

NORTH DAKOTA VISION SERVICES - SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND - TRANSITION FROM RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

The 1993 Legislative Assembly approved House Bill No. 1003 which provided legislative intent regarding services provided by the School for the Blind. The section stated the school was to discontinue residential services by July 1, 1994, and to use the cost-savings to enhance the school's outreach program. The bill further stated the school should pursue renting any available facilities and deposit rental revenue in the general fund.

After residential services were discontinued at the school, the school renovated the south wing of the school into office space at a cost of \$618,000 and subsequently leased the space to the North Dakota University System. In addition, the west wing was leased to Grand Forks Public Schools for use as an alternative high school. Prior to occupying the west wing, Grand Forks Public Schools provided funds for minor renovations to the building.

In 1997 the school spent \$471,700 of funds to renovate the south wing (pool building) into offices, instructional areas, and short-term housing. Two apartments and two suites were added to enable the school to offer short-term residential training programs for persons from outside the Grand Forks area.

The 1999-2000 interim Budget Committee on Institutional Services studied programs and services available to blind and visually impaired persons and recommended 2001 House Bill No. 1038 to the Legislative Assembly. The bill changed the mission of the school to serve persons of all ages with visual impairments instead of just children. The bill clarified the school was to be a statewide service, resource, and referral center for persons with vision impairment.

The school was renamed North Dakota Vision Services - School for the Blind and given the following additional responsibilities:

1. Collect and distribute information on vision services programs available in the state.
2. Facilitate collaboration with agencies providing services to individuals who are blind or have a visual impairment.
3. Assist residents to access appropriate vision services.
4. Maintain a database of blind or visually impaired persons in the state.

CURRENT SERVICES

The school currently offers services to blind and vision-impaired persons of all ages through the main Grand Forks location and outreach offices in Bismarck, Minot, Jamestown, and Fargo. Services provided include:

- Short-term programs for compensatory skills.
- Inhome vision assessments for infants and toddlers.
- Evaluations, consultations, and instruction.
- Vision resource library.
- Adaptive aids.
- Braille access center.
- Vocational/career services.

CURRENT LEASE AGREEMENTS

The school currently receives revenue from the following lease agreements:

Entity	Leased Property	Lease Rate	Total Annual Lease Amount
Grand Forks Public Schools	16,660 square feet of building space	\$8.75 per square foot	\$145,775
Grand Forks Public Schools	Land for portable classroom	\$3,750 per year	\$3,750
North Dakota University System - Higher Education Computer Network	4,400 square feet of building space	\$8.75 per square foot	\$38,500
University of North Dakota	Land for parking lot	\$2,900 per year	\$2,900