required for each student per his/her Individual Education Plan (IEP). ISBVI will take steps to begin the implementation of the strategic plan by addressing five specific goals over the course of the next biennium and beyond. The

goals include: Improving the transition from school to employment and engagement; Delivering core curriculum (i.e., meeting state educational standards) in diverse, innovative ways — including through distance learning; Connecting students across the state to expanded core curriculum (i.e., communication modes, compensatory and functional academic skills, orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education) in diverse, innovative ways; Establishing ISBVI as a center of educational excellence with synergy between a reordered, high-functioning, center-based school and with permeable outreach programs that offer meaningful resources to diverse constituents; and Restructuring the data collection paradigm.

2. Ongoing program cost efficiencies will also be continually reviewed by carefully scrutinizing all position vacancies; reallocating existing resources to better meet ISBVI's mission and strategic plan; examining and implementing energy and other cost saving initiatives; examining efficiencies in the dietary area; continued sharing of resources with the Indiana School for the Deaf and other state agencies; and collaborating with local agencies, businesses and service providers.
3. ISBVI will continue to expand outreach services and improve the percentage of local students served by increasing the number of students served in the Short Course program, the low vision clinic and in their local districts without additional operational dollars.
4. ISBVI will implement portions of the ISBVI Facility Master Plan to improve safety, enhance the living and learning areas, maximize service and cost efficiencies, and protect and extend the original investment in the campus infrastructure.
5. ISBVI will improve stakeholder input and responsiveness to stakeholder needs.