

The Kansas Braille Transcription Institute

Introduction

KBTI Mission

KBTI is a non profit organization whose mission is to train and employ people to increase much-needed services to the visually impaired.

Rationale

- Braille is the access to literacy for the blind
- Heavy reliance on volunteer Braille Transcribers places student achievement in jeopardy
- Poorly Brailled materials or inconsistency in Braille formats will cause confusion and slow reading, impeding one's ability to keep up with their sighted colleagues
- Lack of trained personnel has compromised the standard of materials produced
- The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (PL 103-227, 1994) states, "Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- Goal 7 of the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including those with Multiple Disabilities. The National Agenda identified timely access to textbooks and instructional materials in the appropriate media as one of the eight most critical national issues affecting the education of students with visual impairments

Facts and Figures

- **Statistics**

- The highest number (85%) of employed people with visual impairments read and write braille.
- There is a 65% overall unemployment rate among the visually impaired population
- There are more than 12,000 Kansans who are blind
- By the year 2000 there were only 5.9 full time certified braille transcribers per state
- 30.7% of those beginning the NLS course actually complete it

- **The need**

- It is reported that there are more Braille Transcribers retiring than there are moving into the profession.
- American Printing House has more than 57,000 students in need of instructional material
- Literacy for the blind and visually impaired is dependent on the production of material

- **The Opportunity**

- With training, opportunities to work increase and pay is more competitive.
- There are organizations looking to employ certified Braille transcribers, KBTI being one of them. There are also many opportunities to contract and organizations and institutions are constantly looking to contract Braille Transcribers.

Economic Impact

- Providing training opportunities, and preparing individuals for employment and business opportunities. This has the potential to contribute with equipping the unemployed with workforce skills
- On average, full-time certified Braille Transcribers are paid \$18,000 - \$50,000 a year, while full-time non-certified Braille Transcribers earn \$10,000-\$30,000 a year - 40% less than their certified counterparts.
- A typical school text book is 500 to 1000 print pages yielding anywhere from 1000 to 3000 Braille pages. A sample \$3 per braille page contract for that range of pages could yield \$3000 to \$9000

Research

Research has been conducted at various levels where organizations and institutions of higher learning have put together statistics and information geared towards the timely and quality production of transcribed books and instructional material.

As a result of research conducted by California State University, Maryland

Department of Education and the American Foundation for the Blind, common themes have arisen and can be summarized as follows:

- There is a nationwide shortage of certified Braille Transcribers
- There is a need for standards to be laid to establish consistency in the process
- There is need for Braille Transcription to gain recognition as a professional occupation

- There is need for the development of comprehensive training programs that will move away from just braille transcription but will also equip trainees with applicable workforce skills
- Most importantly the process will go a long way in improving literacy for America's blind and visually impaired.

Why KBTI?

KBTI has been in operation for a period of one year and anticipates having the first trainees up for certification in the next 2 months. This will enable a group of people to gain meaningful employment. Some of these individuals will be employed by KBTI.

KBTI has developed its training program to a place where it incorporates work force skills such as those proposed by the research projects undertaken by the organizations mentioned above. The program will equip the trainees with workforce skills and small business management skills.

In addition the cost of the program has been maintained to a minimal cost to ensure availability and quality in the process. This is the only institution in the State of Kansas that offers this course. Grading of individual lessons is done in-house thus ensuring fast feedback to the trainees.

KBTI is looking into ways to enhance the training process further and has research and development work ongoing to ensure that the institutes training and methods are abreast (if not ahead) with the changes and developments in training techniques and technological advancements.

Course outline

Braille Transcriber Training Course

Minimum Requirements:

- 18 years of age or older
- High School Diploma or GED
- U.S. Citizen or Permanent Resident

Course Outline

- Introduction to Basic Computers and Information systems
- Braille: A History
- Reading and Writing Braille
- Uncontracted Braille
- Contracted Braille
- Braille Writing devices
 - Slate and Stylus
 - Perkins Brailler
 - The Duxbury Systems
 - Embosser and Scanner
- Introduction to other codes (Nemeth code and foreign language)
- Tactile graphics
- Special format
- Introduction to Small Business Management
- Braille Book format
- The Trial Manuscript

- Text Book Braille Formatting
- Thermoforming
- Internship

Program Duration:

The duration of the program is one year, during which upon successful completion, the trainees will have attained proficiency to the level of Literary Braille Transcriber and Text Book Braille Transcriber. Trainees in this program will also have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with various assistive technologies used by the visually impaired. By the end of the program trainees will be equipped with the skills and knowledge required for Braille transcribers employed or working as private contractors.