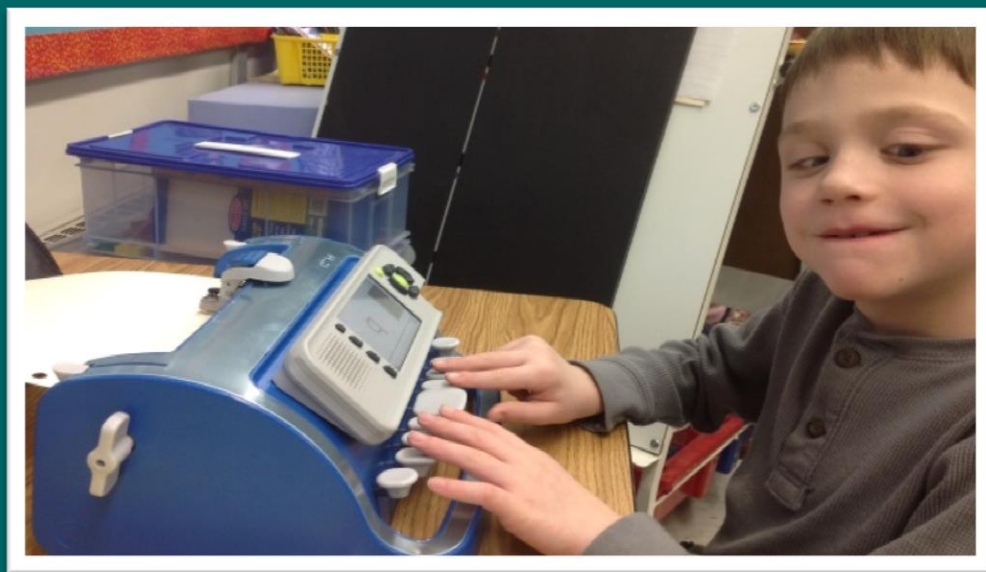
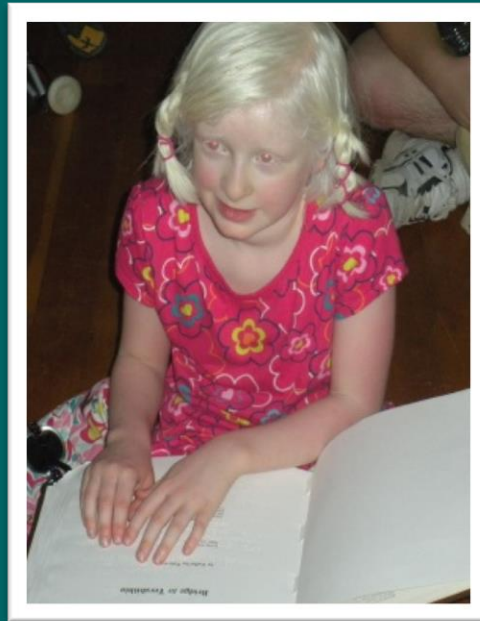


# **Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Vermont**



Vermont Association for the Blind  
and Visually Impaired  
2016

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[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_b\\_lind/visually\\_impaired\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_b_lind/visually_impaired_guidelines.pdf)



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Introduction

**Department of Education**  
**Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services**

65 FR 36586

Thursday, June 8, 2000

Policy guidance on educating blind and visually impaired students was issued as OSEP memorandum 96-4 (November 3, 1995) to respond to concerns that services for some blind and visually impaired students were not appropriate to address their unique educational and learning needs, particularly their needs for instruction in reading, writing, and composition, as well as orientation and mobility and other self-help skills. This policy guidance provided some background information on these students and their unique needs, and applicable requirements of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part B) were explained.

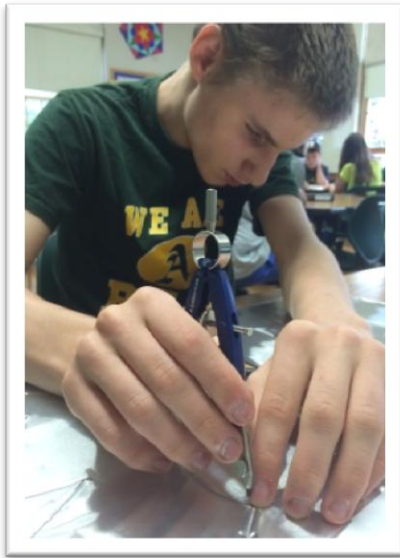
On June 8, 2000 OSERS provided an update to the November 3, 1995 report and provided important background information to educators in meeting their obligations to ensure that blind and visually impaired students receive appropriate educational services in the least restrictive environment appropriate to their unique needs. A description of procedural safeguards also was included to ensure that parents are knowledgeable about their rights, including their right to participate in decisions regarding the provision of services to their children

This Vermont guidelines booklet was written to address the basic guidelines for providing TVI, COMS and CVRT services to children in Vermont. “Given that the type of visual impairments among students is extremely diverse, as is the population of students, we know that students with similar visual impairments will function and learn differently.” For even more OSERS policy guidance, go to *Educating Blind and Visually Impaired Students: Policy Guidance from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)* at <http://www.afb.org/info/programs-and-services/public-policy-center/education-policy/educating-blind-and-visually-impaired-students--policy-guidance-from-osers/1235>

## Chapter 1

# Unique Educational Needs of Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

It is the vision of the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) that everyone will understand the unique educational needs of students who are blind or visually impaired. Additionally, it is the vision of the Vermont Agency of Education (VT AOE) that every learner will complete his or her public education with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, continuing education, careers, and citizenship. Vermont's public education system provides flexible learning environments rich with 21st century tools that promote self-development, academic achievement, and active engagement in learning. It operates within a framework of high expectations for every learner with support from educators, families and the community.



<http://education.vermont.gov/department>

Vision is the primary learning modality and source of information for most children. No other sense can stimulate curiosity, integrate information, or invite exploration in the same way or as efficiently and fully as vision does. The child who comes into the world without a dependable visual system,

or without any vision at all, has to navigate through the incomplete messages received through the other sensory modalities in order to put together a whole picture of the world. The visually impaired child needs to determine how to organize this incomplete information and then respond to what may remain a confusing view of the world. <http://www.tsbvi.edu/program-and-administrative-resources/3247-the-unique-needs-of-the-visually-impaired>

Students with visual impairments have unique learning needs that must be addressed if they are to access the general education core curriculum and become independent, productive citizens. Recent data indicate that only approximately 28 percent of out-of-school youth with visual impairments are employed (Cameto and Nagle, 2007). Thus, educators face a significant challenge in providing educational services that will enhance successful post-school outcomes.

Making appropriate decisions about the development and implementation of programs and services for students with visual impairments requires a clear understanding of their unique learning needs and the intervention necessary to develop successful transition goals for adult independence. Administrators and Special Educators must have knowledge about specialized personnel, materials, equipment and educational settings to ensure appropriate individual educational program planning for this unique student population.

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_blind/visually\\_impaired\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_blind/visually_impaired_guidelines.pdf)

A comprehensive list of the unique needs of students who are blind or visually impaired is listed in Appendix A. This information can be used as a general framework for assessing each student with a visual impairment and for planning and providing instruction and services to meet the assessed needs. Assessment and provision of services are addressed in the following sections of these Guidelines.

Students with visual impairments are a heterogeneous group. Two individuals with the same visual impairment will function differently. Some have mild vision impairments while others are totally blind. Some have visual impairment as their only disability, while others have additional sensory, cognitive and/or physical challenges. Some students were sighted at one time, while others have never had vision. Of the many ways that impaired vision affects learning, the three that have the most impact on education are:

**1. Learning to access information that is acquired casually and incidentally by sighted learners.** In addition to the general education that all students receive, students with visual impairments, starting at birth, need an Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) to meet needs directly related to their vision disability (NASDSE, 1999). These nine ECC areas include instruction in:

- Compensatory Skills**
- Orientation & Mobility (O&M)**
- Social Interaction**
- Career Education and Planning**
- Assistive Technology (including low tech, such as optical devices)**
- Independent Living**
- Recreation and Leisure**
- Sensory Efficiency**
- Self-Determination**

**2. Need for experiential learning.** Even before sighted babies learn to crawl, they watch and visually organize their world. They begin to categorize objects in their environment as large or small, same or different, rough or smooth. They attempt to find a way to come into contact with objects out of arm's reach. When a child has a visual impairment, he or she often depends on the intervention of parents, teachers, and others in order to experience objects that are not within reach. A system for organizing the environment can occur, but only with the assistance of knowledgeable parents and teachers.

**3. Development of alternative skills.** Most areas of the public school curriculum have been developed with sighted students in mind. Modifications and accommodations, such as instruction in reading and writing through Braille, using optical devices with standard print, using auditory materials for learning, accessing computer-based learning and testing materials, and reading

tactile graphics, can be made so that students who are blind or visually impaired have access to the general curriculum.

<http://www.afb.org/info/programs-and-services/professional-development/teachers/expanded-core-curriculum/the-expanded-core-curriculum/12345>

For more details about the Expanded Core Curriculum, please refer to Chapter 2.



