

## Iowa Department for the Blind

# Empowering Blind Iowans to be Gainfully Employed and Live Independently Overview of SFY22 Appropriation Request

### Ask in a Nutshell

IDB greatly appreciates the Governor's support for our appropriation request. We are seeking:

- \* A SFY22 state appropriation of \$2,780,274
- \* Allowance of 89 FTEs

We have three purposes for this request:

- \* Add one teacher to our Independent Living Team to provide training and hope to older individuals losing vision so they can remain independent in their home and communities (\$77,845)
- \* Provide the 21.3% state match to fund our Young Adult Transition Program to allow blind youth with additional barriers to gain the blindness skills they need to move on to higher education and employment (\$200,993)
- \* Provide state match sufficient to cover contract mandated cost of living increases, rising Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) charges (\$249,885)

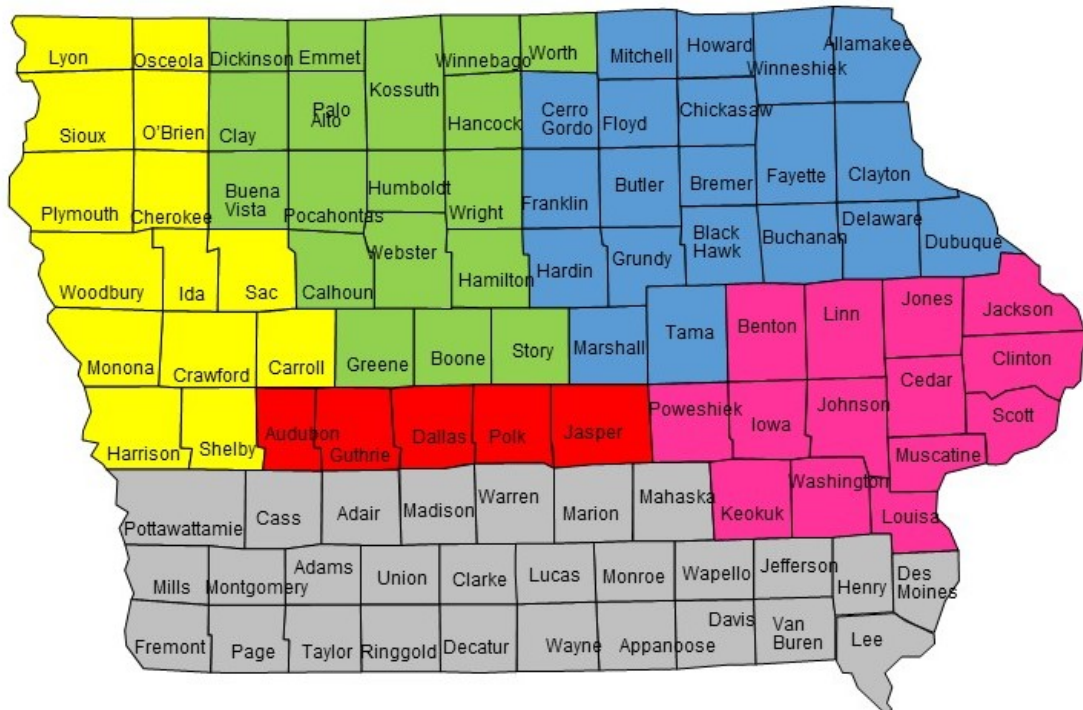
IDB is also asking for a one-time capital request of \$139,100. This would be used for:

- \* Roof repair/replacements to eliminate leaks.
- \* Replacement of boiler.
- \* Creation of additional home management training space on the south side of the 2nd floor to accommodate small group independent living and vocational rehabilitation trainings.
- \* Completion of the renovations to our first floor welcome area.

## Ask Details

### Additional Independent Living Teacher

IDB currently has six teachers to serve all 99 counties. Two of these teachers have to cover more than 20 counties and one of these teachers must cover more than a quarter of the state.



