



Serving the Blind,  
Visually Impaired,  
Deaf, and Hard of  
Hearing in Central  
New York

Kate Weidman, Executive Director

# AURORA of Central New York



## Mission:

- AURORA seeks to improve the quality of life and promote independence for Central New Yorkers by serving people who are Blind or Visually Impaired, Deaf or Hard of hearing, as well as people who are late deafened and Deaf-Blind. The agency is dedicated to being a leader in the field and is committed to:
  - *providing high quality services* geared towards citizens achieving their full potential and participating to their fullest ability in society;
  - *advocating for the elimination of barriers and attitudes* that hinder this participation;
  - *empowering and promoting* the rights of people with disabilities;
  - *educating all citizens on the causes and means of prevention* of these disabilities; and
- *organizing resources* necessary to support these efforts.



## History

- 1917: Founded as The Lighthouse
- 1970: Established a sister agency- the Central New York Association for the Hearing Impaired
- 1991: Officially merged & rebranded as AURORA of Central New York

## Service Region

- Cayuga, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties

## Location

- 1065 James St. Syracuse, NY 13203

# Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired- Children & Youth



- **Children's Socialization Group**
  - Brings children and youth together for fun, accessible activities, and playing with others just like them! This provides an opportunity for parents to connect and build relationships.
- **Orientation & Mobility Training**
  - Instruction in the use of a long cane and how to navigate their environment safely.
- **Pre-Vocational & Work Experience Training**
  - Pre-vocational training, career exploration, work skills development and experience through a variety of programs.



# Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired- Adults



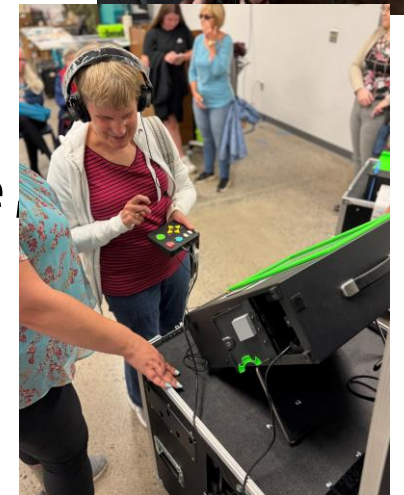
- Adaptive Living (55+)
  - Teaching a set of skills, tools, and systems designed to help individuals live independently and safely in their homes and communities.
- Aids & Devices
  - Training in equipment designed to improve function and support independence.
  - Lighted magnifiers, special phones, talking items and tactile modifications.
- Braille Instruction
  - Educational instruction how to read Braille.
- Employment Training & Job Placement
  - Training and work skills development to ultimately find competitive and integrated employment.



# Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired- Adults (Cont'd)



- **Orientation & Mobility**
  - Develop or relearn the skills needed to travel safely and independently both in-home and in the community.
  - Education on the use of a white cane, electronic devices, public transportation, etc.
- **Peer Support Group- Virtual & In-Person**
  - Brings together those living with vision loss to discuss mental health, new adaptive technology, and provides socialization with peers.
- **Vision Rehabilitation Therapy**
  - Teaching skills essential to daily living, quality of life and maintain independence.
  - Learning how to maximize remaining usable vision.
- **Social Work**
  - Adjusting to life with vision loss & connecting to community resources.

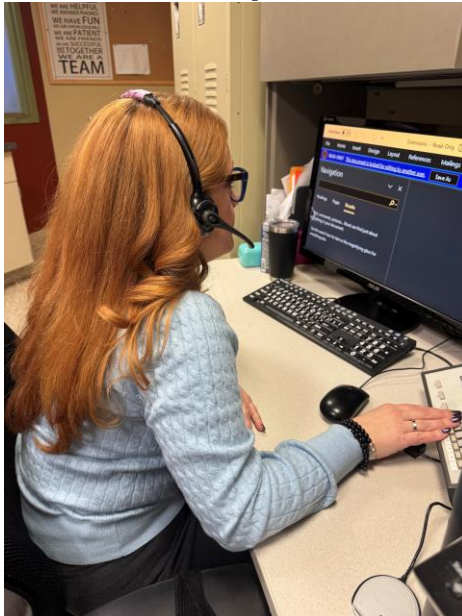


# Employment for the Blind & Visually Impaired



## Veterans Administration Hospital

- Switchboard Operations
  - Employ 11 Blind Individuals to operate the VA Switchboard 24/7.



# Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing- Children & Youth



- **Bedtime Book Series**

- An inclusive, innovative program that fosters early literacy, language development, and family connection by bringing story time to life in American Sign Language and spoken English—so families of all hearing abilities can read, learn, and enjoy stories together.

- Expanding to Onondaga County Schools in 2026.

- **Children's Hearing Aid Program**

- Provide free hearing aids to underprivileged youth.

- **Pre-Vocational & Work Experience Training**

- Pre-vocational training, career exploration, work skill. development and experience through a variety of programs.



# Services for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing-Adults



- Employment Training & Job Placement
  - Pre-vocational training, career exploration, work skills development and experience through a variety of programs.
- Interpreter Referral Services
  - Connecting community entities (hospitals, primary care, community-based organizations, court systems, etc.) with qualified interpreters.
  - Ensure clear, effective, and accurate communication between the entity and Deaf individual.
- Social Work Services
  - Pre-vocational training, career exploration, work skills development and experience through a variety of programs.



# Community Advocacy, Education, & Outreach



- Blind Immersion Experiences
- ‘Deaf That’ Educational Presentation
- Advocacy
  - State Senate Bill 1740– Requires pharmacies to provide prescription drug readers or other accessible means for individuals with vision loss.
  - State Assembly Bill A680– Mandatory Coverage of Hearing Aids by Insurers.

