

2008 Summary of Need for VI Professionals in Texas

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Introduction

Since 1996 the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has conducted an annual survey to assess the need for VI professionals in Texas. “VI professionals” includes teachers certified in visual impairments (VI teachers) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (O&M). Individuals with both certifications are referred to as “dually certified.” This report will provide information about the results of the survey conducted in September 2008.

The most striking findings include:

- In 2008, the total number of full- and part-time VI professionals decreased to 813 or 95% of the previous year’s total.
- In the past 3 years the rate of annual attrition has increased by 32.1%. In 2006 28 people left the field and in 2008 the number jumped to 37.
- 114 or 14% of VI professionals are projected to leave the field within the next 3 years.
- Three years ago it was projected that 79 VI professionals would leave due to retirement or changes in careers. In actuality, 103 people left the field, or 30.4% more than was projected.
- Since 2000, the average margin-of-error for projected 3-year attrition is 25.6%. Applying this margin of error brings the likely 3-year attrition to 143 individuals or 17.6% of the *current* workforce.
- The number of new positions created is not keeping pace with growth. With an average VI student increase of 3%, we need to plan not only for attrition, but growth, just to keep pace with current levels of services.
- The cultural diversity of VI professionals is changing slightly. However, it is not keeping pace with the student population in Texas.
- Universities are training as many VI professionals as funds allow. There are 137 VI professionals in a post-baccalaureate program either as VI teachers or O&M specialists. Almost all of those seeking VI certification are already working under a probationary certificate. There are 23 undergraduate students in training.

Data was collected from the 20 regional education service centers and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). Because TSBVI serves all of Texas, the concentration of students and VI professionals is such that TSBVI data are collected separately from that of regional education service centers (ESCs). Unless otherwise noted TSBVI data is included in the data presented in this report.

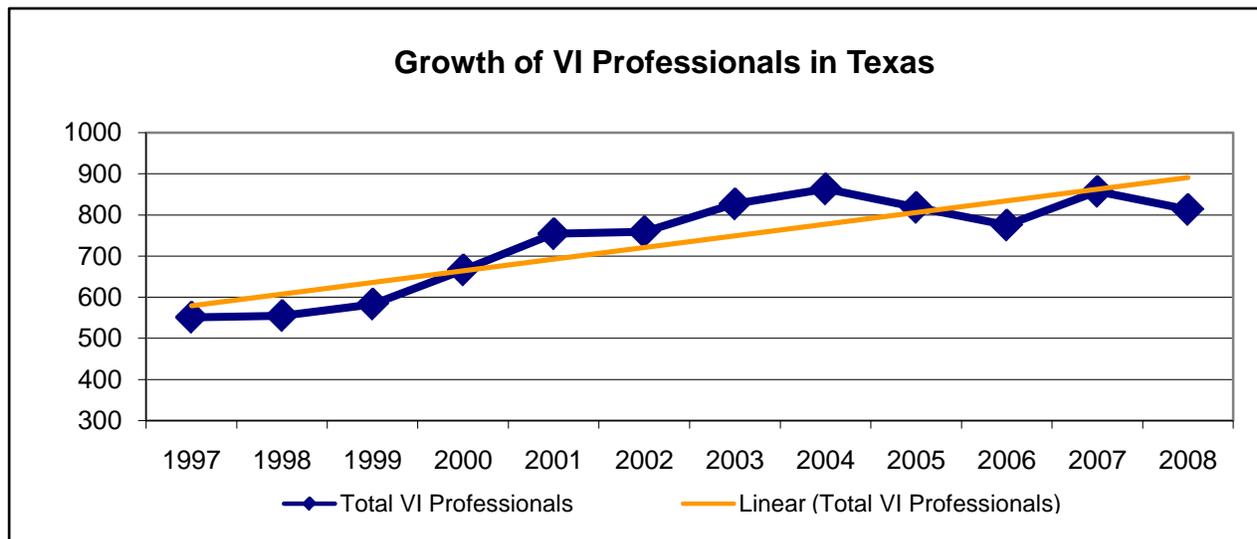
Characteristics of VI professionals in Texas

The survey asked about the number of people *functioning* as VI professionals.

Number of VI professionals in Texas

This data has been gathered annually since 1996. For two consecutive years (2005 and 2006) the reported number of VI professionals declined. 2007 showed an improvement. However, this year the number has once again declined. Over a 12 year-span the number has increased. A chart showing the changes is below.

Information about how this data was collected is included in the Appendix.



Total VI Professionals Statewide

	2006		2007		2008	
	Individuals	FTE ²	Individuals	FTE ²	Individuals	FTE ²
TSBVI Outreach ¹	21	19.5	23	21.5	23	21.5
ESC Leadership ¹	32	22	32	20.4	34	24
VI and O&M service providers (adjusted for dually certified professionals)	722	651	802	712.5	756	679
Total VI Staff	775	692.5	857	754.4	813	724.5

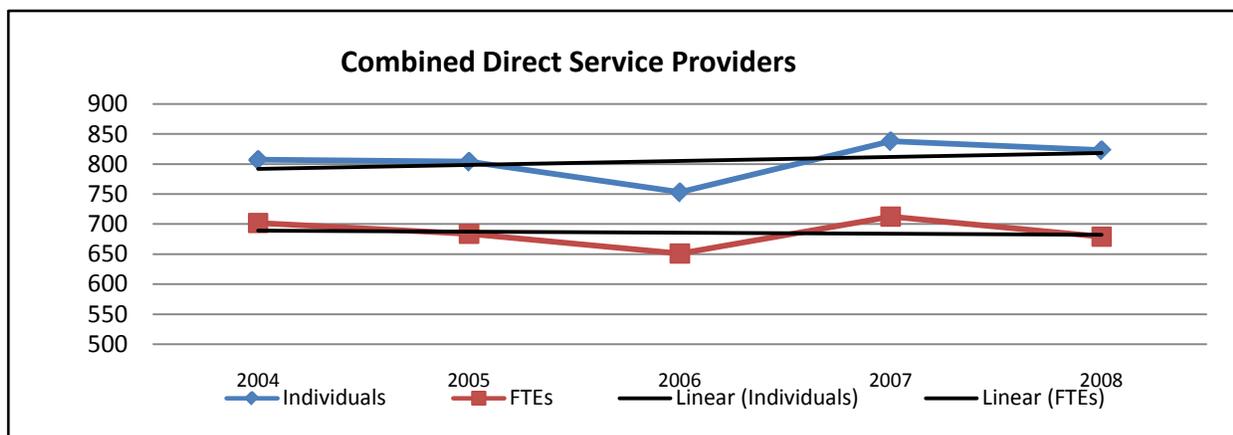
¹ TSBVI outreach and ESC consulting VI staff provide leadership/technical assistance statewide or within their region. Educators at TSBVI or ESCs who provide direct educational service to students with visual impairments are counted as "VI and O&M direct service providers".

² FTE = (part-time x .5) + full-time for all charts

Direct service providers

Below is data about direct service providers. Direct service providers include VI teachers, O&M specialists and dually certified personnel who work with students on a regular basis and are the recognized educator for issues related to visual impairments. A review of the data over time seems to indicate limited, if any, growth over the past 5 years. A more detailed analysis indicates an increase in reliance on part-time VI professionals.

