

2024



Cecilia Robinson, TSVI  
Outreach Programs  
Texas School for the Blind  
and Visually Impaired

# 2024 SUMMARY OF PROFESSIONALS IN VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN TEXAS

A review of education professionals who work with Texas students with visual impairments, including a description of selected characteristics, projections of attrition, and projected future needs.

## Table of Contents

Contents .....	2
Introduction .....	3
Executive Summary.....	3
Characteristics of VI Professionals in Texas .....	4
Number of VI professionals in Texas .....	5
Part-time service providers .....	9
Contract service providers.....	10
Dually certified VI professionals .....	10
Direct services provided by ESCs .....	11
Overall perceptions of caseloads.....	12
Cultural diversity.....	13
VI professionals who have a visual impairment .....	14
Growth in Population of Students with Visual Impairments and Impact on VI Professionals .....	14
Impact on teachers of students with visual impairments .....	15
Impact on O&M specialists.....	15
Variance in growth of students with visual impairments and O&M services .....	15
Attrition.....	16
Attrition factors.....	16
Projected 3-year attrition .....	17
Projected vs. actual attrition .....	18
Anticipated Need .....	19
Posted positions.....	19
Recommendations by knowledgeable professionals .....	20
Discussion of projected need and teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs).....	21
Discussion of projected need and O&M specialists .....	22
Enrollment to Prepare VI Professionals.....	23
Students registered in Texas programs .....	23
Summary .....	26
Appendix .....	29
Methodology.....	29
References .....	31

## Introduction

Since 1996, the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI) has been conducting an annual survey of the Visual Impairment (VI) professionals in Texas. The term “VI professionals” includes teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS). Individuals functioning in both roles are referred to as “dually certified.” This report provides information about the results of the survey conducted in September 2024.

To assess the characteristics of and need for VI professionals in Texas, data was collected from the 20 Education Service Centers (ESCs), two Texas university personnel preparation programs, and TSBVI. Data from TSBVI includes VI professionals who provide direct services in the Comprehensive Programs and those who provide statewide training, short-term services, and leadership via the Outreach and Short-Term Programs. More information about how data were collected is included in the Appendix of this report.

## Executive Summary

The **total number of VI professionals**, including leadership positions, **decreased** from 983 to 904, a decrease of 79 individuals.

- The number of **part-time TSVIs increased** by 13 individuals while **full-time TSVIs decreased** by 46 individuals, bringing this year’s total to **631 or 533 FTEs**, a total decrease of 33 individuals and 39.5 FTEs.
- There are **308 COMS** providing direct service, equaling **243 FTEs**. The total **decreased** by 39 individuals. Twenty-seven individuals decreased in the full-time category, and 12 individuals decreased in the part-time category.
- **Ninety VI professionals are dually certified**, providing both TSVI and O&M services. This is an increase of 6 individuals from the previous year.
- **Approximately 27%** of the total number of VI professionals serving students are **contract service providers** (142 TSVIs, 102 COMS), an increase of 4% from last year.

The **cultural diversity** of VI professionals showed an overall decline, as follows:

- The number of **VI professionals who are African American decreased** by 16, from 65 to **49**, or a decrease of 25 percent.
- The number of **VI professionals fluent in Spanish decreased** by 14, from 141 to **127**. Within this category is a gain of 1 TSVI fluent in Spanish.
- The number of **VI professionals who are Hispanic decreased** by 2, from 153 to **151**. Within this category, the number of COMS increased by 11 to a total of 44.
- The number of **Asian American decreased** by 3, from 11 to **8**.

**Attrition** in the previous year **increased** from 40 to **45** individuals. ESC consultants anticipate that 114 TSVIs, 28 COMS, and 10 dually certified professionals or **17% of existing VI professionals**, will retire or otherwise leave the field over the next 3 years.

#### **The number of students with visual impairments increased in 2024.**

- In 2024, the total number of students reported in the *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments* was **10,930**, 19 more students than registered in 2023.
- Fourteen ESCs reported an increase in VI caseloads while 6 ESCs' VI caseloads remained the same. Thirteen ESCs reported an increase in orientation and mobility (O&M) caseloads; seven ESCs' O&M caseloads remained the same. None of the ESCs reported a decrease in either VI or O&M caseloads.

The **total number of university students statewide** entering VI and O&M certification programs at Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas Tech University **increased by 44**, and **67 completed** their program in 2024.

- There are **182 future VI professionals** in a program leading to certification as either a TSVI or COMS. One hundred forty-five students are working toward their TSVI certification and 37 are enrolled in an O&M program.
- **Sixty-seven individuals** (51 TSVIs and 16 COMS) **completed a VI certification program in 2024** compared to 70 individuals in 2023.
- **Eighty-four percent of students** enrolled in SFASU and TTU TSVI and O&M certification training programs **receive funding support** for coursework, a decrease of 4% from 2023.

