

VI and O&M Preparation

Information about how to become certified as a teacher of students with visual impairments or an orientation and mobility specialist

FALL 2020

VI and O&M Preparation in Texas

Information on how to become certified as a teacher of students with visual impairments or an orientation and mobility specialist

September 2020

What is VI Preparation in Texas?

Certification to work with students with visual impairments is available, regardless of where you live in Texas. Training is provided through Texas Tech University and Stephen F. Austin State University.

For more information about VI and O&M Preparation in Texas, you can contact:

<p><u>General Information:</u> Mary Shore, COMS Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (512)-206-9156 shorem@tsbvi.edu</p> <p><u>Website:</u> http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional</p>	<p><u>Stephen F. Austin State University:</u> Shannon Darst, PhD (VI) (512) 206 – 9463 (TSBVI) (936) 468 - 1173 darstd@sfasu.edu -or- DJ Dean (O&M) (936)-468-1142 djdean@sfasu.edu</p> <p><u>Websites:</u> Visual Impairment: http://www.sfasu.edu/elementaryed/407.asp</p> <p>Orientation and Mobility: http://www.sfasu.edu/elementaryed/406.asp</p>	<p><u>Texas Tech University:</u> Rona Pogrund, PhD (VI) (512) 206-9213 (TSBVI) (806) 252-8026 rona.pogrund@ttu.edu</p> <p>Nora Griffin-Shirley, PhD (O&M) (806)-834-0225 n.griffin-shirley@ttu.edu -or- Phoebe Okungu, PhD (DeafBlindness) (806)-834-0286 phoebe.okungu@ttu.edu</p> <p><u>Website:</u> http://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell/index.php</p>
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Who should read this?

- Have you been thinking about a career change? **Are you interested in teaching, but want a non-traditional setting and job assignment?**
- Do you have an interest in working with children with visual impairments (VI)?
- Have you considered being a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist, but don't know how to get certified or get training?
- Are you an independent worker who is active in teams, a good problem-solver, and eternally curious?

Then a career working with students with visual impairments might be for YOU!

What is in this packet?

Beginning your career as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or O&M specialist through a university program has at least two steps: being accepted in a participating university and being accepted by the certification program. Reviewing the following information prior to submitting the university application will assist in this process:

1. *VI and O&M Preparation* (this document),
2. [*Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals*](#).

What are my career or training options?

There are two types of VI professional preparation at the university level:

- teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI)
- certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS)

To learn more about these professions, please read [*Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals*](#).

What are the training prerequisites for a TSVI and a COMS?

You may seek certification as either a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or as an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist. Although a VI professional may choose to become dually certified as both a TSVI and an O&M specialist, each is a separate profession with separate professional standards. The prerequisites will vary depending on the training option you choose.

Teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) prerequisites

- Initial teaching certification, preferably in special education, elementary, or secondary education,
- and**
- Bachelor's degree from an accredited university

For information on how to obtain a Texas Teaching Certificate you can follow this link:
[http://tea.texas.gov/Texas Educators/Certification/](http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Certification/)

Orientation and mobility specialist (O&M Specialist) prerequisite

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited university. SFASU also offers an undergraduate degree in Rehabilitation Services with an Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Educational Professionals (ACVREP) O&M certification.

What will I be studying?

The specific program of study will depend on the training option (TSVI or O&M) and on other additional factors. Below is a basic listing of course topics. Exact course titles will vary by university and training option.

Common Courses (for all VI professionals)

- All students will take the following courses:
 - Foundations in Visual Impairments+
 - Structure and Function of the Visual System (Anatomy)
 - Methods for Students with Multiple Impairments
 - Basic Orientation and Mobility

Teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI)

- In addition to the common courses, the VI certification program includes:
 - Braille
 - Academic Methods, and
 - Internship/Practicum.

All teachers of students with visual impairments must learn braille in order to be fully certified and to have access to an emergency permit. You will be required to take the TExES Braille exam. You must take and pass the Braille TExES exam and the VI TExES exam prior to being certified. The Braille TExES exam is offered four times a year, and you will be able to take that exam following the completion of the course. The VI exam is taken toward the end of your program.

