

2017 Guidelines and Standards for Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Texas

To find this document on the web:

Look on the Texas Education Agency website at:

http://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Special_Student_Populations/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/Sensory_Impairments/Sensory_Impairments

Search for "2017 Guidelines and Standards" on the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired website, <http://www.tsbvi.edu>

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Updates to the Braille Code

The braille code undergoes periodic updates and changes. A revision known as **Unified English Braille (UEB)** was introduced in the United States for literary uses starting with the 2015-2016 school year, and has been implemented in stages in Texas. This revision aligns braille usage in the United States with that in other English-speaking countries around the world and better supports the increasing use of electronic formats. The Texas STAAR assessments will be provided in UEB and English Braille American Edition (EBAE), which will ultimately be phased out, beginning with Spring of 2018 administration when the braille STAAR test will be available in both EBAE and UEB. This schedule may change, so staying in touch with the TEA updates is crucial.

Implementing UEB may require additional instructional time for students. They will learn the UEB for newer materials while continuing to access the current EBAE materials. Texas textbook adoption cycles are staggered, meaning existing printed instructional materials in EBAE code will continue to be available and used for some time.

UEB implementation will include significant teacher re-training, material preparation and modifications, changes in teacher preparation programs, and code changes for statewide assessment. Nemeth Code will continue to be the standard code used for instruction in science and math. For 2018, the STAAR tests for math and science will be available in Nemeth code in UEB context and in Nemeth code in EBAE context.

The Education Service Centers and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired are available to provide training to support implementation of the braille changes.

Information about Unified English Braille can be found at the Braille Authority of North America website, <http://www.brailleauthority.org>.

A Note about the use of the term DeafBlind:

On April 6, 2016, the American Association of the DeafBlind (AADB) released a statement to the community that announced they are changing the spelling of the organization to American Association of the DeafBlind, thereby eliminating the hyphen, because there "...is the need to shift from a medical view of being a DeafBlind person to a cultural one. We now view our community as a cultural community." This name change was "overwhelmingly passed by the active members with approximately 90%" voting in favor of the name change. Culture and Language instills a sense of pride, belonging, and community.

In this document, the term will be used in the format preferred by the consumer group except where there are legal citations or in the case of the titles of organizations using a different format.

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I. Need for this Document

The American education system has a broad goal of preparing all students for lifelong success. Ensuring that an educational program is available to students with disabilities to "prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living" (IDEA: Regulations, Part 300) and preparing them to "lead productive and independent adult lives, to the maximum extent possible" (IDEA: Title 1) are some of the stated objectives of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. This document addresses how to accomplish those goals for the population of students with visual impairments, including those with DeafBlindness.

Students with visual impairments have unique learning needs that must be addressed if they are going to graduate ready for further education, employment and/or independent living. Employment has often been used as a gauge for educational success. An analysis by the American Foundation for the Blind, using 2013 Bureau of Labor statistics, found that 64% of people who are blind or visually impaired between the ages of 16 and 64 were not working, compared to 28% of the general working population in the same age range (www.afb.org). Educators clearly face a significant challenge in providing educational services that will lead to successful post-school outcomes for this population. Why is that?

In addition to the general education curriculum that all students receive, students with visual impairments, starting at birth, also need an **expanded core curriculum (ECC)** to meet needs directly related to their visual impairment (TEC 30.002, Subsections (c-1) and (c-2)). These expanded curriculum areas include instruction in:

- Compensatory skills that permit access to the general curriculum (such as braille and concept development, tactile graphics, Nemeth Code, and specialized communication skills)
- Orientation and mobility skills
- Social interaction skills
- Career education and planning
- Assistive technology, including optical devices
- Independent living skills
- Recreation and leisure skills
- Self-determination, and
- Sensory efficiency (including visual, tactual and auditory skills).

Making appropriate decisions about the development and implementation of programs and services for students with visual impairments requires a clear understanding of the unique learning needs of these students. Administrators must have knowledge about specialized personnel, materials, equipment and educational settings to ensure appropriate individualized education program planning for these students. Knowing the features of a quality program is also key for parents and caregivers so that they can advocate for appropriate services to meet the needs of their child.

Program administrators must understand how appropriately certified personnel provide an essential role within the educational team for every student with a visual impairment. These specially trained individuals include certified teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS). Some students with

DeafBlindness require trained interveners, while students who read braille may need braille transcribers to be included on their instructional team.

II. Purpose of this Document

The primary purpose of this document is to provide school administrators, educational staff and family members, and other decision makers with a set of guidelines and standards to evaluate the quality of their programs for students with visual impairments.

These guidelines and standards are highlighted in each section. There are also resource links and descriptions of components found in high-quality programs along with references to current laws, rules and regulations in the state of Texas that impact the education of students with visual impairments.

Resources cited in this document include federal and state law and procedures, professional organization standards, and additional sources reflected in Sections XIX and XX. Primary legal sources are S. 1177 — 114th Congress: Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (revised 2004), current Texas Education Code (TEC), and the Texas Administrative Code (TAC). Primary professional references are from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI).

III. The Population of Students with Visual Impairments

The population of students with visual impairments is very diverse. In 2017, a total of 10,074 students were registered with the Texas Education Agency as eligible for specialized instruction due to a visual impairment. This includes 706 students eligible for services as having DeafBlindness. (Annual registration of students with visual impairment and DeafBlind child count 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.tsbvi.edu/texas-students/student-data-program>)

These students:

- May be totally blind or have varying degrees of low vision
- Range from birth to 22 years of age
- May have been born with a visual impairment or may have acquired a visual impairment at a later time in their life
- May or may not be learners on the academic level of their age peers
- May also have hearing impairments (DeafBlindness)
- May also have any number of other disabilities (mild to severe intellectual disability, physical disability, other sensory loss, emotional or behavioral problems, autism and/or specific learning disabilities)
- May have vision impairment related to ocular disorders or due to neurological causes (such as cerebral or cortical visual impairment) or both
- May have additional medical needs and considerations
- May be receiving instruction in a variety of instructional settings, including the home, school and community

IV. Determining Eligibility for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #1:

Eligibility is determined by an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or by an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee. It is based upon an eye medical report, functional vision evaluation, a learning media assessment and an orientation and mobility evaluation. A COMS must be part of the team that determines the scope of any needed full and individual reevaluations.

Visual impairment and **DeafBlindness** are recognized in Federal law as disability eligibility categories for special education and related services.

The term *visual impairment including blindness* means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects the child's educational performance. This includes both partial sight and blindness (TAC 89.1040(c)(12), 34 CFR § 300.8(c)(13)). All rules related to visual impairment also apply to students with DeafBlindness, with additional criteria listed later in this section.

Children may receive services for visual impairment from birth through school graduation. IDEA Part C describes and mandates early childhood intervention services for children with disabilities birth through two years of age (34 CFR § 300.25). IDEA Part B governs services for students with disabilities ages three through twenty-one.

In determining eligibility and educational need, the educational committee must consider information from a variety of sources (34 CFR § 300.306(c)(i)). No single source determines eligibility. In order for a student to be eligible for special education services as a student with a visual impairment under Texas state law (TEC 30.002), the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Admissions, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee must be provided a range of information gathered from a variety of sources, which must include:

1. *A medical report* by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist, and
2. *A functional vision evaluation (FVE)* conducted by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) and/or a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS), and
3. *A learning media assessment (LMA)* that must be conducted by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI), AND
4. *An orientation and mobility (O&M) evaluation* by a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS) is required for *initial* eligibility and a COMS must be a member of the multidisciplinary team reviewing the scope of any needed reevaluation in subsequent years. (TEC §30.002)

Results of the eye medical report along with the findings of an FVE and LMA, the O&M evaluation and any other documented reports of visual functioning should all be carefully considered by the IFSP or ARD committee in determining eligibility as a student with

visual impairment. **The FVE and LMA reports should typically be conducted and results shared prior to additional evaluation by other member of the educational team**, including school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, counselors and related service professionals, to ensure that tools used and results accurately reflect the child's aptitude and not the impact of a visual impairment (34 CFR § 300.304(c)(3)).

Eligibility evaluations, legal requirements

Texas Administrative Code (TAC) 89.1040 outlines required elements for each eligibility evaluation.

- The *eye medical* report should indicate whether the student has no vision or a serious visual loss after correction, or a progressive medical condition that will result in no vision or serious vision loss after correction. (19 TAC §89.1040(c)(12)(A)). The school district is responsible for ensuring that medical reports are available for the consideration of eligibility for special education services. (19 TAC § 89.1050(a))
- A *functional vision evaluation (FVE)* analyzes how a student actually performs visually in real life environments. The evaluation must include the performance of 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. (19 TAC §89.1040(c)(12)(A)(ii)(I))
 - Input from both a TVI and a COMS ensures consideration of all aspects of functional use of vision.
 - The FVE should reflect and link to the student's assistive technology evaluation results.
- Clinical low vision evaluations are needed to prescribe optical devices that enhance visual efficiency for students with low vision. (Low Vision Position Paper, Association for the Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired). Eye care specialists (typically ophthalmologists or optometrists with specialized training in low vision) conduct clinical low vision evaluations.
 - If the IEP committee, based upon the recommendation of the FVE results, agrees to the need for a clinical low vision evaluation, it is the legal responsibility of the local education agency to provide this service (34 CFR § 300.154(b)(2)).
- A learning media assessment (LMA) must include recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and/ or auditory learning media are appropriate for the student and whether or not there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area. (TAC § 89.1040(c)(12)(A)(ii)(II))
 - The LMA is an important evaluation tool for determining a literacy medium. IDEA states, "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." (34 CFR §300.324(a)(2)(iii))
 - The LMA should reflect and link to the student's assistive technology evaluation results.

- Based on the considerations of the law, for some students, literacy decisions may require ongoing diagnostic instruction in a variety of media, and careful data collection. There should be adequate exposure to and practice with tactile, visual and auditory formats in order to meaningfully evaluate the student's strengths and needs. Information from a clinical low vision evaluation is an important component for students with low vision in determining whether there are optical and/or electronic devices that will assist the student in efficiently accessing print.

Note: Often the FVE and LMA are combined into a single report.

- An *orientation and mobility evaluation* must be conducted by a person who is appropriately certified as an orientation and mobility specialist and **must be conducted 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.** The evaluation will analyze the student's level of safe and efficient movement and recommend needed instructional services for current and future mobility needs. (TEC §30.002, Subsection (c-1) and (c-2))

Note: After the required O&M evaluation for initial eligibility for visual impairment, a COMS must be part of the multidisciplinary team that determines the scope of any needed full and individual reevaluations.

- A screening is not the same as an evaluation (34 CFR§300.302). To make professional decisions regarding eligibility, an evaluation must be conducted by a qualified professional.

Eligibility for children under the age of three

If a visual impairment is suspected in a child under the age of three, the Health and Human Services (HHSC) – Division of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Program coordinates the referral process. As part of the eligibility process, ECI assists families with obtaining documentation of the vision problem from a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist. ECI provides the local school district with doctors' reports, consent for referral for evaluation, and consent for release of information. The ECI provider must refer the child to the LEA and to the local office of the HHSC Blind Children's Program, with parental consent and within 5 days of receiving an eye medical report. (40 TAC §108.815). The local district is responsible for providing the FVE, LMA, and O&M evaluations. The initial evaluation and the initial assessments of the child and family and the initial IFSP meeting must be completed within 45 days from the date the lead agency or ECI provider receives the referral of the child, with some exceptions (34 CFR §303.310)

- If the child is already being served by ECI when a vision loss is discovered, the timelines for evaluation and services should be governed by a local agreement between the school district and the area ECI program. See Section XXIV for legal citations.