#### **Anticipated Need for VI Professionals**

- It is projected that Texas will need 28 to 36 additional TSVIs and an additional 26 to 37 COMS by 2027 to accommodate **student growth alone**.
- Texas is estimated to need an additional 152 to 160 full-time equivalent TSVIs and 64 to 75 full-time equivalent COMS in the next 3 years to replace those who are likely to leave the field **and** respond to anticipated student growth.
- If the university TSVI program completion rates continue to reflect those over the last 3 years, the number of newly certified TSVIs (164) **would likely meet the range of anticipated need**.
- Presuming that orientation and mobility students continue to find challenges in completing their programs, and the number of completers continues at a similar rate over the next 3 years (63), **it is likely that the need for a minimum of 75 new COMS by 2027 will not be met**.

#### **Characteristics of VI Professionals in Texas**

The survey asked about the number of individuals *functioning* as VI professionals. While many professionals may hold certification as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI) or as an

orientation and mobility specialist (COMS or O&M specialist), this report summarizes data on those with a *current job assignment* as a TSVI or COMS. Although some VI professionals hold *both* TSVI and O&M certifications, only those professionals whose current job assignment includes **functioning** in both roles are considered dually certified for this report.

It is important to note that most VI professionals are not classroom teachers; they are primarily itinerant specialists in visual impairment who work in a variety of schools, community settings, and homes. In addition to direct services, they also provide collaborative consultations to other team members about the impact of specific visual impairments on students in a range of settings and ensure that appropriately modified materials are available. Additionally, they must travel to their students and provide instruction in the home, school, and community environments. Understanding the difference between classroom teachers and VI professionals is crucial when assessing the current and future need for specialists in visual impairment (Correa-Torres & Johnson Howell, 2004).

### Number of VI Professionals in Texas

***The number of VI professionals decreased by 8% in the Fall of 2024. The decrease was seen in those providing TSVI as well as O&M services.***

This information has been collected annually for 28 years. In 2024, the total number of VI professionals was 904. This was a decrease of 47 professionals from 2023. The number of full-time teachers decreased by 46 from 481 to 435 while the number of part-time teachers increased about 7% from 183 to 196. The number of full-time orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists decreased by 27 to 178 while the number of part-time O&M specialists also decreased about 8% from 142 to 130. Since 2014, the number of VI professionals has increased with an occasional drop. In 2022, there was a decrease of 38 VI professionals (935) that represented a decrease of 25.6 full-time equivalents (FTEs). This year, the total number of VI professionals decreased by 79 (904) representing a decrease of 71.8 FTEs when compared to 2023. This is the largest drop of VI professionals within the past ten years.

The graph that follows displays the changes in the number of VI professionals over ten years, from 2014-2024.

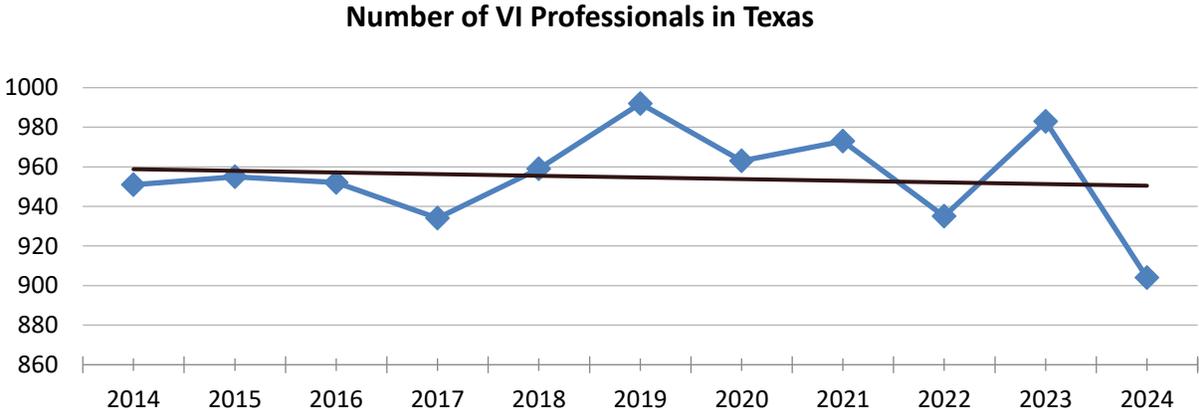


Table 1 below provides further details about VI professionals in Texas within the last 3 years. The term “individuals” includes both full- and part-time VI professionals. The full-time equivalent (FTE) data adjusts for the part-time VI professionals, including those who are dually certified.

