

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

IBSSS STATUS REPORT

Action Requested: Receive the IBSSS status report.

Executive Summary: IBSSS's status report includes a summary of the discussion by the IBSSS Coordinating Council at its meeting in December 2005 regarding vision services in Iowa. The Coordinating Council reviewed the results of needs assessments; identified the strengths and weaknesses of vision services in Iowa; discussed characteristics of a preferred future for vision services in Iowa; and identified possibilities for making vision services in Iowa more effective and efficient.

Details of the Report:

◆ Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Vision Services in Iowa.

- A continuum of services is provided in Iowa by well-qualified service providers; however, access for some students is limited by geography or extended travel times.
- Access to service is provided at IBSSS and by itinerant teachers and orientation and mobility specialists; however, time for individual students is limited.
- While school districts attempt to integrate students who are blind or visually impaired in general education classrooms, some students may not be acquiring skills essential to post-secondary education, careers, and independent living as adults.
- Parents are satisfied overall with the educational progress of their students, but there are limited objective data by which to judge student outcomes statewide.

◆ A Preferred Future for Vision Services in Iowa. A preferred future would be characterized by:

- Providing better training and support for special education teachers working with students who are blind or visually impaired;
- Using regional centers to provide access to the expanded core curriculum (life skills);
- Maximizing skill development in activities for daily living, literacy, social skills, and travel skills; and
- Centralizing administration and coordination of service providers, assistive technology, and regional centers, allocating available resources to achieve maximum effectiveness, eliminating geographical differences in the distribution of resources, coordinating comprehensive transition to adulthood services with the Department for the Blind, and providing more opportunities for general education classroom teachers to become more familiar with accommodating students with visual impairments and the use of Braille.

❖ **Possibilities for Making Vision Services in Iowa More Efficient and Effective.**

- ☑ Develop a model academic program at UNI for middle and high school students who are blind or visually impaired with emphasis on transition to higher education.
- ☑ Centralize responsibilities at the Iowa School for the Deaf for outreach services for students who are blind or visually impaired including the related business, and human resource functions.
- ☑ Co-locate ISD and IBSSS on the ISD campus with separate and distinct educational and dormitory programs.
- ☑ Develop cooperative agreements between the University of Iowa and the area education agencies to provide specialized vision technology services.
- ☑ Retain IBSSS at its current location with emphasis on flexible programming alternatives.
- ☑ Identify alternative uses for the IBSSS facilities and grounds.
- ☑ Explore a cooperative agreement with the Department for the Blind for transition services for older students with visual impairments.
- ☑ Place more emphasis on early childhood services for visually-impaired children ages birth to eight.
- ☑ Enhance the use of resource rooms to serve students with visual impairments.
- ☑ Develop regional resource centers with comprehensive vision services available, including intensive work on the expanded core curriculum, access to direct services providers, and training for general and special education teachers and aides, and information and training for parents.
- ☑ Move ISD and IBSSS to a new central location with short-term residential and day programs and a center for continued education of teachers and information for families.
- ☑ Create a specialized group home for visually-impaired students struggling in public school settings, but for whom an academic program and independent living are possible as adults.

❖ **Next Steps.** The advantages and disadvantages of each possibility identified by the Coordinating Council will be discussed at the next Council meeting in March 2006. In response to requests from parents of students currently attending IBSSS and IBSSS faculty and staff, the Coordinating Council will hold two ICN meetings in January 2006 to solicit additional input.