If you have not taken an overview course in special education, you must also complete a survey of exceptionalities course to become a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI). You will need to coordinate your specific needs with your university advisor.

O&M Specialist

In addition to the common courses, the O&M program of study requires additional coursework. SFASU and TTU address the same competencies; however they arrange their courses a bit differently.

TTU	SFASU
O&M Seminars (6 credit hours)	'Blindfold' or 'Cane' /Beginning Clinical Practicum (6 credit hours across both summer semesters)
'Blindfold' or 'Cane' (6 credit hours)	Intermediate Clinical Practicum (3 credit hours)
O&M Internship (3 credit hours, 350 supervised hours)	Advanced Clinical Practicum (3 credit hours)
	Internship (6 credits, 350 supervised hours)

If you already hold a VI certification and were trained at a university, have already taken the common courses, and have worked in the field since you completed your training, you will probably not need to take them again. Most districts do not require O&M specialists to hold a teacher certification.

How much will the program cost? Is financial assistance available?

Both SFASU and TTU have funds to assist with the cost of tuition. Each university distributes funds according to university program guidelines. The specific method used and amount of stipends vary by university. This is a competitive process. You should discuss it with the faculty advisors at the university of your choice.

TTU students will be required to travel to Lubbock and Austin as part of some courses. Students are responsible for these required travel costs. For O&M students who receive grant funding, tuition, room, and board for summer courses may be covered, pending funding. O&M students are required to come to Lubbock for 4 1/2 weeks of training in the summer.

SFASU O&M candidates will be required to come to the Nacogdoches campus for 6 weeks of training in the summer. Room and board are the financial responsibility of the candidate. Candidates are also responsible for any required travel costs to and from

summer training. Contact the program facilitator for more information about room and board/lodging options for SFASU O&M cane classes.

Candidates will be responsible for ordering and paying for their books. However, some ESCs have either books to loan or funds to help defray the cost of the books. Contact your regional education service center for more information. Go to www.tsbvi.edu/esc#ESC for ESC contact information.

How are courses offered?

Courses are offered through a blend of distance learning strategies such as via the internet, and/or face-to-face activities. The exact blend will depend on your location, the university, and the specific course. For more information, you should contact the universities listed on the first and last pages of this newsletter. One face-to-face course is usually offered by Texas Tech University each semester during the academic year (but due to COVID-19, face-to-face courses may not be available this year). This course typically meets on seven Saturdays at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Austin. For this schedule, please check with the faculty at TTU.

Undergraduate O&M courses at SFASU are usually offered in a face-to-face delivery model on campus in Nacogdoches; however, SFASU's undergraduate courses are currently being offered as hybrid courses due to COVID-19.

Is coursework available in the area of DeafBlindness?

Texas Tech University offers a DeafBlind Graduate Certificate Program. The coursework is available as a stand-alone certificate or an area of emphasis with the [Master of Education in Special Education](#). For additional information, go to: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/graduate/certificates/dual_sensory_impairment.php

Should I contact my regional education service center (ESC)?

Each regional service center has at least one VI contact. You are **strongly encouraged** to contact the VI consultant at your regional service center (ESC) for various reasons.

- The VI person or team at your ESC will be a source of support and resources for you in the future. Why not start the relationship early?
- If you take courses that have an ITV component (SFASU summer courses), you *must* make sure that your region is participating.
- VI programs at your regional service centers have resources that may be helpful. These may include reference materials, journals and specialized equipment. Some ESCs provide assistance with textbooks.

- VI programs sponsor workshops at the service center. They also help support professional development for VI professionals in their region. “Support” may include travel assistance to attend statewide conferences.
- ESC personnel tend to know about TSVI and O&M positions open in their region.

If you would like to find out more about regional VI services, the VI staff, or other information, go to the TSBVI website and click on your region. [See a map and a link to the list of VI professionals at the regions.](#)

Who should apply?