**Table 1: Total VI Professionals Statewide**

	2022		2023		2024	
	Individuals	FTE <sup>2</sup>	Individuals	FTE <sup>2</sup>	Individuals	FTE <sup>2</sup>
ESC leadership <sup>1</sup>	29	21.5	29	21.3	29	24.0
TSBVI statewide <sup>1</sup>	25	20.5	27	21.8	26	20.8
VI and O&M service providers (adjusted for dually certified professionals)	881	829.5	927	848.5	849	776
<b>Total VI professionals</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>871.5</b>	<b>983</b>	<b>891.6</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>819.8</b>

<sup>1</sup> TSBVI statewide consulting staff (Outreach and Short-Term Programs) and ESC consulting VI staff provide leadership/technical assistance statewide or within their organization. Educators at TSBVI or at ESCs who provide direct educational service to students with visual impairments are counted as "VI and O&M direct-service providers."

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

**Direct-service Providers**

***The total number of direct-service providers in 2024 was 849 individuals or 776 FTEs (adjusted for dually certified professionals). There are currently 631 TSVIs and 308 COMS providing services to students with visual impairments across the state.***

Below is data regarding full- and part-time direct-service providers. The term “direct-service providers” includes teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs), certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS), and dually certified personnel who work with students on a regular basis, and/or are the teacher-of-record for issues related to visual impairments. This category does not include those who provide vision-related leadership, technical assistance, or statewide services at ESCs or TSBVI through the Short-Term Programs and Outreach Programs.

This survey captures information about the number of individuals working with students with visual impairments in the state of Texas in either a full- or part-time capacity. It does not gather information on the number of districts that employ full- and/or part-time VI professionals. Full- and part-time status is broadly defined. The reference to “full-time” and “part-time” refers to the total employment of the VI professional. Individuals who work part-time in multiple districts are considered “full-time VI professionals.” As a result, the number of “full-time” VI professionals described may vary from the number of districts or educational cooperatives that employ TSVIs on a full-time basis.

For the purposes of this survey, professionals who are certified *and* employed in both visual impairments and orientation and mobility (dually certified) are counted as a part-time TSVI and a part-time COMS. These specialists are embedded in both TSVI and COMS data. Specific information on dually certified VI professionals is listed in Table 4. Information about the number of combined direct-service providers has been adjusted for dually certified professionals.

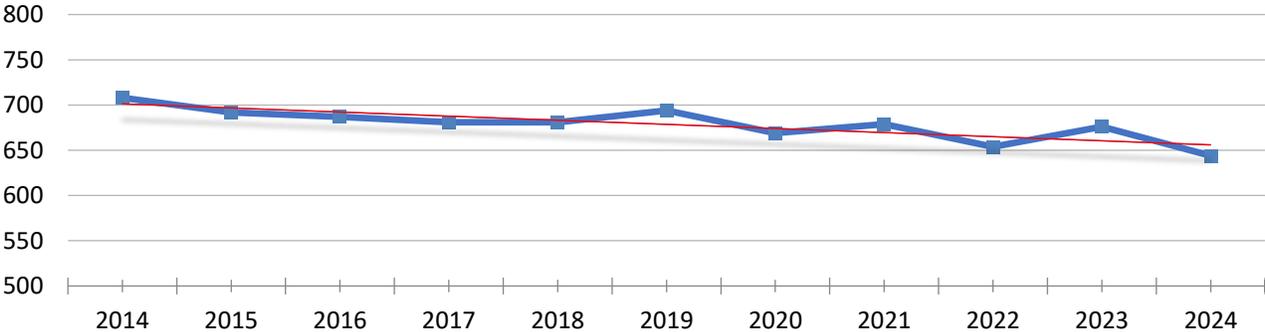
**Table 2: Direct-Service Providers: Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVIs)**

	2022		2023		2024	
	Individuals	FTE <sup>1</sup>	Individuals	FTE <sup>1</sup>	Individuals	FTE <sup>1</sup>
<b>Full-time TSVIs</b>	495		481		435	
<b>Part-time TSVIs</b>	148		183		196	
<b>Total VI staff</b>	<b>643</b>	<b>569</b>	<b>664</b>	<b>572.5</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>533</b>

