



Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

www.tsbvi.edu | 512-454-8631 | 1100 W. 45th St. | Austin, Texas 78756

A Parent's Guide to Services at TSBVI



Photo of Students with Delta Gamma Volunteers in the TSBVI Learning Resource Center

A Legacy of Service: 1856 to Present

The Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) in Austin was established by the Texas Legislature in 1856. We have been proudly serving Texas students with visual impairments since that time!

We are here to support parents, students and professionals in providing quality educational services to Texas students who are visually impaired, deafblind, and have additional disabilities. These students are at the heart of our mission and of our collaboration with parents and ISDs.



Photo of Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired circa 1916

What We Do

Many years ago, TSBVI was viewed as the place where students with visual impairments went throughout their school years. These students rarely returned to their homes except during the summer months. Things have changed a lot since then! We now have three programs (Outreach, Short-Term Programs, Comprehensive K-12 Programs) delivering services throughout Texas. TSBVI works within a statewide network as partners with local school districts, educational service centers and related agencies. We are no longer viewed as a school where a student is likely to spend most of their school career. Instead, we offer a range of options to provide support to local educational teams when they request our assistance in educating their students.



Photo of staff in front of new Main Building

Outreach Programs.

TSBVI established Outreach Programs to expand efforts already underway to serve families and local districts throughout Texas. Over time, Outreach Programs have become a recognized and highly valuable resource throughout the state. We offer a wide variety of services including but not limited to those listed below. For more information about the Outreach Programs, go to <http://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach>.

Family Support.

TSBVI Outreach supports families of children with visual impairment and/or deafblindness to access training and resources, and to connect to other families. Family training is coordinated as appropriate with the Division for Blind Services from the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS-DBS and Deafblind Services). For more information and to access these services, go to

<http://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach/3374-for-families>

School Consultation.

Your student does not need to be enrolled as a TSBVI student in order to benefit from the expertise of our staff. Experienced TSBVI Outreach Programs staff members can consult with your local district to help your educational team with recommendations for quality programming. Requests must come from the local district and are coordinated with your regional Education Service Center (ESC) vision consultant to ensure long-term follow up.

Statewide Training.

TSBVI staff provides local and regional workshops, and sponsors on-campus workshops, statewide conferences, videoconferences (TETN) and webinars.

Training is available for educational team members, including families, community and agency staff, and is often provided in collaboration with or upon request from a local district, education service center, and/or related organizations and agencies. You can find a statewide calendar of training opportunities at <http://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach/1013-statewide-staff-development-calendar-for-professionals-in-visual-impairment>

Publications and Materials.

The Outreach Program produces original materials, including TX SenseAbilities, a quarterly newsletter developed with DARS-DBS, for families and professionals. This newsletter is available in print and on the [website](#) in both English and Spanish. To request a subscription to TX SenseAbilities, please go to: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/tx-senseabilities>.

Also available on the website are a wide variety of articles, links, blogs and other distance learning materials. The new distance learning site has a wealth of easy to follow modules and videos: Go to <http://distance.tsbvi.edu/>

To learn more about these and other Outreach Programs, go to <http://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach>.

Costs of Outreach Program Services.

There are no costs to the student's parent for Outreach Program services. The student's local school district may support Outreach services when trainings have registration fees or to help pay for transportation and related travel costs associated with Outreach visits.

Short-Term Programs.

TSBVI Short-Term Programs includes summer and school-year sessions.

Summer Sessions

Summer sessions are available to Texas students are not enrolled full-time at TSBVI during the regular school year. These programs, which range from 1-5 weeks in length, serve students from elementary through high school, including those who are visually impaired with additional disabilities. Classes focus on various aspects of the Expanded Core Curriculum for students with visual impairments. Each summer, we bring approximately 300 students to our campus from all across the state. TSBVI offers these programs at no cost to parents, but does not provide or pay for transportation.

Summer sessions are:

- Academic Secondary Enrichment
- Practical Academic Secondary Enrichment
- Elementary Summer Enrichment
- Life Skills Camps
- Working and Living in the Community (WALIC)
- Summer Work Experience in Austin Texas (SWEAT)

Summer applications are posted on our website in early January each year, and they are due no later than February 14. They are completed jointly by the student's parent and teacher of the visually impaired.