Of course, you must have an interest in and a commitment to working with children with visual impairments. Most VI professionals work as itinerant professionals. **Therefore, as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or an O&M specialist, you must be prepared for on-the-job travel.**

In addition, you must realize that this is an *intense* program. The instructional content is exactly the same as traditional courses on campus. While the length of instruction is the same, ITV and interactive courses will have fewer meetings (but for more hours each time). Internet courses also require a substantial time commitment.

How do I apply?

Each university has specific requirements and procedures. You must contact the faculty at the university or visit their web site for information. You can find more information at the following sites.

SFASU

1. APPLY TO THE SFASU GRADUATE SCHOOL

- a. Use the Texas Common Application found at https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX. **There is a \$75 application fee**

2. OTHER SFASU PROGRAM AND SCHOOL INFORMATION

- a. SFASU accepts candidates into the VI and O&M preparation (VIP) program in the spring of each year, and all accepted candidates will be considered for grant awards (*Project Vision*) that are used to cover tuition. Grant awards are competitive, and awards are not guaranteed. New students typically take all of their courses as a group, starting in the summer and are referred to as a “cohort”. The deadline for application for each year’s cohort is March 1.

- b. Students who want to join the program at other times will be considered, but may not be eligible for grant monies. For more information on the TSVI/O&M program and how to apply for the competitive grant funding, visit the following website:

<http://www.sfasu.edu/elementaryed/407.asp>

1. APPLY TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

Go to TTU Graduate School

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/gradschool/admissions/howtoapply.php>

and click the “Apply Now” link. Follow the instructions to apply to the Graduate School.

There is a \$65 application fee, and it can be completed online. You do not need GRE scores for certification or Master’s Programs any longer.

2. IF SEEKING A CERTIFICATION

a. Under “Select Your Major” choose “**Teaching Certificate in College of Education**” even if you already have your teacher’s certification. Under “Major Area of Interest” choose “**Visual Impairment**” or “**Orientation & Mobility**”.

b. You can check your admission status online. For assistance, the Graduate School Admissions phone number is 806-742-2787. If you are having application problems, please contact Anita Page at 806-834-1515 in the College of Education for help.

3. IF INTERESTED IN A MASTER'S DEGREE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

You need to also go to: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/gradschool/admissions/howtoapply.php> and choose the Degree option and then Master’s Degree (M.Ed.) in Special Education with a concentration in either Visual Impairment, Orientation & Mobility, or DeafBlindness.

4. APPLY TO THE REACH ACROSS TEXAS VI and O&M PROGRAM

You can complete the online application here:

<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell/students/cert-application.php>

The application for a competitive stipend award for tuition assistance for certification courses only needs to be completed, scanned, and submitted to: reachacrosstexas@ttu.edu. If you are having application problems, please contact Gabriella Davis at (806) 834-1725 for help. The deadlines for Reach Across Texas applications are: fall- June 1, spring- November 1, and summer- May 1.

Note: Both universities require **official** transcripts from **all** previous universities you attended (including community colleges). You should order an **official copy of your university transcript(s)** to be sent directly to the university (*for TTU, make sure transcripts are sent to the TTU Graduate School*) as soon as possible – even if you have not completed your university or program application. Sometimes it takes time to have your request processed and sent. Don’t let this hold up your application. Most universities now have electronic transmission of official transcripts that can be ordered online. Keep the receipt of proof you paid to have transcripts sent.

Can I get a master’s degree?

Both Stephen F. Austin and Texas Tech universities offer master’s degrees in education (M.Ed.).

The courses described here will contribute to certification as a VI professional either as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist. The courses will not provide all of the requirements for a master’s degree in either of those areas, but those at the graduate level can apply towards a master’s degree.

If you are considering a master's degree, even if you are not sure, you should talk to the advisor at the university of your choice as soon as possible. This information may affect how you complete the application procedures.

Please note the grant provides support for certification courses. Students seeking a master's degree will need to self-pay or seek funding elsewhere for the additional courses required beyond those for the certification.

What are the acceptance criteria?