Eligibility for students with DeafBlindness

For students who are **DeafBlind**, there are specific additional criteria for eligibility in both visual impairment and auditory impairment. (TAC §89.1040(c)(2)(A-D). These criteria are listed below:

Deaf-blindness. A student with deaf-blindness is one who has been determined to meet the criteria for deaf-blindness as stated in 34 CFR §300.8(c)(2). In meeting the criteria stated in 34 CFR §300.8(c)(2) a student with deaf-blindness is one who, based on the evaluations specified in subsections (c)(2) and (c)(3) of this section:

- a) Meets the eligibility criteria for *auditory impairment* specified in subsection (c)(3) of this section and visual impairment specified in subsection (c)(12) of this section
- b) Meets the eligibility criteria for a student with a *visual impairment* and has a suspected hearing loss that cannot be demonstrated conclusively, but a speech/language therapist, a certified speech and language therapist, or a licensed speech language pathologist indicates there is no speech at an age when speech would normally be expected.
- c) Has documented hearing and visual losses that, if considered individually, may not meet the requirements for auditory impairment or visual impairment, but the *combination of such losses* adversely affects the student's educational performance; OR
- d) Has a documented medical diagnosis of a *progressive medical condition* that will result in concomitant hearing and visual losses that, without special education intervention, will adversely affect the student's educational performance.

Students will need to have an O&M evaluation for initial eligibility and a COMS on the team - for students with auditory impairments, an O&M evaluation should address how the student accesses auditory information in addition to the other evaluation elements noted above.

V. The Full and Individual Evaluation for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #2:

Visual impairment professionals provide expertise specific to visual impairment prior to and during the full and individual evaluation.

Specially designed instruction (special education) involves adapting content, methodology or delivery of instruction as needed to address the unique needs of an eligible child that result from the child's disability, and ensure access to the general curriculum (34 CFR § 300.39(b)(3)(ii)). Visual impairment professionals are essential partners in the evaluation process. Involvement of the teacher of students with visual impairments and certified orientation and mobility specialist in the Full Individual Evaluation (FIE) is supported by 34 CFR §300.304(c)(3)) that comprehensive evaluations are administered "by trained and

knowledgeable personnel" to accurately reflect the child's aptitude or achievement rather than impaired sensory, manual, or speaking skills; the Texas Education Code aligns with IDEA.

Full initial evaluations for students from birth through two years:

Evaluations of students under three years of age must be comprehensive, multidisciplinary evaluations designed to identify supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of their infant or toddler (34 CFR §303.321). There are significant changes in demands on visual and sensory systems in the early developmental years. A comprehensive evaluation of a child under three years of age includes, but is not limited to, the child's:

- Current health and physical status, including vision, hearing, and nutrition.
- Functioning in developmental areas (gross motor, fine motor, cognitive, language, self-help, and social development); and
- Functional abilities to participate in the family's daily activities.

For students under three years of age, ECI is responsible for making sure a child has all the necessary vision and/or auditory evaluations and medical examinations. The ECI service coordinator must convene a meeting *at least every six months* to evaluate and revise the IFSP as needed (40 TAC §108.1004(f)). Guidance for meeting standards in Texas can be found at the ESC XI website: <http://www.slsbvitexas.org/Page/92>.

The local district is responsible for providing services for children birth through two years old with visual impairment (and with auditory impairment). Texas Administrative Code 40 TAC §108.1011 specifies that the IFSP team must include a TVI and that the TVI must be given 10 days written notice of initial, six-month review and annual IFSP meetings. A COMS must conduct an orientation and mobility evaluation as part of determining initial eligibility and be a member of the team considering subsequent comprehensive needs for evaluation. Every six months or annually for children under the age of three, it is critical to consider a student's evaluation data to determine how that child is functioning in new environments and whether new evaluation is needed. See Section XXIV for legal excerpts.

Initial evaluations for students 3 years old and older

District personnel or family members may refer a student for initial evaluation for a specialized instruction if there is a suspected visual impairment that may be impacting educational performance. The purpose of the full and individual initial evaluation is twofold:

- 1) To determine whether the child is a child with a disability and
- 2) If so, to decide upon specially designed instruction to incorporate into the child's IEP (34 CFR §300.305(a)) (20 U.S.C. 1414(c)(1)-(4)).

The first time a student is formally evaluated as a student with a visual impairment, whether or not the student is already in special education for another disability category, the team must make two determinations:

- xI. Does the child meet eligibility as a child with a visual impairment?
- xII. By reason of that visual impairment, will the child need special education and related services?

The essential evaluations for initial eligibility for visual impairment include: An eye medical, Functional Vision Evaluation, Learning Media Assessment (FVE/LMA), and Orientation and Mobility evaluation. These evaluations should typically be completed and reports shared **prior to evaluation by other members of the team**, including specialized instructional support personnel such as school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, counselors and related service professionals. This ensures that testing procedures are appropriate reflections of the student's achievement and do not reflect their sensory status (34 CFR §300.304(c)(3)).

An FIE is required for any child being considered for special education services as a result of visual impairment. The FIE for initial eligibility must include a comprehensive review of student progress in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities (34 CFR § 300.304(c)(4)).

TEC §30.002 requires that students who are determined eligible for the district's special education program on the basis of a visual impairment receive evaluation and instruction in the expanded core curriculum (ECC). It outlines the nine areas of the ECC that are related to the disability of visual impairment. 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. See Section VI for a complete explanation of these instructional areas, which *should be included in a comprehensive evaluation* of students with visual impairments and in developing the annual individualized education program (IEP).

Reevaluations for continued eligibility and to design IEPs

Vision professionals (TVIs and COMS) must be included in the multidisciplinary team making determinations about needed re-evaluations for students with visual impairments. Their re-evaluations should typically be completed and reports shared **prior to evaluation by other members of the team**, including specialized instructional support personnel such as school psychologists, educational diagnosticians, counselors and related service professionals. This will ensure evaluation media and procedures accurately reflect the student's achievement (34 CFR §300.304(c)(3)). A FIE for continued eligibility must include a comprehensive review of student progress in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, if appropriate, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities (34 CFR § 300.304(c)(4)). TEC §30.002 requires that students who are determined eligible for the district's special education program on the basis of a visual impairment receive evaluation and instruction in the expanded core curriculum (ECC).

Role of VI professionals in evaluations

The input of trained and knowledgeable professionals is required by IDEA 34 CFR 300.304. Specialized vision professionals are critical for:

- **Performing the FVE and LMA** to establish eligibility and appropriate modifications and accommodations for evaluation and instruction (34 CFR §300.306(a)(1), (19 TAC§§89.1040(b) and (c)(12)(A)(ii)(I) and (II)).
- **Performing the O&M evaluation** to establish eligibility and/or reevaluate the need for orientation and mobility instruction (19 TAC

- §§89.1040(b) and (c)(12)(A)(ii)(I).
- Ensuring that evaluation includes all appropriate areas of the **expanded core curriculum** (34 CFR §300.304(c)(4)) and (34 CFR §300.305 (a)(2)(ii)), (TEC §30.002 (c)(4)).
- **Establishing appropriate assessment techniques**, methods, and materials for the Texas Student Assessment Program and local assessments;
- **Assisting other team members** in the use of appropriate evaluation tools and methods;
- Providing input regarding evaluation results as they relate to visual impairments, (34 CFR §300.304(c)(3)), and
- Developing appropriate IEP programming recommendations.

VI. Defining the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

Guideline/Standard #3:

Evaluations of all areas of the expanded core curriculum are used to determine individual student programs.

Evaluations to document the present level of academic and functional performance for the development of the individualized education program are required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Texas Education Code. (34 CFR §300.320 (a)(1)), (TEC §30.002) TX Education Code further specifies that each child eligible for special education as a result of visual impairment receive evaluation and instruction in the expanded core curriculum. (TEC § 30.002(b)(4)(A)(B)).

The expanded core curriculum areas include educational needs that result from the visual impairment to enable the student “to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum”; and "other educational needs that result from the child's disability" as required by IDEA (34 CFR §300.324). There are increasing resources available to support evaluation in each area of the Expanded Core Curriculum. The [ECC Resources for Evaluation and Curriculum](#) is available from TSBVI publications and provides a compilation of resources for easy reference.

The presence of a visual impairment requires that these skills be thoroughly evaluated and systematically taught to these students by teachers with specialized expertise. (NASDSE, 1999, p. 70)

Once eligibility as a student with visual impairment is established, instructional needs in the following skill areas should be considered, based upon evaluation results, as the IFSP/IEP is being developed:

Compensatory Skills needed to access the general curriculum, including:

- *Access to literacy and mathematics* through braille (including literary codes and Nemeth Code) and/or print, handwriting skills and auditory skills. Texas

Education Code assumes that all students who are functionally blind¹ are to be taught braille unless their learning media assessment recommends different learning media. (TEC §30.002(f)). Currently Texas students are beginning to transition to the Unified English Braille code for literary purposes, while maintaining Nemeth Code for math and science materials². Many students with low vision use regular print with magnification devices. Some students need both print and braille. Students with multiple disabilities, including DeafBlindness, may use a tactile or object symbol system for literacy. Tactile learning must include instruction in tactile graphics, increasingly used in instructional materials and assessment tools.

- Communication needs that will vary depending on degree of functional vision, effects of additional disabilities, and the task to be done. Students with DeafBlindness and others may have alternative communication systems such as tactile sign language, symbol or object communication, or calendar boxes.
- Concept development that may be significantly impacted due to limited visual observation. Fragmented concepts can impede social, academic, and vocational development. It is essential to offer specific and sequential hands-on lessons, systematic tactile exploration and clear verbal explanations to build a broad base of experiences. Instruction is essential because 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.
- Many abstract mathematical, geographical, and scientific concepts must be taught with alternative strategies and materials, including Nemeth Code and tactile graphics. Nemeth Code is a specialized braille code used to transcribe mathematical symbols as well as scientific and other technical materials. Teachers must ensure that students have tactile materials to convey the same information that sighted peers learn from pictures, graphs, diagrams, maps and other visual representations. Often, when descriptions cannot adequately convey information, students require quality tactile graphics in their educational programming. The use of graphics in assessment materials to test comprehension of concepts has greatly increased over time. Students must have time to train and practice with tactile graphics in order to achieve competency.

Orientation and Mobility (O&M): Safe and efficient travel throughout the environment is a critical component in the education of students with visual impairments. Students with multiple impairments will benefit from O&M instruction that facilitates purposeful movement and increases independence to the greatest degree possible. In order for students to not only succeed in school but also be prepared for post-secondary and

¹ Functionally blind is a term in TX Education Code. The Legal Framework states: A student who is visually impaired is functionally blind if the student will use tactual media (which includes braille) as a primary tool for learning to be able to communicate in both reading and writing at the same level of proficiency as other students of comparable ability.

² See "Updates to the braille code", page 4 for information on braille code changes.

vocational pursuits, they will need to develop independent travel skills in the community and in using public transportation systems.

Orientation & mobility evaluation and instruction should begin in infancy with basic body and 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.

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, which are important cues to participate successfully in conversations and activities. Social skills that sighted children 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. Full access to appropriate school career preparation programs may require adaptations. 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 education, to increase literacy options, and to enhance communication or improve their functional capabilities. Assistive technology (AT) has also dramatically improved mobility options. There are a variety of high and low-tech AT tools designed specifically for students with visual impairments that may require specialized instruction. AT can include electronic equipment such as switches, tablets and portable notetakers; computer access such as magnification software, screen readers, refreshable braille displays and keyboarding; and low-tech devices such as an abacus, a braille, Active Learning materials (e.g., Little Room®), calendar systems and optical devices. Clinical low vision evaluations may be recommended to determine technology devices that support visual efficiency.

