NCBVI is practicing social distancing and following all state and federal guidelines during this time of COVID-19. NCBVI staff are utilizing remote alternatives (i.e. phone, text, email, mail, skype, Face Time, and such) in order to continue providing services to consumers. Below are what NCBVI staff are doing across the state to provide services to consumers during these difficult and challenging times

New Referrals

1. Sharing information about our services
2. Providing additional community information and resources
3. Mailing applications for services and/or completing applications for services remotely
4. Referring consumers to other agencies, organizations, and such
5. Providing information to consumers regarding legislation/policies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to help them stay informed
6. Providing resources on mental health, general health, and general wellness
7. Sharing and informing consumers of free smart phone apps that are available to the blind and visually impaired such as Seeing AI, money identifiers, color identifiers, and such
8. Discussing and problem-solving alternative ways to accomplish tasks with consumers
9. Referring consumers to our website to watch instructional videos

VR

1. Collecting necessary information remotely in order to determine eligibility for services
2. Working on and completing the IPE to begin services
3. Providing additional community information and resources
4. Providing information to consumers regarding legislation/policies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to help them be informed
5. Referring and assisting consumers remotely with applications to other agencies, organizations, and such (i.e. Social Security, Unemployment, and such)
6. Completing TBBS library applications, public transportation applications, and such remotely
7. Discussing and problem-solving alternative ways to accomplish tasks with consumers
8. Referring consumers to our website to watch instructional videos
9. Researching other agencies, organizations, and such to find support for consumers to assist is issues they are facing
10. Assisting consumers in understanding social security and unemployment benefits
11. Following up with consumers to see if they have any additional needs that we can assist with during this time of isolation
12. Providing skills training to consumers remotely
    1. Providing instruction on how to order groceries and medications online
    2. Cane travel assignments are provided that consumers can accomplish independently
    3. Providing links to videos and trainings technology savvy consumers can watch and/or complete with a follow-up on questions and having a discussion about what was learned
    4. Providing Braille and technology lessons remotely for JAWS, Zoomtext, VoiceOver, and such
    5. Sharing and informing consumers of free smart phone apps that are available to the blind and visually impaired such as Seeing AI, money identifiers, color identifiers, and such
    6. Providing home management lessons remotely (i.e. basic cooking, nutrition, cleaning, and such)
13. Providing information on free courses from Hadley such as Braille, Microsoft Office, and such as well as assisting consumers in applying
14. Providing adaptive equipment to consumers through assessing their needs via the phone in lieu of doing in-person technology assessments
15. Providing all adaptive equipment to consumers timely by preparing the equipment with batteries and setting up the devices, and then mailing them directly to each consumer ready to go
16. Sharing and providing job leads
17. Assisting consumers in completing employment applications
18. Working with consumers on improving their interviewing skills
19. Working with consumers on resumes, cover letters, references, and other work readiness skills
20. Discussing job skills and alternatives that might be involved in different types of jobs the consumer is interested in
21. Discussing accommodations needed for employment
22. Utilizing online training (e.g. Onet, JobScan, YouTube, etc.) to provide job readiness-job search activities to job seekers
23. Working with consumers on Labor Market Information regarding employment opportunities and how it relates to their Vocational Goal
24. Maintaining contact with employers in order to promote opportunities for possible candidates for employment
25. Sharing strategies for using interpreters for deaf-blind consumers during this time of social distancing