The goal of this program is to train and employ VI professionals to work with students with visual impairments. Therefore, in order to be accepted, you will have to make a commitment to work with children with visual impairments in Texas if you accept any scholarships from the program.

Each university has specific acceptance criteria and procedures. These are also affected by whether you want certification-only or want a master's degree. Also, each university has timelines for submitting documentation. **You must contact the university of your choice for requirements and timeline information.** Contact information is on the first and last pages of this newsletter.

Can I get an emergency permit?

Teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVIs):

It is possible to get an emergency permit to work as a TSVI. In order to serve as a TSVI in a district before completing the TSVI program, a district can apply to TEA for an emergency permit for an individual with the agreement that he or she will then complete the remainder of the courses required for full certification as a TSVI. To be eligible for the emergency permit in order to teach students with visual impairments in Texas, you must be currently certified in elementary, secondary, or special education and have satisfied the following requirements: (a) completed six semester credit hours directly related to teaching students with visual impairments (braille + one other vision course) and (b) have one creditable year of classroom teaching experience. In addition, you must have demonstrated competency in literary braille and basic Nemeth Code by passing the TExES Braille exam, holding certification as a literary braille transcriber by the Library of Congress, or passing one university course in braille. The University Program will provide the hiring district a Deficiency Plan noting the remaining courses needed by the person being hired. Both the Braille and VI TExES exams must also be passed before becoming fully certified.

Contact SFASU or TTU for information about how to obtain a VI Emergency Permit. There are no emergency permits available for O&M specialists.

How will the lecture portions of the courses be taught?

The courses are a blend of lecture and skill-based learning. The lecture portion will be taught through a blend of internet and/or face-to-face meetings. More information about the skill-based training follows:

Internet

The Internet is used throughout the programs, either for part or all of courses. The instructor will be available via phone, discussion board, and/or email.

You will be able to participate in the Internet-based courses and activities at your convenience. Specific deadlines will be set for each module or unit. You must meet the deadlines; this is not an independent study course. It will be very important for you to develop and stick to a schedule.

SFASU uses Internet-based interactive platforms, ZOOM and Brightspace/D2L, as the method of delivering the VIP preparation program courses. This platform will be used to provide instruction during the fall, spring, and summer semesters. These classes are held in the evenings. Graduate-level TSVI and O&M courses (other than required face-to-face O&M courses) are offered in an internet-based delivery model.

Face-to-face

TTU usually offers 1 face-to-face course each long semester during the year on 7 Saturdays at TSBVI in Austin (depending on COVID-19, face-to-face courses may be changed in the coming academic year). Additionally, TTU requires skill-based weekend instruction at Texas Tech in Lubbock or Austin for specific modules in some of the courses.

How will the skill-based portions of the training be taught?

Several courses have skill-based components that are taught face-to-face.

Basic O&M

During Basic O&M, students will meet with a facilitator for approximately 20+ hours of instruction. Scheduling will vary by university. The skill-based training will be conducted at a university or an outreach site.

Cane Courses

O&M specialists take a total of 6 credit hours of instruction on how to use the cane while under blindfold. TTU offers two separate 3-credit courses. Both are taken in a single summer. SFASU's

summer blindfold course is offered as one summer semester enrollment of 6 credit hours expanding across both summer semesters.

The cane courses must be conducted on a face-to-face basis. These courses will be offered at the TTU and SFASU campuses. **Pending availability of funds**, students who attend these courses **on-campus** may be provided with a stipend to cover **some** or all of their tuition, housing and/or assistance for travel.

Anatomy of the Eye

At TTU, the eye course requires a weekend in Lubbock for hands-on and interactive training such as dissecting a cow's eye, learning how to do a functional vision evaluation and a learning media assessment, using optical devices, etc. ZOOM may be used as an alternate to the face-to-face weekend during the COVID-19 pandemic. SFASU offers these components online only with no face-to-face or travel needed to complete requirements for the anatomy of the eye course.