Independent Living Skills: Personal hygiene, dressing, food preparation, time and money management, housekeeping, and organization skills are critical skills for successful transition from school to independent living. Young children begin learning basic skills in independent living from visual observation and imitation. Most students with

visual impairments, however, will need systematic instruction, specific adaptations, and frequent practice. Depending on the level of vision, cognition and other individual characteristics of a student, adaptations needed may include highlighting on oven controls, magnifying lenses for grooming, or tactile cues for matching clothing. These skills are not typically evaluated or taught in a sequential and systematic basis in general education settings. Family members may require assistance to implement 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, given sufficient hands-on experiences 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 possible adaptations that would allow them to participate in these activities. Such skills should include both individual and organized group activities for students at all ages and levels.

Self-Determination: Self-determination includes personal decision-making, self-advocacy, problem solving and assertiveness. These skills lead to personal competence and are important components of positive self-esteem. Students who become effective advocates for themselves through instruction in developing self-determination skills can meaningfully participate in their educational and transition planning and make positive adult lifestyle, job, and other life choices upon graduation. Students need self-determination skills to be active and effective members of their educational team, to participate in the development of their IEP and to participate in developing post-secondary goals that are meaningful and reflect personal interests and abilities.

Sensory Efficiency (including visual, tactual, and auditory skills): Students who are blind, have low vision or are DeafBlind need systematic instruction to learn efficient use of all of their senses.

- Instruction in *visual efficiency* must be individually designed and based on accurate evaluation. Instruction may include using visual gaze to make choices, tracking cars when crossing the street, responding to visual cues in the environment, and/or using optical devices such as magnifiers and telescopes.
- For some students, 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.
- Systematic evaluation of and instruction in *auditory* skills are 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, use recorded media, or use echolocation for orientation.
- Sensory learning also addresses the development of the proprioceptive, kinesthetic, and vestibular systems, all of which can be impacted by vision loss. Some students may rely upon olfactory and gustatory skills and need instruction in those areas.

VII. Addressing Curricular Needs of Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #4:

Appropriate instructional time, accommodations, and modifications are provided to meet all identified areas in individual student programs.

Since students with visual impairments have unique learning needs, instructional teams should consider creative strategies to meet those needs. IDEA requires consideration of present levels of performance in both academic and functional areas. Texas law specifically notes that there will need to be flexibility on the part of school districts to meet the special needs of children with visual impairments (TEC 30.002 (c)(5)).

Classroom teachers are primarily responsible for instruction in the academic content, with the support of VI professionals to accommodate or modify instructional design and materials to address the impact of visual impairment. The team, with active participation from the TVI, should develop a plan for determining the student's present levels of academic achievement and functional performance (PLAAFP). The TVI and COMS may have specific input into needed adaptations, modifications and appropriate materials due to their knowledge of the impact of that student's visual impairment. A COMS must conduct the O&M evaluation and provide specific mobility instruction. The TVI should be primarily responsible for assessing strengths and needs in braille, Nemeth Code, and abacus.

Collaborative efforts addressing the ECC by the TVI, COMS, parents and other team members is an effective model for many ECC areas (e.g., social skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure, self-determination, etc.). The district must note in the IEP how they will document student progress when non-ISD staff addresses an identified IEP goal. Enrichment programs can be used to supplement the IEP without documenting the objectives in a goal.

There are new curricula becoming available to support instruction in each area of the Expanded Core Curriculum. The [ECC Resources for Evaluation and Curriculum](#) is available from TSBVI publications and provides a compilation of resources for easy reference.

Providing services for students under the age of three

For students who are under three years old, local districts must provide year-round hearing and vision services to children from birth to 36 months of age who have visual or auditory impairment, based upon developmental needs and family priorities. The ECI programs are now administered by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. The most current Memorandum of Understanding outlining ECI and local education agency joint responsibilities for students under three years old with visual impairment was developed prior to the agency changes, and is accessed by clicking on Early Transition MOU at <http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147494979>.

Instructional time

Instruction in the expanded core curriculum may require additional time beyond the regular school day and year. It can be difficult to find time within the typical school program for addressing all needed elements of the general academic and expanded core curricula. The Texas Education Code notes that students' unique educational curriculum needs may be addressed in many ways, including:

- A longer school day (which might require flexible instructional work times, alternate transportation and locations).
- Additional years in school: Students with disabilities may be eligible for educational services from 0-21 years of age.
- Application for high school credit for vision-specific coursework, following state regulations and procedures. See Section XXV for more information on innovative courses.
- After-school programs sponsored either by the local education agency (LEA), regional education service center (ESC), or community or private agencies.
- Summer programs, either locally, regionally or offered by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI).
- Short-term programs offered by TSBVI Short Term Programs
- Programs offered by Health and Human Services, Blind Children's Program and/or Texas Workforce Commission, Transition Rehabilitation Program
- Intervention in the child's home or natural environment for children under three years of age. (TEC §30.002)

Instructional accommodations/modifications

In addition to the specific areas of the expanded core curriculum, students with visual impairments may need accommodations to access the same well-rounded education program and school assignments as their peers. These accommodations may include extended time, specialized instruction, specialized materials and devices, 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 math concepts, and spatial concepts. Specialized equipment and materials may also be needed such as a braille, raised line paper, a cane, an abacus, a talking graphing calculator, or specialized software for computers.

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. It is critical that families and students understand that some modifications will impact the permissible degree plan and secondary education options.

VIII. Evaluation and Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

TEC §§30.002 (c)(4) and 10(e)(1-5) states that children with visual impairments receiving special education services in school districts receive evaluation of the [impact of the] impairment and instruction in the expanded core curriculum.

Evaluation of the expanded core curriculum

Evaluation of each of the ECC areas is critical to measuring success and assuring lifetime independence. There are a wide variety of formal and informal evaluations that can appropriately determine student functioning level in these vision-specific topics. Each district should have a systematic process to ensure that all ECC areas listed in TEC §30.002 have been considered.

A COMS needs to be a member of the committee that determines what evaluations are needed. Both the TVI and/or the COMS have roles in evaluating or ensuring appropriate evaluation of the student's needs in all areas of the expanded core curriculum. The TVI should take the lead in evaluation of compensatory skills, while the COMS must perform the O&M evaluation. In other areas of the expanded core curriculum, the two professionals may collaborate with other members of the team, including the family, to ensure valid comprehensive evaluation.

Each district should develop a way to annually prioritize a student's needs and strengths in areas of the ECC, and to monitor ongoing progress. Priority ECC areas included in an IEP may vary from year to year for a particular student based on identified needs and are ultimately determined by the ARD committee. Progress can be documented on the VI Supplement, in the student's district folder or another designated format and procedure for storing this information. Evaluation in the ECC can be supported with the use of checklists. One useful source is the ESC Region 10 website:

<https://www.region10.org/programs/visually-impaired-services/expanded-core-ecc-checklists/>

Instruction in the ECC

Instruction in the ECC areas can be addressed using a variety of service delivery models. Creative strategies for finding instructional time are noted in Section VII, above. There are resource materials available both in print (e.g. Allman, Lewis and Spungin, 2014) and online (e.g. www.tsbvi.edu); many are compiled in [ECC Resources for Evaluation and Curriculum](#) available from TSBVI publications.

The TVI and the COMS are primary resources for instruction in the ECC, although the family, early intervention specialists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, classroom teachers, other district personnel, education service center staff, TSBVI programs or the Health and Human Services Commission, Blind Children's Program and/or Texas Workforce Commission, Transition Rehabilitation Program can also play important roles in providing needed instruction (TEC §§30.002 ((c)(5) A-E and (10) A-E). For children under three years of age, the parent(s)/caregiver should be considered the primary instructor(s).

Instruction in the ECC may need to be provided outside of regular school hours. TEC §30.002(c)(5) requires local school districts to provide for flexibility to meet the special needs of children with visual impairments and Section (e)(10) specifically requires a description of the arrangements for services beyond regular school hours. The 2016-2017 Student Attendance Accounting Handbook, available on the TEA website, includes an example of O&M services offered in the evening (underline added):

If your school district provides instructional services for special education after school or on Saturday, the contact hours may be counted only if the services cannot be provided or are unavailable at any other time (for example, speech therapy provided on Saturday as a result of the unavailability of speech therapists during the regular school week, orientation and mobility services or vision instruction provided outside the regular school day because they must be provided at night or in periods of darkness).

SAAH Section 3.6.5 Instruction Provided Outside of the Regular School Day.

IX. Role of the Certified Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI)

Guideline/Standard #5:

Certified teachers of students with visual impairments perform required evaluations and instruction.

Certified teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) are required IEP team members for all students with visual impairments, including those with DeafBlindness. (34 CFR §300.321)(19 TAC §§ 89.1050(c)(4)(A) and (C)). Roles are defined by the Council for Exceptional Children and these competencies are incorporated into accredited university training programs. The educational needs of these students vary widely, the role of the TVI must be flexible to meet changing conditions, and ongoing professional development is essential. From initial evaluation to instruction to ongoing assessment, the TVI plays a critical role in helping students, teachers, paraeducators, family members, and related service personnel. For information about certification requirements, university coursework, and programs for training TVIs, refer to the Administrator Tool Box at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/tb>. A University newsletter is available at each ESC and on the TSBVI website. Go to <http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional> for information to many questions prospective students may have about the TVI and O&M certification programs in Texas.

Certified Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) have many roles, including:

Assessment and Evaluation

- Conducting the functional vision evaluation and the learning media assessment.
- Assisting other professionals in developing appropriate evaluation and assessment strategies.

- Interpreting eye medical reports, evaluation and assessment results regarding the impact of a visual impairment.
- Evaluating student progress and collecting data to demonstrate student progress per district policy.
- Evaluating areas of the expanded core curriculum.
- Recommending and collaborating in appropriate specialized evaluations

Direct Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum

- Providing direct instruction in visual efficiency, tactile symbols, braille (including literary and Nemeth Code), assistive technology, auditory skills, social skills, use of near and distance low vision optical devices, skills for transition and other areas of the expanded core curriculum.
- Supporting parents of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers as they help their children reach developmental milestones with adapted strategies specific to needs related to the visual impairment (services may be in the home, at an early intervention program, or in the community).
- Providing support to the student to facilitate development of self-esteem, self-determination, and social acceptance.

Supporting Educational Teams

The teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) must be able to educate, support, and collaborate with administrators, family members and all other members of the instructional team who work with the student. The TVI must be able to convey professional opinions in a diplomatic, collaborative manner in order to ensure that appropriate programming is recommended for the student with a visual impairment. (<http://community.cec.sped.org/dvi/home>) The TVI's supporting roles include:

- Supporting families in developing infant and early childhood goals and objectives related to their child's visual impairment.
- Supporting transitions from ECI to preschool, preschool to elementary school, elementary to middle school, middle school to high school and through graduation.
- Providing opportunities for families to meet other families and to access training.
- Coordinating services for students with certified orientation and mobility specialists.
- Consulting with parents, teachers, and other specialized instructional support personnel in the home, community, and school on providing instruction in the expanded core curriculum areas.
- Observing instruction across the day in order to support consistent educational programming across environments.
- Supervising/coaching paraeducators to ensure provision of quality adapted materials, promote independence and support mastery of IEP goals.
- Modifying the environment to accommodate specific visual needs.
- Modeling appropriate techniques for providing instruction.
- Providing, creating, and acquiring adapted materials.
- Providing in-service training and collaborative consultation to the extended educational team.
- Recommending adapted strategies for access to the general curriculum and

- participation in the school community.
- Ensuring that instruction in necessary skills for transitioning from school to adult life is provided.
- Providing guidance to help the team develop a vision- specific support system for transitioning from school to adult life.
- Building independence and success in home, community, and school environments.
- Researching technology options and connecting with vendors for optical devices and assistive technology solutions for students.