Part-time VI professionals have advantages and disadvantages. They allow a district to meet the district's needs for a small number of students. They may be either employed by the district on a part-time basis or have duties related to visual impairments as part of their full-time job. Part-time staff may also be VI professionals who are contracted with by the district to provide services. Either way, part-time staff are at-risk for not being able to provide the full caseload management and consultation needed if students are to maximize their independence.



"Full-time equivalent", or FTE, equals the number of full-time professionals plus the number of part-time professionals divided by .5. [FTE = (part-time x .5) + full-time]

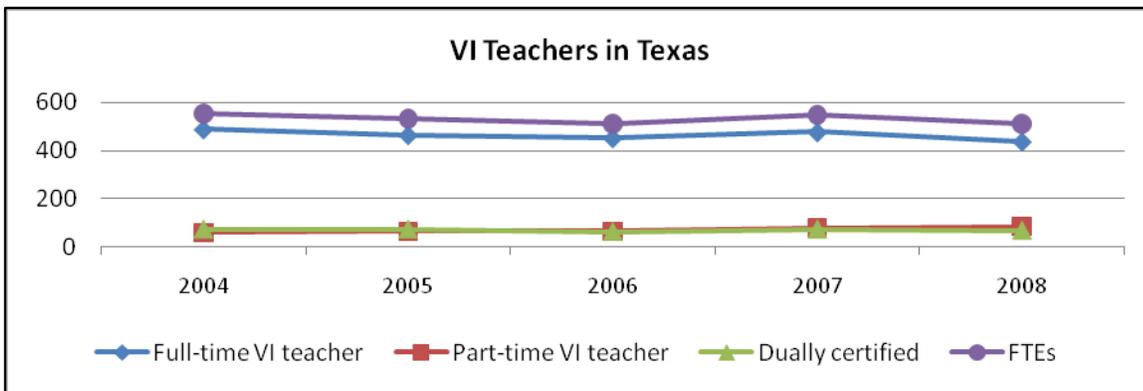
For the purposes of this survey, professionals who are certified in both visual impairments and orientation and mobility (dually certified) are counted as a part-time VI teacher and a part-time O&M specialist. These specialists will show up in the VI teacher data and the O&M data. Information about the number of combined direct service providers has been adjusted for dually certified professionals.

In general, the only area to show a significant increase over last year was the number of part-time, non-dually-certified O&M specialists.

Direct Service Providers: VI teachers

	2006		2007		2008	
	Individuals	FTE ¹	Individuals	FTE ¹	Individuals	FTE ¹
Full-time VI teachers	451		476		437	
Part-time VI teachers	61		75		82	
Dually certified VI professionals	62		72		67	
Total VI Staff	574	512.5	623	549.5	586	511.5

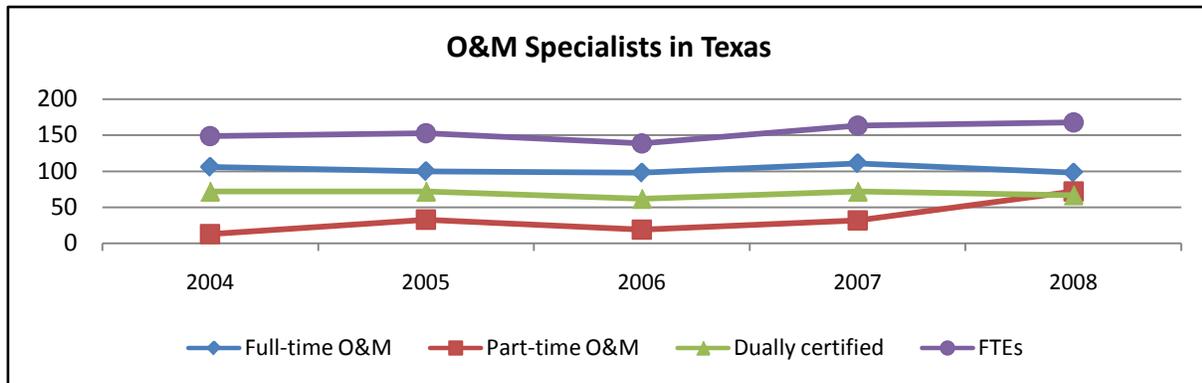
¹. FTE = .part-time x .5 + full-time for all charts



Direct Service Providers: O&M specialists

	2006		2007		2008	
	Individuals	FTE ¹	Individuals	FTE ¹	Individuals	FTE ¹
Full-time O&M specialists	98		111		98	
Part-time O&M specialists	19		32		72	
Dually certified VI professionals	62		72		67	
Total O&M Staff	179	138.5	215	163	237	167.5

¹. FTE = .part-time x .5 + full-time for all charts



Dually certified VI professionals

Dually certified VI professionals are those who are certified both as an O&M specialist and as a VI teacher. While many professionals may hold both certifications, not all dually certified professionals serve in both capacities. This survey gathers data only about those who *function* both as a VI teacher and an O&M specialist. This year's data shows a decrease from last year. Since 2004 the number has fluctuated between 72 and 62. This year it was at a midpoint between the two previous years: 67. Dually certified professionals are unique and offer districts maximum flexibility. Administrators are able to modify work assignments according to the needs of the district and the students for a particular year. The changes between 2006 and 2008 likely reflect changes in staffing needs statewide. Initially dually certified may seem highly desirable. However, dually certified professionals also unique challenges and best succeed when administrators have an understanding of both professions. The temptation is for administrators to assign dually certified professionals a full time VI caseload and a full-time O&M caseload. Since these are two separate professions, this is rarely successful. The students' learning will be compromised. The VI professionals will be frustrated and may leave the district for a more reasonable district.

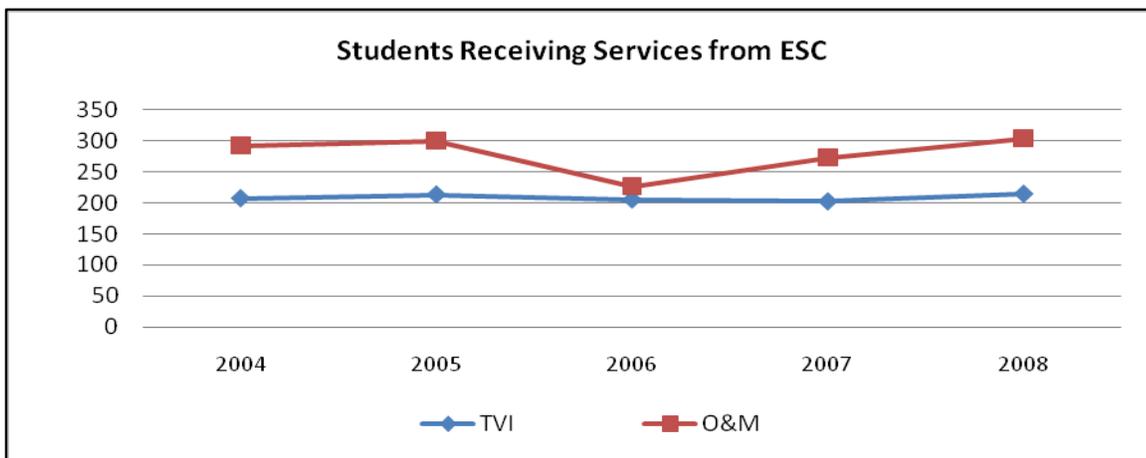
Dually Certified Professionals

	2006	2007	2008
Dually certified	62	72	67

The data shows a 5% decrease in the number of professionals available to meet the unique needs of students with visual impairments. As a result, there were 37 fewer full- and part-time VI teachers to serve 73 additional students with visual impairments.

