

CHAPTER 47.

REHABILITATION AND RELIEF OF BLIND AND DEAF PERSONS.

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47.01 Definition of blind. As used in this chapter, blind includes persons visually handicapped, as determined by competent medical authority, with the approval of the department.

47.02 Farms at schools for visually handicapped and deaf. The department shall administer the farms connected with the Wisconsin school for the visually handicapped and the Wisconsin school for the deaf. Farm receipts shall be credited and farm expenditures shall be charged to the appropriation of the department.

47.05 Services to the blind. (1) **CREATION.** A program of services to the blind is established in the division of public assistance in the department of public welfare.

(2) **DUTIES.** The division shall:

(a) Visit the blind in their homes; investigate their living conditions and home surroundings; give them such instruction and assistance as seems likely to improve their condition, increase their happiness, and make them more useful, self-respecting and self-supporting citizens.

(b) Keep a record showing the cause of their blindness, their physical, mental and financial condition, their capacity for educational and industrial training, and such other facts as seem proper and valuable.

(c) Ameliorate the condition of the aged or helpless blind by promoting visits to their homes for the purpose of instruction and by other methods.

(d) Provide vocational rehabilitation services to blind persons determined by the division to be eligible therefor.

(e) Study the causes of blindness, learn what proportion of these cases were preventable, and co-operate with the state board of health in adopting and enforcing preventive measures.

(f) Supply the county authorities with information which may assist in the administration of aid to blind persons.

(g) Assist the blind in obtaining employment, and for that purpose it may establish an employment agency.

(h) Maintain schools for industrial training and workshops for the employment of blind persons, pay the employees suitable wages and devise means for the distribution of their products. It may provide or pay for temporary lodging and support for pupils or workmen received at such schools and workshops.

(i) Maintain a trade bureau to supply raw materials to the blind at cost and dispose of the finished products by co-operative marketing.

(3) **WORKSHOPS.** The department shall lease buildings or apartments for workshops and provide them with heat and light and water. The rent and the cost of heat, light and water shall be paid by the state. The department may furnish to workmen in the workshops a limited amount of materials and tools required for their employment.

47.06 Trainees; workshop and schools; transportation; board. The division may, with the approval of the department, provide means of instruction in a workshop or school to any blind residents of the state who desire to learn a trade; and may provide for or make a reasonable allowance, under the rules and regulations of the division, for the board of indigent blind persons attending the workshop who are not residents of the city of Milwaukee, for a reasonable time so as to enable them to learn a trade and become self-supporting. The division may also provide means of transportation from any point within the state for any indigent blind person who is a resident of the state and who desires to avail himself of the privileges of the workshop, schools, and other facilities and services of the division.

47.08 Blind enterprises program; concessions and stands. The division, with the approval of the department, shall be authorized to establish a business enterprise program for the blind. In connection therewith, the division shall be authorized to own, lease, manage, supervise and operate vending stands and other business enterprises for the use or benefit of blind persons in federal, state, private and other buildings. The share of the supervisory and other expenses of this program to be charged to each enterprise shall not exceed 3 per cent of the gross receipts of such enterprise. In other than federal buildings, the ultimate objective of this program shall be to enable blind persons to own and operate their own business enterprises. To this end whenever the blind person shall be able to pay for his equipment and stock, the division shall sell it to him at depreciated cost. The contract between the division and the blind purchaser shall stipulate that, in the event of a subsequent resale or in the event of the death of the blind purchaser, the division shall have the option of repurchasing the enterprise, together with all its assets, at depreciated cost, such option to be exercised within 90 days after notice.

47.09 State concessions; blind persons. The concession stands in the state capitol and in the state office building shall be leased to and operated by blind persons chosen and supervised by the department. The lessees shall have the right to purchase the stock and equipment on the terms which are set forth in section 47.08, and to operate them independently. The contract of sale between the division and the lessee shall stipulate that, in the event of a subsequent resale or in the event of the death of the blind purchaser, the department shall have the option of repurchasing the enterprise, together with all its assets, at depreciated costs, such option to be exercised within 90 days after notice. It shall further stipulate that if, at the expiration of any term of lease, the lessor shall consider the blind lessee to be unsatisfactory, the latter shall resell to the department at depreciated cost. In such event, the department shall select another blind operator as lessee.

47.095 Advisory committees of the blind. (1) There shall be created 2 advisory committees of the blind each to be composed of 3 members. One such committee shall act as an advisory committee to the board of public welfare, and the other shall act as an advisory committee to the state superintendent of public instruction. The board of public welfare and state superintendent shall each appoint their committees of 3 members for terms of 2, 4 and 6 years respectively. Thereafter each member shall be appointed for a term of 6 years. Appointments shall be made on the basis of recognized interest in and a demonstrated knowledge of the problems of the visually handicapped. All members of the committee shall be visually handicapped. The committee appointed by the board of public welfare and the committee appointed by the state superintendent of public instruction shall make recommendations as to procedures and policies affecting any problem of the visually handicapped before such respective department. The committees shall advise on such services, activities, programs, investigations and researches as in their judgment shall contribute to the welfare of visually handicapped persons. The board of public welfare and the superintendent of public instruction shall seek the advice of and consult with their respective advisory committees on problems and policy changes affecting the visually handicapped in such departments' respective jurisdictions; and the committees may initiate consultations with the respective departments. Notwithstanding any provision to the contrary the committees shall have access to files, records and statistics kept in either department which relate to matters concerning the visually handicapped. The 3 members acting as the advisory committee to the board of public welfare and the 3 members acting as the advisory committee to the state superintendent of public instruction before June 22, 1949 shall be the members of the advisory committee to the board of public welfare and the state superintendent of public instruction for the remainder of the terms for which originally appointed.

(2) The term "visually handicapped" shall be construed to include all persons having a visual acuity equal or less than 20/70 in the better eye with correcting lenses, or whose visual acuity is greater than 20/70 in the better eye with correcting lenses, but is accompanied by a limitation in the field of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees.

47.10 Co-operation with federal government. The department, through the division, shall co-operate, pursuant to agreements, with the federal government in carrying out the purposes of any federal statutes pertaining to vocational rehabilitation of the blind and is authorized to adopt such methods of administration as are found by the federal government to be necessary for the proper and efficient operation of such agreements or plans for vocational rehabilitation of the blind and to comply with such conditions as may be necessary to secure the full benefits of such federal statutes.