Administrative/Record Keeping Duties

- Registering each eligible student with the Texas Education Agency via the Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairment and DeafBlind Child Count.
- Maintaining records on all evaluations, IFSPs/IEPs, and progress reports.
- Attending IFSP and ARD meetings.
- Monitoring and recording student progress toward IEP goals/objectives.
- Ordering and providing adapted instructional materials as appropriate for each student.
- Ordering adapted materials from the American Printing House for the Blind through the Federal Quota program and from other resources.
- Consult with guidance counselors about accommodated state and College Board tests.

Federal and state laws mandate specific involvement of certified teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) in the educational programs of students with visual impairments, including those with DeafBlindness and other additional disabilities:

- TVIs must be available to students with visual impairments, including deaf-blindness. (34 CFR §300.321, TAC §89.1131(b)(3))
- IDEA requires that an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results be a member of the IEP team. (34 CFR §300.321).
- A TVI must attend initial and annual individualized family service plan (IFSP) meetings and any other IFSP meeting, for children birth – 2 years of age with visual impairment, including DeafBlindness, that addresses issues related to or impacted by the visual impairment. (Early Childhood Transition MOU).
- A TVI must attend each ARD committee meeting for students with visual impairment, including those with DeafBlindness, unless they meet the exception conditions regarding attendance or excusal described in 34 CFR §300.321(e)(1-2).
- In general, the TVI is not the principal instructor in academic content areas; instruction in the general curriculum is the primary responsibility of the general education teachers.
- The district shall ensure that the ARD committee for each student with a disability includes the required members. (19 TAC §89.1050(c))
- All special education and related service personnel must be certified,

endorsed, or licensed in the area(s) of assignments. (ESSA, 34 CFR §300.321 and TAC §89.1131(a))

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

Guideline/Standard #6:

Certified orientation and mobility specialists perform required evaluations and instruction in orientation and mobility.

Movement, independent or supported, is critical for learning. A COMS is required to conduct an orientation and mobility (O&M) evaluation for *initial eligibility* of a student under the IDEA category of visual impairment (TEC §30.002 (c-1)) and to be a member of the multidisciplinary team in evaluating needed reevaluations. Orientation & mobility is recognized in IDEA as a related service, which may be required to assist a child with a visual impairment to benefit from **special education**. Under TEC §30.002, orientation and mobility may be considered as an instructional service if the qualifying reason for eligibility as a student with a visual impairment relates to O&M instruction. These students would qualify as visually impaired under IDEA and their instructional services would be provided by the COMS.

COMS are critical members of the team for all students with visual impairments who have identified O&M needs. Certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) provide services that enable students who are visually impaired to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement *within home, school and community environments*, and in addition support development of social, sensory, daily living, and recreation/leisure skills. (34 CFR §300.34(c)(7)(i)). The O&M needs of students with visual impairments vary widely, and ongoing professional development for COMS is essential.

In the state of Texas, an orientation and mobility specialist must be certified by the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) to provide orientation and mobility instruction in the schools (19 TAC§ 89.1131(e)). For information about university coursework and certification requirements and programs for training COMS, refer to the Administrator Tool Box 2.0 at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/tb>. A University newsletter is available at each ESC and on the TSBVI website. Go to <http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional>. It has answers to many questions prospective students may have about the TVI and O&M certification programs in Texas.

Certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) have many roles, including:

Assessment and Evaluation

- Conducting the functional vision evaluation
- Conducting the orientation and mobility evaluation.
- Evaluating student progress and collecting data to demonstrate student progress per district policy.
- Evaluating ECC areas, often in collaboration with the TVI

Direct Instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum

- Encouraging purposeful movement, exploration of immediate surroundings, and motor development for infants 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 in a variety of settings (e.g., using traffic sounds at an intersection to cross the street).
- Facilitating purposeful movement and independence to the greatest degree possible for students with multiple impairments, including through active learning systems for students with severe disabilities.
- Facilitating development of self-esteem, self-determination, social skills, independent living skills, and recreation and leisure.
- Instructing in efficient use of low vision for movement.
- Orienting students to unfamiliar environments and different lighting conditions (e.g., night travel).
- Teaching efficient use of optical devices.
- Teaching use of mobility tools, including the long cane and adaptive mobility devices, for safely negotiating the environment.
- Encouraging and reinforcing use of braille skills in the community for accessing information (e.g. signage)
- Reinforcing and developing listening skills.
- Teaching the use of assistive technology that supports movement and travel, including GPS systems and other navigation tools as well as online applications.
- Arranging travel experiences for instruction in the community, including residential and business environments and public transportation systems.

Supporting Educational Teams

- Supporting families of young children in developing gross and fine motor skills, sensory skills, basic concepts and other developmental milestones.
- Ensuring continuity from early childhood intervention services to school-aged programs.
- Ensuring that appropriate vision-specific supports are in place and the necessary skills 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, including family 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 orientation and mobility strategies for access to the general curriculum such as physical education class and participation in school and community extracurricular activities

Administrative/Record Keeping Duties

- Maintaining records on all evaluations, IFSPs/IEPs, and progress reports.
- Attending IFSP and ARD meetings.

- Ordering and providing adapted materials from the American Printing House for the Blind through the Federal Quota program and from other resources.

XI. Roles of Paraeducators for Students with Visual Impairments and DeafBlindness

Guideline/Standard #7:

Written job descriptions identify comprehensive roles of paraeducators supporting instruction of students with visual impairments, including DeafBlindness.

The decision to add a paraeducator (also called a paraprofessional, classroom aide or teaching assistant) to a student's team is made by the ARD committee after careful consideration of what modifications are necessary to achieve proposed IEP goals. The roles of paraeducators will vary with the specific student or classroom being supported. In addition, there are unique categories of support staff for students who are blind, described below. As required in the ESSA, paraprofessionals paid for with Title 1 funds must meet applicable State certification and licensure requirements. In addition, when working with students with visual impairment, these staff members need specific and ongoing training on the impact of vision loss and the individual's other learning characteristics. Guidance and specific direction from the TVI or COMS is necessary in order to effectively support effective strategies to address sensory impairment.

Paraeducators must be provided training on their role and the roles of all team members. The impact of a visual impairment on development varies widely; paraeducators need information and ongoing coaching on instructional strategies appropriate for their individual students with sensory impairments. When simply assigned to a student without proper preparation, paraeducators may act as a barrier between the student and peer involvement, improperly direct instruction away from the teachers, or reduce independent skill acquisition. Over-reliance on a paraeducator over time can lead students to develop passivity and dependence on prompts from others.

Classroom paraeducators may be hired to provide overall support to the larger class with particular duties for a student with a visual impairment and/or DeafBlindness. Their role may include assistance for activities of daily living, health and safety, and/or access to the environment. Many programs hire paraeducators to provide assistance with material preparation. Preparation may include general copying, highlighting and enlarging or adapting materials based on the student's learning media assessment, and/or scanning materials.

As stated in State Board of Educator Certification Rules, [19 TAC §230.61](#), paraeducators work under the supervision of a certified teacher or teaching team. They supplement instruction and practice of skills introduced by the teaching team, support implementation of IEP goals and student behavioral plans, and may contribute data for student progress monitoring to the team.

Braille transcribers

When there are students reading braille, districts will need to hire braille transcribers. Transcribers need intensive training in order to provide specialized braille materials for literacy, music and math, and computer code instruction, using computer software and tactile graphics devices. The TVI will specify learning media for each student and oversee material preparation. Inservice training, both online and in person, is offered by the Education Service Centers, the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

Certification courses in braille codes is available from the National Federation of the Blind for a person to acquire National Library Service Brailist Certification. Find more information at: <http://www.nfb.org/transcribers>.

Interveners

Interveners are specially trained paraeducators who ensure appropriate access to instruction for some students who are DeafBlind. Interveners are needed for students with DeafBlindness who 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. (See <http://www.tsbvi.edu/materials-on-DeafBlindness/1886-interveners-for-students-with-DeafBlindness-in-texas>) Training should include information on DeafBlindness in general and also on the specific communication and learning strategies that are appropriate for each individual student. Training for interveners is available from VI professionals in the local districts, from regional ESC consultants, from the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and via web-based resources.

There is also a category of community intervener within the Medicaid Waiver program. These interveners work with people with DeafBlindness, all ages, outside the school settings. For information, see <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/deaf-blind-multiple-disabilities-dbmd-program-manual>.

Paraeducator job functions differ according to role, but generally, duties will include:

- Assisting vision professionals and campus staff to adapt/modify instructional materials, to include use of braille translation, magnification devices or assistive technology software.
- Ordering, storing, and distributing large print and braille books and other adaptive materials, under teacher supervision.
- Assisting teacher(s) with individual student activities to implement the IEP.
- Reinforcing O&M skills for movement of students between instructional locations or activities.
- Increasing access for students with DeafBlindness to their immediate environment
- Implementing the student's communication system per the IEP

Sample job descriptions of paraeducators, braille transcribers, interveners and other paraeducators are part of the Administrator's Tool Box found on the TSBVI website at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/tb-jobs>.

XII. Role of the Family in the Individualized Family Service Plan/ Individualized Education Program (IFSP/IEP) Process for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #8:

Families are active members of the educational team.

Quality education is fostered by collaboration between educators and families. Parent training and counseling are included in the Texas Education Code 30.002(c)(7) as one component of the comprehensive state plan for students with visual impairment in order to support effective interaction between the school and home. Family members of children with visual impairment, including those with additional disabilities, including DeafBlindness, may need information and support to

- incorporate activities into daily routines that promote their child's development
- ensure that their child has access to information that other children gain through vision
- adapt the home and community environment for safety and increased access
- connect with other families of children with similar needs
- help their child master skills necessary to access and interpret their environment
- locate information and resources about their child's specific needs
- understand their child's unique educational requirements
- understand the combined impact of additional disabilities, such as a hearing loss or other impairments

Collaboration of all team members, including family members, helps to assure a shared focus on student success. Families bring knowledge of their child but also need information about the unique needs of and services for students with visual impairments, including DeafBlindness, 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 the family member and the child. Families need knowledge to advocate effectively for their child's needs. Close partnership with the TVI and COMS is critical. Early intervention services should be based on the needs and concerns of each family and child.

A quick checklist for families is available at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/resource-pages/4248-is-my-child-getting-a-quality-vi-program> . Another resource that may be helpful is the "Considering Blindness and Visual Impairment", a checklist originally developed by the Center for Parent Information & Resources, 2010. It is available at <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/considering-visual>.

Families of students with visual impairments have the same rights and responsibilities as families of all students with and without disabilities. Texas Education Code § 30.004 requires each school district to provide parents with information about the availability of

services at state institutions and their rights in regard to eligibility and admission. Specific notice about services available through the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is required under TEC 30.002(e)(3). The form can be downloaded from this site: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/school/19/comprehensive-programs/195-general-information-for-parents>.

The ESSA mandates extensive family engagement for families of students in Title 1 schools, while IDEA defines rights of parents of children with disabilities. These requirements related to increasing participation of families in the education of their children include the right to explanations of the IDEA procedural safeguards, confidentiality of and access to their child's records, participation in their child's educational meetings, independent evaluations, prior written notice, etc. as outlined in multiple sections of the statute, including 34 CFR §§300.306(a)(1), §300.322(c), §300.327, §300.328 and §300.501(b-c). [Texas Project First](#) is a Texas Education Agency sponsored resource for information on parent rights in special education in Texas.