Direct service from ESCs

Each regional service center (ESC) provides an array of services to districts. Some services include direct services to students with visual impairments; the ESC staff is listed on the IEP. Of the 13 regions that provide any type of direct services, six provide VI services to 215 students. These same 13 regions provide direct O&M services to 304 students. One hundred students receive both VI and O&M services from the ESC. The number of ESCs providing direct services decreased this year from 14 to 13. Changes in regions providing direct services are typically a reflection of changes in district and/or ESC capacity.



Students receiving services from ESCs

	2006	2007	2008
VI- only services (5 regions)	206	203	215
O&M-only services (13 regions)	227	273	304
Both VI and O&M (5 regions)	54	96	44
Total	487	522	563

Cultural diversity

Texas is a diverse state and needs a diverse workforce. This survey asks about African-American, Hispanic, and Asian VI professionals. It also queries the number of Spanish-speaking VI professionals. The results are listed below.

Hispanic VI professionals

	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	64	63	67
O&M specialists	5	9	10
Dually certified	4	8	3
Total	73	80	80

Spanish-speaking VI professionals

	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	65	68	75
O&M specialists	6	14	12
Dually certified	9	10	8
Total	80	92	95

African-American VI professionals

	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	10	17	18
O&M specialists	12	10	9
Dually certified	2	1	0
Total	24	28	27

Asian VI professionals

	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	6	4	5
O&M specialists	1	0	0
Dually certified	0	0	0
Total	7	4	5

In September 2008 there were 18 VI teachers, 19 O&M specialists, and no dually certified professionals who are African-American. The Hispanic VI professionals included 67 VI teachers, 10 O&M specialists and three dually certified professionals. Seventy-five VI teachers, 12 O&M specialists and eight dually certified professionals speak Spanish.

The change in the cultural diversity numbers was very mixed. The number of African-American VI teachers increased from 17 to 18 this year, a minor improvement, and the number of O&M specialists and dually certified specialists each decreased by 1 specialist; yielding an overall decrease of one African-American VI professional. The pattern for the Hispanic VI professionals was similar, with the number of VI teachers and O&M specialists increasing (from 63 to 67 and 9 to 10 respectively) and dually certified specialists decreasing (from 8 to 3) for an overall maintenance of last year's total. While the number of VI professionals has increased significantly since 1996, representation of the state's the cultural diversity still remains a challenge.

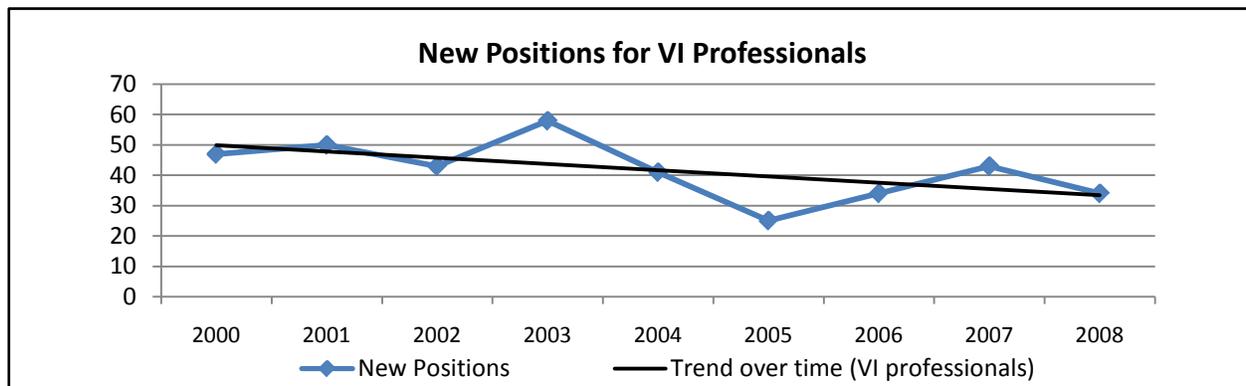
Because VI professionals are so critical to student learning, a change of even one person, in any single district, can have dramatic effects on the annual yearly progress of

New Positions and Attrition

New Positions

On average, according to the *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments*, the number of students has increased by 3% a year. Data about new positions to meet the increasing need has been collected since 2000. Texas showed significant growth in 2003 and 2007 (31 and 37 new positions respectively). The lowest number of new positions occurred in 2005. In 2008 the number of new positions declined by 29%. Meanwhile, the number of new students with visual impairments increased

by 73 students. Using a standard recommended formula for caseloads, this growth should result in at least 5 FTEs for VI teachers and 2 O&M FTEs, for a total growth of 7 FTEs. Instead the number decreased this year.



New Positions for VI Professionals

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
VI Teacher	28	17	26	37	26
O&M Specialist	12	5	5	5	5
Dual Certified	1	3	3	1	2
Total	41	25	34	43	33

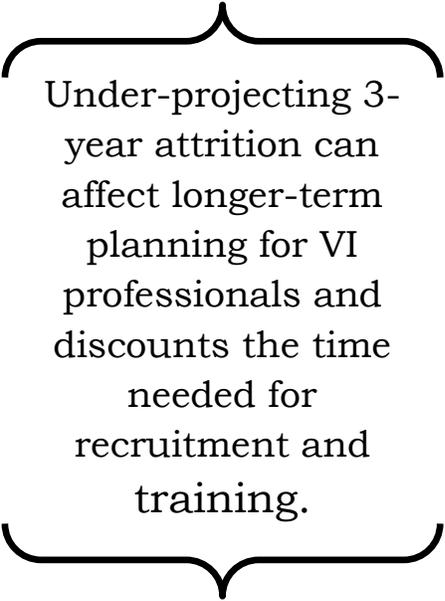
The decline may reflect a limited capacity to train interested candidates. As the chart below indicates, the number of new positions varies year to year, sometimes significantly. Limitations in the ability to train new VI professionals may make administrators hesitant to advocate for a new or additional VI position.

Texas has been able to provide stipends for those seeking university training in visual impairments since 2001. However the funds have remained flat. **Since that time, the tuition has increased by more than 100%. As a result, fewer stipends are available, causing some students to either assume the cost of the tuition or seek funding elsewhere. Having access to a training program and funds for stipends has proven to be a significant factor in attracting students.** It is possible that the limited funds have had an effect on administrators' ability to identify a future VI professional and enrollment in training programs. Adding a trend line indicates that, statistically, there is no evidence of overall growth in the number of new positions statewide.