Sport of  
GOALBALL:  
Designed for the  
Visually  
Impaired

## Chapter 2

# The Expanded Core Curriculum

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is the body of knowledge and skills that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique, disability-specific needs. Students with visual impairments need the expanded core curriculum in addition to the core academic curriculum of general education. The ECC should be used as a framework for assessing students, planning individual goals and providing instruction. <http://www.afb.org/info/programs-and-services/professional-development/teachers/expanded-core-curriculum/the-expanded-core-curriculum/12345>

### **A. Description of each ECC area:**

**Compensatory Skills** needed to access the general curriculum, including:

- Access to literacy and mathematics through braille (including literary, United English Braille, Nemeth and other braille codes) and/or print, handwriting skills, and auditory skills. Access to literacy through Braille and/or print, handwriting skills and auditory skills is required by the regulations implementing IDEA 2004, which state that, “In the case of a student who is blind or visually impaired, the IEP team must provide for instruction in Braille and the use of Braille unless the IEP team determines, after an evaluation of the child’s reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media (including evaluation of the child’s future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille), that instruction in Braille or the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child.” 34 CFR §300.324(a)(2)(iii)

<http://idea.ed.gov/explore/view/p/%2Croot%2Cregs%2C300%2CD%2C300%252E324%2Ca%2C2%2Ciii%2C>

- Communication needs that will vary depending on degree of functional vision, effects of additional disabilities, and the task to be done. Many students with low vision use regular print with magnification devices. TVI's can use the Learning Media Assessment to determine when a student is a braille reader or large print reader. Some students need both print and braille. Students with deafblindness or multiple/other impairments may have alternative communication systems such as tactile sign language, symbol or object communication, or calendar boxes.
- Specialized instruction in concept development that may be significantly impacted when visual observation is limited. It is essential to offer specific and sequential hands-on lessons to build a broad base of experiences. In higher grades, there are many abstract mathematical, geographical, and scientific concepts that must be taught with alternative strategies and materials, including United English Braille or Nemeth Code and tactile graphics.
- A child with little or no vision may have fragmented understandings of the world without systematic tactile exploration and clear verbal explanations. Some concepts are totally visual, such as colors, rainbows, clouds, and sky. Some are too large to experience completely, such as a building, mountain ranges, and oceans. Other items are too tiny or too delicate to understand through touch, including small insects, a snowflake, or an item under a microscope. Fragmented concepts can impede social, academic, and vocational development.

**Orientation and Mobility (O&M):** Safe and efficient travel throughout the environment is a critical component in the education of students with visual impairments. Orientation & mobility evaluation and instruction should begin in infancy with basic spatial concepts, purposeful and exploratory movement, and progress through more independent age-appropriate motor and travel skills in increasingly complex environments. Vision provides the primary motivation for infants to begin to move their bodies, to raise their heads to see people, to reach toward objects, to move through the environment, and to begin to play. Significant delays and differences in meeting motor milestones can impact overall development. The child who is blind needs to know how classrooms or other environments are arranged in order to independently move with confidence. Systematic orientation to a space may be needed before the placement and function of furniture and objects are understood. As the student gets older, more advanced age-appropriate travel skills such as street crossings, bus travel, and community experiences are needed. Students with multiple impairments benefit from O&M instruction that facilitates purposeful movement and increases independence to the greatest degree possible.





**Social Interaction Skills:** A visual impairment can socially isolate a student, impede typical social interactions, or limit social skill development. A student with a visual impairment may not be able to see facial expressions and subtle body language to participate in conversations and activities. Social skills that sighted children are able to observe and imitate may need to be taught to a child with a visual impairment.

**Career Education and Planning:** Students with visual impairments need to be taught about the variety of work and career options that are available since they cannot casually observe people in different job roles. They need opportunities to explore their strengths and interests in a systematic, well-planned manner. This training may include the acquisition of specialized skills and equipment to compete in the job market. Students must be prepared for a wide range of vocational choices and the adaptations, including technological devices, which make them attainable. It is important to have opportunities to job shadow for concrete experience of different career choices and to learn about other persons with visual impairments who have successful vocational outcomes.

**Assistive Technology (including Optical Devices):** Technology permits students with visual impairments to access the general curriculum, to increase literacy options, enhance communication and learn employable skills. There are a variety of high and low-tech assistive technology solutions designed specifically for students with visual impairments that require specialized instruction. These devices include, but are not limited to: electronic Braille note takers, screen reader software, screen enlarging software, Braille displays, auditory access to printed materials, colored transparencies, tactile symbols, calendar systems, video magnifiers, magnification devices and access to social media.

**Independent Living Skills:** Home living, self-determination, vocational goals, community access skills, and appropriate interpersonal/social skills are critical for successful transition from school to independent living and employment. Young children begin learning basic skills in independent living from visual observation and imitation. Most students with visual impairments, however, will need specific instruction and adaptations to standard equipment, such as modifications to read oven markings and to cook independently and safely. Depending on the level of vision, cognition and other individual characteristics of a student, adaptations may range from minor highlighting to tactile clues for matching clothing. Students can learn to apply make-up and perform other grooming activities with magnifying lenses, specially marked containers, and highlighted dials on electric shavers. These skills are not typically evaluated or taught in a sequential and systematic basis in general education settings. Family members may require assistance and guidance to implement the proper adaptations that will permit independent practice and mastery of new skills within the home.

**Recreation and Leisure Skills:** Students with visual impairments need to be exposed to and taught recreation and leisure activities that they can enjoy as children and throughout their lives. They are often not aware of the options or the possible adaptations that would allow them to participate in these activities. Such skills include both individual and organized group activities for students at all ages and levels, within and outside of the school environment.

**Self-Determination:** Self-determination includes personal decision-making, self-advocacy, problem solving and assertiveness. These skills lead to competence, as opposed to learned

helplessness and are important components of positive self-esteem. Generally, low societal expectations for people who are blind can be overcome with specialized instruction in developing self-determination skills so that students can meaningfully participate in their educational and transition planning and make positive adult lifestyle, job, and other life choices upon graduation.

**Sensory Efficiency (includes visual, tactual, and auditory skills):** Students who are blind and students with low vision need systematic instruction to learn efficient use of their senses:

- ***Visual Efficiency:*** Instruction in *visual efficiency* must be individually designed and may include using visual gaze to make choices, tracking car movements when crossing the street, responding to visual cues in the environment, and/or using optical devices such as magnifiers and telescopes.
- ***Tactual Skills:*** For students who are blind and functionally blind, an increased reliance upon *tactual* skills is essential to learning. These skills should be considered as part of the IFSP/IEP development. It takes more detailed “hands-on” interaction and repetition to tactually understand a concept, such as relative size, that may be readily captured with a glance.
- ***Auditory Skills:*** Systematic instruction in *auditory* skills is critical for successful mobility and learning. Students must learn to effectively use their hearing to respond appropriately to social cues, travel safely in schools and across streets, learn from recorded media, and use echolocation for orientation.
- [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_blind/visually\\_impaired\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_blind/visually_impaired_guidelines.pdf)

## **B. Evaluation and Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum**

Each eligible student who is blind or visually impaired is entitled to receive educational programs that reflect evaluation and instruction in Expanded Core Curriculum areas in order to derive lasting practical benefits from the education provided by school districts. A structured evaluation of each of the ECC areas is critical to measuring success and assuring independence. There are a variety of formal and informal evaluations that can appropriately determine the student’s functioning level in these vision-specific topics. Instructional needs in the ECC areas can be addressed using a variety of service delivery models. Collaboration between professionals will ensure comprehensive services. Although the TVI and the O&M specialist are the primary resources for instruction in the ECC, family members, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, classroom teachers, other division personnel, and DBVI staff members can also play important roles in providing the needed instruction.

**Instructional time.** It is difficult to find time within the typical school program for addressing all needed elements of the core curriculum and ECC. Flexibility within the school schedule may be required. The ECC may need to be addressed in many ways, including:

- incorporation of ECC goals within the core content areas
- extension of preschool (for children ages 3 – 5)
- additional years in school and entitlement through age 21

- after-school enrichment programs sponsored either by school division or community agencies
- summer enrichment programs

**Instructional accommodations/modifications.** In addition to the specific areas of the ECC, students with visual impairments may need accommodations to access the same assignments as their peers. These accommodations may include extended time, specialized instruction, specialized materials, and environmental adaptations to reach the same levels of performance as sighted students. Individualized instruction for certain skills that may be difficult to learn in a large group setting may be needed for concepts such as map skills, advanced mathematical concepts, and spatial concepts. Specialized equipment and materials may also be needed, such as a braillewriter, dark and/or raised line paper, a long cane, an abacus, specialized software for computers, low vision aids, and electronic equipment for auditory access to print material. For most students, accommodations should be designed so that success in the general curriculum can be attained without lowering expectations. Some students may also need modifications to the general curriculum to develop an appropriate individual program.

**Accessible instructional materials.** For many students with print disabilities, the limitations of print materials create barriers to access and therefore to learning. In 2004, Congress passed amendments to IDEA requiring printed textbooks, printed core materials, and other educational materials to be converted to alternate formats (Braille, large print, electronic text, and audio recordings) to meet the unique learning needs of students with print disabilities.

**Cultural and linguistic diversity.** Increasing numbers of students in Vermont represent diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious groups, including students who are blind or visually impaired. Individual cultural groups may not share in the beliefs and practices of the majority population; therefore, educational personnel must be sensitive to cultural responses to disability and work with families to understand how their beliefs may differ with that of the school. For example, it may be necessary to alter the methods used in human guide techniques to conform to cultural expectations about appropriate touch.

**Outside of the regular school day:** If your school district provides instructional services for special education after school or during schools days off, the contact hours may be counted only if the services cannot be provided or are unavailable at any other time (e.g., a TVI lesson occurring during a teacher inservice day or an orientation and mobility lesson provided outside the regular school day because they must be provided at night or in periods of darkness). [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_blind/visually\\_impaired\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_blind/visually_impaired_guidelines.pdf)

### **C. Specialized Instruction vs Related Service Provider.**

*Special education* means specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability; *related services* support the child in benefitting from special education. Specialized instruction provided by a teacher of the blind and visually impaired to students found eligible with “visual impairment including blindness” is special education. This service should be documented on the IEP as specialized instruction rather than as a related service. Regardless of whether it is his or her primary, secondary, or tertiary disability, a child with a visual impairment

requires specially designed instruction to ensure access to the general curriculum. Ensuring access to the general curriculum by adapting or helping the general education teacher adapt instructional strategies and the curriculum is a special education service. There is no federal or state definition of the term “vision services” despite its continued popular use. School personnel and IEP teams should be clear and specific about the services to be provided for a child from the TVI and avoid use of the term “vision services.”

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training may be considered special education, or specially designed instruction, if it involves “travel training” of students who are blind or visually impaired provided by a professional certified in O&M. O&M may also be considered a related service.



