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**OPERATING BUDGET AMENDMENT**

**OFFERED IN:** House Finance Committee

**TO:** CSHB 81(FIN)/CSHB 83(FIN)

**OFFERED BY:** Representative Les Gara

**DEPARTMENT:** Department of Labor and Workforce Development  
**APPROPRIATION:** Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
**ALLOCATION:** Independent Living

**ADD:** \$70.0 General Funds (1004)

**EXPLANATION:**

Outreach to Visually-Impaired in Rural Communities

This increment would allow The Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired to reach out to provide life skill and services to visually impaired Alaskans in those small communities, where no or few services are offered. The Increment was recommended by the Division and not forwarded to the Legislature by the Governor.

## Statewide, Community-Based Vision Rehabilitation Outreach & Services

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**Request:** \$70,000 incremental increase to current grant to the Alaska Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired (for a total of \$125,000) – **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, DOLWD**

### **Purpose:**

- take vision rehabilitation to communities statewide
- identify people with visual disabilities whose needs are not being met
- increase safety, employability, and quality of life for Alaskans with visual disabilities

**Need:** Without vision rehabilitation, people may experience poverty due to unemployment, nursing home admission or death because of falls or fires, health complications from not being able to read medicine labels, and depression. The need is growing as the number of older Alaskans and the rate of diabetes both increase.

The grant focuses on the 60% of 10,000 visually disabled Alaskans who live outside of Anchorage. In addition to the Center's current 250 clients, **this grant, when expanded, could serve over 100 more people each year.**



*Home visit in Cordova... learning how to use a special lighted magnifier*

### **Who benefits?**

People like the 90-year-old gentlemen with advanced macular degeneration living alone in a rural village, population 410. He's still building an addition on his cabin and wants to stay safe and connected.

Because of this grant, he has had a low vision assessment and knows which specialized magnifiers will help him get the most out of his remaining vision. He uses new fire safety measures in his kitchen, can label staple food supplies and choose the right one by touch, and uses tactile aids to dial his phone accurately.

He knows an Alaska Center for the Blind & Visually Impaired vision rehabilitation professional will teach him to walk with a white cane if his eyesight deteriorates further – and he plans to order a talking tape measure to continue his building project!

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### **Saves money in tough times:**

This grant finds people who don't know that it's possible to learn new skills to get and keep a job. It allows loved ones to work because their family member is independent and safe. Vision rehabilitation and low vision services save the medical costs of falls, accidents, and medication mistakes.



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