<sup>1</sup> FTE = part-time x .5 + full-time for all charts

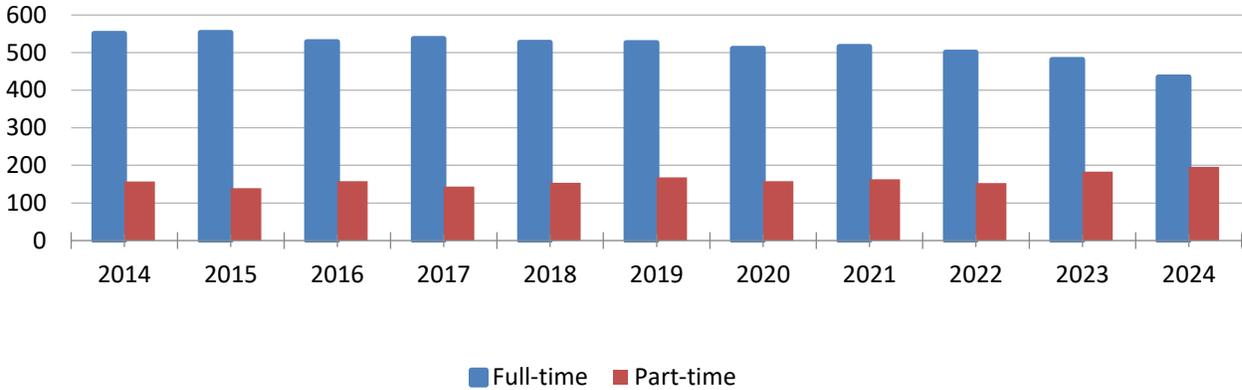
As the table above indicates, the total number of *full-time individuals* who work as a TSVI decreased by 46 while the *part-time* category increased 13 individuals to 196. The total is 631 individuals or 533 FTEs.

**Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments in Texas**



In 2024, the number of teachers decreased by 33 from 664 to 631. The graph above shows a decrease this year like 2022, and an absence of any significant increase in the past the years in the total number of TSVIs across the state. The graph below shows the full and part-time TSVI totals in the last ten years. This year, availability of TSVIs decreased while the number of students increased by 19 as identified by *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments*.

### Full- and Part-time TVIs



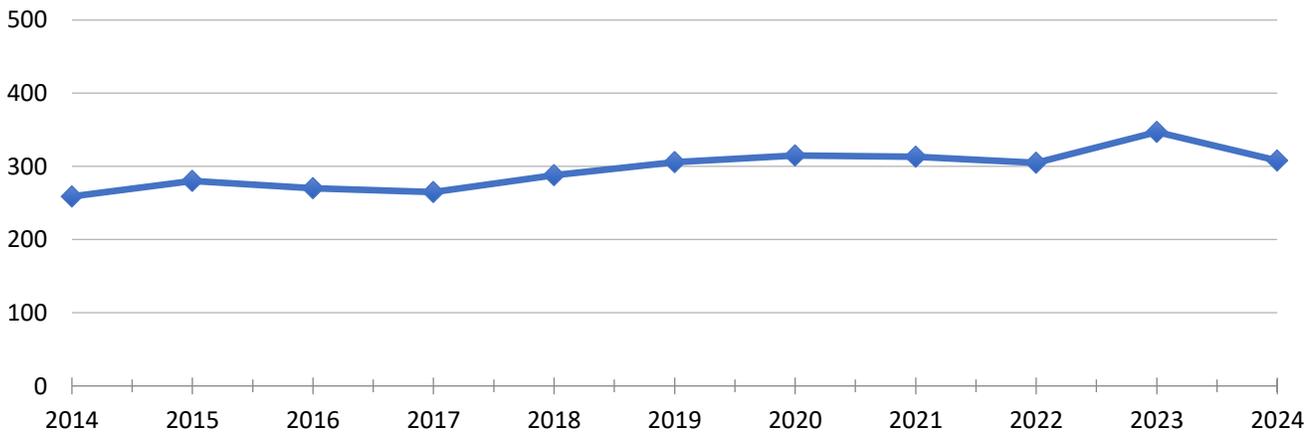
**Table 3: Direct-Service Providers: Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS)**

	2022		2023		2024	
	Individuals	FTE <sup>1</sup>	Individuals	FTE <sup>1</sup>	Individuals	FTE <sup>1</sup>
<b>Full-time COMS</b>	202		205		178	
<b>Part-time COMS</b>	103		142		130	
<b>Total O&amp;M staff</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>253.5</b>	<b>347</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>308</b>	<b>243</b>