### Chapter 3

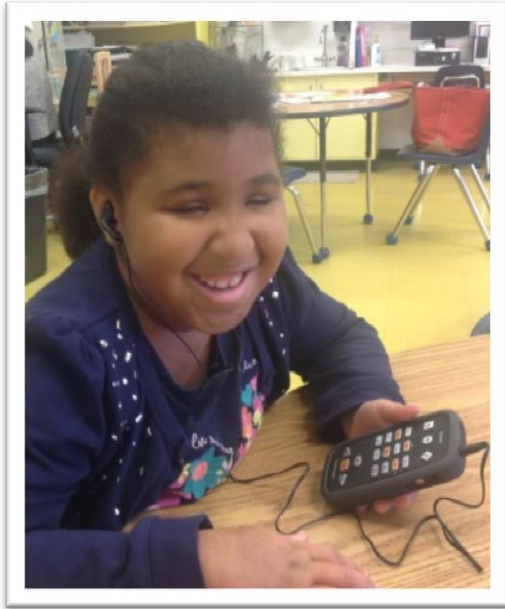
## The Population of Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

The population of children who receive services due to blindness or visual impairment is extremely diverse. These children display a wide range of vision difficulties and varying adaptations to vision loss. With regard to degree of vision, the population includes students who are totally blind or students with minimal light perception, as well as students with varying degrees of residual vision. For some individuals, blindness or visual impairment is their only disability, while for others, blindness or vision impairment is one of several identified disabilities that will affect, to varying degrees, learning and social integration. For example, some children who are blind or visually impaired also have hearing, orthopedic, emotional, or cognitive disabilities.

In addition, persons with similar degrees of vision loss may function very differently. A significant visual deficit that could pose formidable obstacles for some children may pose far less formidable obstacles for others. This is because adaptations to vision loss are shaped by individual factors, such as availability and type of family support and degree of intellectual, emotional, physical, and motor functioning. Therefore, in addition to the nature and extent of vision loss, a variety of factors need to be considered in designing an appropriate educational program for a blind or visually impaired child, and these factors could change over time.

The challenge for educators of blind and visually impaired children, including those with additional disabilities, is how to teach skills that sighted children typically acquire through vision. Blind and visually impaired students have used a variety of methods to learn to read, write, and acquire other skills, both academic and nonacademic. For example, for reading

purposes, some students use braille exclusively; others use large print or regular print with or without low vision aids. Still others use a combination of methods, including braille, large print, low vision aids and devices with computer-generated speech, while others have sufficient functional vision to use regular print, although with difficulty.



In order to receive an appropriate education it is generally understood that students who are blind or visually impaired must be provided appropriate instruction in a variety of subjects, including language arts, composition, science and mathematics. However, in order to be educated in these subject areas effectively, blind and visually impaired children must be taught the necessary skills to enable them to learn to read and to use other appropriate technology to obtain access to information. It also is very important for blind and visually impaired children, including those with other disabilities, who need orientation and mobility services, to receive appropriate instruction in orientation and mobility as early as possible. Providing these children with needed orientation and mobility services at the appropriate time increases the likelihood that they can participate meaningfully in a variety of aspects of their schooling, including

academic, nonacademic, and extracurricular activities. Once these individuals are no longer in school, their use of acquired orientation and mobility skills should greatly enhance their ability to move around independently in a variety of educational, employment, and community settings. These skills should also enhance the ability of blind and visually impaired students to obtain employment, retain their jobs, and participate more fully in family and community life.

**The population of students with visual impairments is very diverse. They:**

- may be totally blind or have varying degrees of low vision
- may be ages birth through 21 years
- may be born with a visual impairment or may have acquired a visual impairment at a later time in their lives
- may or may not be learners on the academic level of their sighted peers
- may have a stable or degenerative visual impairment
- may have any number of other disabilities (mild to severe cognitive impairment, physical disabilities, mental health, emotional or behavioral problems, autism and/or learning disabilities) or have hearing impairments (deaf-blindness)
- may have a visual impairment in any part of the eye structure, including the structures responsible for vision within the brain, due to neurological causes (such as cortical visual impairment)
- may have families who speak a language other than English or
- may have additional medical needs and considerations.

### **Adaptation to vision loss is shaped by many factors such as:**

- availability and type of family support
- degree of intellectual, emotional, physical, and motor functioning
- degree of early intervention and access to appropriate instruction designed for the unique learning needs of a child with visual impairment. Therefore, in addition to the nature and extent of vision loss, a variety of factors needs to be considered in designing an appropriate educational program for a child who is blind or visually impaired, and these factors may change over time (Riley, 2000).

[http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_blind/visually\\_impaired\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_blind/visually_impaired_guidelines.pdf)

## **Chapter 4**

# **Eligibility and Referral Guidelines**

**VT AOE Eligibility:** VABVI services for children follow the VT AOE regulations. The following definitions were copied from the Vermont Special Education Rules, July 2013:

[http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Rules\\_2360\\_Special\\_Ed.pdf](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Rules_2360_Special_Ed.pdf)

- **Visual impairment**, including blindness, means an impairment in vision as evaluated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist, demonstrated by:
  - central visual acuity that is 20/70 or worse in the better eye with correction,
  - or a peripheral field that subtends an angle not greater than 20 degrees at its widest diameter.
- **Deaf-blindness** means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

### **Referral Guidelines to VABVI:**

- **Ages:** Birth through twenty one years and suspected of having a visual impairment.
- **Function at the Definition of Blindness:** For students with reduced visual performance due to brain injury or dysfunction as determined by an eye care specialist or neurologist. For example, students with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) who function as visually impaired, but do not meet the above VT AOE criteria.
- **Who refers:** Referrals are welcome from parents, case managers, school personnel, and physicians. All referrals are reviewed by the VABVI Supervisor of Children's Services. Once all the required documentation has been received then a Teacher of the Visually Impaired and will be assigned to complete a Functional Vision Assessment.
- **Obtaining an Application:** A referral can be made to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. A copy of the application can be obtained at our web site <http://www.vabvi.org/how-to-make-a-referral-for-children/> or by calling VABVI at 1-800-639-5861 ext. 225.

## Chapter 5

# Evaluations of Students with Visual Impairments

The one time initial assessment for new student referrals is free in Vermont from a VABVI Teacher of the Visually Impaired or Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Assessments VABVI can provide include, but are not limited to:

- **Functional Vision Assessment**
- **Learning Media Assessment (large print vs braille)**
- **Cortical Visual Impairment Assessment**
- **Orientation and Mobility Assessment**
- **Daily Living Skills Assessment**
- **Social Skills Checklist**
- **Assistive Technology Assessment**
- **Assessment of Braille Literacy Skills**

Before the initial provision of special education and related services to a child with a disability under Part B, a full and individual initial evaluation must be conducted in accordance with 34 CFR Secs. 300.532 and 300.533. Evaluations and assessments specific to children with visual impairments should be conducted by a licensed Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, and/or a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

The IDEA Amendments of 1997 require that a variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used in the evaluation process to gather relevant functional and developmental information about the child. This includes information provided by the parents, to assist in determining (1) whether the child is a child with a disability, and (2) the content of the child's IEP, including the extent to which the child can be involved and progress in the general curriculum, and for a child of preschool age, to participate in appropriate activities. Through the evaluation process, determinations also can be made about the range of accommodations and modifications necessary for a blind or visually impaired child to access the general curriculum, or a specifically designed curriculum, created in response to relevant evaluations.

An assessment of a child's vision status generally would include the nature and extent of the child's visual impairment and its effect, for example, on the child's ability to learn to read, write, do mathematical calculations, and use computers and other assistive technology, as well as the child's ability to access the general curriculum. For children with low vision, this type of assessment also might include an evaluation of the child's ability to utilize low vision aids, as well as a learning media assessment and a functional vision assessment. For children who are blind and for children who have low vision, consistent with the new statutory requirement regarding braille instruction, the assessment of vision status generally would be closely linked to the assessment of the child's present and future reading and writing skills, needs, and appropriate reading and writing media. This information would be used by the IEP team in determining

whether it would be appropriate to provide a blind or visually impaired child with instruction in braille or the use of braille.

As required for children with other disabilities, appropriate assessments of blind and visually impaired children, including those with other disabilities, also must address each child's ability to access and thrive in the general curriculum, the same curriculum as for nondisabled children. This information could be obtained, for example, from an assessment of academic performance that would focus on the child's ability to learn to read, including reading comprehension, and to learn composition, science and mathematics, and computing.



As part of the evaluation process, it is especially important to address a blind or visually impaired child's ability to access the general education curriculum, particularly in situations where the child has other disabilities. This is because of the relationship of the evaluation to the child's IEP, which focuses specifically on participation in the general curriculum offered to nondisabled students, including the need for any supplementary aids and services, other accommodations, modifications, or devices to facilitate the blind or visually impaired child's involvement in the general curriculum. This information is needed regardless of whether a child will be educated in a regular classroom or in a separate classroom or school. The evaluation also should identify any necessary program modifications or supports for school personnel needed for a child or on behalf of a child to ensure that the child's unique needs arising from blindness or visual impairment or other identified disabilities are appropriately addressed in the IEP.

Because of the importance for some blind and visually impaired students of acquiring the skills necessary to access information, additional assessments may be necessary to determine whether a child should receive specific instruction in listening skills. Possible assessments for this purpose could include assessments of hearing, general intelligence, or communicative status. A child's need for orientation and mobility services and the appropriate method or methods for acquiring the requisite skills also should be assessed, and this generally would be accomplished through an assessment of motor abilities, as well as vision and communicative status, which should be conducted as early as possible. This is especially important because parents and organizations representing the interests of blind and visually impaired individuals have reported that, in some instances, these students are not receiving appropriate orientation and mobility services and that appropriate evaluations of their needs for these services are not being conducted. In all instances, the results of all assessments administered to the child, including those administered to determine the child's needs resulting from one or more disabilities other than blindness or visual impairment must be considered as the child's IEP is developed.