XIII. Service Delivery for Infants with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard #9:

Vision professionals are members of the instructional team for all birth through 2-year-old children with visual impairments and available for services year-round.

The Health and Human Services Commission - Early Childhood Intervention (HHSC-ECI) is the lead agency in Texas for services for infants with disabilities. However, local districts provide specialized services specifically for infants with visual and/or auditory impairments at no cost to families as mandated by IDEA Part C. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governs roles and responsibilities and sets standards and funding agreements between HHSC-ECI and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for students with visual and/or auditory impairments. The MOU states that it is a responsibility of the TEA to ensure that LEAs provide year-round hearing and vision services to children from birth to 36 months of age who have AI or VI. Therefore, district and ECI personnel must be available to provide services or assess children during the summer months. Programs may not exceed two successive weeks without having services available for children who need them as determined by the child's IFSP. Guidelines on standards for serving students from birth through two years of age with visual impairments can be found at the ESC XI website: <http://www.slsbvitexas.org/Page/92>.

General Information on ECI programs and links to find a local program can be found online at: <https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services>. A Parent Handbook with general information for family members is available at <https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services/eci-parent-handbook>. (See Section XXIV for relevant legal excerpts.)

Early intervention services should be based on the needs and concerns of each family and child. The purpose of early intervention is to support parents and caregivers in developing competence and confidence to help their young child learn and develop.

A training created by the ESC XI, called EIEIO, as well as other related resources, is available on the ESC XI website to help districts provide appropriate services to infants and toddlers with sensory impairments: <http://www.slsbvitexas.org/eieio>.

The teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI), and for a student with DeafBlindness, a teacher of students of the deaf and hard of hearing (TDHH), must attend each annual IFSP meeting as well as each IFSP meeting that addresses issues related to and impacted by the visual impairment and/or hearing impairment (19 TAC §89.1050). A COMS is required to perform an O&M evaluation for initial eligibility as well as be a member of the IFSP team considering the need for any re-evaluation.

The MOU promotes interagency collaboration and a coordinated system of activities, policies, and procedures to support services for infants. The ECI service coordinator arranges evaluations, coordinates the interagency team for effective delivery of services, sets up IFSP meetings, and ensures that records are accurate and up to date. The IFSP is family-driven and provides services in the child's natural environment, focusing on the needs of the child within the family. TVIs and COMS often provide services in the home setting as well as day care and other community settings for children under three.

It is the local district's responsibility to provide visual impairment or auditory impairment instructional services to all infants with sensory loss residing within district boundaries. The location of service delivery is determined as part of the IFSP process, based upon the individual needs of the child and family, after outcomes are identified and strategies are designed. The family's routines and the child's daily living experiences are relevant factors to consider in determining the location of services. Each school district develops agreements that govern coordination of services with Early Childhood Intervention programs in their area.

If a child attends daycare outside the boundaries of the school district of resident, the district may:

- Make a formal or informal arrangement with the district that the daycare is in for that district to provide the VI/AI services
- Provide services in the evening or on weekends in the child's home
- Provide services in the daycare that is outside district boundaries

The Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH) and 19 TAC §89.1035b outline legal requirements for districts to serve infants with visual impairments to be enrolled in their local district or regional day school program for the deaf (for students who are deaf and/or DeafBlind). See excerpts from IDEA, 19 TAC §89.1035, and Section 3.3.9 and 4.10 of the SAAH in Section XXIV.

XIV. Appropriate Educational Placements for Students with Visual Impairments

Guideline/Standard#10:

An array of services and placement options are available based on individual student needs.

Children under the age of three are served through ECI in the setting agreed upon in an Individual Family Service Plan to match each family situation. The most appropriate setting is the placement supporting the family in achieving chosen outcomes for their family and child, with as little disruption as possible to daily routines and family life. Though most ECI services are provided at home, they can also be provided in other locations where the child goes regularly, such as a daycare center or other community setting.

For school-aged students, IDEA provides this guidance on 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 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 of each disabled student.

(34 CFR §§ 300.115 and 300.116)

The ARD Committee should determine the most appropriate learning environment for each student based upon individual educational needs. By law, the committee must consider the least restrictive environment (LRE) for each student. LRE is typically interpreted to be the placement closest to the child's home with an appropriate program to meet assessed needs of the individual child. These needs should include both general academic needs as well as expanded core subjects for a student with a visual impairment. IDEA and Texas Education Code require the ARD Committee to first look at placement in general education with recommended accommodations and/or modifications.

By law, student needs 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 §300.116).

After considering educational needs in both the general curricula and the expanded core curriculum, the committee must carefully select from the full array of potential settings. TEC 30.002(c)(5) requires "flexibility on the part of school districts to meet the special needs of children with visual impairments". Educational settings to be considered can include but are not limited to:

- Co-teaching
- Content mastery (in class support)

- Itinerant teacher services
- Resource as an instructional arrangement specific for students with visual impairments
- Short-term programs at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI)
- Summer programs at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI)
- Self- contained classrooms
- Placement for an academic year at TSBVI, which has a residential component*

* There are specific procedures to be followed if an ARD committee determines that enrollment at TSBVI is the most appropriate educational setting. The steps to admission are posted on the TSBVI website at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/school/16-steps>.

XV. Determining Service Time from the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) and/or a Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS)

Guideline/Standard #11:

Times for specialized instruction by certified teachers of students with visual impairments and by certified orientation and mobility specialists are supported by appropriate evaluation in all areas of the expanded core curriculum for each student.

The IFSP/IEP team must determine the appropriate amount of service time that a student will receive from a TVI and/or COMS. This should be based on the student's assessed needs in both the regular curriculum and expanded core curriculum, the educational setting, the types of skills to be taught, and other factors. IEP service should include time for direct instruction, collaborative consultation with the team members, evaluation, and specialized material procurement and preparation. For infants, a plan must be based upon a comprehensive evaluation of the child's developmental progress with significant input from the family, and include identification of functional goals and outline the need for expertise from the TVI or COMS for achieving child and family outcomes.

The Visual Impairment Scale of Service Intensity of Texas (VISSIT) is a validated tool to guide decisions on the type and amount of TVI service. It helps the TVI use evaluation results in all areas of the ECC to quantify how much instructional service (direct and collaborative consultation) to recommend per individual student. A new VISSIT tool for COMS is now posted <http://www.tsbvi.edu/o-m-vissit>; further validation testing is underway. The VISSIT tools and training materials are found on the TSBVI website at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/vissit>.

Service time from the TVI and COMS should not be determined based upon availability of personnel. The district should establish procedures for documenting student need based on evaluations and use that information to make service delivery decisions.

It can be challenging to provide sufficient time when the supply of VI professionals is so limited. There is an ongoing shortage of vision professionals in this state and country. Therefore, in order to ensure adequate current and future supplies of certified and qualified vision professionals, a district's program should include ongoing recruitment for new TVIs and COMS in conjunction with the regional service centers, TSBVI, and personnel preparation programs in the state.

Service delivery option examples:

- Students require intensive instructional time when beginning to learn braille, including both literary code and Nemeth Code. A certified TVI should provide braille instruction on a daily basis, often for 1-2 hours a day. An additional 2-3 hours per day will be needed for preparation of adapted materials and extensive collaboration with the team.
- Social skills instruction must be provided frequently enough to ensure mastery and generalization. Instruction may need to be provided directly to the student with frequent guided practice and observation across school and home settings at other times. Vision professionals also have important roles in training campus staff and family members to adapt instructional approaches and/or to reinforce newly learned social skills with daily practice.
- To provide adequate time for community instruction, the COMS may schedule lessons in 2-hour blocks. Time needs to be built into a schedule to permit travel to appropriate settings as well as enough time to explore and learn decision-making skills for safety in unfamiliar situations. Once students are familiar with their immediate school environments, instruction moves into the community in order to master O&M skills in the home, school and community as needed for adult life.
- Students with low vision who are learning to use optical devices may initially require intensive direct instruction 1-3 times a week, followed by reduced instructional time as mastery increases.
- Lessons may need to be offered outside the normal school day. Some visual conditions require flexible scheduling by both the TVI and/or the COMS to support learning in nighttime environments.
- Students with multiple impairments need routines that create predictable patterns for learning. To support instruction in newly introduced skills in a transdisciplinary model, the TVI may initially schedule more intensive daily consultation for a specified period of time, and then decrease as appropriate based on student progress, for:
 - Observing the student's current skill levels
 - Working directly with the student to determine appropriate modifications to materials or instructional methodology
 - Modeling teaching to show other team members appropriate techniques
 - Monitoring student progress

- Collaborative consultative services (indirect services) for complex learners can be as time intensive as direct instruction. There should be scheduled time for active collaboration and consultation with the educational team, including family members, for each student. Considerable time will be required from the TVI and/or COMS when service delivery includes participating in team evaluations, contributing to the writing of IEPs, working periodically with the student, observing across activities, modeling appropriate teaching strategies, creating and preparing communication materials and adapted tactile graphs or learning media, and attending staffings on a student with complex needs.
- An independent student with stable vision who is making progress in academic and age appropriate ECC areas may require minimal assistance beyond collaboration around adapted materials and communication with the general education team and family. Assuming the student's progress in the ECC is evaluated by the TVI and/or COMS annually, this student may require one hour of collaborative consultative services on a monthly or twice monthly basis.
- Service delivery for infants with visual impairments should be individually planned to match the needs of the family. Family centered intervention must be sufficiently frequent – typically weekly – to develop a rapport between the family, child and professional, and to build family confidence and competence in supporting their child's development. The TVI and COMS may provide direct instruction to the infant and family. In addition, to ensure consistency and prevent fragmented services, home visits may be combined with other team members such as early interventionists, physical therapists, speech language pathologists, and/or social workers.

Direct Instruction and Collaborative Consultation models

The TVI and O&M specialist will make a recommendation for either direct instruction with collaborative consultation or collaborative consultation services. This decision must be based on the assessed needs of the student and the needs of and resources available to the educational team, including family members.

Direct service, with related consultation time, is appropriate for a student who has needs that only a particular professional can meet efficiently, legally, and appropriately. For example, the O&M specialist is the professional who should introduce instruction in the use of a cane or teach the use of distance optical devices for street crossings. The TVI is the professional who teaches new braille skills or evaluates visual functioning in classroom environments. In addition to direct services, the vision professionals must schedule consultations with other team members and the family to ensure consistency in programming across the day. Therefore, students with direct service from a vision professional will also need collaborative consultation time to support generalization of IEP objectives.

Collaborative consultation is a validated model that can be used effectively to support educational progress. Many goals and objectives can be developed and addressed collaboratively by the primary service provider, which is typically the family or early

intervention specialist or a classroom teacher, with indirect services in support from the vision professionals.

Consultation (or indirect) services help ensure that a student has multiple opportunities in a day to use a particular skill and that required accommodations are implemented throughout all instructional settings. Collaborative services should be linked to IEP or IFSP goals.

This model is critical for students who cannot generalize to new locations or situations. Collaboration is an important part of making sure that students with special needs are appropriately included in the general education classroom.