Adding an additional teacher would:

- \* Reduce teacher territory sizes, reducing travel time and allowing clients to be seen sooner and more frequently.
- \* Allow for expanded outreach to doctor's offices, nursing homes, and community service providers to increase awareness of the availability and benefit of IDB services.

According to the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living (HHS-ACL), the national average cost of care in a private room within a nursing facility is \$253 per day, \$7,698 per month, or \$92,376 per year. Alternatively, the national average cost of in-home care is \$20.50 per hour. The Iowa Department for the Blind's Independent Living training and tools help to delay or eliminate the need for older individuals who are blind or have low vision, to enter a care facility or reduce or eliminate the need for in-home care.

Our agency also works to assist eligible individuals who prematurely and voluntarily moved into a nursing home, and want to move to a less restrictive and less costly living situation. Our teachers help these individuals to transition from the facility back into a home or apartment within their community. Through the acquisition of techniques for accomplishing tasks without relying on vision, and building peer support networks, individuals can experience freedom from isolation, through increasing their daily living skills, connect with other lowans who are blind, and in general learn to live a fulfilling and productive life just like any other lowan.

The COVID–19 crisis has taught us all how vital it is to have the tools and techniques needed to live independently in one’s own home. Because IDB needed to suspend in home visits from March 13 to June 7, our case numbers have decreased and fewer clients were able to successfully close their case in SFY20. While we provided as many services as possible over the phone and virtually, there were a number of objectives that could not be met without in person instruction. When we resumed in-state travel in June, some clients were very excited to work in person with their teachers while others were not ready to do so. We continue to work virtually with those who request it and keep in touch with all clients. We know that once the crisis has passed, we will see a definite increase in applications and teacher caseloads will equal or exceed prior levels. While this will be very exciting, it will also be very challenging and being able to put another teacher in the field in the next state fiscal year would be extremely helpful in ensuring clients wait as little time as possible to get the services they need.

## **Young Adult Transition Program**

4+ programs are designed for students who have completed the academic requirements to graduate from high school, but still have Individualized Education Plan (IEP) goals to achieve. Four Plus programs already exist throughout the state of Iowa serving students with all types of disabilities. Many of these are run by school districts and community colleges. These programs have little to no experience working with blind students. Very often, this results in lowered expectations and no provision of the adjustment to blindness skills blind students need to be independent.

In the fall of 2017, IDB managers met with the IESBVI management to discuss the possibility of IDB creating a 4+ program in Des Moines similar to the program hosted on the Iowa School for the Deaf campus in Council Bluffs. It was estimated that there would be significantly more need for a 4+ program serving blind and low vision youth than could be served in the IESBVI program. IDB began work on designing such a program. In the fall of 2019, IDB asked for funding for this program and this request was supported by the Governor and included in her budget request. IDB and IESBVI gave a joint presentation to the Education Appropriation Subcommittee in January 2020. [Click here too view the presentation slides and handouts.](#)

In the budget passed by the legislature during the COVID crisis, funding for IDB’s 4+ program was not included. In order to begin the pilot year and serve the students needing our services, IDB asked for and received a one-time grant of third party match funds from the Iowa Commission for the Blind’s Gifts & Bequests Fund. During the 20–21 school year, we are serving four students. Our program staff will be working with these students to meet their goals, developing and iterating curriculum, and assisting Vocational Rehabilitation field teachers by working with other clients in the Des Moines metro area. We are very excited by the level of talent and enthusiasm in the team we are assembling for this program. We have

hired a nationally certified cane travel instructor and a licensed teacher. We have also moved a vocational rehabilitation teacher with considerable experience in youth services into this program.

We are very excited for the opportunity to fill this long standing service gap and get youth with additional barriers the blindness skills they need to achieve their fullest potential. We hope the Governor and legislature will provide the appropriation necessary to continue this program beyond its pilot year. For more information about the Young Adult Transition Program, visit the YATP page on our website (<https://blind.iowa.gov/YATP>).