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## Chapter 6

# Qualifications of Personnel Working with the Visually Impaired

- **TVI** = Qualified TVI's have graduated from a Bachelor's or Master's Degree specifically for Teachers of the Visually Impaired and are licensed by the Vermont Agency of Education (VT AOE). For more specifics, refer to Vermont endorsement #67 and the corresponding Vermont Endorsement Standards.  
[http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Rule-5440\\_Supplement\\_A\\_Licensing\\_Endorsements.pdf#page=141](http://education.vermont.gov/documents/EDU-Rule-5440_Supplement_A_Licensing_Endorsements.pdf#page=141)
- **COMS** = Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists, work with children and adults to increase independent travel skills. They have graduated from a Bachelor's or Master's Degree specifically for Orientation and Mobility and are certified by the Association for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP).
- **CVRT** = Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists work with transition aged students and adults to master independent living skills. They have graduated from a Bachelor's or Master's Degree specifically for Vision Rehabilitation Therapists and are certified by ACVREP.

The National Association of State Directors of Special Education described the 11 key elements (pages 81-108) in their *Blind and Visually Impaired Students Educational Service Guidelines* when identifying qualified staff working with this population:

- I. Professional personnel should have the specialized knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to provide educational and orientation and mobility services to students who are blind and visually impaired.
- II. Education personnel should be knowledgeable about establishing parent-professional partnerships.
- III. Education personnel should work collaboratively with professionals and other members of the student's community.
- IV. Teachers of the visually impaired should be knowledgeable and proficient in literacy and communication modes (including Braille reading and writing and use of optical devices) for students who are blind and visually impaired.



- V. Education personnel should be sensitive to the issues surrounding ethnic cultural and linguistic background of the students they serve.
- VI. Qualified education personnel, such as TVI's and COMS, must be available to provide educational services. More clearly defined:
- VII. 'The intensity of instruction provided by qualified TVI's and COMS and other personnel must reflect the assessed need of students. If a first grade student is blind and needs instruction in braille, the amount of time available to the student from the TVI must be based on the student's needs, not on the amount of time allocated by the school district or available in the teacher's schedule.... At no time should personnel be asked to adopt an IEP program that bases the number of service hours on administrative allotment rather than child needs. Without this instruction, blind and visually impaired students cannot be expected to compete academically and socially with their sighted peers nor can they be expected to enter the workforce upon leaving school.'
- VIII. Personnel specializing in orientation and mobility must be available to provide related services to students who are blind and visually impaired including those with multiple disabilities.
- IX. Professional personnel shall ensure appropriate participation of support personnel such as paraprofessionals, Braille transcribers and orientation and mobility assistants.
- X. Education personnel shall be knowledgeable about assistive devices and technology including Braille, speech and low vision technology.
- XI. Education personnel must be expected to engage in ongoing professional development.
- XII. Education personnel who specialize in working with students who are blind and visually impaired are entitled to performance reviews by persons knowledgeable in the education of these students.
- XIII. Educational administrators need to develop strategies to attract and retain certified personnel who specialize in working with students who are blind and visually impaired.

For in depth descriptions of each of these 11 elements please refer to this book.  
 Pugh, G.S., & Erin, J. (Eds.). (1999) *Blind and Visually Impaired Students. Educational Service Guidelines*. Watertown, MA: Perkins School for the Blind.

## Chapter 7

# Roles & Responsibilities

***"For a child to become proficient in Braille, systematic and regular instruction from knowledgeable and appropriately trained personnel is essential. For blind and visually impaired children, including those with other disabilities, IEP teams must ensure that the instructional time allocated for Braille instruction is adequate to provide the level of instruction determined appropriate for the child."*** OSERS, 2000, p. 36589.

## A. Role of the Teacher of the Visually Impaired

Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI's) are team members for all students with visual impairments, including those with deaf-blindness or additional disabilities. The educational needs of these students vary widely. The TVI plays a critical role in helping students, teachers, paraprofessionals, family members, and related service personnel from initial evaluation to direct instruction to consultation.



### **Assessment and evaluation:**

- conducting the Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) and the Learning Media Assessment (LMA)
- conducting or participating in assistive technology evaluations
- referring students, as appropriate, for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) evaluations
- referring students for low vision exams conducted by low vision practitioners
- interpreting evaluation and assessment results regarding the impact of a visual impairment
- evaluating student progress and providing progress notes
- assisting other professionals in developing appropriate evaluation and assessment intervention strategies

### **Direct instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC):**

- providing direct instruction in visual efficiency, tactile symbols, Braille, assistive technology, auditory skills, social skills, use of near and low vision devices, and other areas of the ECC, as appropriate
- supporting families of young students as they help their children reach developmental milestones with adapted strategies specific to needs related to the visual impairment
- providing support to the student to facilitate development of self-esteem, self-determination, and social acceptance

### **Supporting educational teams:**

The TVI will educate, support, and collaborate with family members and other members of the instructional team who work with the student. The TVI will convey professional opinions in a diplomatic, collaborative manner in order to ensure that appropriate programming is recommended for the student with a visual impairment.

- supporting families in developing early childhood goals and objectives related to the visual impairment
- supporting transitions of services from early childhood settings or homes to preschool, preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school and high school to adulthood
- ensuring that necessary skills are attained for transitioning from school to adult life

- providing direct instruction, co-teaching, and participating in other collaborative efforts
- consulting with parents, teachers, and other professionals in the home, community, and school on providing instruction in the ECC areas
- modifying the environment to accommodate specific visual needs
- modeling appropriate instructional techniques
- providing, creating, and acquiring adapted materials
- maintaining current eye reports on each student and interpreting ophthalmological information for the educational team
- providing in-service training and consultation to the educational team in school and top professionals in applicable community settings (e.g., community-based instruction and community-based employment)
- recommending adapted strategies for access to the general curriculum and participation in the school community ensuring that a vision-specific support system is in place for transitioning from school to adult life
- building independence and success in home, community, and school environments
- participating as a member of the child's IEP team

**Administrative/recordkeeping duties:**

- referring each eligible student to VABVI after securing a signed parental release to share information and maintaining records on all evaluations, IEPs, and progress reports
- ensuring that each student has updated FVA, low vision assessment, and O&M evaluation, as appropriate
- attending IEP meetings
- ordering, receiving, distributing, and returning adapted textbooks as appropriate for each student
- completing and submitting visit summary reports monthly
- maintaining inventory on materials on loan from VABVI
- providing VABVI with copies of recent eye examination reports
- updating any change in contact information for students open to VABVI

**The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2008) (NCLB), mandates the provision of highly qualified professionals. In cases where the TVI is not the student's highly qualified instructor in academic content areas, the TVI should collaborate with the academic teacher.**

**See Appendix C for a Perkins webcast about the Role and Value of the TVI.**

**B. Role of the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)**

Movement, independent or supported, is critical for learning. O&M is recognized in IDEA 2004 as a related service, which may be required to assist a child with a visual impairment to benefit from special education. O&M specialists provide services that enable students who are visually impaired to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement in school, home, and community environments. They are critical members of the team for students with visual impairments who have identified O&M needs. The IEP team may consider an O&M assessment for every initial

evaluation and triennial evaluation for a student who is identified as legally blind. It is important that O&M specialists have the competencies necessary to provide effective services to students. There are currently two organizations that certify O&M specialists: the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals <http://www.acvrep.org/ascerteon/control/index> and the National Blindness Professional Certification Board <http://www.nbpcb.org>. Although there are no laws in Vermont that require licensure for O&M specialists, VABVI requires either certification from all hired COMS employees.

**Assessment and evaluation:**

- conducting the O&M assessment
- evaluating student progress and providing progress notes

**Direct instruction in the ECC:**

- encouraging purposeful movement, exploration of immediate surroundings, and motor development for young children with visual impairments
- teaching spatial and environmental concepts and use of information received by the senses (such as sound, temperature and vibrations) to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel (e.g., using traffic sounds at an intersection to cross the street)
- providing support to the student to facilitate development of self-esteem, self-determination and social acceptance
- orienting students to unfamiliar environments
- instructing in efficient use of low vision for movement
- teaching efficient use of low vision devices
- teaching use of mobility tools, including the long cane and adaptive mobility devices, for safely negotiating the environment
- providing travel experiences in the community, including residential and business environments and public transportation systems

**Supporting educational teams:**

- supporting families of young children in encouraging gross and fine motor skills, sensory skills, basic concepts, and other developmental milestones
- ensuring continuity from early childhood intervention services to school-age programs
- ensuring that appropriate vision-specific supports are in place and the necessary skills are attained for transitioning from school to adult life
- modifying the environment to accommodate specific mobility needs
- modeling appropriate O&M techniques for other team members
- providing, creating, and acquiring adapted materials, such as tactile maps and mobility devices
- providing in-service training and consultation to other team members in home, school, and community settings
- recommending O&M strategies for access to the general curriculum, such as physical education class and participation in school and community extra-curricular activities

**Administrative/recordkeeping duties:**

- maintaining records on all evaluations, IEPs, and progress reports and attending IEP meetings.

**C. Role of the Paraprofessional for Students with Visual Impairments**

The decision to assign a paraprofessional to a student is made by the IEP team after careful consideration of what accommodations or modifications are necessary for the student to make progress toward IEP goals. Paraprofessionals need specific and ongoing training in order to effectively support the student's learning. Although No Child Left Behind requires minimum educational levels for paraprofessionals, additional specific training on the impact of visual loss is important for effective instructional support for a student who is blind or visually impaired. The roles of paraprofessionals vary with the specific student or classroom being supported. However, they must support the student with a visual impairment and/or deaf-blindness in accordance with specific direction from the TVI and/or COMS. Without proper orientation and supervision, paraprofessionals can inadvertently act as a barrier between the student and peer involvement and can detract from the student's progress toward independence. Over-reliance on a paraprofessional over time can result in students' exhibiting passivity and unnecessary dependence on adults.

