

Visual Impairment 101

What do administrators need to know?

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Handouts and Additional Resources

[Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired - Administrator's Toolbox](#)
[Statewide Leadership Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)

Simulation Activities

What is a visual impairment?

[§300.8 \(c\)\(13\)](#)

Visual impairment including blindness means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

[§89.1040 \(c\)\(12\) \(A\)](#)

A student with a visual impairment is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for visual impairment as stated in 34 CFR, §300.8(c)(13). The visual loss should be stated in exact measures of visual field and corrected visual acuity at a distance and at close range in each eye in a report by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist. The report should also include prognosis whenever possible. If exact measures cannot be obtained, the eye specialist must so state and provide best estimates.

What types of vision does this include?

[Legally Blind](#)

Central vision acuity in the better eye of 20/200 or worse after the best correction possible, or a field of vision of 20 degrees or less.

[Low Vision/Partial sight](#)

Visual acuity better than 20/200 after correction in the better eye. Vision loss that is severe enough to impede performance in everyday life but still allows some useful visual discrimination. Vision loss that cannot be corrected to normal with eyeglasses or contact lenses

The majority of persons who are legally blind are included within this classification



Blind

A person who is sightless, having less than 1/10 of normal vision in the more efficient eye when refractive defects are fully corrected by lenses

This condition is rare amongst students with visually impairments

Functionally Blind

Educationally this is any visually impaired student who uses touch as the primary sense, even if some light or form is perceived. This is determined by a Learning Media Assessment, and Braille would typically be the literacy medium.

What qualifies as Deafblindness and how is it documented?

Deafblind

Concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that they cannot be accommodated in special education solely for deaf or blind children. (U.S. Dept. of Education, CFR 300.8 (C)(2))

Questions about eligibility handout on TSBVI website

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/about-deafblind-child-count>

Deafblind Child Count FAQ Video

<http://library.tsbvi.edu/Player/13386>

How many students do we have in Texas with visual impairments?

2017 VI registration and DB Child Count (tentative count)

Total Students with Visual Impairments in Texas 10,074

Students with Visual Impairments ages 0-2, 411

Students with Visual Impairments ages 3-5, 1,011

Students with Braille as their learning medium, 414

Students with a Visual Impairment and additional disabilities, 7,573

Myth versus Fact

Kahoot information

<https://play.kahoot.it/#/k/aec388bc-5d12-4de9-bacd-63c7c16a9ab8>



What documentation/assessments are required for an initial evaluation of a child with a Vision Impairment?

[§89.1040 \(c\)\(12\) \(A\)](#)

Part A: Provided to TVI/COMS prior to FVE, LMA and OME

A Report (State of Texas Eye Report) from a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist that includes:

- ★ visual loss in exact measures of visual field and corrected visual acuity at a distance and at close range in each eye; or
- ★ If exact measures cannot be obtained, provides best estimates of the visual loss; and prognosis whenever possible;
- ★ Eye report must state that the child has :
 - no vision or to have a serious visual loss after correction; or
- ★ a progressive medical condition that will result in no vision or a serious visual loss after correction.

A functional vision evaluation (FVE) by a certified teacher of children with visual impairments, or a COMS that includes:

- ★ Performance tasks in a variety of environments requiring the use of both near and distance vision; and
- ★ Recommendations concerning the need for a clinical low vision evaluation;

A learning media assessment (LMA) by a certified teacher of children with visual impairments that includes:

- ★ Recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and/or auditory learning media are appropriate for the child; and
- ★ Whether there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area;

An orientation and mobility evaluation (OME) performed by a COMS in

- ★ a variety of lighting conditions and
- ★ a variety of settings including in the
 - child's home,
 - school,
 - community
 - in settings unfamiliar to the child

Part B: Multiple Sessions/ Multiple Environments



What are the special factors for students who are blind and visually impaired?

Braille

300.324 (a)(2)(iii) In the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, 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 an 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;

TEC 30.002 (f) When developing the IEP for the child who is [functionally blind](#), according to the Texas Education Agency's criteria:

- Proficiency in braille reading and writing is presumed to be essential for the child's satisfactory educational progress;
- Each person assisting in the development of the child's IEP must receive information describing the [benefits of braille instruction](#);
- The ARD committee must provide for braille reading and writing instruction that is sufficient to enable the child to communicate with the same level of proficiency as other children of comparable ability who are at the same grade level;
- Braille instruction may be used in combination with other special education services appropriate to the child's educational needs;
- The ARD committee must specify the appropriate learning medium based on the full individual and initial evaluation; and
- The ARD committee must ensure that instruction in braille will be provided by a teacher certified to teach children with visual impairments.