In 2008, Texas gained 73 students. Using a standard recommended formula this growth should result in an additional 5 FTEs for VI teachers and 2 O&M FTEs, for a total growth of 7 FTEs. Instead the number of new positions decreased this year.

Attrition Factors

Much has been written about the existing and increasing rate of educators leaving the field. VI professionals are rare and difficult to find. Therefore retention is of critical concern. Unlike many disciplines, even other high-need areas like math, when a VI professional is unavailable there is no one who can help meet the student's needs. As a result, students' progress and independence may suffer when a student has sub-standard access to critical services from a highly qualified professional.

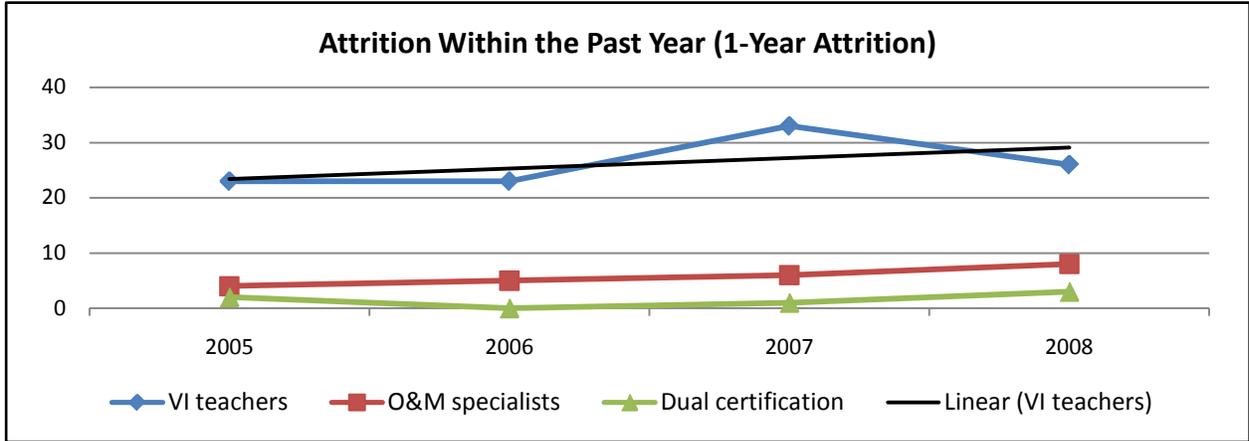


Under-projecting 3-year attrition can affect longer-term planning for VI professionals and discounts the time needed for recruitment and training.

Several factors affect recruiting and attrition in the VI fields. Below are some of those factors.

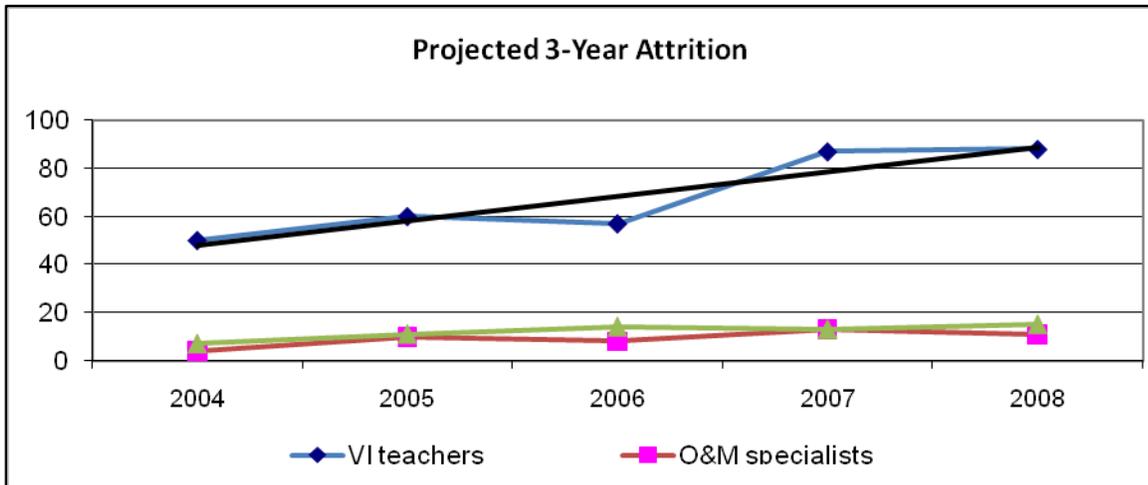
- Most VI professionals are mid-career professionals with an average of seven years professional experience in other careers and are likely to have shorter careers in this second field.
- Most educators and other likely candidates are unaware that the field exists. Blindness is a low incidence field with a very small population. Therefore, special recruitment challenges exist. People must be aware of the field and its possibilities before they can become a VI professional.
- It is not uncommon for mid-career professionals to need two or three years before they decide to initiate VI training, and then another one or two years to be trained.
- There are limited professional preparation options for those who do decide to become a VI professional. In Texas there are only two programs. However most states don't even have a single program. Distance education options are making it easier to access training for mid-career professionals who may not be able to leave their home and jobs for training.
- Because VI professionals are so critical to student learning, a change of even one person, in any single district, can have dramatic effects on the annual yearly progress of students.
- Changes in the number of those who *function* as dually certified may or may not reflect attrition of dually certified professionals. Rather, it may reflect a change in how the VI professional functions this year.

As a result, it is important to consider and analyze the existing and projected attrition rates when considering personnel needs for the future. Under-projecting 3-year attrition can affect longer-term planning for VI professionals and discounts the time needed for recruitment and training. In 2006 it was projected that 79 VI professionals would leave the field. In fact since that time, 103 VI professionals have left the field, an underestimate of 30.4%.



Attrition within the Past Year (1-Year attrition)

	2006	2007	2008
VI Teacher	23	33	26
O&M Specialist	5	6	8
Dual Certified	0	1	3
Total	28	40	37



Projected 3-Year Attrition

Projections from:	2006	2007	2008
VI Teacher	57	87	88
O&M Specialist	8	13	11
Dual Certified	14	13	15
Total	79	113	114

Projected vs. Actual Attrition

The number of VI professionals who have left the field within the past year, or 1-year attrition and projected 3-year attrition numbers have jumped substantially since 2006. Complete (3-year) data comparisons are available for the years 2006 – 2008.