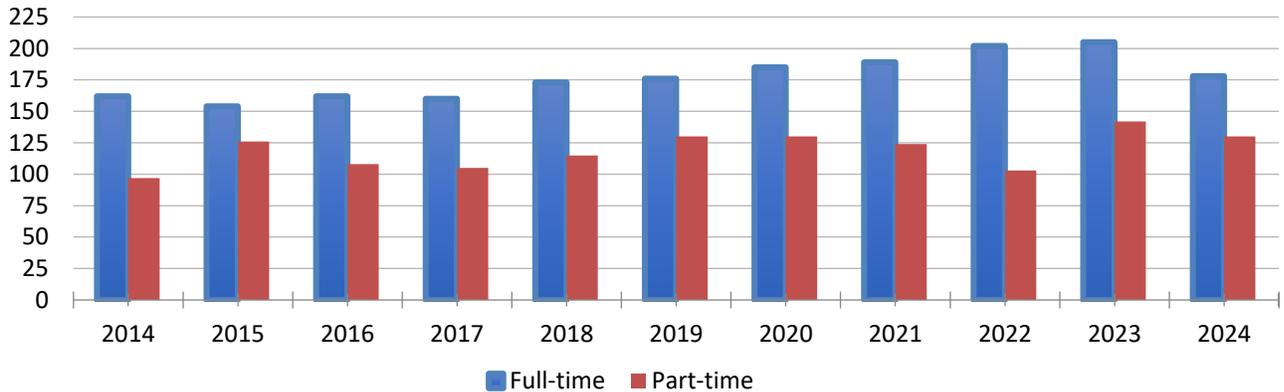
<sup>1</sup> FTE = part-time x .5 + full-time for all charts

As noted in Table 3 above and the graphs that follow, the total number of O&M specialists decreased this year by 39 individuals and the number of FTEs decreased by 33. Decreases were seen in the full- and part-time categories: 27 full-time and 12 part-time service providers.

### Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists in Texas



### Full- and Part-time COMS



All initial evaluations of students with visual impairments must include an O&M evaluation by a certified O&M specialist in the home, school and community setting per TEC 30.002. The *2024 Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments* reported that 69% of all students with a visual impairment in Texas have been evaluated by a COMS. This is an increase of 3% from 2023. Forty percent of the student receive orientation and mobility services, an increase of 2% when compared to the previous year. Within the last 10 years, the number of O&M evaluations steadily increased with the highest in 2020 at a total of 8,394 evaluations. Since then, the number of evaluations decreased each year. From 2021 to 2023, the decreased number of evaluations was most likely due to a lower student count because of the pandemic. As more students return to school, the number of students to receive an O&M evaluation, as well as the number of students to be provided O&M services, will probably continue to increase.

Since 2014, the number of students with visual impairment increased each year until 2020. In 2020, the total was 11,125 students. Then, the number of students decreased in 2021 and 2022. In 2023, the number of students increase by 272. This year, the number of students increased by 19 to a total of 10,930 students. Both the number of O&M evaluations and number of students receiving O&M services also increased. It is projected that student growth will be about 1.7% in the next three years, a decrease of 0.1% when compared to 2023. Therefore, increasing the number of COMS FTEs will be essential to ensure that all students have access to an O&M evaluation and receive needed orientation and mobility services.

### Part-time Service Providers

***There are 326 part-time VI professionals serving students with visual impairments in Texas. The number of part-time TSVIs increased while part-time COMS decreased in 2024.***

It is important to note that employing part-time VI professionals have advantages and disadvantages. Advantages include supporting districts with a small number of students with visual impairments to meet their local needs. Part-time VI professionals can increase flexibility in districts that have just a bit more, or a bit less, than a full-time VI professional can reasonably handle and still provide quality

services. In addition, part-time VI professionals may either be employed by the district on a part-time, contractual basis for VI-only purposes, or may be hired full-time with duties unrelated to visual impairments.

Disadvantages include logistical challenges in meeting the needs of the students. Due to other commitments and/or responsibilities, part-time staff members are at risk of not being able to provide the full caseload management or comprehensive array of services necessary for even small caseloads.

Part-time contract employees may not be able to function as full members of the collaborative educational team if their service hours are limited to only direct hours by the hiring district or co-op, as is frequently the case. It may be challenging to carry out collaborative consultation to the degree needed if service delivery time is limited. Without time for collaboration, part-time VI professionals may not be able to adequately ensure that other team members have the training to assist with generalization of skills learned from the VI specialist (TSBVI, n.d.).

### **Contract Service Providers**

***Twenty-seven percent of TSVIs and COMS in Texas are contract service providers.***

Many VI professionals work for school districts in Texas as contract service providers on either a part-time or full-time basis. According to ESC consultants, 244 VI professionals serve in this capacity. The overall increase in contract service providers is about 6.6% or 15 contractors when compared to 2023: the number of contract TSVIs increased by 11 to a total of 142 while the number of contract COMS increased by 4 to a total of 102 individuals. This is the *highest increase* of contract service providers since the pandemic: in 2020, 24% of the VI professionals in Texas were contract service providers.

Contract service providers continue to work for charter schools or private staffing companies. Some of them are retired VI professionals returning to the field. It should be noted that VI professionals who serve as private contractors may be difficult for ESC consultants to accurately report their data for the purpose of this document since these service providers may not be directly affiliated with a school district or a regional education cooperative.