Academic Methods

At TTU, the academic methods course for teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVI) requires a weekend in Austin for the Assistive Technology component of the course which includes hands-on learning about the latest technological advances used with students with visual impairments. SFASU offers these components online only with no face-to-face or travel needed to complete requirements for the academic methods course.

Practicum or Internship

The VI and O&M training options both require field experiences, known as either a practicum or internship. These will be arranged on an individual basis. Typically, the practicum/internship will be in the local area. However, each practicum/internship experience must meet certain basic requirements. **As a result, it may be necessary to travel from your existing job location for a portion or all of the practicum/internship. It is possible that O&M specialists will need to go out of their area or even out of Texas.**

O&M internship

In O&M, the field experiences (internship and practicum) are completed under the supervision of an Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) certified O&M specialist who meets the criteria for internship supervisors and who has been selected by the university to do so. Internship involves providing orientation and mobility services on a full-time basis. **This important experience usually happens away from your home community. Faculty will make all arrangements.**

VI practicum/internship

Teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) complete a practicum/internship. It will be supervised by university faculty or by a university designee. During that period, you will need to work as a TSVI, completing a series of professional experiences. It is possible that you will need to travel beyond your district for a limited period of time in order to complete those experiences. For those students already working as a TSVI with an emergency permit, their internship can be done with their existing caseload of students.

Does it make a difference which university I attend?

NO. Both university programs address the same set of professional competencies, respond to the same set of accountability measures, and offer training which will enable you to be certified as either a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist.

There are differences. You must evaluate both programs and determine which best meets your needs. Stephen F. Austin State University admits new students and groups them into cohorts that begin taking classes in summer semesters. Other students may be admitted on a case-by-case basis. This block of students, known as a cohort, take classes together via the Internet. Certification can be completed in three consecutive semesters (summer, fall, and spring). Texas Tech University accepts new students year round and offers courses predominately via the Internet.

IMPORTANT: Additional information is available from both universities. You should contact both universities to determine which is best for your situation. You can find information on their websites. The addresses are:

SFASU: <http://www.sfasu.edu/elementaryed/407.asp>

NOTE: If you have any difficulties or questions, please call 936-468-1145.

TTU: <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell/>

NOTE: If you have trouble with the website, please contact Anita Page at 806-834-1515 or anita.page@ttu.edu. TSVI specific info:

https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/graduate/psychology-and-leadership/special_education_visual_impairment.php and O&M specific info: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/graduate/psychology-and-leadership/special_education_orientation_and_mobility.php

Master's degree students

If you are interested in getting a master's degree as a TSVI and/or an O&M specialist, you **must** discuss this with the faculty at SFASU and TTU. Each university has different requirements. You will be able to complete the extra coursework required for the master's via on-line courses.

In order to help you make that decision, you should contact each university to discuss its application and acceptance policies. If possible, it is preferred that you declare whether or not you are seeking a degree during the first semester.

What are the deadlines for enrollment?

Remember, there are **at least TWO** steps you must complete:

1. Applying and being accepted by the university

AND

2. Being accepted to the *Reach Across Texas* Program at TTU or *Project Vision* at SFASU, if you are interested in applying for a competitive stipend award.

These are separate procedures. You **MUST** complete all of the steps according to the chosen university's procedures. To learn more about the steps for enrolling in the university, visit the websites for the VI programs at SFASU and TTU.

Texas Tech University (TTU)

Texas Tech accepts students throughout the year, although the majority of TTU students begin the program in the fall semester. You must apply to the university and to Reach Across Texas no later than **November 1, 2020 for the Spring 2021 semester, May 1, 2021 for the Summer semester and June 1, 2021 for the Fall 2021 semester**. Many students start the TSVI program in the summer, taking braille and the foundation course so that they can start a job as a TSVI in the fall with an emergency permit. Once accepted, you must register for the designated courses. For more information visit: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/visual-impairment/> or <https://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/programs/cert-prep/orientation-and-mobility/>

Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU)

At SFA, VI and O&M professionals typically take their courses as a group, or cohort. This means that most students start together (in the summer) and take their classes in a set sequence. Other students can join the program in other semesters on a limited basis based on prerequisites. The cohort applications are accepted in the spring of 2020 and courses start the first summer session. You must apply no later than **March 1, 2021**. Once you have applied to the SFASU graduate school using the Apply Texas common application found at https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX, you can then apply for funding from *Project Vision*.