Communicating about student programming and progress with all parties involved in a student's educational program can be extremely time-intensive. Depending on the student's needs and the instructional setting, the amount of time needed for consultation can vary from daily to once a month. Observation times across the school day and at home must be scheduled to provide documentation of student progress and necessary programming adjustments. Examples of collaborative models include:

- Collaboration should occur between the family, TVI, COMS, classroom teachers, and other personnel to assure that the student's needs are appropriately addressed across settings. The TVI may demonstrate instructional strategies to the classroom teacher that will enable a student to efficiently view a lesson, and show the family how their child can access the home television. A COMS may meet with early childhood intervention staff to incorporate strategies important for sensory efficiency into other developmental lessons.
- Collaboration ensures that necessary adaptations are provided throughout the student's day. The COMS may work with school personnel so that tactual cues are provided in the hallways and classrooms to facilitate use of independent mobility skills. Similar cues might be established in the home, at day care or an afterschool job placement.
- Collaboration for a student with DeafBlindness may require organized meetings with a wide range of team members, including an intervener, a Teacher of the DeafBlind, Teacher of students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, audiologist, LSSP and other related service members.

The time needed for an individual student from vision professionals can be expected to vary over his or her educational career. Some students will perform independently and competently in school until there are changes in social demands, academic requirements, or new environments. For example, a student who has been receiving consultation only in elementary school may move to direct instructional support for new skills upon entering middle school. Once skills are acquired, the ARD committee may reduce service time.

Service time from a TVI or COMS can be evaluated in part by how successfully the chosen service delivery model is supporting student progress. More or less time can be written into an IFSP or IEP as the student's educational performance indicates. The district should establish procedures for documenting student progress and the vision professional's time.

XVI. Determining Appropriate Caseloads for Vision Professionals

Guideline/Standard #12:

Written caseload guidelines are used to evaluate caseloads of vision professionals.

Districts should establish procedures to determine appropriate student caseloads for TVIs and COMS. It is important that caseloads allow for necessary instruction and services to meet the unique educational needs of students with visual impairments. Objective tools should be administered, with supervisory input, at least annually to evaluate adequacy of staffing levels. The Administrator's Toolbox, Chapter 4, has a relevant section on Workload Analysis at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/tb-workload>. A caseload analysis is a data-based process to assess the amount of time needed for VI professionals to adequately and appropriately educate their existing student caseloads. Paired with predictions on future growth and predicted staffing changes, this analysis allows districts to use objective data to provide for student instructional needs.

Although finding highly trained personnel in this field may be a challenge for Texas schools, establishing caseloads to effectively assure that student needs are met is necessary to support a quality program. Appropriate workloads result in better student outcomes, increase student safety in school and community settings, ensure adequate instruction including intensive interventions as needed, and help retain quality staff. A set of flyers to help recruit professionals and paraprofessionals and provide information on VI workloads is available at the TSBVI website: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional>.

The Itinerant Services Division of The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) position paper on Caseloads Based on Students' Assessed Needs states:

In determining an appropriate caseload for an itinerant teacher of students with visual impairments, the following factors must be considered: direct service hours needed to implement IEP goals, time for preparation of materials, time spent in collaboration and consultation with other team members, time spent in assessment, and driving time to reach schools.

Students served using a collaborative/consultation model, particularly those with multiple impairments, may require as much time from the TVI and/or COMS as a student provided direct instruction. Participation in evaluation, observation in multiple settings and across multiple activities, modeling strategies, and attending team meetings can require extensive time, including weekly or more frequent intervention.

The Visual Impairment Scale of Service Intensity of Texas tools, developed in Texas, are now available to support the decision process of TVIs and COMS. The VISSIT tools guide TVIs and COMS to use evaluation results in all areas of the expanded core curriculum to determine how much instructional service (direct and collaborative consultation) to recommend per individual student. The VISSIT tools and training materials are on the TSBVI website at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/vissit>.

Written caseload guidelines in the professional literature advocate an average ratio of from 8 to 12 students per teacher for quality services. The National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Students with Blindness and Low Vision (CEC, 2000) noted a preferred ratio of 8:1. The American Foundation for the Blind (1989) and the California Department of Education (2014) both provide similar ranges based on national averages for caseload and class size to be used as guidelines. For itinerant teachers, both describe an average range of from 8 to 12 students for TVIs and COMS, a range of 8 to 12 for a resource room with one teacher and one paraeducator, and fewer students for classes with younger children. According to the 2016 Summary of Professionals in Visual Impairment in Texas posted at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/pds>, the 10-year average caseload for TVIs has been 15 students per full time TVI. The 10-year average caseload for COMS has been 16 students per full time equivalent. Despite a growth in the number of vision professionals in training, the student population growth has meant increasing caseloads, potentially limiting the availability of qualified staff to provide needed services to students.

The caseloads of TVIs and COMS need to be regularly monitored to assure equity between teachers as the school year progresses and adequate staffing to meet student needs.

XVII. Conclusion

Students with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities and/or DeafBlindness, are an extremely heterogeneous population. The small number of such students makes it difficult for any one school or program to have full knowledge and adequate resources to meet varied and intensive specialized needs of this unique student population. This document was designed to provide a guideline into key components for appropriate individualized education program planning for these students and critical resources available to schools and families. The document references the impact of visual impairment and key areas for delivery of quality educational services for students with visual impairments as outlined in the Goal Statements of the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities.

Further information and support is available from the Texas regional Education Service Centers, Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and local vision professionals.

XVIII. Frequently Used Links

Texas Education Code (TEC)

§ 30.002 is found at:

<http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/Docs/ED/htm/ED.30.htm> - 30.002

§ 30.004 is found at: <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us/SOTWDocs/ED/htm/ED.30.htm>

Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and the Texas Education Agency, click on the Early Transition MOU link at: <http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147494979>

The **Texas Student Attendance Accounting Handbook** is found at:

<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=25769817607>

IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Act:

(references to 34 CFR § 300.xxx, etc.)

Part B of the IDEA, relating to services for students from 3 through the school year of their 21st birthday, are found here: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/reg/idea/part-b/index.html>

Part C of the IDEA, relating to services for infants and toddlers up to age three, is found here: <http://idea.ed.gov/part-c/search/new.html>

The Every Student Succeeds Act, the amendment to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is found at: <https://www.ed.gov/essa?src=rn>

Texas Administrative Code (TAC)

The Texas Administrative Code (TAC) is found at:

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.ViewTAC](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.ViewTAC)

Search the site to find specific sections.

XIX. Additional Resources

For additional information on the education of students with visual impairments:

Websites:

- Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals: <http://www.acvrep.org>
- American Council of the Blind of Texas: <http://www.acbtexas.org>
- American Foundation for the Blind: <http://www.afb.org/>
- AFB FamilyConnect: <https://www.familyconnect.org/parentsitetime.aspx>
- AFB CareerConnect: http://www.afb.org/info/living-with-vision-loss/for-job-seekers/12?_ga=2.191381859.83260556.1504907000-1653109677.1504907000
- American Printing House for the Blind: <http://www.aph.org/>
- Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired: <http://www.aerbvi.org/>
- Benetech Bookshare: Accessible Books for Texas: <https://www.bookshare.org/cms/state/texas>
- Center for Parent Information & Resources, "Considering Blindness and Visual Impairment", a legacy resource from NICHCY, December 2010, <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/considering-visual>
- Council for Exceptional Children <http://www.cec.sped.org>, CEC-DVIDB <http://community.cec.sped.org/dvi/home>
- Deaf Blind Multi-Handicapped Association of Texas: <http://www.dbmat-tx.org>
- Education Service Center Region 10 Expanded Core Curriculum checklists: <https://www.region10.org/programs/visually-impaired-services/expanded-core-ec-c-checklists/>
- Hadley School for the Blind: <http://www.hadley.edu/default.asp>
- HHSC Early Childhood Intervention: <https://hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/early-childhood-intervention-services>
- Health and Human Services Commission, Blind Children's Program: <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/services/blind-childrens-vocational-discovery-and-development-program>

- IDEA legislation: <http://idea.ed.gov/>
- Learning Ally: <http://www.learningally.org/>
- National Federation of the Blind: <http://www.nfb.org>
- National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments: www.napvi.org
- National Center on Deaf-Blindness: <https://nationaldb.org>
- National Organization of Parents of Blind Children: <http://www.nopbc.org>
- Stephen F. Austin State University: <http://www.sfasu.edu>
- Texas Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments: <http://www.tapvi.com/>
- Texas Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired: <http://www.txaer.org/>
- Texas Education Agency – Accessible Instructional Materials: http://tea.texas.gov/Academics/Instructional_Materials/Accessible_Instructional_Materials
- Texas Education Agency – Special Education Home Page: http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education
- Texas Education Agency – Special Ed Rules and Regulations: <http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147497444>
- Texas Parents of Blind Children: <http://www.tpobc.org/>
- Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/>
- Texas Tech University: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell>
- Texas Workforce Commission: <http://www.twc.state.tx.us>

XX. Reference Publications

Allman, C., Lewis, S., and Spungin, S. (2014) ECC Essentials: Teaching the expanded core curriculum to students with visual impairments. New York: AFB Press.

Annual registration of students with visual impairment and DeafBlind child count (2016). Available at: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/texas-students/student-data-program>.

California Department of Education (2014). Guidelines for Programs Serving Students with Visual Impairments. Available for download at www.csb-cde.ca.gov/Documents/VI%20Guidelines/VI_Guidelines_110314.pdf

Department of Education 34 CFR Parts 300 and 301 RIN 1820-AB57 Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities and Preschool Grants for Children with Disabilities. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Education Final Regulations. (August 14, 2006).

Division on Visual Impairment and DeafBlindness of the Council for Exceptional Children Position Papers on the roles of VI and O&M professionals available at: <http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>

Huebner, K.M., Merk-Adak, B., & Wolffe, K. (2004). National agenda for the education of children and youths with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Holbrook, M.C. et al. (Eds.) (2017). Foundations of education, 3rd Edition Vol. I: History and theory of teaching children and youth with visual impairments. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Holbrook, M.C., et al (Eds.) (2017). Foundations of education, 3rd Edition Vol. II: Instructional strategies for teaching children and youths with visual impairments. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Loftin, M. (2006). Making evaluation meaningful: Determining additional eligibilities and appropriate educational strategies for blind and visually impaired students. Austin, TX: TSBVI.

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE): Blind and Visually Impaired Students: Educational Service Guidelines (1999). Dr. Gaylen Pugh, Project Director. Watertown, MA: Hilton Perkins Foundation, Perkins School for the Blind.

Poggrund, R. L. & Fazzi, D.L. Eds. (2002). Early focus: Working with young children who are visually impaired and their families. New York, NY: AFB Press.

Spungin, S.J. & Ferrell, K.A. (2007). The role and function of the teacher of students with visual impairments. Division on Visual Impairment and DeafBlindness of the Council for Exceptional Children Position Papers on the roles of VI and O&M professionals available at: <http://community.cec.sped.org/DVI/resourcesportal/positionpapers>

Tellefson, M. (2017) Orientation and Mobility Career, College and Community Readiness Standards. Available for download at <http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/resources/orientation-and-mobility-career-college-and-community-readiness-standards>
http://www.pathstoliteracy.org/sites/pathstoliteracy.perkinsdev1.org/files/OM_Career_College_and_Community_Readiness_Standards_2017.pdf.

Texas Education Code, Commissioner's Rules Concerning Special Education Services 89.AA. Chapter 89. Adaptation for Special Populations. Available online at:
<https://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147509089>

XXI. Education Service Centers

There is a certified visual impairment specialist at every regional Education Service Center in Texas. To find the visual impairment specialist at your ESC, go to the State Leadership Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired site at <http://www.slsbvitexas.org/domain/67> or contact Stephanie Isbell Walker, the SLSBVI State Lead, at 817-740-7594.