### **Dually Certified VI Professionals**

***Ninety individuals are functioning in a dually certified role in 2024, providing both VI and O&M services to Texas students.***

Dually certified VI professionals are those who are certified and function both as a TSVI and COMS. While many professionals may hold both certifications, not all dually certified professionals function in both capacities. This survey gathers data only about those who currently *function* as a TSVI and an O&M specialist.

**Table 4: Dually Certified Professionals**

**2022    2023    2024**

<b>Dually certified</b>	81	84	90
-------------------------	----	----	----

Dually certified professionals are unique and offer districts maximum flexibility. Administrators can modify work assignments according to the needs of the district and the needs of students for a particular year. While these VI professionals may be employed full-time in a district, they must split their time and expertise between two different, although related, professions. An administrator must understand the challenges faced by these professionals to ensure that neither area is slighted.

**Direct Services Provided by ESCs**

***Each regional education service center (ESC) provides an array of services to school districts and for some, that includes direct TSVI and O&M services. There are currently 468 students served directly by the ESCs.***

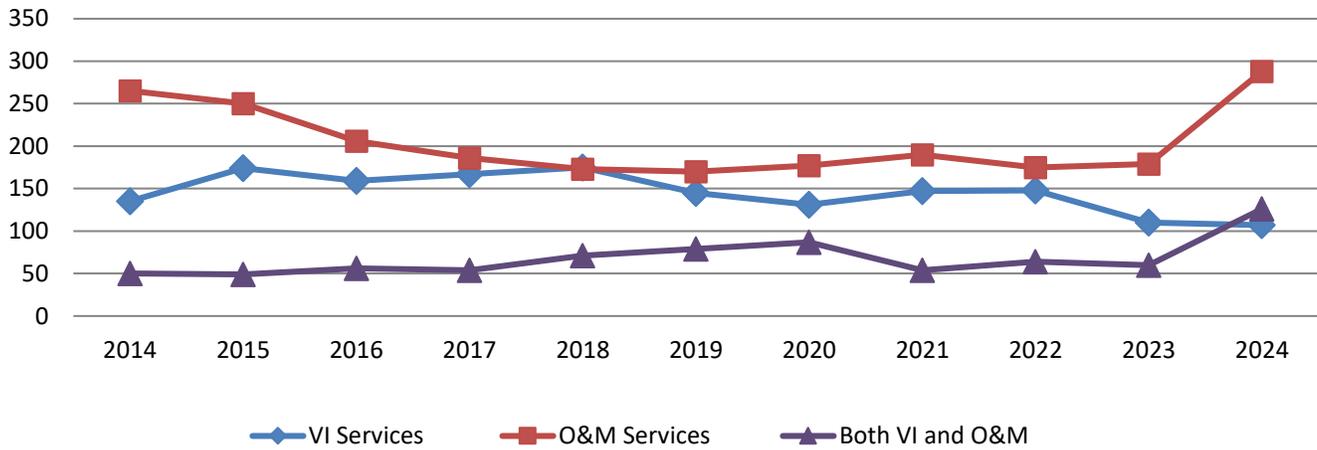
ESCs are a *major* part of the state’s infrastructure that ensure access to high quality VI services. ESC VI specialists are critical players in the provision of leadership, technical assistance, professional development, and specialized materials for the VI professionals, families, and students in their region. They also assist TSVIs and 94 (+3 from 2023) braille transcribers within the state in braille and tactile graphics production. They act as a vital source of information on VI-related issues for special education administrators in the region. A significant portion of Texas’ reputation for leadership in visual impairments is due to the high level of skills and services provided by its VI specialists in regional education service centers.

In the regions where direct services are provided, the ESC staff members are listed on the student’s individualized education program (IEP). ESCs are providing services to 468 students this year, an increase of 120 students compared to 2023. There is a decrease of 55 students receiving VI services with an increase of 109 students receiving O&M services only. The number of students receiving both VI and O&M services doubled to a total of 126 students. Eight ESCs continue to provide services to students in VI, O&M or both VI and O&M. Table 5 reflects the number of students receiving direct services from the ESCs.

**Table 5: Students Receiving Services from ESCs**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>VI-only services (3 regions)</b>	107	109	54
<b>O&amp;M-only services (7 regions)</b>	175	179	288
<b>Both VI and O&amp;M services (3 regions)</b>	64	60	126
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>468</b>

### Students Receiving Services from ESCs



The provision of direct services from an ESC depends on many factors, including population size, region/district agreements, regional service delivery options, and fiscal constraints. While many factors can affect the number of students served by ESCs, the local districts’ capacity to meet the needs of their students is a primary one. Statewide, the number of posted positions in 2024 was 64 compared to 66.5 positions in 2023.

