

**Report on the Response of the  
Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind  
at Staunton  
To the Impact of the Aging of  
Virginia's Population**

**Date Submitted: September 26, 2007**

**Pursuant to legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly of Virginia, the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy C. Armstrong".

**Nancy Armstrong, Superintendent**

**Submission Date: September 26, 2007**

## **Executive Summary**

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind serves children through age twenty-one years, and no major issues are encountered in regards to serving the aging population, as this is not in our mission. The alumni of the school participate in many of our programs and activities, which is a positive influence on both our students and staff.

## Agency Description

The Mission of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton is to assist in the provision of essential services for children with a primary disability of deafness or blindness by providing quality day and residential instructional programs to children referred by local school divisions and by serving as a resource for children with similar disabilities educated throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

VSDB-S offers comprehensive educational programs and support services to students with sensory impairments as specified on each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The school provides both residential and day options for children depending upon the distance from the child's home and his/her needs. VSDB-S provides the following services/programs:

VSDB-S offers comprehensive educational programs and support services to students with sensory impairments as specified on each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The school provides both residential and day options for children depending upon the distance from the child's home and his/her needs. VSDB-S provides the following services/programs:

- Preschool instruction for deaf or hard of hearing children ages 3 to 5 years old
- Educational programs for deaf and blind children at elementary, middle and secondary levels
- Advanced Standard Diplomas, Standard Diplomas, Modified Standard Diplomas, IEP Diplomas per students' IEP
- Students assessed using the Virginia Assessment System
- Weekly home going trips for residential students
- Extra-curricular and special activities in sports, clubs, academic bowls, dances, and space camps
- Work study opportunities on and off campus to increase independent living skills
- Short-term apartment living for seniors to increase independent living skills
- Mainstream educational opportunities in local high schools, Valley Vocational Technical School, Blue Ridge Community College and Post Secondary Rehabilitation Training at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center
- Support services in speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation and mobility training and audiology
- American Sign Language (ASL) instruction in the classroom and residential setting
- Braille instruction for the visually impaired
- Specialized technology for the visually impaired
- Teachers endorsed in Hearing Impairment/Visual Impairment and in their content areas of instruction
- University training sites for interns and student teachers in HI, VI, Speech, Audiology, Psychology, Social Work, and Counseling
- Staff trained in behavior management techniques
- Registered nurses in the infirmary with contracted medical physicians, occupational and physical therapists
- Food service personnel trained to provide specialized diets for students
- Campus Security Chief and security staff

## Data Requested

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton (VSDB-S) does not provide direct services to senior citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Services are provided to hearing impaired and visually impaired students, ages three through twenty-one years of age. Its mission is as follows:

*The Mission of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind at Staunton is to assist in the provision of essential services for children with a primary disability of deafness or blindness by providing quality day and residential instructional programs to children referred by local school divisions and by serving as a resource for children with similar disabilities educated throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.*

VSDB-S does provide the use of the facility and assistance to the alumni groups of the school, who range in age from 18 years to over 85 years of age. Alumni are given use of the facility for such activities as meetings and reunions, and a museum is housed on campus, which is overseen by a group of our deaf alumni members. Assistance is given to them by VSDB-S as needs arise, such as maintenance and upkeep of the museum. The blind alumni meet annually on the campus for a week-end filled with activities. These activities include the faculty and staff at the school as well as recent graduates.

Our senior population is also called upon from time to time to interact with students of the school, such as reading to a class or presenting a program in the dormitory, and some also fill substitute positions in our classrooms and dormitories as needed. The Human Resource Office at VSDB-S often assists retirees when need to complete forms, make telephone calls, and answer questions on issues such as health insurance and compensation.

VSDB-S operates a website, approved by the Virginia Information Technologies Agency, that is easily accessible to the senior population, and is designed to be “user friendly” for all ages of the population. The school’s deaf alumni also operate a website of their own, which features alumni as well as school information. VSDB-S publishes the *Virginia Guide*, which features student activities and articles of interest concerning the school, and is available to the senior population through a paid subscription.

The school is handicapped accessible, including our gymnasium, which assists the aging population when attending activities or sporting events on the campus, as they often do.

VSDB-S has 16 employees (11 percent of our workforce), who are eligible to retire within the next two years. These individuals are dispersed throughout our organization; however the primary impact is in our Education Program. Seven of these employees are special education instructors, who are very difficult to replace due to the scarcity of candidates in this career field. Recruitment in this area is further complicated due to our demand for instructors who are skilled in American Sign Language or Braille. In anticipation of these retirements, we are reviewing our Salary Administration Plan to determine if additional recruitment incentives would be appropriate. We are also encouraging and assisting our Teacher Assistants who are interested in special education, to prepare themselves for these positions.