

# Massachusetts Commission For the Blind

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**WIOA PARTNERS MEETING  
OCTOBER 18, 2016  
2:00PM-3:30PM**

**600 WASHINGTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA. 02111  
617-727-5550  
800-392-6450**

# PRESENTERS

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- **Thelma Williams, Regional Director**
- **Kyle Hawkins, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor**
- **Diane Sherry, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor**
- **Carolyn, Hjelte, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor**
  
- **(Kara Sittig, VR & Children's Supervisor)**

# GEOGRAPHIC AREA

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**Springfield (Region 1): Michelle Bovenzi**

**Worcester (Region 2): Carolyn Gordon**

**Northeast Region (Region 3): (Boston Office)**

**Metro-West Region (Region 4): (Boston Office)**

**Greater Boston Region (Region 6): (Boston Office)**

## MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

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- **Established in 1906 with the advocacy of Helen Keller and three others, the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB) envisions a world where blindness is no longer a barrier to full community participation and independence**
- **Provides rehabilitation, vocational and social services to individuals who are registered as legally blind**

# LEGAL BLINDNESS

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- **Legal Blindness does not mean total blind:**
- MCB oversees the registration process for the reporting of legal blindness. MGL Chapter 6, Section 136 requires that all eye care providers report within 30 days all cases of legal blindness to MCB
- Legally, blindness is defined as less than 20/200 vision in the better eye (vision of 20/200 is the ability to see at 20 feet only what the normal eye can see at 200 feet)

# MASSACHUSETTS COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

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- **Serves people from all ages with a variety of services:**
  - Children's Services
  - Social Rehabilitation
  - Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Rehabilitation Teaching/Vision Rehabilitation Therapy
  - Deaf Blind and Extended Services
  - BRIDGE
  - Orientation and Mobility
  - Assistive Technology

# TYPES OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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## Structural

- Glaucoma
- Cataracts
- Retinal Detachment
- Diabetic Retinopathy
- Kerataconus
- Optic Nerve Atrophy

## Neurological

- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Closed Head Injury
- Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)
- Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA)/Stroke
- Neurological/Genetic Etiology

**Glaucoma – characterized by increased intraocular pressure resulting in damage to the optic nerve and retinal nerve fibers, resulting in peripheral visual field loss**

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## **Normal Vision**



## **Glaucoma**





**Cataracts – clouding of the lens preventing a clear image from forming on the retina; like looking through wax paper**

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## **Normal Vision**



## **Cataracts**



**Retinal Detachment – separation of the retina from the underlying tissue-“like a curtain coming down”**

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**Diabetic Retinopathy – retinal changes due to Diabetes Mellitus, eventually resulting in the growth of abnormal new blood vessels causing distortion/disruption to vision**

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# Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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- **Assist individuals with legal blindness to obtain and maintain gainful employment.**
- **Aid consumers in overcoming barriers in the workplace.**
- **Provide worksite accommodations**
- **Provide post-employment supports to maintain and/or retain employment**

# Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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- **Ages 18+**
- **Eligibility Requirements**
- **Low- Vision (new 2016)**
- **Pre- Employment Transition Services**
- **Internship Program**
- **Post-Employment**
- **Assistive Technology**
- **O&M**

# PARTNERS

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- **Partners Health Care**
- **Boston Public Schools**
- **Legal Sea Foods**
- **MBTA**
- **Secretary of the Commonwealth**
- **NSTAR**
- **Harvard University**
- **Hampden County Correctional Facility**
- **Spaulding Rehab**

# PARTNERS

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- **Fidelity**
- **Verizon**
- **Newton Wellesley Hospital**
- **Pearson Education Group**
- **Brigham & Women's Hospital**
- **UMass**
- **Hampden County Correctional Facility**
- **Intel**
- **John Hancock**

# WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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- **Over 100 years of experience**
- **Sustainable Partnerships**
- **Strong Corporate Relationships**
- **Innovative Community Affiliates**
- **Training & On-Site Supports**



# CHALLENGES

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- **Accessibility**
- **Adaptive Technology**
- **Reasonable Accommodations**
- **Lack of Disability Awareness**
- **Language and Cultural Issues**
- **Inclusiveness**

# WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

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- Expand Outreach Efforts
- Education
- Disability Awareness Training



**Thank You**

# QUESTIONS

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