

Second Quarterly Report  
S.M.A.R.T. Services  
 Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired

	1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter (July – Sep)	2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter (Oct – Dec)
YTD total Referrals	101 clients	74 (total 175)
YTD Clients completed service	43	53 (total 96)
Average # of goals per client	3.2	4.4
Average # of goals achieved per client	1.95	3.8
# of clients added to Virtual Peer Assisted Learning and Support Groups (PALS Groups)	8	4

Feelings Related to Social isolation Among Clients (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarters Combined):

- Of the 175 clients served during the first two quarters, 96 completed services
- Of the 96 clients who completed services, 87 reported that they felt less socially isolated, or better off for having received services.
- Of the 96 clients who completed services, 8 reported that they were the same. All 8 reported that they felt the same for reasons other than vision loss.
  - Factors affecting the feelings of sameness included memory/dementia related issues, motor problems, mental health, and additional physical health related conditions.
- Of the 96 clients, 1 died before services could be completed.
- None of the 96 clients reported that they were more socially isolated or worse off as a result of the services received.

Summary:

As of January 1, 2021, we are still actively serving 78 clients in our SMART program. Of all the clients who completed services from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020 90.6% reported feeling less socially isolated and better off for having received SMART Services. Of those who did not report a change in their feelings of social isolation, the causes were due to extenuating circumstances not related to their vision or receipt of the training. Clients who received benefit were able to accomplish at least one or more tasks, such as video conferencing with their doctor, communicating with family and friends through various modes of technology, having groceries delivered, participating in a support group and more.

Success Story #1: (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter)

A woman in the Northeast Kingdom was given a smartphone and iPad from her daughter. In her words, she knew the devices could help her, but her daughter did not have the patience to teach her how to use the devices. We often hear this as a common complaint from our clients that their children and grandchildren have the knowledge of how to use these devices, but they just do not know how to explain it to their senior relatives effectively. This is two-fold. First, we often have the least patience with those who are closest to us, which is a shame. Second, and most important, the family members often know the software or app, but do not have a knowledge of how to use accessibility features like enlarging text, contrast and text to speech features native to the devices.

Our teacher began to meet with the woman weekly to work their way through how to setup and use the accessibility and video conferencing features of both the iPhone and iPad. We had to help the woman to download Google Duo, as that was what her children and friends were using to video chat. We helped her to setup a Gmail account. Through the accessibility features of enlarging text, we showed her how to activate and use the video conferencing platform. She now has regular contact with their Grandchildren, doctors and friends through video conferencing.

#### Success Story #2: (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter)

Prior to Covid-19, all Peer Assisted Learning and Support (PALS) Groups took place in person. Following Covid-19, all PALS groups were moved to a virtual platform. Clients are able to phone in or join through Video Conferencing via Zoom. One woman wanted to join through zoom, but did not know how to operate the controls on her iPhone using VoiceOver (text to speech) gestures. The buttons were too small to see. Our teacher demonstrated how to use VoiceOver, showing the client how to first focus VoiceOver by sliding one's finger until you hear the name of the button, thus placing the focus on that button, then double tapping to toggle the control, such as Mute/Unmute. With this training in place, the client was able to join and participate, muting and unmuting her microphone whenever she needed to speak. What was feared to be a technological impossibility for the client has now become a source of great joy and comfort, participating with her fellow visually impaired friends and breaking down the barriers that physical distancing have established.

#### Success Story #3 (1<sup>st</sup> Quarter)

Many of our clients, who have been asked to participate in medical care through Tele-Health, have relied on our teachers to provide them with training to be able to do this. One in particular not only needed help to video conference with her doctor, she needed to know how to video conference to be able to continue her participation in her Bone Builders Group. Our teacher collaborated with the instructor in the Bone Builders class and together they developed a strategy to continue to address her health needs, both in exercise and in consultation with her doctor. The client was so grateful and has been able to thrive despite restrictions.

#### Success Story #4 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)

A woman in her 80's who has age related Macular degeneration enjoyed getting cartridges sent to her from the ABLE Library, but expressed that she wished she didn't have to wait so long for the cartridges to be sent back and forth through the mail. Our teacher explained to her how the BARD Mobile App, would allow her to download books from the National Library Service, directly from the website. This would avoid waiting for the mail altogether and allow her to have access to as many talking books as she wanted, instantly. She became very excited and asked our teacher to help her do this. It only took about an hour to get her registered and confirmed with the ABLE Library to allow for downloads and the woman was so happy. She declared, "Now I don't have to wait for weeks when it's a really good series! I can just download the next book and keep going!"

#### Success Story #5 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)

A man in his 80's with age related macular degeneration was needing to call his bank to confirm deposit of his social security check, because he felt he could not handle online banking through his computer. Our teacher noticed he had a Pad and offered to help teach him how to use the low vision accessibility features of the iPad to check his bank account online. Identifying the correct app and working closely with his bank, our teacher helped him to set up the app, learn the zoom and contrast features native to the accessibility features of the iPad, and the client is now completely independent in managing his finances alone. He said he felt so helpless before and now feels confident and in control.

**Success Story #6 (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter)**

A grandmother in her 80 has wanted to video conference with her grandchildren for the holidays and had an iPad in her home. Our teacher helped her to learn to use the video conferencing features of FaceTime to allow her to connect more fully for the holidays, despite quarantines and physical distancing. It meant the world to our client to be able to view, and be seen by her family.