### **Salaries and Other Rising Costs**

While our employees have received contract 2.1% cost of living increases each of the past two years, we have received no additional appropriation to cover the state portion of these costs. Our bill for Department of Administrative Services increased by \$44,000 last year. These are administrative costs of which approximately 10% can be charged to our federal grant. Because we received level funding for SFY21, we eliminated out-of-state travel and merit based raises. We do not receive an increase in our state appropriation to cover these rising costs in SFY21, we will be forced to choose between cutting independent living services or failing to meet maintenance of effort requirements for our federal vocational rehabilitation basic support grant.

## **IDB Facts & Figures**

### **Appropriation Request Figures At-A-Glance**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Amount</b>
SFY21 Appropriation	\$2,252,001
Additional Independent Living Teacher	\$77,845
COLA and Merit Increase	\$249,885
YATP State Match	\$200,993
Total Requested Increase	\$528,723
Total Requested SFY22 General Fund Appropriation	\$2,780,724
Requested One-Time Capitol Improvement Funding	\$139,100
Requested FTE Allotment	89

## Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- \* For every \$21.30 that we receive in-state appropriation, we are able to pull down \$78.70 from the federal government to provide Vocational Rehabilitation services to blind lowans.
- \* While IDB's case closure numbers have decreased dramatically in recent years, this is a national trend experienced after the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. However, we have been dramatically increasing the number of core services provided and the number of clients receiving these core services. Core services include: counseling and guidance, job readiness training, disability related skills training, and rehabilitation technology. Core skills also includes pre-employment transition services such as work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary enrollment opportunities, workplace readiness training, job exploration and counseling, and instruction in self-advocacy. While we know that it will take time, this increased service provision will improve quantity and quality of our employment outcomes as well as reduce the number of clients returning to re-open a case after failing to thrive in the world of work.

SFY	Number of Clients Receiving Core Services	Total Core Services Provided	Total VR Services Provided
SFY15	137	1931	3278
SFY16	186	2584	4210
SFY17	215	2759	4688
SFY18	275	2707	4930
SFY19	321	3816	6151
SFY20	396	6429	8240

## Decreasing Federal Support for Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Losing Vision

- \* No matter how much state or non-federal dollars we provide, the amount of federal support we can receive for Independent Living Services to older individuals is limited. The last increase was in FFY14. After FFY14 it decreased and remained the same from FFY15 to FFY17. It has decreased every year since FFY17. The OIB grant award by Federal Fiscal Year is as follows:

Federal Year	Grant Amount
FFY13	\$315,669
FFY14	\$325,101

FFY15	\$315,736
FFY16	\$315,736
FFY17	\$315,736
FFY18	\$312,867
FFY19	\$306,242
FFY20	\$304,614

### Independent Living Service Model Innovations

- \* Due to the implementation of the cluster model developed with Mississippi State University and putting an additional teacher in the field, our ability to provide better services in a timelier manner increased dramatically. Between SFY17 and SFY20, the number of service units provided increased by 37.2%. The average days between seeking services and receiving a service dropped by 39.22% and the average days to successful completion of the training dropped by 45.34%.

	SFY17	SFY18	SFY19	SFY20
Clients Served	443	397	426	413
Service Units Provided	7685	7200	10123	10544
Services Per Client	17.35	18.14	23.76	25.53
Average days to Service	51	59	31	31
Average days to Completion	408	377	297	223

### For More Information

To learn more about IDB programs and services visit our website: <https://blind.iowa.gov>

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IowaBlind>

Visit our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/IDBOnline>

To apply for vocational rehabilitation or independent living services: [Complete our referral form](#) or call (515) 901-8621

To apply for library services, call (515) 281-1323

For more information about library services, visit these links:

Iowa Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped Blog: <https://iowalibrary.blog/>

Instructional Materials Center Blog: <https://idbimclibrary.blog/>