Classroom paraprofessionals may be hired to provide overall support to the larger class with particular duties for a student with a visual impairment and/or deaf-blindness. Their role may include assistance for activities of daily living, health and safety, and/or access to the environment. Some programs employ paraprofessionals to provide assistance with material preparation, which may include, but is not limited to copying, highlighting, enlarging, and scanning materials.

Paraprofessionals who work with students with deaf-blindness should receive training including information on deaf-blindness in general and also on the specific communication and learning strategies that are appropriate with individual students. Often students with deaf-blindness require assistance to connect with what is happening in the environment beyond what they can personally see or hear, often using highly individualized communication systems. Intervener training is available on line. For more details contact the Vermont Sensory Access Project (Vermont's Deafblind Project) at <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/db/>

**Paraprofessional job functions differ according to role, but in general, duties include:**

- working under the direction of vision professionals and staff to modify instructional materials, including use of Braille translation or magnification software
- storing and distributing large print, Braille, and audio books under teacher supervision
- assisting teachers with instruction and activities
- reinforcing O&M skills for movement of students between instructional locations or activities
- increasing access for students with deaf-blindness to their immediate environment and implementing a meaningful communication system
- assisting students in becoming increasingly independent

## **D. Role of the Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (CVRT)**

It is estimated that seventy to eighty percent of all we learn is incidental through what we see and hear. A sensory impairment impacts a child's development significantly and is not just limited to the core academic skills of a school based education. Children are impeded from learning basic skills of daily living and personal management, by not being able to observe and see their family, peers and teachers going about these daily tasks. As important as having access to one's academic education, it is equally important to have access to direct instruction in these areas. In Vermont, Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRTs) teach adaptive independent living skills, enabling transitioned aged students and adults who are blind or have low vision to perform a wide range of daily activities. CVRT's are certified through the Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professional (ACVREP).

### **The CVRT provides instruction in areas such as:**

- home and personal management
- adaptive communications skills including braille and computer access
- orientation in the home
- home mechanics
- diabetic and health management
- leisure activities
- use of low vision devices and training techniques

### **Direct Instruction and Ongoing Assessment and Support:**

- Utilizing the Transition Checklist provided by the TVI, the CVRT will follow up on targeted skills by providing instruction and ongoing assessment and recommendations
- The CVRT will attend IEP Meetings as requested to review progress and set collaborative goals
- The CVRT can provide instruction at both the school or in the home as requested by the team
- The CVRT will provide instruction, assistance and advice to families and school team in the continued support and maintenance of targeted goals by telephone, electronic, or in person meetings

## **E. Role of the Family in the Individualized Education Program Process for Students with Visual Impairments**

Quality education is fostered by collaboration between educators and families. One goal of early intervention services is to support parents and caregivers in developing competence and confidence to help their child learn and develop. Family members may continue to need suggestions and support as their child enters school in order to adapt the environment so that their child has access to information that other children gain through vision. Coordination of all team members, including family members, helps to assure a shared focus on student success. Family members bring knowledge of their child but also needed information about the unique needs of and services for students with visual impairments in order to be informed participants

on the team. Information about specific teaching strategies, materials, and activities will need to be shared with family members to ensure consistent approaches and to support and facilitate quality interactions between family members and the child. Families of students with visual impairments have the same rights and responsibilities as families of all students with any disabilities. For example, state and federal special education regulations require school divisions to afford the parents of a child with a disability an opportunity to participate in meetings with respect to the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child. 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.501(b) and (c); 8 VAC 20-81-170 A.

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## Chapter 8

# Services for Birth to 3 Year Old

Teachers of the Visually Impaired work closely with the Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS), the lead Vermont agency, delivering services throughout Vermont for infants with disabilities. The TVI's role and responsibilities includes monitoring whether the infant or



toddler is reaching their visual milestones, assessing their interaction with objects and evaluating other significant milestones such as mobility. TVI's provide evaluations, direct instruction, consultation and collaboration before, during, and after team meetings. For a complete list of TVI roles and responsibilities, please refer to the previous chapter. TVIs are members of the instructional team for all children birth to 21, with visual impairments.

VABVI and CIS promote interagency collaboration and a coordinated system of activities, policies, and procedures to support services for infants. The local CIS service coordinator arranges evaluations, coordinates the interagency team for effective delivery of services, sets up meetings, and ensures that records are accurate and up to date. Services for children age birth to 3 years are family driven and occur in the child's natural environment, focusing on the needs of the child within the family. The One Plan, also known as the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), is a single service plan for all services. The One Plan documents the relevant and meaningful goals and objectives for each child, the setting of each service (home, day care and/or other community setting), the frequency of services and the list of service providers. The family's routines and the child's daily living experiences are relevant factors when writing the One Plan.

**Obtaining an application:** A referral can be made to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired by the parent, service provider or doctor, provided they have parental approval



to do so. A copy of the application can be obtained at our web site <http://www.vabvi.org/how-to-make-a-referral-for-children/> or by calling VABVI at 1-800-639-5861 ext. 225.

More information about the One Plan is available at:

[http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/cis/Guidance\\_Manual/Ch\\_7\\_One\\_Plan\\_CIS\\_Manual.pdf](http://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/pdf/cdd/cis/Guidance_Manual/Ch_7_One_Plan_CIS_Manual.pdf)

More information about the CIS program can be found online at: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/cis>

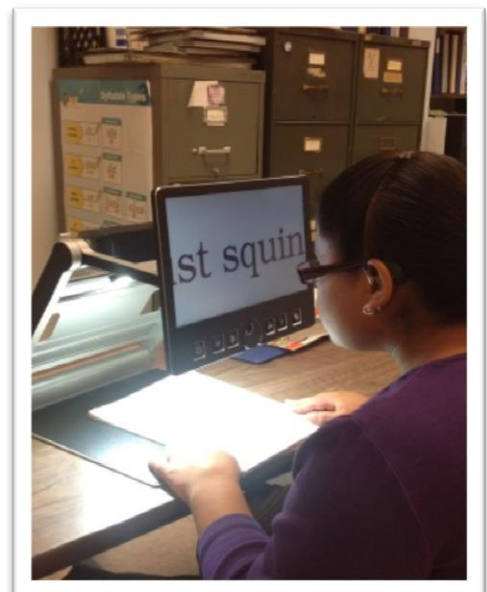
## Chapter 9

# Educational Placements for Students with Visual Impairments

*There is a saying among educators of students with visual impairments..., “There is no best placement for a child with a visual impairment. There is a best placement for each individual child at a particular time in her/his life. Therefore, we cannot adequately meet the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired unless we have a full continuum of services of placement options. NASDSE, 1999, page 26.*

Children under the age of three are provided with early intervention services by CISEI in a setting deemed most appropriate to each family’s situation. The most appropriate setting is determined as being the placement supporting the family in achieving desired outcomes for their child with as little disruption as possible to daily routines and family life. For school age students, IDEA 2004 and its federal and state implementing regulations guide the placement. “Part B regulations require public agencies to make available a continuum of alternative placements, or a range of placement options, to meet the needs of students with disabilities for special education and related services. The options on this continuum, which may include regular classes, special classes, separate schools and instruction in hospitals and institutions, must be made available to the extent necessary to implement the IEP for each student with a disability.” (34 CFR paragraph 300.115 and 300.16).

The educational team should determine all appropriate learning environments based upon each student’s individual educational needs. By law, the team must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) for each student. LRE is typically interpreted to be the placement as close to the child’s home as possible in a setting with nondisabled peers and with an appropriate program to meet essential needs of the individual child.



Consideration should include both the core and expanded core subjects for a student with a visual impairment. The law requires the educational team to first look at placement in all general education settings, with supplementary services, program modifications, and supports from school personnel and outside service providers as needed.

After considering educational needs in both the general curricula and expanded core curriculum, the educational team must carefully select from an array of potential settings. Collaborative settings, itinerant teacher services, self-contained classrooms, Extended School Year (ESY) programs and/or placement at a school for the blind, which has a residential component, are all options to be considered by the educational team. Student's needs and her/his family's valued life outcomes should drive placement decisions. Any service delivery option may be the most appropriate for an individual student at any given time, and the appropriate placement option may change over time for a particular student. (34 CFR paragraph 300.116).

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## Chapter 10

# Transitions

Basically there are three major educational transitions when working with children:

1. Transitioning from early intervention services at age 3 to preschool services. This includes the transition from a One Plan (also known as the IFSP) to an IEP. The TVI will help create a smooth transition into a preschool by continuing to provide direct instruction and consultation as well as an inservice for the new preschool providers. Just as the TVI wrote objectives for the One Plan, the TVI will also be available to write goals and objectives for the IEP.
2. Transition from preschool to Kindergarten. The TVI will help create a smooth transition into Kindergarten by continuing to provide direct instruction and consultation as well as an inservice for the new school teachers, including all the teachers, (classroom, PE, art, music, SLP, PT, OT and so on) working with the student. The TVI will continue to write goals and objectives for the IEP as needed.
3. Transition into adulthood. Transition planning is required in the IEP for students by age 16. VABVI and the Vermont State Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) collaborate regarding transition services for students ages 14-22 and these services are designed to assist students with visual impairments to make a smoother transition from high school into adult life. There are a few transition specific programs available in Vermont that are specific to



incoming grants; therefore they will not be detailed here. For more information you can contact your local TVI. Some of the related areas addressed in the transition programs are:

- Employment exploration
- Post-secondary education
- Expanded Core Curriculum (described more in depth in Chapter 2):
  - Orientation & Mobility
  - Socialization
  - Independent Living
- Recreation & Leisure
  - Assistive Technology
  - Career Education
  - Self-determination
- Dressing for success
- Taking control of health needs
- Community integration
- Self-assessment and constructive criticism
- Job skills development via summer employment opportunities

A TVI may provide direct instruction on pre-vocational skills, independent living skills, technology, and self-advocacy skills as determined by the educational team prior to graduation. DBVI offers vocational counseling, coordination of services and assistance with access to programs to help secure and maintain employment. For more information about DBVI call 802-885-9133 [www.DBVI.vermont.gov](http://www.DBVI.vermont.gov)

## Chapter 11

# Accessible Instructional Materials

*Students with visual impairments should receive materials at the same time as their sighted peers; otherwise they are at a distinct disadvantage compared to the sighted peers.*

TVI's help IEP and 504 Teams determine the appropriate accessible format for students with visual impairments and will work with the schools to identify the best practice of obtaining the accessible formats. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) states that State and/or Local Education Agencies (SEA's and LEA's) **“will provide instructional materials in an accessible format to blind persons or other persons with print**

**disabilities in a timely manner”**. (National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standard-related sections; Part B, Sec 612(a)(23)(B) and Sec. 613(a)(6)(B)).

