

National Federation of the Blind of New York State 2015 Resolutions

Resolution 2015-01 Regarding the Proposed Office of Community Living

WHEREAS, an "Office of Community Living" (OCL) is being considered by the State Office for the Aging, which may involve Access VR (formerly VESID), the Department of Labor, and other agencies within New York State Government; and

WHEREAS, depending on a report forthcoming from the Office for the Aging in December 2015 this proposed office may include the New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB); and

WHEREAS, numerous studies have shown that a separate agency for the rehabilitation of the blind is more effective and produces more quality results than an umbrella agency serving a plurality of disability groups; and

WHEREAS, while an initiative to improve staff training and communication among agencies that serve people with disabilities with the goal of raising the bar of cross-disability competency and making more effective inter-agency referrals is laudable, any effort to subsume NYSCB, its staff or operations can only harm employment and community living outcomes for blind New Yorkers: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind, in convention assembled in the city of Albany this first day of November 2015, that we submit our strong conviction that any development of a NYS Office of Community Living must occur in such a way that NYSCB, its staff, administration, and operations remain distinct from any proposed consolidation of agencies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon the NYS legislature to ensure that any future development of the OCL and any future proposed alteration to the administration, operation and staff of NYSCB be shaped by input from NYSCB consumers and the organized blind of New York State.

Resolution 2015-02
Regarding TASC Accessibility

WHEREAS, the New York State Education Department adopted the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) as the replacement for New York's previous high school equivalency exam; and

WHEREAS, the TASC is available in hard copy standard print, large print, Braille, and a computer-based version developed by CTB/McGraw-Hill, a producer of educational materials; and

WHEREAS, computer-based tests are notoriously fraught with accessibility issues; and

WHEREAS, both the computer-based and Braille formats of the test require the provision of quality tactile graphics to be meaningfully accessible to blind test-takers; and

WHEREAS, CTB/McGraw-Hill plans to integrate Common Core Standards into the TASC over the next three years, altering the test framework to include questions with new forms of interaction which will necessitate new approaches to accessibility; and

WHEREAS, CTB/McGraw-Hill has not been fully transparent with stakeholders regarding the accessibility of its computer-based test and provision of tactile graphics; and

WHEREAS, the practice materials, including a readiness exam which has not been produced in large print or Braille, have not met the needs of blind test takers, placing them at a disadvantage as they prepare for the TASC; and

WHEREAS, CTB/McGraw-Hill has been reluctant to allow for the needs of all blind test takers when approving accommodations, including requests for multiple testing modalities; and

WHEREAS, CTB/McGraw-Hill has now gone on record with the assertion that full non-visual accessibility is recommended but not required in its contract with the New York Education Department, and has essentially declared that

the access blind students have today to the TASC is as much access as they will get; and

WHEREAS, fully accessible computer-based testing, meaningfully accessible tactile graphics, and the provision of multiple testing modalities are all critical components of a testing process that allows blind test takers to compete on terms of equality: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of New York State in Convention assembled this first day of November, 2015, in the City of Albany, New York, that this organization call upon the New York State Education Department to affirm a continuing effort to demand that CTB/McGraw-Hill make the TASC fully accessible to all test takers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization request that NYSCB continue to engage with the Education Department to provide technical assistance and advocacy to improve the accessibility of TASC; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this organization call on CTB/McGraw-Hill to make a commitment to full meaningful non-visual accessibility in TASC and to work with the NFB and other stakeholders to provide all test takers with a level playing field by making the TASC fully accessible now and going forward as changes are made to integrate Common Core Standards.

Resolution 2015-03
Regarding Accessibility Requirements in State RFPs and Contracts

WHEREAS, the State of New York, local governments, and their agencies contract with private entities on a regular basis, and these contracts often involve information and communication technologies; and

WHEREAS, whenever new technologies are implemented through the State or any of its agencies, Federal and state law requires that those technologies be usable by all; and

WHEREAS, unless explicit and robust accessibility requirements are built into the language of a request for proposal and subsequent contract, accessibility of the resulting information and communication technology cannot be assured; and

WHEREAS, ICT that is inaccessible excludes people with disabilities from activities of employment, education, civic responsibility, and other activities supported by technologies which the State procures; and

WHEREAS, including robust, explicit accessibility requirements in RFP's provides an incentive for businesses to create ICT that is meaningfully accessible; and

WHEREAS, building accessibility into ICT from the outset of a project carries little inherent additional expense: Now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the National Federation of the Blind of New York State in Convention assembled this first day of November, 2015, in the City of Albany, New York, that this organization work with New York State and its municipalities to ensure, through whatever means necessary, that all requests for proposal and subsequent contracts entered into by the State or local governments or any of their agencies require that all information and communication technologies be accessible.