

**MONTANA BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM
FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

EXHIBIT 3
DATE 4-1-05
SB 335

FACT SHEET

MISSION

To provide blind and visually impaired persons in Montana with opportunities for stable remunerative employment, enlarged economic opportunities, and increased self-support.

STRATEGY

Use the **blind vendors' preference** contained in both federal and state statutes to create employment opportunities in the vending industry, particularly through the operation of vending machines on federal and state properties. Make program financially self-supporting.

LEGAL BASIS

- **State** -- Montana Blind Vendors Act of 1981 (MCA 18-5-401 through 416); Blind Purchasing Preference (18-5-501 through 504); Administrative Rules (ARM 46.6.2501-2570)
- **Federal** -- Randolph-Sheppard Vending Facilities Act of 1936, as amended (20 USC 107 through 107f); Federal Regulations (34 CFR 395); Interstate Transportation Act (23 USC 111) (relates to interstate rest areas)

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

- DPHHS designated as **State Licensing Agency** to manage program development and operation
- DPHHS contracted with **Montana Business Enterprises, Inc. (MBEI)**, a not-for-profit company, to manage program on day-to-day basis

KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS

- **Administration** of vending facilities on state properties
- **Operation** of vending machine facilities by licensed blind vendors

VENDING OPERATIONS ON STATE PROPERTIES

▪ **Blindness Defined**

"A person whose central **visual acuity** does not exceed 20/200 in the better eye with correcting lenses or whose visual acuity is greater than 20/200 but is accompanied by a **limitation in the field of vision** in the better eye to such a degree that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle

no greater than 20 degrees as determined by an ophthalmologist or a physician skilled in diseases of the eye." (MCA 18-5-402)

▪ **Blind Vendor Preparation**

- (1) Undergo extensive screening and evaluation
- (2) Intensive 6-week training program, including 2-3 weeks of field training
- (3) 6 months of OJT (while operating routes)
- (4) Ongoing in-service training

▪ **Blind Vendor Operations**

- (1) Primary focus on operating vending machines on federal, state and other properties in Montana
- (2) Principal approach is to develop **vending routes** consisting of multiple sites and machines
- (2) Blind vendors are both **managers** and **operators of vending businesses** (e.g., sites and routes)
- (3) Use sighted **drivers**, who may assist them with various aspects of route operation

CURRENT PROGRAM STATUS

- (1) 7 licensed blind vendors fully employed, 2 awaiting placement; 12 other full- and part-time employees
- (2) Active vending operations in Kalispell, Missoula, Helena, Deer Lodge Valley, and Billings
- (3) Licensed blind vendors operating 190 vending machines on 46 properties, and 1 snack bar on 1 property
- (4) Vending Sales (FY05 Projected): \$370,000