### Overall Perceptions of Caseloads

***Fourteen ESCs reported an increase in TSVI caseloads, and thirteen ESC reported an increase in COMS caseloads.***

Since 2010, this survey also asked about ESC specialists’ perceptions of overall regional changes in caseloads. The survey did not ask about specific districts or how many districts within a region experienced a change. The ESC specialists were asked to use their professional expertise in their estimates.

**Table 6: ESC Specialists’ Perception of Regional Overall Changes in Caseloads**

2024 Caseloads	TSVIs	COMS
Increases	14	13
Decreases	0	0
No significant change	6	7
Unknown	0	0

This year, 14 of the 20 education service centers (ESCs) reported increased caseloads for TSVIs and 13 had increased caseloads for their COMS. Compared to 2023, a decrease of 2 ESCs saw an increase in TSVI caseloads. The number of ESCs that experienced an increase in COMS caseloads remained the same. None of the ESCs reported a decrease in both TSVI and COMS caseloads. When compared to 2023, the number of ESCs with no significant change in TSVI caseloads increased by 4 to a total of 6

ESCs, and the number of ESCs with no significant change in COMS caseloads increase by 3 to a total of 7. This year, the number of posted positions decreased by 2.5 to a total of 64: a decrease of 6.5 TSVI and 3 COMS positions to a total of 38 TSVI and 16 COMS positions respectively; dually certified increased by 7 to a total of 10 positions.

**Cultural Diversity**

***Texas saw a decrease in all culturally diverse groups, with the largest increase in the total number of Spanish-Speaking VI professionals.***

Texas is a diverse state and requires a diverse workforce to serve its citizens. This survey asks about Hispanic, African American, and Asian-American VI professionals in relation to services provided. It also queries the number of VI professionals fluent in Spanish. This year, data was not available from one ESC. The result from the survey is as follows:

**Table 7: Culturally Diverse VI Professionals**

**Hispanic VI Professionals**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>TSVIs</b>	89	101	100
<b>COMS</b>	41	33	44
<b>Dually certified</b>	20	19	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>151</b>

**Spanish-Speaking VI Professionals**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>TSVIs</b>	73	85	86
<b>COMS</b>	29	35	34
<b>Dually certified</b>	13	21	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>127</b>

**African American VI Professionals**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>TSVIs</b>	33	40	29
<b>COMS</b>	20	25	20
<b>Dually certified</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>49</b>

**Asian-American VI Professionals**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>TSVIs</b>	5	6	6
<b>COMS</b>	2	5	2
<b>Dually certified</b>	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>

This year, *VI professionals who are Hispanic* decreased by of 2 to a total of 151. This decrease includes 1 TSVIs and 12 dually certified VI professionals, and an increase of 11 COMS. The total number of *Spanish-speaking VI professionals* decreased by 14, bringing the total to 127 compared to 141 in 2023. The decrease includes 1 COMS and 14 dually certified professionals with an increase of 1 TSVI. The number of fluent Spanish-speaking VI professionals represents 14% of the professionals in the field. The total number of *African American VI professionals* decreased by 16 individuals: eleven TSVIs and 5 COMS. The total number of *Asian-American VI professionals* decreased by 3 COMS this year while the number of TSVIs remained the same at a total of 6. ESC consultants and TSBVI staff were also asked to

provide the number of *Native American* and *Caucasian* VI professionals working in their region/school. This year, Texas did not have any VI professionals identified as *Native American*. The number of *Caucasian* VI professionals was 547 representing 61% of the VI professionals in Texas. The total decrease was 125 professionals or 7%. Two VI professionals were reported in the *Other* category. Recruiting and retaining ethnically and culturally diverse educators continues to be an important goal in Texas to reflect the student demographics.