It goes on to say, “... **Timely access to appropriate and accessible instructional materials is an inherent component of public agencies' obligations under the Act to ensure that FAPE is available for children with disabilities and that they participate in the general education curriculum as specified in their IEPs.**” (Section § 300.172(b)(3)) Timely access is defined as students with visual impairments receiving materials at the same time as their sighted peers.

In 1996, Congress passed the **Chafee Amendment** (now Sec. 121 of the Copyright Act), which provides in part that it is not an infringement of copyright for an authorized entity to reproduce or to distribute copies or phono-records of a previously-published, nondramatic literary work if such copies or phono records are reproduced or distributed in specialized formats exclusively for use by blind or other persons with disabilities. The Chafee Amendment “allows authorized entities to reproduce or distribute copies...of previously published nondramatic literary works in specialized formats exclusively for use by blind or other person with disabilities.” <http://www.loc.gov/nls/reference/guides/copyright.html>



This means that:

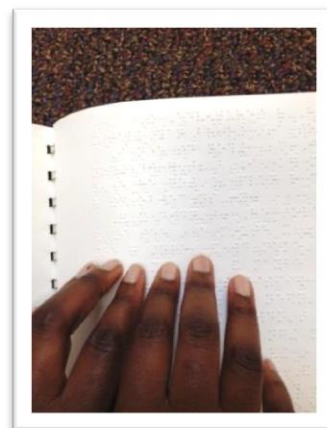
- the auxiliary aid or service provided must permit the person with the disability to access the information. For example, if a blind student is able to read Braille, then written material in Braille would be accessible for that student. If homework assignments are available on-line, then the on-line program used by the school must be accessible to students who are blind. Similarly, if a student can only read in enlarged print, then large print or tools to magnify print would be accessible.
- the auxiliary aid or service must be provided in a timely manner. That means that once the student has indicated a need for an auxiliary aid or service or requested a particular auxiliary aid or service, the public school district must provide it (or the alternative, as discussed above) as soon as possible.
- the auxiliary aid or service must be provided in a way that protects the independence of the student with the disability. For example, if a blind student requested an accessible electronic book (e-book) reader to complete in-class reading, instead of using a reading aide, the school district should provide the e-book reader because it would allow the student to go through the material independently, at his own pace, and with the ability to revisit passages as needed.

(Adapted from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oct/docs/dcl-faqs-effective-communication-201411.pdf>)

## Vermont Instructional Materials Center (IMC)

VABVI is a depository for new and used accessible materials from APH for registered VABVI students. The TVI's work with local school districts and other public and private agencies to procure and produce alternative format educational materials, such as Braille books. These specially adapted materials are available for loan for the school year from VABVI, such as:

- Braille books
- Large print books
- Perkins Brailers
- Braille paper
- CCTV's /VisioBook (from APH)
- Light boxes
- Tactile Atlas
- Sound Sources
- Adaptive PE materials
- Braille and larger print rulers
- Early childhood 3D books
- And more...



For a longer item list, please refer to the following APH catalog link. You must order these items through a TVI to obtain them through the APH Quota system, as described in the FAQ chapter of this booklet. [http://shop.aph.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Home\\_10001\\_11051](http://shop.aph.org/webapp/wcs/stores/servlet/Home_10001_11051)

### Chapter 12

## Frequently Asked Questions

**1. How does a student get referred to the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI)?**

To make a referral for children's services call toll free 800-639-5861 and speak to the Supervisor of Children's Services ext. 225. You can also download the application <http://www.vabvi.org/how-to-make-a-referral-for-children/> Referrals can be made by parents, teachers, doctors, or ophthalmologists.

**2. How is it determined whether a student will read braille or not?**

A certified Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) must conduct a Learning Media Assessment to determine each student's literacy medium. This evaluation includes



recommendations for the use of visual, tactual, and auditory learning media. Decisions on whether a student should learn and use braille for literacy includes evaluating the efficiency with which the student gathers information from various sensory channels, the types of general literacy media the student uses, or will use, to accomplish reading and writing tasks, and the literacy media the student will use for reading and writing.

**3. Do all students with visual impairments need IEP goals and objectives in all areas of the expanded core curriculum?**

Given that the expanded core curriculum (ECC) identifies critical skills that are impacted by the presence of a visual impairment, there is a need to provide assessment in all areas of the expanded core curriculum to determine whether or not instruction is needed. IDEA requires consideration of present levels of performance in both academic and functional areas. The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) has endorsed the term “expanded core curriculum” to describe areas that should be included in the comprehensive evaluation of students with visual impairments.

**4. How does a student qualify for VABVI services?**

VABVI follows the rules and regulations of the VT AOE, as described in Chapter 4. Students must have a visual acuity of 20/70 or worse in the better eye or a peripheral field loss of 20 degrees or less. Students who have a diagnosed progressive eye disease also qualify, as do students who are functionally blind, as in the case of some students with cortical visual impairments.

**5. If a student has a mild visual impairment and a slight hearing impairment, does he qualify as deafblind?**

Yes, this description meets the qualification for deafblindness. We work closely with the Vermont Sensory Project (VSAP)//Vermont’s Deafblind Project <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/db/> .

**6. Are there specific roles for paraprofessionals working with students who are braille readers or are deafblind?**

When an IEP team determines that a paraprofessional is needed as a member of a student's educational team, there is careful consideration of the specific training needs by that individual to support implementation of the IEP. For example, students learning braille may require a para to learn braille software programs, while students with deafblindness may require an intervener.

**7. Will a TVI attend the IEP, 504 or One Plan meetings?**

Yes, TVI’s are expected to attend each meeting as the person most knowledgeable about the visual impairment and address the issues related to and impacted by the visual impairment.

**8. At what age does VABVI begin to work with children?**

TVI’s work with children from birth through high school graduation. VABVI also has an adult services department for students transitioning to adulthood.

**9. How much time should be provided by a TVI or COMS?**

Determination of the amount of service time and the type of service delivery is based upon the assessed needs of the student, the educational setting, the types of skills to be taught, and other factors. It is an individualized decision for each student.

**10. How does a school order braille, large print books or audio?**

All book orders should go through the TVI. VABVI has access to the Accessible Textbooks Department at the American Printing House for the Blind (APH) and their Louis Database. This allows us to locate text books in braille and large print across the nation. If the books are produced by APH, then they are most likely to be FREE, when purchased through the quota system. The APH Accessible Media Producers Database (AMP) is a self-listing directory of producers of accessible formats such as braille, tactile graphics, large print, e-text and audio. VABVI is also familiar with many alternative sites for locating accessible books, such as Bookshare for students on IEPs, Learning Ally for audio books and so on.

### **11. What is the APH Quota system?**

Through the Federal APH Quota system, some textbooks and specialized materials are provided to eligible and registered blind students in educational settings ranging from early intervention programs for visually impaired infants to rehabilitation for elders who have age-related vision loss, and from center-based and residential school programs to the regular classroom. Braille and large prints books produced by APH are also available for purchase through the quota system. These specialized materials are identified in the APH Educational Catalog (available on-line) but MUST be ordered through a VABVI TVI.

### **12. What is a CCTV?**

A CCTV is short for a “closed circuit television.” The CCTV is a low vision device that allows students to enlarge all near and distant material viewed by the CCTV camera lens. The CCTV will enlarge anything from a finger print to a book to a label on a round bottle to a white board at the other end of a classroom. TVI’s often recommend CCTV’s instead of large print books, because of their versatility, lower cost in the long run and their ability to be useful in the work world. In order to be employable, students must use a variety of low vision tools to access print at school and work. TVI’s are knowledgeable and have access to a variety of low vision tools.



## **Appendix A**

# **Unique Needs of Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired**

*2010 Guidelines for Working with Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired in Virginia Public Schools.* Reproduced with permission from the Virginia Department of Education

The unique needs of students, who are blind or visually impaired, set out below, can be used as a general framework for assessing each student and for planning and providing instruction and services to meet the assessed individual needs.

### **Concept Development and Academic Needs**

A visual impairment will often impede a student's development of visual concepts and learning of academic subjects. Special concept development and academic needs that may need to be addressed include:

- Developing a good sense of body image;
- Understanding the following concepts: laterality, time, position, direction, size, shape, association, discrimination, sequence, quantity, sensations, emotions, actions, colors (to the best visual ability), matching, and classifying;
- Developing listening skills appropriate to the level of the student's functioning, including the development of auditory reception, discrimination, memory, sequencing, closure, and association skills;
- Developing auditory comprehension and analysis skills appropriate to the level of the student's functioning, such as the development of the ability to understand character; understand setting; recognize feelings; recognize climax, foreshadowing, and purpose; and distinguishing fact from opinion;
- Becoming familiar with the format of, and knowing how to use, reference materials in the student's primary reading medium or media;
- Being able to interpret accurately maps, charts, graphs, models, and tables;
- Developing skills for note taking during a lesson;
- Developing writing and recording skills for note taking from material originally intended for print, e.g., use of material that has been recorded or is read aloud;
- Developing the ability to organize notes and other study materials;
- Developing the ability to organize one's time;
- Developing the ability to select and use a reader; and
- Being able to acquire materials in various learning media, e.g., Braille, large type, aural media, or electronic format.