Region 1 – Edinburg
1900 West Schunior
Edinburg, TX 78541-2234
(956) 984-6000
Fax: (956) 984-7632

Region 2 – Corpus Christi 209
North Water Street Corpus
Christi, TX 78401- 2599
(361) 561-8400
FAX: (361) 883-3442

Region 3 – Victoria
1905 Leary Lane
Victoria, TX 77901-2899
(361) 573-0731
FAX: (361) 576-4804

Region 4 – Houston
7145 West Tidwell
Houston, TX 77092-2096
(713) 462-7708
FAX: (713) 744-6514

Region 5 – Beaumont
350 Pine Street, Suite 500
Beaumont, TX 77701
(409) 951-1700
FAX: (409) 951-1800

Region 6 – Huntsville
3332 Montgomery Road
Huntsville, TX 77340-6499
(936) 435-8400
Fax: (936) 295-1447

Region 7 – Kilgore 1909 N.
Longview Street Kilgore, TX
75662-6827
(903) 988-6700
FAX: (903) 988-6708

Region 8 – Mount Pleasant
4845 U.S. Highway 271 N.
Pittsburg, TX 75686-4303
(903) 572-8551
FAX: (903) 575-2611

Region 9 – Wichita Falls
301 Loop 11
Wichita Falls, TX 76306-3706
(940) 322-6928
FAX: (940) 767-3836

Region 10 – Richardson 400
E. Spring Valley Road
Richardson, TX. 75081-5101
(972) 348-1700
FAX: (972) 231-3642

Region 11 – Fort Worth
1451 S. Cherry Lane
White Settlement, TX 76108 (817)
740-3600
FAX: (817) 740-7600

Region 12 – Waco
P. O. Box 23409 Waco, TX 76702-
3409
Location: 2101 W. Loop 340,
76712
(254) 297-1212
FAX: (254) 666-0823

Region 13 – Austin
5701 Springdale Road
Austin, TX 78723-3675
(512) 919-5313
FAX: (512) 919-5374

Region 14 – Abilene
1850 Highway 351
Abilene, TX 79601-4750
(325) 675-8600
FAX: (325) 675-8659

Region 15 – San Angelo
P. O. Box 5199
San Angelo, TX 76902-5199
Location: 612 South Irene Street,
76903
(325) 658-6571
FAX: (325) 655-4823

Region 16 – Amarillo
5800 Bell Street
Amarillo, TX 79109-6230
(806) 677-5000
FAX: (806) 677-5001

Region 17 – Lubbock
1111 West Loop 289
Lubbock, TX 79416-5029
(806) 792-4000
FAX: (806) 792-1523

Region 18 – Midland
P. O. Box 60580 Midland, TX
79711-0580
Location: 2811 LaForce Blvd.,
79711
(432) 563-2380
FAX: (432) 567-3290

Region 19 – El Paso
P. O. Box 971127
El Paso, TX 79997-1127
Location: 6611 Boeing Drive,
79925
(915) 780-1919
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XXII. List of Guidelines/Standards

- I. Eligibility is determined by an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or by an admission, review, and dismissal (ARD) committee. It is based upon an eye medical report, functional vision evaluation, a learning media assessment and an orientation and mobility evaluation. A COMS must be part of the team that determines the scope of any needed full and individual reevaluations.
- II. Visual impairment professionals provide expertise specific to visual impairments prior to and during the full and individual evaluation.
- III. Evaluations of all areas of the expanded core curriculum are used to determine individual student programs.
- IV. Appropriate instructional time, accommodations and modifications are provided to meet all identified areas in individual student programs.
- V. Certified teachers of students with visual impairments perform required evaluations and instruction.
- VI. Certified orientation and mobility specialists perform required evaluations and instruction in orientation and mobility.
- VII. Written job descriptions identify comprehensive roles of paraeducators supporting instruction of students with visual impairments, including DeafBlindness.
- VIII. Families are active members of the educational team.
- IX. Vision professionals are members of the instructional team for all birth through two year old children with visual impairments and services identified in the IFSP must be available 48 weeks a year.
- X. A continuum of services and placement options are available based on individual student needs.
- XI. Times for specialized instruction by certified teachers of students with visual impairments and by certified orientation and mobility specialists are supported by appropriate evaluation in all areas of the expanded core curriculum for each student.
- XII. Written caseload guidelines are used to evaluate caseloads of vision professionals.

XIII. Innovative Courses

Innovative Courses allow districts to offer state-approved innovative courses to allow students to master competencies not included in the essential knowledge and skills of the required general education curriculum ([Texas Administrative Code \[TAC\] Section 74.27](#)). With the approval of the local board of trustees, school districts and charter schools may offer any state-approved innovative course for state elective credit only. A district does not need to apply to the agency to offer approved innovative course. The following are approved innovative courses with relevance to students with visual impairments.

Braille

This course will provide instruction in pre-braille skills, tactual discrimination, the reading and writing of the braille code, and the development of efficient braille reading including fluency and comprehension. The braille reading and writing course will emphasize the conventions and mechanics of braille. It will, therefore, facilitate and support tasks completed in all subject areas and work environments.

Orientation and Mobility for Students with Visual Impairments

This course will focus on skills and strategies that will enhance essential travel skills. These travel skills will enable students with visual impairments and blindness to access all of the educational environments in which they will be involved. The courses will focus on travel in the following domains:

- Home/Living Environment which includes directionality, positional concepts, and using landmarks and clues for travel within the school environment
- Campus Environment which includes cane techniques, on-campus orientation and mobility, cardinal directions and low vision devices
- Residential Environment which includes vehicle familiarization, residential area travel, address systems and travel within rural areas as necessary
- Commercial Environment which includes commercial area travel, and commercial street crossings to access community experiences
- Public Transportation which includes skills necessary to travel on public transportation such as buses, taxicabs and rail systems

General Employability

This course will provide instruction in general employability skills as well as the pre-requisite skills for general employability. Employability skills are the skills and attitudes that allow employees to get along with their co-workers, make important work-related decisions, and become strong members of the work team. Discovering job possibilities that link skills, abilities, interests, values, needs, and work environment preferences is an experiential learning process that takes place over time.

This course is designed to guide students through learning these skills that can be transferable among a variety of jobs and careers and are considered essential in any

employment situation. Students will learn and apply basic knowledge of what is expected in the world of work.

Methodologies for Academic and Personal Success I & II (MAPS)

The *Methodology for Academic and Personal Success* courses focus on the skills and strategies necessary for students to make a successful transition into high school and an academic career. Students will explore the options available in high school, higher education, and the professional world in order to establish both immediate and long-range personal goals. After identifying their individual learning styles and abilities, students will build on these abilities by developing critical time management, organization, and study skills. The courses focus on self- understanding, decision- making, resiliency, attitude, character education, and leadership to help students maximize personal achievement. Students will develop the specific strategies necessary to achieve their personal and professional goals. The course emphasizes proactive problem solving, self-determination, and independent thinking and learning skills. In addition, students will explore and experience collaboration as a tool for creative problem solving. As part of the goal setting and leadership activities, students may complete an outside community service learning experience in addition to class assignments.

Assistive Technology

This course will provide instruction in assistive technology. Assistive technology provides access to print and electronic information using screen reading software, screen magnification software/hardware, scanning and reading, braille access, voice recognition and switches. This course will educate students about a variety of technology choices to match the needs of individuals, and educate students who are interested in broadening their scope of technology, mainstream applications and specialized devices.

Students will learn and apply basic and assistive technology skills to access instructional materials and produce work. These skills include switch access, keyboarding, operating system navigation, file management, Internet browsing, word processing, presentation software and spreadsheets, and programs and devices specifically designed for students with visual impairments and those who struggle with reading.

Please note that the approved courses may serve as state graduation elective credit only and are not approved to substitute for any required state graduation requirements.

Use the following codes to identify approved innovative courses. These codes may only be used by school districts that have the approval of their local board of trustees to offer these courses in accordance with 19 TAC §74.27. Information can be found at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=6079>.

Braille	N1100505
O&M	N1160510
General Employability	N1290060
MAPS I	N1130021
MAPS II	N1130022
Assistive Technology	N1260002

XIV. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is an eye medical report signifying a visual problem sufficient to qualify as a student with visual impairment?

Under Federal law, the local school district must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies and not any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability or determining an appropriate educational program for the child. Eligibility for services as a student with visual impairment is determined based upon an eye medical report, a functional vision evaluation, a learning media assessment and an orientation and mobility evaluation that indicate that there is a visual impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. This is outlined in Texas Administrative Code 89.1040.

See Section V in this document.

2. How is it determined whether a student will read braille?

A Learning Media Assessment is a required evaluation for determining each student's literacy medium. Under Texas Administrative Code 89.1040, a certified teacher of students with visual impairments must conduct this evaluation; it will include 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. More information is at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/seehear/spring03/literacy.htm>

See Sections IV and V in this document.

3. If a student has a mild visual impairment and a slight hearing impairment, does the student qualify as DeafBlind?

An ARD committee considers evidence to determine the eligibility of a student for services as a student with DeafBlindness. Texas law establishes eligibility for DeafBlindness using 4 separate sets of criteria. The third eligibility criteria states that a student can be considered as DeafBlind if the student: "(C) has documented hearing and visual losses that, if considered individually, may not meet the requirements for auditory impairment or visual impairment, but the combination of such losses adversely affects the student's educational performance;"

See Section IV in this document.

4. Do all students need evaluation by a certified orientation and mobility specialist?

Texas Education Code 30.002 mandates an evaluation by a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS) for initial consideration of eligibility of a student as having a visual impairment. A COMS must also be part of the multidisciplinary committee reviewing information to determine whether a reevaluation would be necessary for subsequent full and individual evaluations, which must be considered no less than every three years (or annually for infants)

See Section IV in this document.

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

The expanded core curriculum (ECC) identifies critical skills that are impacted by the presence of a visual impairment. TEC 30.002 clarifies the need to provide assessment and instruction in all areas of the ECC. A Q&A document developed to support implementation of TEC changes notes:

If a student continues to meet the criteria as a student with visual impairment, then the district should have a systematic process to ensure that all areas listed in TEC §30.002 have been considered, including the areas of the ECC. A COMS needs to be a member of the committee that determines what evaluations are needed.

Retrieved from <http://www.tsbvi.edu>, Q&A: Expanded Core Curriculum Instruction and Orientation and Mobility Evaluations.

An ARD committee should have a system to consider appropriate annual IEP goals and objectives when evaluation results indicate a need for instruction in areas of the ECC. There are checklists to support district procedures available, including the ESC Region 10 website under ECC at <https://www.region10.org/visually-impaired-services/>
See Sections V and VI in this document.

6. Which professionals must attend an ARD meeting for a student who is visually impaired?

According to Federal Law 300.306(a)(1) and Texas Administrative Code Sections 89.1050(b) and (c)(3)(A), a teacher who is certified in the education of children with visual impairments must attend each ARD for a child with a suspected or documented visual impairment including suspected or documented DeafBlindness.
See Section IX in this document.

7. Which professionals must attend an ARD meeting for a student who is DeafBlind?

According to Texas Administrative Code Section 89.1050(3)C, for a student with suspected or documented DeafBlindness, the ARD committee shall include a teacher who is certified in the education of students with visual impairments and a teacher who is certified in the education of students with auditory impairments.
See Section IX in this document.

8. Are there specific roles for paraeducators working with students with visual impairments or DeafBlindness?

When an ARD committee determines that a paraeducator is needed as a member of a student's educational team, there needs to be careful consideration of the specific training needed by that individual to support implementation of the IEP. Students with DeafBlindness may require an intervener, a paraeducator with specific training in appropriate access to instruction for students with combined hearing and vision impairments.
See Section XI in this document.