Expanded Core Curriculum

TEC 30.002 (c)(4)(B) instruction in an expanded core curriculum, which is required for students with visual impairments to succeed in classroom settings and to derive lasting, practical benefits from the education provided by school districts, including instruction in:

- I. compensatory skills, such as braille and concept development, and other skills needed to access the rest of the curriculum;
- II. orientation and mobility;
- III. social interaction skills;
- IV. career planning;
- V. assistive technology, including optical devices;
- VI. independent living skills;
- VII. recreation and leisure enjoyment;
- VIII. self-determination; and
- IX. sensory efficiency;



ARD committee must develop an IEP that

TEC 30.002 (e) (3) reflects that the student has been provided a detailed explanation of the various service resources available to the student in the community and throughout the state;

(4) provides a detailed description of the arrangements made to provide the student with the evaluation and instruction required under Subsection (c)(4); and

(5) sets forth the plans and arrangements made for contacts with and continuing services to the student beyond regular school hours to ensure the student learns the skills and receives the instruction required under Subsection (c)(4)(B)

2010 Due Process ECC

DOCKET NO. 117-SE-0110

While the evidence shows the school district engaged in a number of activities and addressed many of the expanded core curriculum skills through some specific IEP goals and objectives, instructional modifications, accommodations, and related services, it did so without clearly communicating what it was doing to Student's parents.

Student's educational program does not clearly establish or explain a systematic, well planned approach for the evaluation of the nine expanded core curriculum skill domains as state law requires. This aspect of student's program does not meet student's individualized needs. Tex. Educ. Code §§ 300.002(c)(e); 19 Tex. Admin. Code § 89.1055 (d).

When is an Orientation and Mobility Evaluation required?

TEC §30.002 (c-1) To implement Subsection (c)(1) and to determine a child's eligibility for a school district's special education program on the basis of a visual impairment, the full individual and initial evaluation of the student required by Section §29.004 must, in accordance with Commissioner rule:

(1) include an orientation and mobility evaluation conducted:

- (A) by a person who is appropriately certified as an orientation and mobility specialist, as determined under commissioner rule; and
- (B) in a variety of lighting conditions and in a variety of settings, including in the student's home, school, and community and in settings unfamiliar to the student;

How do TVI's and COMS determine service time?

The [Visual Impairment Scale of Service Intensity of Texas \(VISSIT\)](#) helps TVIs use evaluation results in all areas of the ECC to determine how much instructional service (direct and collaborative consultation) to recommend per individual student.

The [Michigan Severity Rating Scales](#) in visual impairments were modified in 2012.

[Ensuring High-Quality Instruction for Students in Braille Literacy Programs](#) by Alan J. Koenig and M. Cay Holbrook, Delphi Study; JVIB

[Literacy for Students with Low Vision: A Framework for Delivering Instruction](#) by Anne L. Corn and Alan J. Koenig; JVIB



Administrator's Toolbox

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/2015-11-18-21-31-13/school-district-administrator>

Chapter 1: Administrator's Toolbox –An Overview

Chapter 2: Certification Information

VI Professionals in Texas:

- TVIs, certified by the state
- O&M Specialists, nationally certified by the Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals (ACVREP) www.acvrep.org

VI and O&M Preparation in Texas: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/professional-prep-and-mentoring-items/495-vi-o-and-m-preparation-in-texas>

Certification to work with students with visual impairments in Texas is available via a distance model through Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas Tech University at the graduate level. SFASU also offers an undergraduate O&M certification.

Chapter 3: Job Descriptions

- Teacher of students with visual impairments
- Certified orientation and mobility specialists
- Brailist
- Paraprofessional with braille responsibilities
- VI program paraprofessional
- Deafblind intervener

Chapter 4: Workload Analysis

[Sample District Profile](#)

QPVI: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/quality-programs-items/1865-conducting-a-vi-staff-caseload-analysis>

Chapter 5: Recruiting the Best Candidates to Your District

Fact sheets (TVIs, COMS, Braillists, Interveners, Workloads):

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional>

VI Professionals working in Texas school districts:

TVIs = 687; 158 part-time, 529 full-time

COMS = 270; 108 part-time, 162 full-time

Dually certified = 58 (included in part-time totals above)

Total number of VI and O&M providers = 899



Attrition in 2016:

TVI = 26

COMS = 2

Dually certified = 1

Total = 29

Long-term projected need (over the next 2-3 years):

TVIs = 123

COMS = 43

Dual = 18

Total = 184

University VI/O&M program completers (over the last 3 years)

TVI = 127

COMS = 89

Most do stay and work in Texas, however, some accept jobs out of state. O&M specialists may also fill jobs in the adult rehabilitation field.

Additional information regarding the need for VI professionals in Texas can be found in the 2016 [Summary of Professionals in Visual Impairment in Texas](#) document. This document is a review of education professionals who work with Texas students with visual impairments, including a description of selected characteristics, projections of attrition and projected future needs.