### **Literacy and Communication Needs**

A student with a visual impairment will usually require alternative modes for instruction in reading and writing. He or she will need special skills in using alternative strategies, learning media, and specialized equipment and materials to communicate effectively (link with "Determining the Appropriate Reading Medium"). Communication needs that should be addressed where appropriate include:

- Being skilled in reading, using appropriate modes (e.g., Braille, print, or recorded format) for such purposes as gaining academic information and pursuing personal, career, and recreational interests;
- Developing skill in writing for personal needs, using appropriate modes (e.g., Braille, print, keyboarding, handwriting, word processing) for such purposes as note taking, recording phone numbers and addresses, taking messages, and writing travel directions and personal notes;



- Being proficient in typing and computer access skills;
- Being able to write one's own signature legibly;
- Being able to operate a range of multimedia devices, such as radios, talking book machines, recorders, and CD players;
- Being skilled in using a recording device for recording lectures or for recording phone numbers and addresses;
- Being cognizant of, and able to use, appropriate special devices for reading and writing, such as slates and styli; optical aids; closed-circuit television systems; electronic note taking devices; computers adapted with speech, enlarged type, or Braille; and other voice, video, and data information technology; and
- Being cognizant of, and able to use, appropriate special devices for mathematics and science, e.g., the abacus; talking calculators; electronic Braille note-taking devices; specialized measuring equipment; and computers adapted with speech, enlarged type, or Braille.

### **Social Emotional Needs**

A visual impairment often affects a student's self-concept, observation of behavior in social situations, involvement in recreational activities, and sexuality. The student with a visual impairment may, therefore, have special needs for socialization, affective education, recreation, and sex education. These students will also need to learn to deal with the psychological implications of the visual impairment.

### **Socialization**

Socialization needs that should be addressed include:

- Understanding and displaying acceptable social behavior appropriate to a variety of group situations;
- Being able to discriminate between those behaviors that are socially unacceptable in public yet acceptable in private;
- Understanding and exhibiting appropriate assertiveness techniques in a variety of situations;
- Students with visual impairments need to understand the difference between allowing others to help when it is not needed and deciding to ask for help when it is needed;
- Being aware of and using appropriate nonverbal communication techniques, e.g., gestures, eye contact, raised head, and facial expressions;
- Being aware of and being able to control body posture, movement, and physical mannerisms in an acceptable, coordinated manner;
- Being aware of and using proper manners in eating and other social situations;
- Being able to make introductions properly and demonstrate appropriate conversational skills;
- Being prepared to contribute constructively to group activities and social situations;
- Being aware of appropriate social distances for various communication situations; and
- Being aware of dress codes for specific groups and occasions and dressing appropriately for one's age and situation.

## **Affective Education**

Affective education needs that should be addressed include:

- Recognizing that each person is unique and different from every other person;
- Understanding that persons who are visually impaired have the same emotions as everyone else;
- Being able to identify one's feelings;
- Being able to express one's feelings to others directly and in a socially acceptable manner;
- Having feelings of self-worth and well-being;
- Recognizing one's own strengths and weaknesses in a realistic manner;
- Acknowledging both positive and negative feelings in oneself and in others and understanding that both types of feelings are legitimate;
- Being able to identify and appropriately express one's likes and dislikes;
- Being able to understand and recognize teasing and developing appropriate ways of handling it;
- Being aware of alternative ways to respond to the feelings and behavior of others;
- Feeling that one is a valuable, contributing member of society;
- Being able to identify and understand a wide range of feelings in oneself and in others, e.g., happiness, guilt, frustration, boredom, confusion, anger, embarrassment, and pride;
- Being aware that the way a person feels about himself or herself is reflected in the way he or she treats others;
- Being aware that each person must establish his or her own set of values and live by them;
- Being aware of the concept of peer pressure and determining the appropriateness of conforming to peer pressure;
- Being able to identify and share feelings about his or her visual impairment in relation to being accepted by one's peers;
- Understanding the ways in which a person can become victimized by allowing others to make choices in his or her life;
- Understanding the long-range results of too much dependence on others;
- Being aware of the connection between being in control of one's life and taking responsibility for what happens in life;
- Being able to feel comfortable asking for help from others when it is appropriate;
- Understanding the difference between allowing others to help when it is not needed and deciding to ask for help when it is needed; and
- Being an effective self-advocate.

## **Recreation**

Recreational needs that should be addressed include:

- Being familiar with a variety of social and recreational activities;

- Being able to participate in a variety of different recreational activities with a group and on an individual basis;
- Realizing that many options are involved in deciding how to spend one's leisure time;
- Learning to play indoor and outdoor games appropriately, e.g., ball, cards, and roller skating;
- Developing hobbies of individual interests, e.g., arts, crafts, music, or collections;
- Being competent in several different recreational activities;
- Learning about popular spectator activities in order to enjoy attending them and to be able to discuss these topics appropriately;
- Being aware of opportunities for participation in recreational activities in the neighborhood and in the community in addition to those designed specifically for persons who are visually impaired, e.g., YMCA or YWCA, neighborhood parks and centers, scouting, and school and social clubs; and
- Being aware of current recreational trends and being able to participate where appropriate, e.g., learning current dance steps or fad games.

### **Family Life Education**

Family Life Education needs that should be addressed may include:

- Being able to identify with his or her own gender;
- Being knowledgeable about appropriate grooming and personal hygiene techniques;
- Being able verbally and tactually, with the use of models, to identify human male and female body parts and organs of the reproductive system, using correct terminology;
- Being knowledgeable about appropriate child care procedures and adaptations that may be necessary for a parent who is visually impaired through contact with real infants and children;
- Being aware of verbal and nonverbal communications that relay sexual messages to others, e.g., the use of body language;
- Being knowledgeable about strategies for prevention of physical and sexual abuse, including inappropriate touching and rape;
- Being knowledgeable about the genetic factors related to some visual impairments that one should consider before having children and being aware of genetic counseling;
- Being aware of the responsibilities associated with premarital sexual relations, marriage, and parenthood; and
- Being able to express and discuss any concerns related to one's visual impairment and relations with the opposite sex, e.g., dependency, not being able to drive, financial concerns, and genetic factors.

### **Psychological Implications**

How well a student understands and accepts his or her visual impairment may be determined by addressing the needs in this area, including:

- Being able to recognize that one has a visual impairment ;
- Being knowledgeable about one's own eye condition;

- Being able to explain one's eye condition and vision-related needs to others;
- Understanding the vision process;
- Understanding and accepting any physical limitations caused by the visual impairment;
- Understanding how low vision aids can assist in improving visual abilities and accepting the use of appropriate low vision aids;
- Accepting the use of alternative techniques and apparatuses for obtaining sensory information, where appropriate, e.g., use of Braille, the long cane, adaptive technology, and low vision aids;
- Being knowledgeable about personal eye care, e.g., medications, hygiene, regular eye exams, and low vision assessments; and
- Having realistic knowledge of current treatment as it relates to one's visual impairment.

### **Sensory/Motor Needs**

A visual impairment may affect one's gross and fine motor skills; alternative sensory discrimination and sensory integration skills; and abilities to develop appropriate posture, balance, strength, and movement. The student with a visual impairment may need to develop special skills in these areas. Needs that should be addressed include:

- Learning to control the head, limbs, and body for purposeful exploration and movement;
- Learning to sit, crawl, stand, and walk independently;
- The student with a visual impairment will need special skills to understand and become oriented to various environments;
- Learning to control the head and body while sitting, crawling, standing, and walking (while walking, the student should exhibit appropriate gait, stride, and posture);
- Developing the ability to balance while standing still and while in motion;
- Using gross motor skills, such as crawling, walking, exploring for objects, negotiating stairs, negotiating depth changes, opening and closing doors, and pushing and pulling objects;
- Developing fine motor skills, such as grasping and releasing objects of varying sizes and shapes, turning door handles, grasping a cane, and dialing a phone ;
- Developing sufficient muscle relaxation and flexibility to perform basic daily living and mobility skills safely, efficiently, and gracefully;
- Developing sufficient strength, stamina, and endurance to complete routine mobility, physical fitness, and daily living skills tasks;
- Learning to identify, discriminate, and use various textures and objects tactually and underfoot;
- Learning to identify, discriminate, track, and use continuous and intermittent auditory sources indoors and outdoors;
- Learning to identify, discriminate, and use various kinesthetic and proprioceptive sources indoors and outdoors, such as changes in temperature, movement of air currents, or height of slopes and depth changes; and
- Learning to identify, discriminate, and use various olfactory sources indoors and outdoors.