More information is available at: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/summer-programs>

Short-Term Sessions

Short-Term Sessions provides classes between September and May to academic students who are functioning on or close to grade level and are able to quickly adapt and learn in a new environment. Ranging from 3-5 days in length, these highly intensive, fast-paced classes introduce students to aspects of the Expanded Core Curriculum that can be difficult to provide during the regular academic school day. Our residential instruction is as carefully planned and supervised as our day program. All classes are provided at no cost to the school or family; this includes transportation.

Instruction in Short-Term sessions supports the regular curriculum (TEKS) by teaching:

- Disability-specific skills needed to access the regular curriculum (e.g., technology, low vision tools and strategies, math tools and strategies)

- Basic concepts that support the curriculum (e.g., college prep, social studies, research, number concepts)
- Attitudinal changes that support successful learning (e.g., self-determination, social skills, independent living)

In addition to working on identified objectives, students:

- Interact with other students and adults with visual impairments who share many of their life experiences, thus supporting social-emotional development and self-advocacy. This alone can have a life-changing impact on a student's perspective and willingness to learn in the classroom.
- Practice supplementary skills and adaptations (before and after school) needed for food preparation, household tasks, personal organization and management, accessible recreational and leisure skills.
- Experience the independence of living away from home for a short time in a totally supported environment, making choices and trying out new experiences on their own.
- Better understand the need and value of using special adaptations related to vision loss
- Join in activities that access the campus at large as well as the community.

Examples of our many Short-Term Program classes are:

- Elementary Access to Academic Skills
- High School Access to Academic Skills
- Low Vision Tools and Strategies
- College Prep
- Tech for Tykes
- Iron Chef: Working in the Kitchen
- Safe Driving with Low Vision
- City Travel
- Accessible Math Tools



Photo of students working with geometric model

More information is available at: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/short-term-programs>



Photo of 2012 Braille Challenge Team

Comprehensive (K-12) Programs.

As in the past, we continue to have our on-campus regular school year program for students. Most students reside on campus Sunday night through Friday afternoon, traveling back to their homes either weekly or every other week. Students who live close to the school continue to live at home during their enrollment and are transported to the school on a daily basis by their local school districts. We know families are important! We work hard to make sure students are home and connected to their communities as often as possible.

Like all students with disabilities throughout the country, each student enrolled in Comprehensive Programs has an individual educational plan (IEP) developed by the student's local Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) committee, which includes the student's parents or guardian. For students attending TSBVI, our staff also participates in this ARD meeting, offering support to the local district.

TSBVI is a center of expertise in visual impairment. Our teachers and other support staff (O&M, OT/PT, Speech Pathologists, Nurses, and Paraprofessionals) are uniquely able to provide specialized support to you and your district when a student needs a period of intensive services on our campus. We are able to evaluate each student's learning needs and help the local district build its capacity to provide appropriate instruction when the student returns home.

If you and your district determine that your student may need a period of intensive services in Comprehensive Programs, a referral can be initiated by the student's local ARD committee. If the student is accepted for Comprehensive Programs, an ongoing process of collaboration among TSBVI, you, and your district begins right away and continues throughout the student's enrollment at TSBVI. The purpose of the collaboration is to ensure that TSBVI makes an effective contribution to your student's long term educational plan. TSBVI will deliver an appropriate on-campus educational program while at the same time assisting you, your local school, and other agencies to prepare for the student's successful return to the district or to adult life after graduation.

Eligibility Requirements.

To be enrolled as a student at TSBVI, the student must be a resident of Texas who has been determined by the local school district Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) Committee to be visually impaired or deafblind. By law, students who are admitted to TSBVI:

- Must require specialized or intensive educational or related services related to the visual impairment
- Must not have needs that are appropriately addressed in a home or hospital setting or in a residential treatment facility; and
- Must not have primary, ongoing needs related to a severe or profound emotional, behavioral or cognitive deficit.

For more information about referral for admission, contact: Cathy Olsen, TSBVI Admissions Coordinator, olsenc@tsbvi.edu or by phone 512-206-9182.



Photo of TSBVI Champion Robotic Team

Costs.

The student's local school district shares in the cost of the student's education when the student is enrolled in TSBVI. The cost to the district is based on each local school district's property tax revenue.

The district also funds the costs of the student's transportation at the beginning and end of the school year, and at each of the TSBVI school holidays when the School closes. There are eight school closings in the typical school year.

The student's education is free to the parent. The student's medical treatment is the responsibility of the student's parents. Parents are encouraged to provide students with an "allowance" for personal items and special recreation activities, although most recreation activities are funded by TSBVI.



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