

Family Guide to Services at TSBVI

URL: <https://www.tsbvi.edu/parent-family-member/a-parent-s-guide-to-services-at-tsbvi>



Caption and ALT TEXT: 2019–2020 TSBVI Student Council and Staff Sponsors.

A Legacy of Service: 1856 to Present

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

We are here to empower families, students, and professionals by providing access to quality educational services in Texas. Serving the more than 11,000 students who are blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind in Texas is at the heart of our collaboration with families and independent school districts.



Caption and ALT TEXT: Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired from about 1916.

Many years ago, TSBVI was a place where students with visual impairments lived and learned throughout their school years, rarely returning to their homes except during the summer months. Things have changed a lot since then!

Though TSBVI is still a school, it has a unique identity as both a state agency and a school and is widely regarded as one of the premier organizations of its type in the world. Now, TSBVI serves Texas through eight main functions:

- a year-long comprehensive school experience, with students living on-campus during the school year and traveling home on the weekend, for students whose current educational needs are best met at TSBVI
- a short-term supplemental experience for students who are working at or near grade-level in their local school district, who come to TSBVI for three to five days during the regular school year to receive intensive instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum
- a summer school, offering a variety of enrichment programs for students who are blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind of all ability levels
- a provider of post-secondary education, career counseling, and other transitional services for students as they prepare for adult life
- a consultation and technical assistance provider for families and school districts across the entire state of Texas
- a mentorship, training, and continuing education facility for professionals working in the fields of visual impairment, orientation and mobility, and deafblind education
- a visual impairment registration and Deafblind census service for Texas's student-age population
- a resource and knowledge provider about visual impairment and deafblind education, especially as it applies to the infant to 22-year-old age range

What We Do

The public functions of TSBVI are grouped around three main program areas: Comprehensive Programs, Short-Term Programs, and Outreach. Through these areas, TSBVI works as part of a statewide network, partnering with local school districts, educational service centers, and other state agencies to provide resources to the more than 11,000 students who are blind, visually impaired, or Deafblind throughout Texas.



Caption and ALT-TEXT: The cast and crew of the Spring 2018 school play.

Comprehensive Programs

TSBVI's Comprehensive Programs offers services for K-12 students, students transitioning into adult life via the EXIT program, and a post-secondary program that provides transition planning and training in independent living skills and employability.

Like all students within special education throughout the country, each student enrolled in Comprehensive Programs K-12 or EXIT has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) developed by the student's local Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee, which includes the student's family. While a student is enrolled at TSBVI, our staff participate in the ARD meetings, offering support to the local district and families.

TSBVI is a center of expertise in visual impairment. Our teachers and other support staff like Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Speech Language Pathologists, Psychologists, Social Workers, Counselors, 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 effective contributions 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.

You can find more information about TSBVI's Comprehensive Programs on [the TSBVI website](#), or by contacting the TSBVI Admissions Coordinator at admissions@tsbvi.edu or by phone 512-206-9182.

K-12 Comprehensive

Students enrolled in the K-12 program attend classes on the TSBVI campus Monday through Friday. Most students reside on campus Sunday night through Friday afternoon, traveling back to their homes either weekly or every other week. Students who live within 45 miles of TSBVI continue to live at home during their enrollment and are transported to the school on a daily basis by their local school districts. We feel that staying connected to local communities, friends, and family is essential and a vital component of healthy development. We strive to ensure that students return home as often as possible and hope that they can maintain relationships and stay connected with peers in their local communities.

Eligibility Requirements

To be enrolled 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. By law, students who are admitted to TSBVI:

- must require specialized or intensive educational or related services related to the visual impairment;
- must have needs that are not 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.

Experiences in Transition (EXIT)

Experiences in Transition (EXIT) is a special education program at TSBVI that focuses on transition needs that face young adults with visual impairments. Designed for students aged 18 to 22 who have completed required coursework leading to graduation, the EXIT program provides an individualized education program (IEP) that incorporates a focus on the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) while also addressing a student's individual transition needs related to movement from school to post-school activities. Addressing areas such as post-secondary education, employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation, TSBVI's EXIT program provides the opportunity to practice skills in an environment that more closely emulates the post-secondary settings they may encounter after graduation.