Pre-ETS

* 1. Contacting employers for summer WBLE’s for blind teens
  2. Sharing information regarding student rights under IDEA.
  3. Discussing technology and accommodations needed for completing school work at home
  4. Following up with students who are expected to have capability of tele-school (i.e. checking for additional needs)
  5. Working with the TVI and SPED teacher as needed when modifications to the IEP need to be made.  (Schools seem to be providing all necessary technology.)
  6. Providing post-secondary opportunities through EducationQuest (i.e. FAFSA, scholarships, and such)
  7. Providing the college prep and transition to college guide from AFB
  8. Utilizing online training tools when available for career exploration
  9. Providing general information about up-coming programs that are agency sponsored as well as other opportunities that are available
  10. Hosting remote informational interviews between employers and consumers
  11. Working on resumes and resume writing
  12. Assisting in completing on-line job applications
  13. Helping to apply for social security, Medicaid, and other services
  14. Remote Counseling and Guidance sessions with students on self-advocacy, youth leadership, and informed choice
  15. Providing remote Individual and small group sessions on skills to transition from school to college or work, with career connections through AFB
  16. Discussing staying active, providing resources for exercise, and encouraging students to face time for peer interaction
  17. Reviewing the Academic Training and Support Memo with all VR consumers that plan to attend college or are already in college

OIB

1. Working on eligibility and completing the IPIL to begin services
2. Conducting regular contacts to ensure that Older blind are managing basic needs during this time
3. Providing additional community information and resources
4. Providing information to consumers regarding legislation/policies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to help them be informed
5. Referring and assisting consumers remotely with applications to other agencies, organizations, and such (i.e. Social Security, Medicaid, and such)
6. Completing TBBS library applications, public transportation applications, and such remotely
7. Providing resources for care providers to promote communication and checking about support networks
8. Discussing and problem-solving alternative ways to accomplish tasks with consumers
9. Referring consumers to our website to watch instructional videos
10. Researching other agencies, organizations, and such to find support for consumers to assist is issues they are facing
11. Assisting consumers in understanding social security and other public benefits
12. Following up with consumers to see if they have any additional needs that we can assist with during this time of isolation
13. Providing skills training to consumers remotely
    1. Providing instruction on using the phone, calling emergency assistance numbers, ordering groceries via the phone or online, managing medications, and such
    2. Providing Braille and technology lessons remotely
    3. Sharing and informing consumers of free smart phone apps that are available to the blind and visually impaired such as Seeing AI, money identifiers, color identifiers, and such
    4. Providing home management lessons remotely (i.e. basic cooking, nutrition, cleaning, and such)
14. Providing adaptive equipment to consumers through assessing their needs remotely in lieu of doing in-person technology assessments
15. Providing all adaptive equipment to consumers timely by preparing the equipment with batteries and setting up the devices, and then mailing them directly to each consumer ready to go
16. Sharing strategies for using interpreters for deaf-blind consumers during this time of social distancing

IL

1. Working on eligibility and completing the IPIL to begin services
2. Providing additional community information and resources
3. Providing information to consumers regarding legislation/policies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to help them be informed
4. Referring and assisting consumers remotely with applications to other agencies, organizations, and such (i.e. Social Security, Medicaid, and such)
5. Completing TBBS library applications, public transportation applications, and such remotely
6. Providing resources for care providers to promote communication and checking about support networks
7. Discussing and problem-solving alternative ways to accomplish tasks with consumers
8. Referring consumers to our website to watch instructional videos
9. Researching other agencies, organizations, and such to find support for consumers to assist is issues they are facing
10. Assisting consumers in understanding social security and other public benefits
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NBE Program for Blind Vendors

1. Assisting Randolph Sheppard vendors in re-opening their cases for job retention services for their businesses and following all proper VR procedures
2. Assisting Randolph Shepperd’s vendors with open cases to get equipment for new sites, assisting with DOT utility payments, insurance payments, re-start-up product, fair minimum return, temporary period of not collecting set-aside, and such
3. Sharing information regarding other types of economic assistance available (i.e. unemployment, HHS, SBA, and such)
4. Working with Blind Vendors on applying for unemployment and other public benefits
5. Assisting blind vendors in finding resources for filing federal taxes
6. Providing information to blind vendors regarding legislation/policies associated with the COVID-19 pandemic to help them be informed
7. Assisting blind vendors in understanding social security and unemployment benefits

Nebraska Center for the Blind

All Center staff have made themselves available for students throughout the day. In efforts to minimize the disruption in time and schedule, the students are keeping their usual class periods, between 8:00-5:00. Instructors are contacting students remotely, via Zoom, Face Time, or simply over the phone. Students can expect to hear from their respective instructors when the normal class time would begin, as if they were at the Center.