The data generates two concerns:

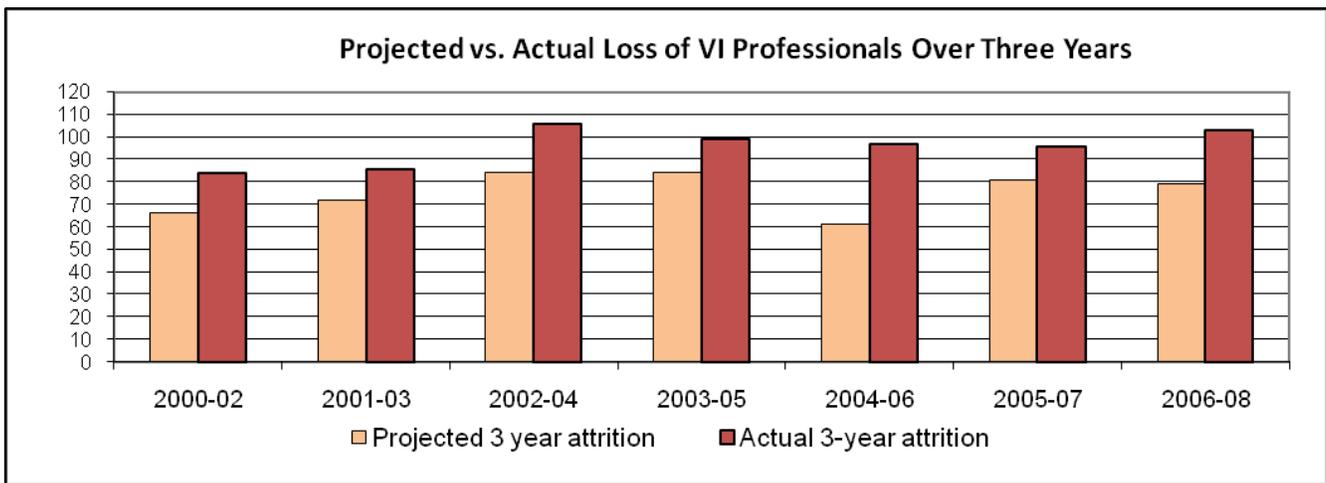
- The number who are projected to leave the field, and
- A history of underestimating the projections.

In 2008, the VI consultants projected that 114 VI professionals would leave the field within the next 3 years. This means we can anticipate 14% of existing VI professionals retiring or moving to another profession. This data specifically addresses those who will leave the field, not move from school-employment to private contractual work. The expected growth of students over that same period indicates we will need an additional 63 FTEs statewide for VI teachers. Texas will need additional O&M specialists to meet the needs of the 31% of students with visual impairments who receive O&M training. As the number of students grows, it is expected that the number of those needing O&M will also grow.

Also of concern is the accuracy of the projection.... VI professionals have *underestimated* attrition by an average of 30.6%.

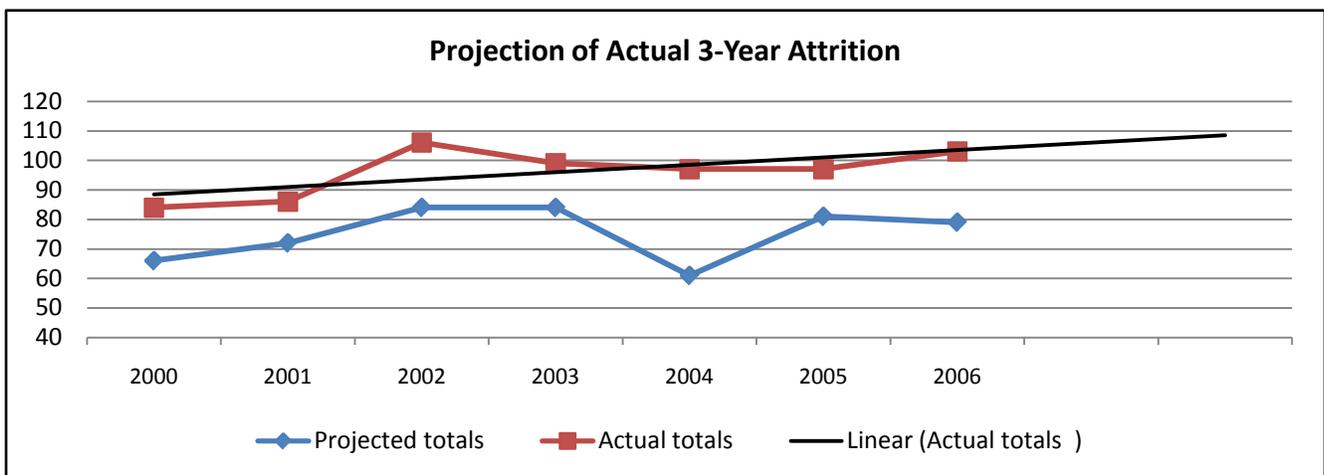
Also of concern is the historical accuracy of the projection. A comparison of the real vs. projected attrition reveals a disturbing trend. For the last 3-year cycle for which data is available (2006-2008) the projected attrition was underestimated by 30.4%. On average, there is a 30.6% margin-of-error. That is, the VI professionals have *underestimated* attrition by an average of 30.6%. Applying the average margin-of-error indicates that the real projected attrition is likely to be between 114 and 149 VI professionals.

The actual loss in the most recent and complete 3-year cycle of data (2006 -2008) shows the projection was short by 24 people. This is a significant difference. It may take one to two years to recruit a candidate, and another one to two years to get that person trained. A shortfall of this significance can potentially affect 525 students with visual impairments, or 6.5% of the students identified in 2008.



* 2006 was the last year for which a complete set of data is available.

A review of a projection of attrition indicates that the attrition will not decline in the next two years. The 2-year projection is based on data collected since 2000.



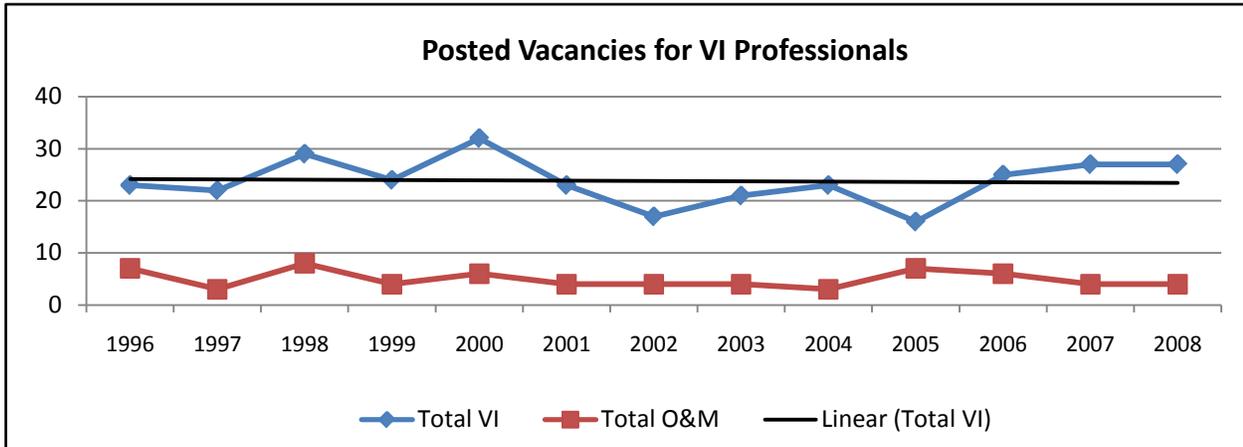
Anticipated Need

Interpreting and understanding need relies on several factors. Typically these include the number of posted positions, recommendations from knowledgeable professionals and recommended student/teacher ratios. Below are data from each of these areas.