## **Orientation and Mobility Needs**

A visual impairment usually affects how the student learns about and functions within various environments. The student with a visual impairment, therefore, will need special skills to understand and become oriented to these environments and to move, travel, and play independently and safely within them. Orientation and mobility needs that should be addressed include the following:

- Developing a conceptual understanding of body image, e.g., planes, parts, laterality, and directionality in relation to objects and environmental features;
- Concrete environmental concepts, e.g., grass, lawn, cement, wood, carpet, tile, tree, bush, and street;
- Spatial concepts, e.g., far, near, close, high, low, above, below, facing, in front of, behind, beside, away from, next to, forward, backward, sideways, and 90-, 180-, and 360-degree turns;
- Compass direction concepts, e.g., north, south, east, and west relationships, sides of streets, names of corners, and relationships among changes in direction;
- Traffic and traffic control concepts, e.g., fast, slow, parallel, perpendicular, same direction, opposite direction, near side, and far side, stop signs, walk signs, and light-controlled intersections;
- Learning to travel independently at home and at various school settings throughout one's school career;
- Learning appropriate trailing and protective techniques and techniques for locating objects to facilitate independent orientation and mobility at home and school;
- Learning to use appropriate sighted guide skills in all travel situations when needed, such as traveling in normal situations; going through narrow passages; ascending and descending stairways; using escalators and elevators; switching sides; seating oneself in chairs, in sofas, and at tables; and establishing and maintaining control of the sighted guide situation with familiar and unfamiliar guides;
- Learning to use remaining vision and distance low vision aids, as appropriate, to the maximum extent possible for independent, safe orientation and mobility;
- Learning to use the long cane appropriately to supplement or replace visual travel skills (skills to be acquired are basic grasp and hand and arm position; touch technique; use of the cane at closed doorways and stairs and in congested areas and in social situations; trailing techniques; and modified touch technique for location of drop-offs, e.g., curbs or down staircases).
- Developing an understanding of the importance, dangers, responsibilities, and behavior appropriate for independent travel in increasingly sophisticated settings;
- Learning to become oriented and travel independently in residential and rural areas, e.g., traveling along a residential sidewalk; traveling past driveways and walkways; locating curbs and wheelchair ramps; recovering from veering; crossing residential streets; recognizing and recovering from a change in direction on street crossings; using environmental tactile, auditory, kinesthetic, or olfactory cues, compass directions, maps, and spatial relationships for orientation and safe mobility in familiar rural or residential areas; and becoming independently oriented to an unfamiliar area;

- Developing an understanding of the services various business establishments provide, e.g., grocery stores, department stores, banks, post offices, and shopping malls;
- Learning the skills necessary to become oriented and to travel independently in light and major metropolitan business areas;
- Using traffic sounds to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel;
- Traveling safely and appropriately on increasingly busy business area sidewalks;
- Crossing independently intersections of four lanes or more controlled by traffic lights;
- Exhibiting appropriate verbal and physical public behaviors;
- Developing the ability to seek out and interact appropriately with the public for assistance in orientation or mobility as needed;
- Learning to use street address systems as an aid to orientation;
- Carrying identification and emergency funds when traveling;
- Knowing whom to contact in case of emergency or disorientation;
- Learning to locate independently various destinations in business areas;
- Learning to travel safely in various retail and service establishments, including independent travel on escalators and elevators;
- Learning to carry out increasingly complex personal business transactions independently;
- Understanding and being able to use public transit systems;
- Learning to acquire information regarding products, services, or location of various stores and businesses by using the telephone, including recording this information for later referral;
- Being able to recognize and safely travel past areas of road construction;
- Being able to negotiate railroad track crossings independently;
- Being able to travel independently within light or major metropolitan business areas;
- Being able to travel independently within light or major metropolitan business areas at a level sufficient to carry out tasks necessary for basic survival;
- Developing, if nonverbal, a feasible communication system for acquiring information and communicating needs;
- Learning to use adaptive mobility skills as necessary for use with ambulatory aids, such as wheelchairs, walkers, braces, and orthopedic canes, to provide for maximum independent mobility, e.g., bus lifts or rail ramps;
- Use of alternative mobility devices when appropriate; and
- Being able to develop and travel alternative routes and, if necessary, travel specific routes in limited areas to care for basic needs;

### **Daily Living Skills Needs**

Because a visual impairment affects the student's ability to live independently, the student with a visual impairment will often need special techniques to function as independently as possible. Assessment and instruction to provide needed daily living skills should include those needs as follows:

### **Performing personal hygiene skills:**

- Performing basic personal hygiene tasks, e.g., toileting, care of teeth and hair, and bathing needs; and
- Using personal service businesses to care for one's own needs and to make appointments, e.g., for barber or beauty shop services.

### **Performing dressing skills:**

- Dressing and undressing, including tying shoes and fastening buttons and zippers; and
- Selecting appropriate clothing and planning clothing purchases.

### **Caring for one's own clothing:**

- Using techniques for clothing storage and identification of colors and patterns, sorting laundry, and using a washer and dryer; and
- Using services such as shoe repair, performing minor repairs on clothing, and hemming and ironing clothing.

### **Practicing housekeeping skills:**

- Locating and using housekeeping areas in the home, such as the kitchen, dining area, and bedroom; and assisting in basic upkeep, such as putting out trash and setting the table;
- Performing many basic housekeeping tasks, such as vacuuming and scheduling regular maintenance; and
- Being able to make basic home repairs.

### **Preparing food:**

- Identifying kitchen appliances and performing basic pouring, stirring, measuring, and spreading techniques; and
- Using kitchen equipment, such as a stove and oven; preparing and cooking menus: following recipes; and preparing complete meals.



### **Practicing eating skills:**

- Locating food on the plate;
- Using utensils properly; being familiar with passing food, serving oneself at buffets, and using cafeterias; ordering food from restaurant menus; and understanding tipping; and
- Accessing restaurants, cafeterias, and buffets.

### **Managing money:**

- Identifying coins and knowing coin equivalents; and
- Handling money in public, planning a budget, using checking and savings accounts, using automatic teller machines (ATMs) and other electronic banking and money management systems, and having one's own system for money management.

### **Practicing social communication skills:**

- Conducting basic social interactions, including communicating needs; and
- Conversing appropriately with familiar persons and strangers.

### **Practicing skills in using telecommunications:**

- Identifying one's own telephone number and placing an emergency call;
- Using directory assistance, using various types of telephones for personal and business calls, arranging for one's own telephone service, and displaying good telephone etiquette; and
- Understanding fax communications and E-mail.

### **Practicing written communication skills:**

- Understanding that written communication is used to convey information and ideas; and
- Writing a signature and personal and business letters, using a system for recording information, and using basic office supplies correctly.

### **Understanding changes in time:**

- Responding to a daily schedule;
- Knowing events that occur during the daytime compared to nighttime; and
- Knowing how to tell time and use clocks and watches, knowing automatic time (weeks or months), scheduling one's own time, and keeping appointments.

### **Being able to organize systematically:**

- Organizing time, activities, and personal belongings at home, at school, and in the community.

### **Career/Vocational Needs**

To be successfully employed, the student with a visual impairment will often need guidance to prepare for the world of work. Assessment and instruction in career awareness and vocational education, including adaptive skills, will often be needed for an individual to succeed in the workplace. Some career/vocational needs that may be addressed include:

- Understanding oneself in terms of the characteristics and attributes that make up one's individuality and recognizing one's uniqueness as a person and building one's self-esteem;
- Knowing the difference between work and play and when each is appropriate;
- Understanding the importance of doing a job to the best of one's ability;
- Understanding work ethics, including getting to work on time;
- Understanding the necessity of responsibility and commitment in the workplace;
- Being able to fill out a job application or giving the necessary information to another person;
- Being familiar with the development and use of a résumé;
- Knowing that money is a medium of exchange and related to work and developing concepts of financial management;



- Knowing and using personal information skills, including a legal signature;
- Maximizing one’s capabilities in developing skills in technology and in using adaptive devices, such as computers, note-taking devices, and calculators;
- Being familiar with jobs held by one’s family members and the jobs available in the school and the community, particularly jobs held by visually impaired persons;
- Experiencing hands-on work experiences through chores, paid jobs on or off campus or after school (particularly in the private sector), or in simulated work environments;
- Being able to interact appropriately with supervisors, coworkers, and the public;
- Participating in skill training at a job-entry level in a variety of experiences to assist in determining realistic occupational choices;
- Determining postsecondary education needs: whether to attend college or technical school or go to work;
- Knowing how to make contact with the Department of Rehabilitation for referral, training, and/or placement;
- Being able to use and train readers;
- Knowing sources for having materials transcribed and for obtaining specialized books, materials, and equipment;
- Being able to organize time and materials to maximize learning;
- Obtaining and managing financial assets for postsecondary education;
- Being self-reliant in managing postsecondary education;
- Being able to serve as one’s own advocate in obtaining necessary services, adaptations, and equipment needed for success on a job, during job training, or in college; and
- Knowing and using laws prohibiting discrimination based on disability, including “equal access” and “reasonable accommodation.

## **Appendix B**

# **Cogswell-Macy Act (pending)**

Pending landmark legislation to provide improved education for students with visual and hearing impairments was introduced (not passed yet) into U.S. House in 2015. The Cogswell-Macy Act aims to provide special education for every child who is blind, visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing. Introduced by Reps. Matt Cartwright (D-PA), Mark Takano (D-CA) and Steve Stockman (R-TX), H.R. 3535 combines into one bill two pieces of formerly draft-only legislation, the Cogswell-Macy Act was named for Helen Keller's beloved teacher and advocated by a broad coalition of national, regional and community-based organizations representing vision loss and Alice Cogswell, the first deaf girl to be educated in a school for the deaf in the United States and advocated by America's leading deafness and hard of hearing organizational voices.

September 17, 2015: The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) announced the introduction of H.R. 3535—the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act, the most comprehensive special education legislation for students with visual or hearing disabilities to date. "Right now,

our schools are not prepared to help children who are visually impaired or hearing impaired develop to their fullest potential, and we are determined to change that," said Paul Schroeder, vice president of programs and policy at AFB. "H.R. 3535 would provide vital resources and establish requirements to help students with visual or hearing impairments excel in the classroom, at home, and in their communities."

**The legislation would ensure:**

- Every child who is deaf and every child who is blind, regardless of whether they have additional disabilities, will be properly counted and served
- Each of a child's unique learning needs will be properly evaluated
- States will engage in strategic planning to be sure that they can in fact meet each child's specialized needs
- The U.S. Department of Education will do its part to hold states and schools accountable
- Students who are deaf will be served by qualified personnel
- Students who are blind will receive state-of-the-art services and skills supported through a new major national collaborative initiative addressing their unique learning needs

To read the complete Cogswell-Macy Act go to <http://www.afb.org/info/programs-and-services/public-policy-center/education-policy/complete-text-of-macy-act/1235>

**Appendix C**

**Perkins Webcast  
Role and Value of the  
Teacher of the Visually Impaired**

This twenty minute Perkins video link “presented by Marla Runyan, Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Olympic athlete walks us through her experience as a child with a visual impairment and the impact of the TVI in her education. As a TVI herself, Marla discusses the importance of making the curriculum not only accessible but also meaningful for the child with a visual impairment.”

<http://www.perkinselearning.org/videos/webcast/role-and-value-teacher-visually-impaired>

**NOTES**

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