In order to help EXIT students make an effective transition from school to adult life, TSBVI staff partner with the local school district's team and the student's family to develop a realistic, specific adult transition plan based on the student's desired post secondary goals. TSBVI emphasizes on-going collaboration with the student's local school district, family, adult service agencies, and local community resources. For students that will be returning to their home communities, transition plans often include a return to the local school district for the student's final year(s) of special education eligibility.

A student's IEP team may consider the EXIT program for any visually impaired students who have completed their academic course requirements towards graduation. The EXIT program serves a continuum of students ranging from those who will need significant support as adults to those who expect to attend college and live and work independently. The student's local school district ARD Committee must make a referral to TSBVI by including a description of the reasons for referral to TSBVI and referencing how services at TSBVI can assist the local district in meeting the student's specific adult transition goals. Acceptance into the EXIT program requires careful consideration of these reasons for referral along with any other programming opportunities that may be available to the student.



Caption and ALT-TEXT: Students in TSBVI's Career Education "Hospitality Class" prepare breakfast for the Ronald McDonald House wearing aprons embroidered by the Career Education Assembly and Manufacturing class.

Post-Secondary Program

The Post-Secondary Program (PSP) provides transition planning and training in independent living skills and employability. Some PSP participants prepare for college through experiences at the local community college. This program, offered in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission/Division for Blind Services, provides training for students who are legally blind and have a regular State Board of Education high school diploma or GED.

Participants in TSBVI's Post-Secondary Program gain real-life experiences in the following:

- daily living activities including cooking, cleaning, and laundry
- consumer planning, shopping and budgeting
- transportation and mobility within and outside of the city
- personal advocacy
- community recreational access

- organization skills including print papers, personal information, etc.
- employability through volunteer work experiences
- College readiness (when appropriate)

PSP participants are required to volunteer at least 100 hours during their stay in the PSP apartments. This requirement is in addition to attending classes at Criss Cole Rehabilitation Center and, sometimes, at Austin Community College.

Short-Term Programs

TSBVI Short-Term Programs include both school-year and summer sessions. You can find more information about TSBVI's Short-Term Programs on the TSBVI website, or by contacting the STP administrative team at stp-admission@tsbvi.edu or by phone at 512-206-9241 or 512-206-9332.

School Year Short-Term Programs

Short-Term Programs provide school-year classes (between September and May) to students who are at or close to grade level and are able to quickly adapt and learn in a new environment. Ranging from three to five days in length, these highly intensive, fast-paced classes introduce students to aspects of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) that can be difficult to provide during the regular school day. Our dorm instruction is carefully planned and supervised. Short-Term Programs also offer online distance learning opportunities as well as individualized instruction.

Short-Term Programs provide instruction intended to help students access the Texas Essentials Skills and Knowledge (TEKS) by addressing:

- disability-specific skills needed to access the general curriculum (e.g., technology, low vision tools and strategies, math tools and strategies);
- basic concepts that support the general curriculum;
- social skills and character development that support successful learning (e.g., self-determination, self-advocacy, independent living).

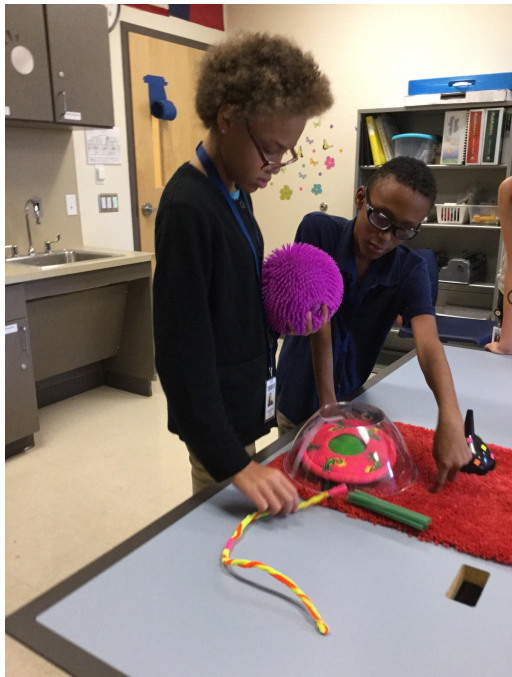
Additionally, students attending Short-Term Programs have the opportunity to:

- interact with other students and adults with visual impairments who share similar life experiences, enhancing social-emotional development, self-advocacy skills, and self-determination skills; ;
- practice skills and adaptations needed for food preparation, household management, personal organization and management, recreational and leisure skills;
- experience the independence of living away from home for a short time in a highly supported educational 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; these interactions can provide a valuable — and at times life-changing — impact on a student's perspective and willingness to learn in the classroom.

Summer Programs

Summer Programs are available to Texas students who are not enrolled full-time at TSBVI during the regular school year. Each summer, hundreds of students attend from all across Texas. These programs, which vary in length, serve blind and visually impaired students from elementary through high school. Classes focus on various aspects of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for students with visual impairments.

Summer applications are posted on the [Short-Term Programs section of the TSBVI website](#) in early January of each year, and are due no later than February 14. Applications are completed jointly by the student's family and Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI).



Caption and ALT-TEXT: Two students in Junior Access to Academics, a Short-Term Programs school-year class, work together to create a model of the eye.

Outreach Programs

TSBVI established Outreach Programs to expand efforts to serve families and local districts throughout Texas. Over time, Outreach Programs are recognized as a highly valuable resource throughout Texas, offering a wide variety of services including, but not limited to, engagement, consultations, training, and materials..

Family Engagement

Outreach Programs support families of children who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind by providing access to training and resources, and helping to connect families with other families. Family support and training are coordinated as appropriate with the Health and Human Services' Blind Children's Program and the Texas Workforce Commission's Blind Services Program. Learn more about family engagement on the TSBVI website under [Statewide](#)

[Resources: Family Engagement](#). For families of students who are deafblind, you can also find resources and support at our [Texas Deafblind Project website](#).

School Consultation

Your child does not need to be enrolled as a TSBVI student in order to benefit from the expertise of our staff. Experienced TSBVI educational consultants can work 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 the vision consultant at your regional Education Service Center (ESC) to ensure long-term follow up. You can learn more about contacting your ESC on the [Texas Education Agency's website](#).

Statewide Training

Outreach Programs staff provide local and regional workshops and sponsor on-campus and statewide conferences, video conferences, and webinars. Training is available for educational team members, families, community, and agency staff. Training is provided in collaboration with or upon request from a local district, education service center, and/or related organizations and agencies. You can find out more about training from Outreach Programs on the [Outreach Services webpage, under the Consultation and Training section](#).

Publications and Materials

Outreach Programs publishes *TX SenseAbilities*, a quarterly newsletter about visual impairment and Deafblind education for families and professionals in English and Spanish; you can find it online at www.tsbvi.edu/tx-senseabilities, and can subscribe for notifications of when we update. Other original materials from Outreach Programs, such as articles, blogs, virtual coffee chats, and the *A Sense of Texas* podcast can be found on the TSBVI website under [Statewide Resources](#).



Caption and ALT TEXT: TSBVI staff in front of the Main Building.

Program Costs

Costs Associated with Comprehensive K-12 Programs

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

Costs Associated with Short-Term Programs

School-year Short-Term Programs classes and transportation are provided at no cost to the school or family. Summer classes are offered at no cost to families other than transportation.

Costs Associated with Outreach Programs Services

There are no costs to a student's family for Outreach Program services. A student's local school district may provide support for some services when there are costs associated with training (e.g., registration fees) or to help pay for transportation and related travel costs associated with a visit from Outreach Programs staff.

The student's local school district shares in the cost of the student's education while the student is enrolled at 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 during TSBVI school holidays when the school closes. There are eight school closures in the typical school year.

For More Information about TSBVI

Visit us on the web at www.tsbvi.edu or join in the discussion on our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/TSBVI>.

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