Posted positions

The respondents at each ESC and at TSBVI were asked how many part- and full-time positions were posted in their regions or at TSBVI in September. This data were collected in October after all regular hiring for the academic year has been completed. These positions remained unfilled and active, or

were developed after the start of the school year. The figures reflect postings for part- and full-time staff.



Posted positions

	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	25	27	27
O&M specialists	6	4	4
Dually certified	1	1	0
TOTAL	32	32	31

Over time the number of posted positions has not showed a significant change. Research completed in 1997, 2001, and 2005 (Dignan, TSBVI) indicated that special education administrators are willing to advocate for new or additional VI professionals based on their confidence they can fill the positions. In other words, if administrators are confident they can fill a position, they will post one.

The table below shows the posted level of need since 1996. Statistically, the trend of having unfilled posted positions in September is slightly decreasing. This may be due to various factors:

- Administrators are better able to recruit from within and enroll the candidate in a training program,
- Administrators are able to recruit candidates prior to the start of the school year
- Administrators are not confident they will be able to fill a position, so they are reluctant to advocate for or post a new position.

Regardless of the reason, the numbers should not be considered without reflecting on the total number of VI professionals. In 1996 the unfilled postings were similar to 2008. In 1996 there were postings for 7 O&M specialists and 23 VI teachers. In 2008 there were 4 official O&M openings and 27 positions for VI teachers. In that same period, the total number of VI professionals (VI teachers and

O&M specialists) has risen from 457 to 778, a 70% increase in VI professionals. The percentage of unfilled positions is declining overall.

Furthermore, each year approximately 56 – 60 individuals complete training. All have jobs waiting for them, either new positions or positions that have been vacated the year before. For all of these reasons, reviewing posted positions has not been a good indicator of true need for VI professionals.

Recommendations by knowledgeable professionals

VI consultants were asked how many VI teachers, O&M specialists, and dually certified personnel were needed in their region, in addition to those already in training. Regional VI consultants are considered to be experts in the needs of their region. The results are indicated in the table below.

Short-term Need: 12 – 24 months

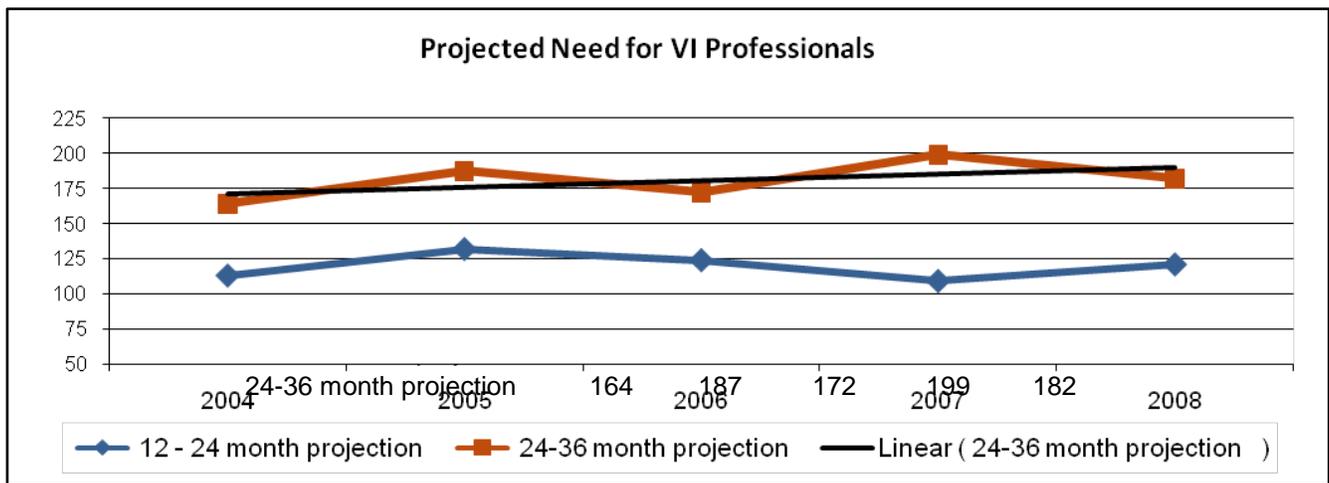
	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	76	68	76
O&M specialists	32	23	26
Dually certified	16	18	19
Total Need	124	109	121

Longer-term Need: 24-36 months

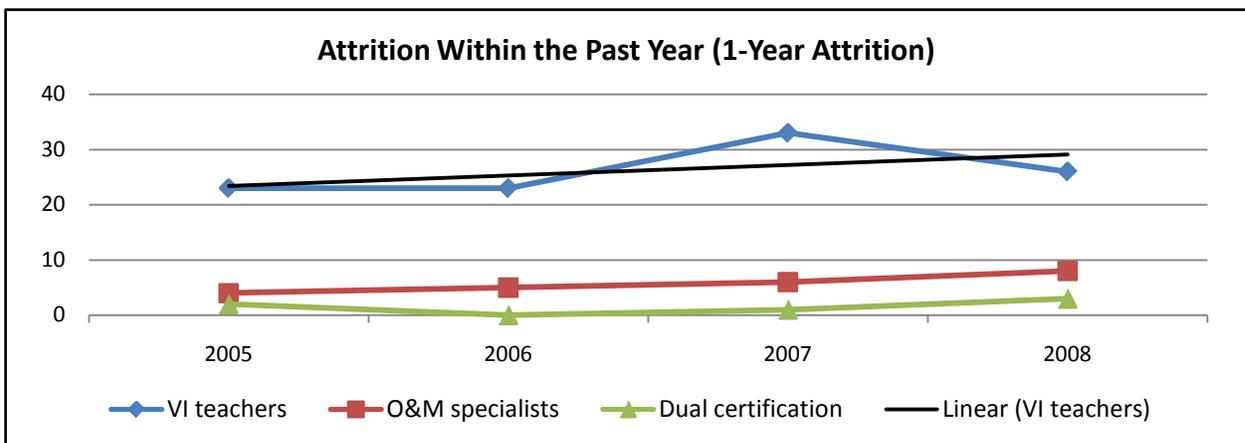
	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	110	133	116
O&M specialists	37	40	42
Dually certified	25	26	26
Total Need	172	199	184