9. Must a TVI attend the IFSP meetings for infants with visual impairments?

According to the MOU between TEA and the ECI, the teacher of students with visual impairments (and a teacher of students with auditory impairments for a student with DeafBlindness) must attend each annual IFSP meeting and each IFSP meeting that addresses issues related to and impacted by the visual impairment and/or hearing impairment.

See Section XIII in this document.

10. Does a district have to enroll an infant (birth through 2 years) with a visual impairment?

Yes. Students with hearing and/or visual impairments are eligible to be served from birth. The Department of Health and Human Services-Early Childhood Intervention (HHSC-ECI) is the lead agency for serving students from birth through 2 years of age. However, local district staff provides the specialized services for visual and/or auditory impairments as mandated by IDEA Part C.

See Section XIII in this document.

11. How does a student get referred to attend the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired?

For admission to TSBVI, students must have been determined by their local school district to be eligible for educational services as students with a visual impairment or DeafBlindness. Referrals for consideration for admission must be originated by the student's local school district in collaboration with the student's parent. TSBVI cannot accept direct parent referrals. The TSBVI is one placement option in the continuum of placement options for students with visual impairments and/or DeafBlindness. Documents for district personnel (go to: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/2015-11-18-21-31-13/a-school-district-guide-to-accessing-services-at-tsbvi> and for parents (go to: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/parent-family-member/a-parent-s-guide-to-services-at-tsbvi>) have been developed to help explain the unique role of the TSBVI in Texas and are posted on the TSBVI website.

See Section XIV in this document.

12. How much time should a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) or a certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) provide to students with visual impairment?

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 relevant factors. It is an individualized decision for each student. The VISSIT and VISSIT/O&M are new tools available to help TVIs and COMSs determine the amount of direct and collaborative services to recommend to the IEP team, based on evaluation. They are both available on the TSBVI website at www.tsbvi.edu/vissit.

See Section XV in this document.

XXV. Selected legal references related to services for students with visual impairments from birth through two years

Collaboration and coordination between the LEA/TVI and ECI providers is necessary to implement the timelines discussed in the regulations below.

More information is included in the Memorandum of Understanding that was drawn up between the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services and the Texas Education Agency, which can be downloaded from the TEA website:

<http://tea.texas.gov/index2.aspx?id=2147494979>

IDEA Part C Regulations

§303.342 Procedures for IFSP development, review, and evaluation provide guidance for IFSP meetings

- (d) Accessibility and convenience of meetings.
 - (1) IFSP meetings must be conducted--
 - (i) In settings and at times that are convenient for the family; and
 - (ii) In the native language of the family or other mode of communication used by the family, unless it is clearly not feasible to do so.
 - (2) Meeting arrangements must be made with, and written notice provided to, the family and other participants early enough before the meeting date to ensure that they will be able to attend.

Texas Administrative Code

40 TAC §108.1011

In addition to the requirements in 40 TAC §108.1009 of this title (relating to Participants in Initial and Annual Meetings to Evaluate the IFSP), the IFSP team for an initial IFSP meeting or annual meetings to evaluate the IFSP must include a certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or a certified teacher of the visually impaired if the child has a documented auditory or visual impairment as described in 40 TAC §89.1040 (relating to Eligibility Criteria).

- (b) Unless there is documentation that the LEA has waived notice, the contractor must:
 - (1) provide the teacher at least a 10-day written notice before the initial IFSP meeting, any annual meetings to evaluate the IFSP or any review and evaluation that affects the child's auditory or vision services; and
 - (2) keep documentation of the notice in the child's record.

(c) The IFSP team cannot plan auditory or vision services or make any changes that affect those services if the certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or certified teacher of the visually impaired is not in attendance.

(d) The IFSP team must route the IFSP to the certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or certified teacher of the visually impaired for review and signature when changes to the IFSP do not affect the child's auditory or vision services.

(e) The certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing and the certified teacher of the visually impaired may submit a request within five days of the IFSP meeting to have another IFSP meeting if the teacher disagrees with any portion of the IFSP.

(f) The certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or certified teacher of the visually impaired are not required to attend the review when changes do not affect the child's auditory or vision services, but the contractor must obtain their input.

Student Attendance Accounting Handbook (SAAH)

3.3.9 Infants and Toddlers with Auditory or Visual Impairments or Both

Infants and toddlers birth through 2 years of age who have auditory or visual impairments or both and an individualized family services plan indicating a need for services by the district must be enrolled in the local district or regional day school program for the deaf (RDSPD). If district services are to be provided through the RDSPD, the RDSPD must involve the home district. Local education agencies should collaborate with the RDSPD to ensure that appropriate services are provided. (See 4.10 Special Education Services for Infants and Toddlers)

4.10 Special Education Services for Infants and Toddlers

Infants and toddlers (children 0 through 2 years of age) who have visual or auditory impairments or both and who are served by your district are eligible for special education services and are eligible to generate ADA. The following subsections describe the coding information to use for these children.

4.10.1 Infants Receiving Visual Impairment Services, Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Services, or Both

All infants (birth through 2 years of age) receiving visual impairment services, O&M services, or both **at home, in day care, or in a non-district center-based program** should be reported with the information shown in the following table:

Grade Level	EE
Instructional Setting Code	01, homebound (a doctor's statement is not needed)
ADA Eligibility Code	<p>0—enrolled, not in membership if the infant is served fewer than 2 hours per week</p> <p>2—eligible for half-day attendance if the infant is served at least 2 hours but fewer than 4 hours per week</p> <p>1—eligible for full-day attendance if the infant is served at least 4 hours per week</p>

See 4.7.2 Code 01 Homebound for more information on the homebound instructional setting.

All infants receiving visual impairment services, O&M services, or both **in center-based programs** (not an early childhood intervention [ECI] program) should be reported with the information shown in the following table:

Grade Level	EE
InstructionalSetting Code	44 , self-contained, mild/moderate/severe, regular campus or 97 , off home campus depending on the location of the services
ADA Eligibility Code	0—enrolled, not in membership if the infant is served fewer than 2 hours per day 2—eligible for half-day attendance if the infant is served at least 2 hours but fewer than 4 hours per day 1—eligible for full-day attendance if the infant is served at least 4 hours per day

4.10.1 Infants Receiving Auditory Impairment (Deaf) Services

All infants (birth through 2 years of age) receiving auditory impairment (deaf) services **at home or in day care** should be reported with the information shown in the following table:

Grade Level	EE
InstructionalSetting Code	01, homebound (a doctor’s statement is not needed)
ADA Eligibility Code	0—enrolled, not in membership if the infant is served fewer than 2 hours per week 2—eligible for half-day attendance if the infant is served at least 2 hours but fewer than 4 hours per week 1—eligible for full-day attendance if the infant is served at least 4 hours per week

See the **Student Attendance Accounting Handbook** for more information on the homebound instructional setting.

All infants receiving auditory impairment (deaf) services **in your school district or in non-district centers** should be reported with the information shown in the following table:

Grade Level	EE
InstructionalSetting Code	44 , self-contained, mild/moderate/severe, regular campus or 97 , off home campus depending on the location of the services
ADA Eligibility Code	0—enrolled, not in membership if the infant is served fewer than 2 hours per day 2—eligible for half-day attendance if the infant is served at least 2 hours but fewer than 4 hours per day 1—eligible for full-day attendance if the infant is served at least 4 hours per day

XXVI. Standards for LEA Collaboration with ECI on Part C Services

Child Find:

ECI and the LEA share child find obligations for children birth to three with suspected visual impairments and/or hearing loss. This requires strong communication and collaboration between the Local Education Agency (LEA) and the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) provider.

When a child with a **suspected** visual impairment is referred to an early intervention team, the teacher of students with visual impairment (TVI), and certified orientation & mobility specialist (COMS) are considered vital members of the collaborative early intervention team.

When a child with a **suspected** hearing loss is referred to an early intervention team, the teacher for the deaf or hard of hearing (TDHH) is considered a vital member of this collaborative early intervention team.

Parental consent is required for ECI and the LEA to share confidential information. ECI will be required to obtain a Release of Information prior to consultation and/or referral. With parental consent, a TVI or TDHH may be consulted for ways to obtain the required medical documentation leading to a full referral. Consultation may include phone calls, emails and/or home visits if necessary.

Collaborative consultation will aid in preventing children from experiencing delays in service due to lack of medical follow-up. Consultation will also improve the quality of referrals, therefore saving time for the LEA professionals that are evaluating for hearing and vision loss.

Evaluations:

ECI is responsible for providing the LEA with current ophthalmological evaluation when there are signs of visual impairment, and/ or current audiological and otological evaluations for suspected hearing loss.

The LEA is responsible for the communication assessment for students being evaluated due to hearing loss and for the functional vision evaluation, learning media assessment, and orientation and mobility assessment for children being evaluated for visual impairment.

When a suspected visual impairment or hearing loss drives the referral to ECI, the LEA service providers must collaborate with ECI to meet the 45 calendar day timeline for an initial evaluation.

In the event that the child has already been evaluated and is receiving ECI services due to a medically diagnosed condition or a developmental delay before VI or DHH is suspected, the timeline for evaluation is determined by a local agreement between the LEA and ECI. Best practice is to complete the evaluation within 3 weeks of referral. **It is important to complete the evaluation and begin services for the family as quickly as possible.**

The initial evaluation is a baseline, which should be revised on an ongoing basis as services are delivered. Reviewing and updating evaluations is required on an annual basis for Part C services; this includes Functional Vision Evaluation, Learning Media Assessment, Expanded Core Curriculum review, and Orientation and Mobility evaluations for children with visual impairments, as well as the communication evaluation for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Family Services:

All services delivered to a family through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) must follow the IDEA Part C guidelines. This includes services that are provided through LEA service providers. Part C guidelines indicate that IFSP services are centered on evidence based practices in early childhood including coaching and supporting families in interacting with their child in their natural environment. Service time should be planned and delivered to meet individual family needs. A parent or caregiver must be an active participant.

Service providers, including TDHH, TVI and O&M, must follow the schedule of services set in the IFSP according to the 12 month calendar year. The IFSP is based on the child/family need, and making an exception for a holiday based on provider need is not indicated in either the MOU or in rule. Sessions that are cancelled or going to be cancelled for any reason, including but not limited to sickness, holidays, or vacation, should be discussed with the family, documented, and a plan for make-up sessions should be agreed upon by both the family and provider.

LEA Procedures

Students must be enrolled at the LEA before receiving services. Families must follow district policies for enrolling their child. **LEAs should set up a policy on enrolling infants that encourages and supports families in this process.** These policies may include setting up a single location for all infants to enroll, having the LEA service provider facilitate the process at the school or at the home, communicating with ECI to obtain required documentation that they may have on file, and/or waiving a district requirement for the parent to appear in person at the school.

According to IDEA Part C guidelines, there is a statutory responsibility to provide services for infants and toddlers who have hearing or vision impairments. Texas has established, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), that LEA's are required to work in collaboration with ECI to meet the Part C guidelines for this population of students. LEAs and ECI share the responsibility of ensuring that services begin within 28 calendar days after the initial IFSP. It is important that district enrollment procedures do not cause the LEA or ECI to fall out of compliance in delivery of timely services.

References

[http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=2&ch=108&rl=207](http://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=40&pt=2&ch=108&rl=207)

<http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr;sid=65e04594421191528ad86f073961470b;rgn=div5;view=text;node=34:2.1.1.1.2;idno=34;cc=ecfr>

<http://www.slsbvitexas.org/Page/92>

