§ 215-a. Senior vision services program. 1. Definitions. As used in this section:

(a) "Senior vision services" shall mean the provision of non-vocational services to elderly persons who have a functional visual impairment. These services may include, but not be limited to, client assessment, information and referral, client and family counseling, referrals for opthalmological, optometric or other health care services, technical assistance and training for human services personnel to serve persons who are blind or visually impaired, and low vision screening.

(b) "Functional visual impairment" shall mean an impairment of sight that substantially interferes with an elderly person's ability to perform specific daily living skills and tasks. Persons who are not regarded as legally blind, pursuant to this section, but who experience such an impairment of sight, shall be deemed eligible for senior vision services pursuant to this section.

(c) "Elderly" shall mean an individual over sixty years of age.

(d) "Director" shall mean the director of the office for the aging.

2. The director, in consultation with the New York state commission for the blind, is hereby authorized and directed, subject to the availability of appropriations, to establish a program of senior vision services grants to assist in the provision of vision services to elderly persons with functional visual impairments.

3. The director, in consultation with the New York state commission for the blind, shall award senior vision services grants to not-for-profit corporations which demonstrate:

(a) the ability to provide senior vision services;

(b) a commitment to provide such services to visually impaired persons or specialized training in providing such services to persons who are blind or visually impaired; and

(c) other such factors as may be determined by the director in consultation with the state commission for the blind.

4. Grant awards shall take into consideration the lack of non-traditional and non-vocational services for elderly persons in need of senior vision services and the ability of such senior vision services

grants to establish or to expand existing blind or visually impaired services currently provided or available in the county or region served by the not-for-profit corporation or through another source.

5. The director shall ensure that in awarding the grants pursuant to this section that due consideration is given to the geographic and existing service demands for senior vision services within a county or region of the state.

6. The director shall promulgate any rules and regulations necessary to carry out the provisions of this section. Additionally, the director shall submit a report to the governor, the temporary president of the senate and the speaker of the assembly, prior to, but in no event later than, December thirty-first, in the year following enactment of this section, and annually thereafter, which shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) financial reports of the grant project operations established pursuant to this section;

(b) an analysis of the grant project's ability to provide such senior vision services to elderly persons with functional visual impairments;

(c) recommendations on the continuation of such grants and the need for program expansion, if appropriate;

(d) a profile of the grant recipient; and

(e) other information deemed necessary by the director.