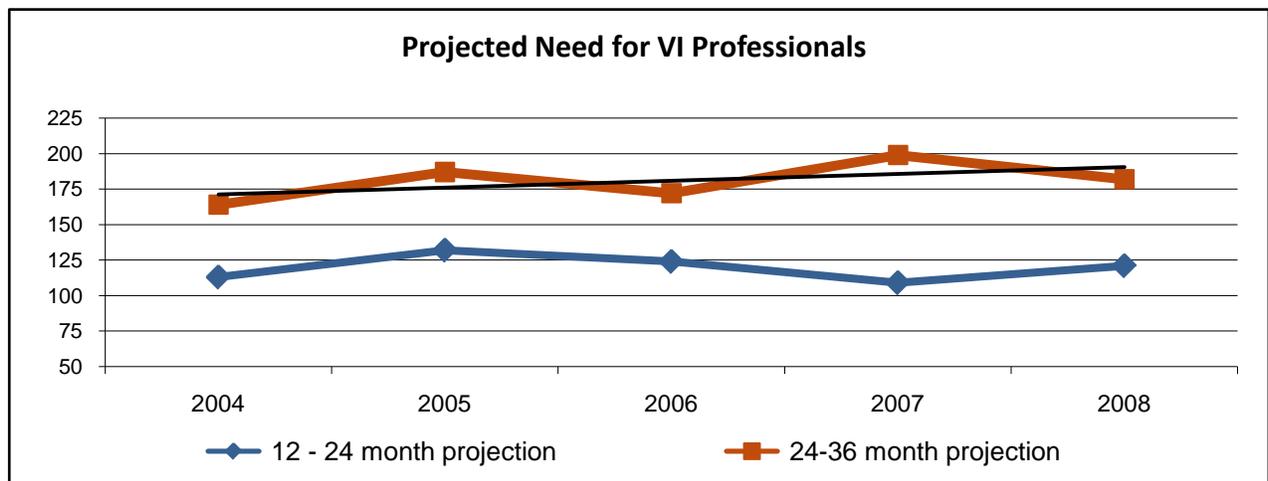
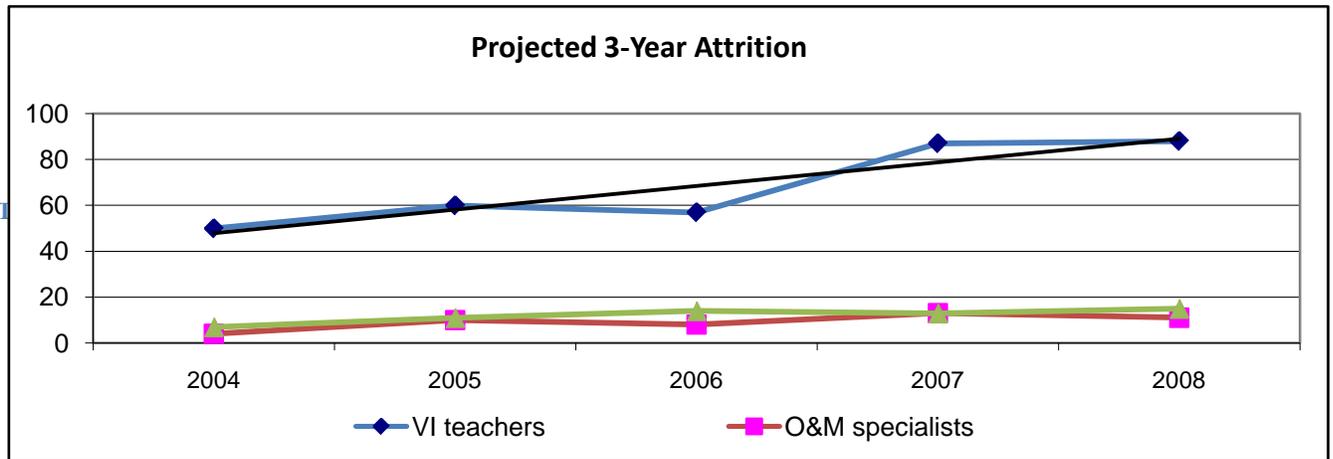
When considering the needs, VI consultants are advised to reflect on real attrition and anticipated attrition (those who are expected to permanently leave the field).

It is helpful to review the longer-term need (24-36 month) in conjunction with the 3-year actual and the projected attrition. While the numbers do vary from year to year in each domain, adding a statistical trend line can be helpful in evaluating the changes over time.



Below are tables showing attrition within the past year, projected attrition, and longer-term (36 months) need. The O&M and dually certified data remains essentially the same, showing little significant change from year to year. However the VI teacher data shows changes. Notice the slope of the trend lines. The projected attrition has the steepest statistical slope. Assuming the historical under projection of 30% that slope would be even steeper. This indicates a growing need for VI professionals.





The lack of change in O&M specialist data is noteworthy. At this point, there are no reliable statistical projections on the percentage of students with visual impairments who likely need O&M services. Nor do all students with visual impairments even receive O&M evaluations. In fact, according to the data gathered from the 2008 *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments*, only 50% of visually impaired students were evaluated for O&M skills within the previous 3 years. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate the lack of growth in reported need for O&M specialists (including dually certified professionals) based on data.

However, we do know the number of students who receive O&M and how that has changed since the data has been collected (2001). The first year 25% of students with visual impairments were receiving O&M services. In 2008, 31.3% are getting services. If statistical forecasts are accurate, it is projected that 33% will be receiving services by 2010. Each student will need a fully qualified O&M specialist.

Recommendations using a caseload formula

The American Foundation for the Blind's *Program Planning and Evaluation for Blind and Visually Impaired Students: National guidelines for educational excellence* (1989), and the *National Plan for Training Personnel to Serve Children with Blindness and Low Vision* (2000) recommends that caseloads for VI teachers and O&M specialists be restricted to 8 – 12 students per full-time equivalent (FTE) position.

VI teachers

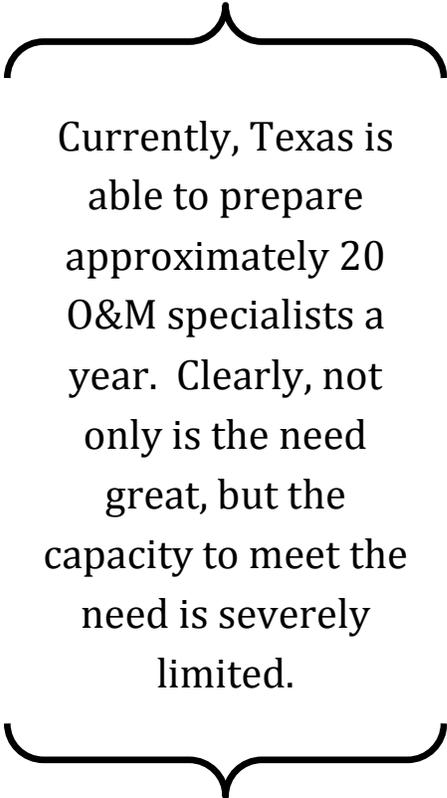
In January 2008 there were 8,040 students with visual impairment in Texas identified on the *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments*. Based on that figure, and in light of the recommended 8 –12 students per teacher ratio, Texas has a need for between 670 and 1,005 full-time equivalent direct service VI teachers. Currently there are 511.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) VI teachers. Therefore using this measure, Texas is lacking between 159 and 494 (FTE) VI teachers. (The mean of this range is 326 FTEs.)

This does not accommodate for the number of *individuals* needed. Approximately 25.4% of the VI teacher workforce is employed as a VI teacher on a part-time basis. (Of the 149 part-time VI teachers, 67 are dually certified; the remaining either contract with the district or are employed in some other capacity.) The number of *individuals* needed to fill 326 FTE positions would be *much* higher. Based on current ratios, the number of individuals needed is closer to 408 full- and part-time VI teachers.

O&M specialists

Determining the need based on a comparison of the data for orientation and mobility services is more complicated. According to the American Foundation for the Blind, 8 - 12 students is the recommended caseload for O&M specialists. However, not all students need O&M services each year.