For more information visit: <http://www.sfasu.edu/elementaryed/407.asp>

- **SFASU – Deadline for admission to the 2021 VI & O&M Cohorts -- March 1, 2021**
- **SFASU – Deadlines for limited admission other semesters –please contact the program**
- **TTU – Deadline for admission for SPRING 2021 – NOVEMBER 1, 2020**
- **TTU – Deadline for admission for SUMMER 2021– MAY 1, 2021**
- **TTU – Deadline for admission for FALL 2021 –JUNE 1, 2021**

Will I need to get my transcripts?

Yes. You will need to arrange for an **official copy of all of your transcripts** to be sent to the Graduate School at the university of your choice. The holder of your transcripts (all previously attended universities, including community colleges) will send them directly to SFASU or TTU Graduate School Admissions (most universities can send transcripts electronically now). Since it may take time for your request to be processed, you are strongly advised to start this process **as soon as possible. Do not wait!** You might miss a deadline!

Will I have a mentor?

In Texas, all participants are paired with a trained, experienced professional. Individuals who are new to the VI profession are assigned a mentor when they are hired by a school district as a TSVI or COMS. The mentor relationship continues through the protégé's practicum/internship period and extends one year beyond certification as a VI professional in Texas schools. In general, the mentor/protégé assignment lasts for two years. Any TSVI working on an emergency permit is assigned a mentor right away. To the degree possible, the mentor will be from your home region.

All participants in either the TTU or SFASU VI programs are invited to attend a Mentor Center during their training and up to a year after completion. Mentor Centers are hosted at TSBVI where you are able to observe TSVIs and COMS working with students at TSBVI. Reach Across Texas recipients are required to attend at least one Mentor Center while in the program.

This is a non-evaluative mentor program. This means that your mentor will typically not be called upon to provide an evaluation of your skills, either by the university or your district. This is a person to whom you can turn when you have questions and/or concerns about content or skills.

When will courses be offered?

Due to COVID-19, university regulations may prohibit the offering of certain courses and how courses may be delivered. For more information contact the universities directly for updated information.

Texas Tech University

Summer I

Cane I & II (TTU campus in Lubbock)
Braille (6 weeks) (Internet)
Basic O&M (internet + on-campus weekend)
O&M Internship (off campus; sites vary)

Summer II

Foundations (internet)

Fall

Eye Anatomy (Internet + on-campus weekend or ZOOM during pandemic)
Foundations (Internet)
Braille (Internet)
Basic O&M (Internet + weekend in Austin)
Basic O&M (Internet + on-campus Lubbock weekend)
Visual and Multiple Impairments Methods (Internet)
Intermediate O&M Seminar (Internet)
O&M Internship (Off campus; sites vary)
VI Internship (Off campus; sites vary)

Spring

Braille (Internet)
Academic Methods (face-to-face at TSBVI in Austin on 6 Saturdays + AT weekend and via distance education with AT weekend in Austin- may change due to pandemic)
Eye Anatomy (Internet + on-campus weekend)
Visual and Multiple Impairments Methods (Internet)
Advanced O&M Seminar (Internet)
VI Internship (Off campus; sites vary)
O&M Internship (Off campus; sites vary)

Stephen F. Austin State University

Summer

Anatomy (Internet)
Braille (Internet)
Clinical Practicum in O&M/Blindfold (6 hours) (on campus)
Internship in O&M (3 to 6 hours) (off campus; sites vary)

Fall

Foundations in VI (Internet)
Methods in Visual and Multiple Impairments (Internet)
Practicum in VI (Internet)
Intermediate Practicum in O&M (3 hours) (Internet + various sites)

Spring

Basic O&M (Internet)
Academic Methods (Internet)
Practicum in VI (Internet + various sites)
Advanced Clinical Practicum in O&M (3 hours) (Internet + various sites)
Low Vision (Internet)