With a few exceptions of apartment visits, all contact with students has been done remotely. Students have been encouraged to utilize other communication tools during this time, such as emailing, conference call lines, and other modern tolls for remote access. This has allowed for students to expand their communication abilities as well as keep in touch as a group. Check-ins and the weekly seminar have been held through conference lines, and have been successful. For many students, this was the first time utilizing using a conference line.

As stated, all instructors are currently working remotely. Here are some of the ways Center instructors are continuing to provide creative learning to their students.

Home-Management:

1. Recipes- Instructors have been focusing on preparing meals that are in large quantity and can be preserved.
2. Grocery Lists- Instructors have been going over grocery lists with students. Insuring they consider nonperishable items, as well as matching the list up with the students’ recipes.
3. Cooking Videos- The instructors have been researching cooking videos on-line. These videos are screened for good non visual descriptions of the activity. Suitable videos are passed on to students for instructional purposes.
4. Cooking- Cooking lessons have been provided via speaker phone. Students are learning how to also speak in non-visual terms as they describe their actions in the kitchen over the phone to the instructor.
5. In Home-Management, there is always opportunity for further discussions in regards to daily activity and living skills. Instructors have also discussed managing medications, increased cleaning, budgeting, and entertainment ideas.

Travel:

1. Mental Mapping: The instructor is able to provide remote instruction over the phone in the way of mental mapping. This allows the instructor to know if the student can visualize or imagine themselves walking a planned route.
2. Address system: The instructor has been discussing the address system over the phone with students.
3. Social distancing behaviors: The instructor has counseled the students in effective travel while practicing social distancing.
4. Route planning: The instructor has been introducing the students to both local and out of state route planning. This includes planning trips for local routes in town, as well as vacations out of town. This can include navigation apps as well as internet research.
5. Exploring navigation apps: The instructor has been providing instruction in navigation apps. This includes Google maps, Apple Maps, YELP, and other modern accessible apps.

Computer/Technology:

1. Conference Line: The instructor has introduced conference line

calling to students. This involves practicing with the students to make sure they are listening and performing the required task.

B. Zoom: The instructor has practiced Zoom calling with the students.

C. Keyboarding” The instructor continues to assign writing assignments. These are submitted via email.

D. Tech support: The instructor provides tech support during class time to students when preparing grocery lists and researching recipes.

E. JAWS training: Over speaker phone, the instructor has been able to provide JAWS training to students who have a computer or those who use the computer in the conference room.

Braille:

1. Charli has been able to remain in contact with her students and effectively provide remote Braille instruction.
2. Reading: The instructor is able to access the same book and sentences as the students. This allows for the students to read over the phone to the instructor.
3. Writing: The instructor reads sentences or words over the phone, and the student writes out what is read to them. The student then reads back what is written.
4. Word and sentence practice: The students are assigned writing practices. When staff visit the apartments, these braille assignments are picked up by staff and turned in to the braille instructor.
5. Braille project: More advanced students are working on researching their braille project. This includes researching a local business and Brailling up their information. This can be a community agency, a business, or a restaurant.
6. Brail videos: The instructor has encouraged students to research braille videos on-line. This creates conversation and discussion in teaching philosophies and approaches.

Shop:

1. Emergency preparedness: Due to the shelter in place, Mike has discussed how to be prepared for emergencies and shelter in place.
2. Do it yourself: Mike has been researching “Do it yourself” videos, with the students. These are around the house home-maintenance videos students can access via the computer or personal device. Students and the instructor are looking for good well descriptive videos to be used now and in the future.

Worked with the Mayor’s Commission for Citizen’s with Disabilities to create a list of resources for individuals with disabilities.

Worked with the Vision Resource Coalition which comprises all agencies and organizations to create resources to individuals that are visually impaired, blind and deaf blind