



REACHING OUT

NORTH DAKOTA VISION SERVICES/SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

#95

September 2020

Superintendent's Scoop: Paul Olson

Dear Families and School Partners,

First, North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind (NDVS/SB) would like to extend warm greetings and well wishes to everyone. As NDVS/SB begins the school year, there isn't any need to list all of the shared hopes and concerns we all have. Everyone is well aware of the challenges that Covid-19 has created, however NDVS/SB vows to do the best to support children under these circumstances. As you know, NDVS/SB provides a great deal of outreach support directly to students, families, schools and other organizations across the state. **The hope is that the majority of services will continue to occur on-site in homes and schools with the appropriate safeguards in place.**

NDVS/SB teachers and specialists have begun to schedule periodic virtual appointments to consult with families, observe and teach children and collaborate with partners. Although

NDVS/SB hopes for stability and even improvement with the pandemic, we will be prepared and ready to serve children in ways that fit your needs including in-person (with appropriate safeguards in place) or virtually.



The goal is to assure that all children with a visual impairment become as independent as possible in the Expanded Core Curriculum areas like technology, daily living skills, braille, etc.

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Nothing replaces the rich, hands-on interaction between a teacher of the visually impaired and child, but it is the belief of NDVS/SB that we can provide many services using online video sessions with **Zoom, Microsoft Teams** or even **Facetime**. You can decide the platform that works best for you, if you choose to have virtual services. There may even be a few benefits—one being fewer missed appointments in the winter due to bad weather and roads. NDVS/SB will work with you to determine how and when to best provide both on-site and virtual services.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to one of our regional coordinators or adult service coordinators. You may also contact me directly by calling (701) 795-2717 or by emailing me at polson@nd.gov.

We are here with you and for you!
Paul Olson--Superintendent

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Sky Gabel: Psychology Intern

Greetings from Grand Forks, ND. My name is Sky Gabel and I am a clinical psychology doctoral student from the University of North Dakota. I work at North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind part-time and work with many students attending the programs here, learning coping skills, increasing emotional awareness, and addressing challenges people face when experiencing visual impairment. In addition, I am available for individual sessions for those who may need a little extra emotional support.

We are living in unprecedented times, between COVID-19 and pushes for social justice, many people are experiencing increased stress and changes in their lives. Everyone reacts differently from stress, but there are many ways to help cope and face these challenges head on. However, before I get into ways to cope, it is important to note that these fears are normal. Your feelings are valid, and those feelings should be recognized. That being said, sometimes we have emotions that impact our lives negatively and cause problems.



Bring your attention to how you are feeling throughout the day. Are their times or things that improve your mood or make it worse? With news stories bombarding us daily, it may be helpful to limit social media or news casts to once a day. Does going outside in the (FINALLY) warm weather calm you? Maybe calling a friend while enjoying time outside would be relaxing.

It is important to balance both physical and mental health as they are intertwined. Getting fresh air, exercise, good sleep, and having a healthy diet can improve your mental health just as much as your physical health.



If you are feeling more intense negative feelings, it's helpful to reach out. Maybe that is to your family, friends, or spiritual leader. Maybe it is towards services such as NDVS/SB and myself for times to meet and discuss some of the difficulties you are facing. If you would like to get in contact with myself, you are more than welcome to call NDVS/SB at 701-795-2704 to set up an appointment or learn more about what we offer! Stay safe, healthy, and take some time for yourself. We all need to.

Short Term Programming: Cindy Williams

Welcome back to the 2020-2021 school year! I hope you are all adjusting well to your new school routine or soon will be! We are looking forward to working with your child/student this school year and are honored to be a part of your child's/student's educational team!

As we all adjust to the uncertainties of living in a world with COVID-19, I am optimistic and excited about learning opportunities available through NDVS/SB. Our school year will look a little different as we have made the decision to hold our student Short-Term Programs virtually for the health and safety of everyone involved. With that said, NDVS/SB is here to serve and educate students with visual impairments. Our teachers are traveling doing outreach services, and if you would like an outreach consultation set-up at your home or school, please contact your regional coordinator to schedule.

I would like to provide information on expectations and the process for attending our Short-Term Programs (STP). As a reminder, there will not be a mass mailing going out. We plan to communicate through email; however, information and forms can be mailed to families upon request. Forms and information will be sent through email and are available on our website in printable or fillable form at <https://www.ndvisionservices.com/programs/registration-forms> . Our goal is to conduct our registration electronically. Forms can also be emailed or mailed back to us. We will still conduct registration for our virtual program

as we have in the past, and I will communicate registration deadlines, information, etc. via email about one month prior to the start of the STP occurring.

As far as how our virtual program will look, below is information on what to expect:

- Sunday evening - Meet-n-Greet along with a Social Skills lesson via a virtual platform (Zoom) which will last about an hour
- Monday and Wednesday (on student's own time) – work on project or assignment as designated. This will range anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour.
- Tuesday and Thursday (2:00 – 4:00 pm) – meet with instructors and peers for virtual lesson via platform such as Zoom. Note: an individual lesson with a specific instructor can also be requested during this time which will be scheduled during registration.



Please feel free to contact me via email or phone with any questions or concerns as we work together to schedule your child/student for our Short-Term Programs at NDVS/SB. I hope your school year is off to a great start and all of us at NDVS/SB look forward to being a part of student's educational team!

Sincerely, Cindy Williams, TVI
Coordinator of Student Programs
701-795-2704
ckwillia@nd.gov

The Store: Ryan Torgerson

We're still here and would love to help you. The Store has been fully operational during this whole Covid 19 pandemic. Our catalog is located on our website. There is both a PDF formatted catalog and also a word format that is JAWS friendly. We carry items from Eschenbach, Ambutech, and numerous items from LS&S and also MaxiAids. Ordering is easy too. Just call me at 701-795-2714 or send me an email to rltorg@nd.gov that includes the items you would like to purchase , your name, address and a phone number I could call you at if I have any questions.

What is Sunu Band: From sunu.com

Designed for when you can't easily use sight or due to a vision impairment, Sunu Band enables you to walk and travel with confidence. Sunu Band is the only smart-band that guides your way around obstacles. It uses sonar or echolocation to detect objects up to 16 feet or 5.5 meters away. Then haptic vibration feedback informs how close (or far away) you are to obstacles. Sunu Band compliments the white cane, guide dog or low vision. This smart-band augments your personal awareness, and reduces accidents to the body, chest, arms and head. Sunu Band is the only intelligent travel aid with more built-in sensors than any other device in the market. Explore and navigate unfamiliar places with Sunu Band's haptic compass, place finder/explorer and GPS navigation app. Now you can enjoy the personal freedom of always knowing where you are, what's around you, and how to get there with Sunu Band.



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