Let's review your action steps:

- **Read** the [Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals](#).
- **Determine** which university program fits best with your lifestyle and learning style, and other factors. Contact each university for more information.
- **Order** an OFFICIAL copy of your transcript(s) to be sent to the Graduate School Admissions Office at the university of your choice. You may choose to have the transcripts sent directly to the university (most universities now can send official transcripts electronically).
- **Apply** to the university of your choice. You will find links so that you can apply online at:
 - SFASU: <http://www.sfasu.edu/elementaryed/407.asp>
 - TTU: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/gradschool/admissions/howtoapply.php>. and click the "Apply Now" link. Follow the instructions to apply to the Graduate School.
- **Talk** to your advisor at the university.
This is likely to be one of the university faculty listed below.
- **Register** for the first course(s).
- **TTU students:** Your advisor will help you understand what course(s) to take and the procedures for completing this step on-line.
- **SFASU students:** Do not register until you receive an e-mail telling you which class, section and CRN # to use in registration.
- **Complete** all of the scheduled activities.

How can I get more information?

If you would like more information, or have a special circumstance, *please do not hesitate to contact:*

General Information:

Mary Shore, COMS
TSBVI Outreach
512-206-9156
shorem@tsbvi.edu

Texas Tech University Program:

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Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals

Adapted from *Quality Programs for the Visually Impaired*, developed by Nancy Toelle

The **Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVI)** has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Has primary responsibility for specialized instruction and services required to meet the unique educational needs of her students who are visually impaired.
- Possesses the skills and abilities necessary to provide and coordinate this specialized instruction.
- Assists the student, parents, special and general education personnel, and the student's sighted peers in:
 - understanding the unique educational needs and learning characteristics of students who are visually impaired,
 - becoming aware of services and support available from local programs for students who are visually impaired,
 - acquiring information regarding local, state, and national resources for the education of students who are visually impaired, and
 - interpreting the student's specific eye condition, the educational implications of the visual impairment, and the results of functional vision evaluations and learning media assessments.
- Consults collaboratively with the classroom teacher, other general and special education personnel, parents, and others to coordinate programs and services for the student who is visually impaired.
- Assists the site administrator and teachers in making environmental adjustments for the student in the school.
- Shares responsibility with classroom teachers in the identification of instructional areas in which the student requires assistance.
- Assures that large-type or braille texts, supplementary materials, educational aids, and equipment needed by the student who is visually impaired, and the classroom teacher, are provided in a timely manner to ensure the student's maximum participation in all classroom activities (appropriate educational materials may be prepared or adapted by the TSVI, or they may be obtained from educational, clerical, or transcriber services.)
- Provides instruction in the development and maintenance of skills to meet the student's unique educational needs in the following areas, as indicated in the IEP:
 - low vision strategies and use of optical and non-optical devices
 - assistive technology
 - sensory efficiency skills (visual, tactile, auditory),
 - concept development & academic access skills,
 - independent living skills,
 - recreation/leisure skills
 - career & vocational education skills,

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- communication skills (these skills include braille reading and writing, as appropriate),
- self-determination skills
- social interaction skills and abilities,
- Prepares sequential and meaningful instruction geared to the student's assessed needs, IEP goals and objectives, functioning, and motivational levels. This instruction should be reflected in weekly or monthly lesson plans, as appropriate.
- Provides assistance to the classroom teacher in academic subjects and activities of the classroom that, as a direct result of the student's visual impairment, require adaptations for accessibility for the student.
- Provides initial and ongoing assessments:
 - consults with assessment team to determine appropriate testing materials and modifications needed,
 - assists with assessments when needed,
 - interprets assessment results when needed.
- Conducts functional vision evaluations, learning media assessments, and expanded core curriculum evaluations and produces written reports.
- Attends ARD/IEP meetings for students with visual impairments.
- Schedules time efficiently for evaluation, planning, instruction, preparation of materials, travel, and conferences with relevant school and other key individuals.
- Maintains ongoing contact with family members to assist them in the development of a supportive understanding of their child's abilities, progress, and future goals.
- Provides in-service training programs for school personnel and students and education for parents regarding the needs of students who are visually impaired and adaptations, programs, and services for these students.
- Makes available pamphlets, videos, and other public information materials that may be useful in developing realistic and unprejudiced attitudes toward students who are visually impaired.
- Collaborates with other personnel, such as transcribers, readers, counselors, O&M specialists, career/vocational education staff, and rehabilitation counselors.
- Maintains a current reference library of professional materials and resources.
- Acquires information and training about current research, development, and technology.