Chapter 6: Training and Professional Development Options

Because of the limited number of VI professionals in a state, pre-service training and professional development can be a challenge. This chapter of the Administrator's toolbox provides information and resources to address those challenges.

Chapter 7: Hiring and Employment Options

- Issues to consider when hiring dually certified VI professionals
- Information about desirable characteristics for VI professionals
- Using alternate pay scales for VI professionals as a tool for retention and recruitment

Advantages and disadvantages of various hiring options are listed at the end of the chapter.

Additionally information about what you should expect to pay to contract with a VI professional is also included.

Chapter 8: Interview Resources

- Interview sample questions
- Documents to request in advance
- Interview process considerations



Chapter 9: Mentoring

How can mentoring benefit your district?

Teaching students who have visual impairments is a challenging job. It requires extensive knowledge of a unique set of adaptive techniques as well as an ability to work effectively with other education professionals. Often the VI teacher and the O&M specialist are the only professionals on a visually impaired student's educational team who have knowledge about the specialized resources, equipment, and skills that are essential for the student's success.

Research shows that beginning teachers who have had the continuous support of a skilled mentor are much more likely to stay in the profession. All beginning teachers should be assigned a skilled mentor. (What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future, 1996).

Texas has had a mentoring system for VI professionals since 1998. At any given time, Texas has close to 300 mentors with expertise in visual impairments.

Chapter 10: Performance Evaluation

The Texas Education Agency has introduced a new performance evaluation called the Texas Teacher Evaluation and Support System ([T-TESS](#)). The T-TESS was specifically designed for classroom teachers, therefore, a committee of VI professionals developed companion documents to assist administrators in completing evaluations for VI professionals who serve students through an itinerant service delivery model. These documents are intended to be a companion to the T-TESS rubric, not to replace it.

T-TESS Companion Documents for the VI Professional can be found here: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/2015-11-18-21-31-13/school-district-administrator>

Chapter 11: Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

Each disability requires that a broad set of disability-specific skills and abilities be addressed. For students with visual impairments, the disability-specific skills are within nine domains and collectively known as the “expanded core curriculum” (ECC). When the domains in the ECC are systematically and intentionally addressed by all members of the instructional team, the student’s independence and readiness for the post-school environment are dramatically improved.

A visual impairment can affect all areas of functioning, well beyond the classroom. The ECC extends beyond reading, writing, and calculation. It includes those skills necessary to benefit from instruction in the core curriculum and to achieve functional independence.

As an administrator, you have the unique role of ensuring that the ECC will be implemented in your district. Implementation will include issues related to staffing, service provision, and professional development. As previously mentioned above, the 9 areas of the ECC are:

- Assistive Technology Assistive
- Career Education Career
- Compensatory Skills
- Independent Living Skills
- Orientation and Mobility (O&M)



- Recreation and Leisure
- Self-Determination
- Sensory Efficiency
- Social Interaction Skills

Additional information regarding the ECC can be found by following the links below:

- ECC flyer: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/images/ecc-flyer.pdf>
- Article (See/Hear): <http://www.tsbvi.edu/seehear/winter01/core.htm>
- Resources for the ECC (RECC): <http://www.tsbvi.edu/recc/>

Guidelines and Standards document:

The primary purpose of this document is to provide decision-makers, including school administrators, educational staff and family members, with a set of guidelines and standards by which they can determine the quality of their programs serving students with visual impairments.

In analyzing a program's current components, this document offers the opportunity for program adjustment or improvement. These guidelines and standards are highlighted in each section. There are also resource links and an explanation of the components found in a high quality program for these students along with references to frequent questions and answers, current laws, rules and regulations in the state of Texas that impact the education of students with visual impairments. (Guidelines and Standards, page 7)

The Guidelines and Standards document can be found online here:

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/attachments/EducatingStudentswithVIGuidelinesStandards.pdf>

ECI and Part C:

[Memorandum of Understanding](#)

[Effective Initiatives for Early Intervention Opportunities](#)

Confused by the limited information in the TEA ECI Memorandum of Understanding? Missing the AI/VI MOU FAQ document? Not sure where it says "that" in regards to services to infants and toddlers who are deaf/hard of hearing or visually impaired? Well look no farther! We've pulled all of that information into one spot: the EIEIO Rules and Regulations module. This module provides an easily searchable answer to "Where does it say that?"

EIEIO Module II is an overview of the processes and procedures related to infants and toddlers with visual and/or auditory impairments being served by ECI. This module covers writing outcomes and procedures, scheduling services, progress notes, reviews and referrals.

Future modules will focus on the "how-tos" of writing outcomes, completing progress notes, working as a team with ECI Staff to provide effective services to our families, and more.

What are your questions?