According to the *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments*, 2,516 students were receiving O&M services in January of 2008. If we assume that all students who would benefit from O&M currently receive it, and base the calculations on the suggested 8 –12 students per teacher ratio, Texas has a need for between 210 and 315 full-time equivalent (FTE) O&M specialists. With 167.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) O&M specialists, Texas is lacking between 41 and 146 (FTE) O&M specialists. (The mean of this range is 94 FTEs.) However it must be noted that, given the shortage cited above, not all students who could benefit from O&M are receiving instruction.



Currently, Texas is able to prepare approximately 20 O&M specialists a year. Clearly, not only is the need great, but the capacity to meet the need is severely limited.

Also, the impact of part-time O&M specialists is more significant than for VI teachers. Approximately 41.8% of the O&M specialists in Texas provide services on a part-time basis. These individuals may be dually certified or private contractors working with other districts or the Division for Blind Services (DBS). Therefore, even the average estimated need for 95 O&M specialists should be considered *very* conservative. The number of *individuals* needed to fill 95 FTE positions would be *much* higher. Based on current ratios, the number of individuals needed is closer to 135 full- and part-time O&M specialists. Currently, Texas is able to prepare approximately 20 O&M specialists a year. Clearly, not only is the need great, but the capacity to meet the need is severely limited.

VI professionals needed based on caseload formula (Mean of range)

	2006	2007	2008
VI teachers	296	280	326
O&M specialists	97	88	95

Summary

This report reviewed characteristics of and indicators of need for VI professionals. In September 2008, Texas had 813 individuals providing vision-related services, either directly to students or in a leadership and/or technical assistance capacity. After adjusting for dually certified professionals (67) there are 756 individuals providing direct-service either on a full- or part-time basis. The total includes the following full-or part-time individuals:

- 586 VI teachers (511.5 FTEs)
- 237 O&M specialists, (167.5)
- 67 dually certified professionals

In addition, there are:

- 57 leadership/technical assistance specialists (or 45.5 FTEs)

This is a decrease from the 2007 report. This includes a reduction of 46 direct service providers. The area of biggest reduction was in VI teachers. There were 37 fewer full- and part-time VI teachers. The number of O&M specialists increased overall, from 215 to 237. However, the number of part-time O&M specialists also increased significantly; from 32 to 72 part-time O&M specialists, an increase of 125%. It is too early to assess whether this change reflects increasing flexibility, or a reduction in commitment to provide O&M services.

In September 2008 there were 17 VI teachers, 10 O&M specialists, and no dually certified professionals who are African-American. The Hispanic VI professionals included 73 VI teachers, 10 O&M specialists and three dually certified professionals. Seventy-five VI teachers, 12 O&M specialists and eight dually certified professionals speak Spanish.

The change in the cultural diversity was very mixed. The number of African-American VI teachers increased from 17 to 18 this year, but the O&M specialists and dually certified specialists decreased; yielding an overall decrease of a single African-American VI professional. Meanwhile the pattern for the Hispanic VI professionals was a bit different; the number of VI teachers and O&M specialists increased (to 67 and 10 respectively) and dually certified specialists decreased from eight to three. Overall, no change was indicated. While the number of VI professionals has increased significantly since 1996, cultural diversity still remains a challenge.

An examination of the attrition, projected attrition and new positions being created indicates challenges lie ahead. The number of new positions is not keeping pace with student growth. The attrition rate decreased this year from 40 to 37 VI professionals. The projected 3-year attrition rate was estimated at 114, or 14% of the total population of VI professionals.

This report included the number of “posted” positions in September. However, this is not considered a reliable or accurate indicator of need. The numbers are too low to be reliable and have proven to be a poor predictor of need. Data and experience indicates that posting and hiring practices are directly related to confidence that a position can be filled. These data are valuable as a crude indicator that a need exists even after the start of the school year.

Relying solely on use of a formula also poses problems. Formulas address only full-time equivalent positions. In Texas, use of part-time or dually certified personnel is a valuable option for serving children with visual impairments. Sole reliance on a method that only measures FTEs does not address the need for part-time or dually certified VI professionals. Part-time and dually certified VI professionals increase the flexibility of local staff and may assist students in getting more frequent service.

This report considers the recommendations of the VI specialists at the regional service centers to be the best indicators of real need in Texas. These professionals have extensive knowledge of their districts and region.

Comparison of Methods for Determining Need

Method for determining need	VI teachers	O&M specialists	Dually certified	Total Needed
<u>Posted vacancies</u> (full- and part-time)	27 individuals	4 individuals	0 individuals	31 individuals
Regional VI consultant recommendations: <u>12-24 months</u>	76 individuals	26 individuals	19 individuals	116 individuals
Regional VI consultant recommendations: <u>24-36 months</u>	116 individuals	42 individuals	26 individuals	184 individuals
<u>Caseload formula</u>	326 FTEs	94 FTEs	Not applicable	420 FTEs

Three indicators of need were reviewed in this document: posted vacancies, recommendations by regional consultants, and caseload formulas. All provided very different data. While each source reveals a different set of numbers, what is clear is that regardless of the method used, Texas has a clear and ongoing need for VI professionals.

Regardless of the strategy used to measure need, it is apparent that Texas has a clear and significant need for new and additional VI professionals and that need will continue to grow. In addition to need based on expected growth, it is anticipated that at least 14% of all VI professionals will be leaving the field within the next 3 years. These positions must be filled to ensure that students with visual impairments have the skills to succeed.

Appendix

Methodology

The survey asked about the number of people *functioning* as VI professionals. These individuals may be VI teachers, O&M specialists or both. Those *functioning* in both roles are referred to as being dually certified. The VI professionals provide instruction to students in a direct or consultative capacity and/or provide leadership, or technical assistance from regional educational service centers (ESCs) or Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). Those in leadership or technical assistance roles may be full- or part-time capacity.

Texas employs both full- and part-time VI professionals. Full-time professionals are those who work .6 FTE or more. Part-time professionals are those who work .5 FTE or less. This method has been used by TEA and is considered to be an adequate estimate of the number of full-time equivalent VI professionals. Part-time VI professionals are a significant proportion of the Texas workforce (23.6% of the VI teachers and 48.4% of the O&M specialists).

When relevant, information about full-time equivalent (FTE) positions is also presented. The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff was determined by multiplying the number of people employed in part-time positions by .5 and adding the result to the number of people employed as full-time VI professionals (Part-time X .5 + Full-time = FTE).

The descriptive and need data reflect statewide totals, which is a combination of VI teachers and O&M professionals. Data on each profession is also included separately. When appropriate, data on dually certified VI professionals is also presented.

People who provide O&M and VI services (dually certified) are counted as part-time VI and part-time O&M. Although they may be full-time employees of a district or cooperative, dually certified professionals are considered part-time VI teachers and part-time O&M specialists. As a result dually certified individuals appear on both the VI and O&M tables as part-time professionals. This results in a variance between the data listed in the Statewide Totals table and the combined totals of the Direct Service Provider tables. Simply adding together the discipline-specific totals would result in double counting some individuals. Statewide totals are adjusted for dually certified professionals.