- **The Classroom Teacher** (general education, special education, or resource specialist) has the following roles and responsibilities:
 - Provides instruction in appropriate academic and non-academic content areas to the student who is visually impaired in the classroom.
 - Works cooperatively with the teacher of students with visual impairments to:
 - identify the student's areas of educational need, including unique education needs,
 - coordinate instruction and services to meet these needs,

- provide, in a timely manner, classroom materials that need to be reproduced in another medium,
- determine mutually convenient times during the school day for scheduling the teacher of students with visual impairments to work with the student,
- modify classroom procedures and environment to meet the specific needs of the student who is visually impaired for participation in classroom activities, and
- exchange information concerning the student who is visually impaired with parents and other individuals on a regular basis.

The **Orientation and Mobility Specialist** has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Instructs the student who is visually impaired in the development of skills and knowledge that enables him or her to travel independently, based on assessed needs and ability.
- Teaches the student who is visually impaired to travel with proficiency, safety, and confidence in familiar and unfamiliar environments.
- Consults regularly with sighted peers, parents, classroom teachers, physical education teachers, and/or other special education personnel to assist in home and classroom environmental modifications, adaptations, and considerations and to ensure reinforcement of appropriate O&M skills that will encourage the student who is visually impaired to travel independently in these settings.
- Collaborates with the teacher of students with visual impairments to conduct the functional vision evaluation as it relates to independent travel.
- Conducts evaluations that focus on both long- and short-term needs of the student.
- Includes the needs and strengths of the student and an estimate of the length and frequency of service necessary to meet identified needs in the evaluation report.
- Prepares sequential and meaningful instruction geared to the student's assessed needs, IEP goals and objectives, functioning, and motivational levels. This instruction should be reflected in lesson plans connected to each lesson.
- Prepares and uses equipment and materials, for example, tactile maps, models, distance optical devices, and long canes, for the development of O&M skills.
- Transports the student, with district and parent permission, to various community locations, as necessary, to provide meaningful instruction in realistic learning environments.
- Is responsible for the student's safety at all times and in all teaching environments while fostering maximum independence.
- Evaluates the student's progress on an ongoing basis with progress reports, as required.
- Keeps progress notes on each student and collects data on student progress.
- Participates in necessary parent conferences and meetings.
- Provides inservice training to general and special education personnel, sighted peers, and parents concerning the O&M needs of the student and appropriate methods and procedures for interacting with the person who is visually impaired that will foster maximum independence and safety.
- Provides O&M instruction, where appropriate, in a number of specific areas:

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- body imagery,
- laterality/directionality,
- environmental concepts,
- gross and fine motor skills related to purposeful movement and independent travel,
- sensory awareness, stimulation, and training,
- spatial concepts,
- compass direction concepts,
- guide technique procedures
- basic protective and information-gathering techniques
- orientation skills
- map skills
- cane skills,
- use of functional vision
- use of optical devices related to travel skills
- urban, suburban, and rural travel,
- travel in business areas,
- procedures for crossing streets including how to deal with traffic control signals,
- use of public transportation systems,
- procedures for use of the phone and internet for information gathering and for emergencies,
- procedures for interacting with the public
- knowledge and application of community address systems,
- procedures for travel and independent functioning in places of public accommodation,
- skills for independent living,
- use of assistive technology related to O&M
- sensory/motor skills in collaboration with the physical or occupational therapist and teacher of students with visual impairments, and
- skills for recreation/leisure, self-determination, and social interaction.

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