**VI Professionals Who Have a Visual Impairment**

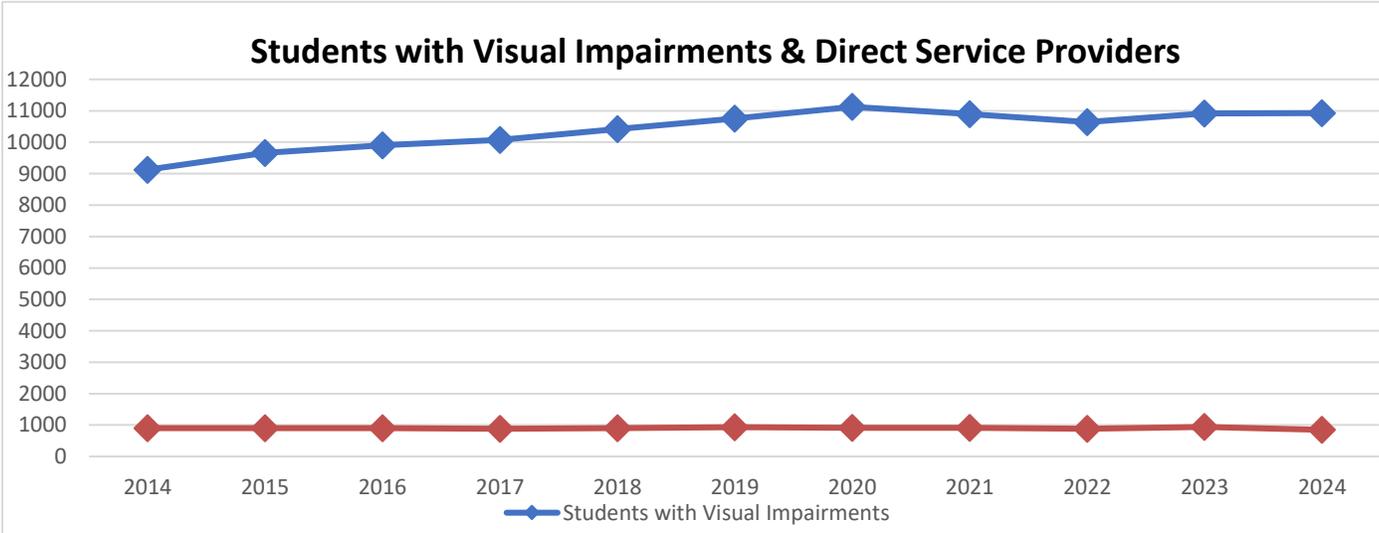
***Currently, twenty-six VI professionals who are blind or visually impaired provide VI/O&M leadership or direct services to students in Texas.***

TSBVI and the ESCs were asked how many VI professionals on their campus or in their regions have a visual impairment. In 2024, there were a total of 26 VI professionals in Texas who are blind or have a visual impairment. Compared to 2023, this is a increase of one individual. The total includes direct service providers and TSBVI statewide consultants.

**Growth in Population of Students with Visual Impairments and Impact on VI Professionals**

In January 2024, there were 10,930 students with visual impairments in Texas, an increase of 19 students from 2023. This is the second increase in the number of students on record since 2020. The increase this year is about .2% compared to 2.49% in 2023. Before the pandemic, Texas typically saw a steady increase in student enrollment each year. Although the state only experienced increases in 2023 and 2024, data collected within the last 10 years continues to project that student population will continue to increase by an average of approximately 1.7% per year over the next 3 years for a total of 11,299 students by 2026.

Below is a graph that displays the growth in the number of students with visual impairments and the number of direct service providers (TSVIs and COMS) over a 10-year span. Texas has generally seen an increase in students each year from 2014 to 2020. In 2021 and 2022, the number of students decreased. The largest growth occurred in 2015 with a 5.8% increase in the number of students.



### **Impact on Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments**

***It is projected that Texas will need approximately 28 additional full-time equivalent TSVIs (or 36 individuals) by 2027 to accommodate student growth alone.***

This year, the student-to-teacher ratio was 20.1 students per TSVI full-time equivalent (FTE) position compared to 18.7 in 2023. Looking back over the past 10 years, caseloads have increased by 1 student to an average of 17.8 students per TSVI FTE. If this average ratio is applied to the number of expected new students, it is projected that Texas will need approximately 36 additional individuals by 2027 to accommodate student growth. Given that 69% (75% in 2023) of TSVIs are working full-time, it will take more individuals to meet the expected need for 28 FTEs. If the current average ratio of full- to part-time teachers continues, the number of TSVIs needed will be closer to 36 individuals.

### **Impact on Orientation and Mobility Specialists**

***It is projected that Texas will need a minimum of 26 additional full-time equivalent orientation and mobility specialists (or 37 individuals) to meet expected student growth over the next three years.***

Information about students with visual impairments is collected each January and includes information related to orientation and mobility services. The 2024 *Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments* indicated that the percentage of students receiving O&M services was approximately 40%, an increase of 2% from the previous year. It is anticipated that by 2027, 4,822 students will be receiving O&M services, an additional 445 students.

In 2024, the average student-to-COMS ratio is 17 students per FTE. The average ratio seen over a 10-year period is about 17 students per FTE. Using this average to help predict need, by 2027 Texas will need an additional 26 full-time equivalent (FTE) orientation and mobility specialists to meet expected student growth.

In Texas, full-time equivalent positions can be quite different from the number of individuals needed to equal the FTEs, especially with O&M specialists. In 2024, 58% of COMS were employed full-time compared to 60% in 2023. These O&M specialists work full-time in a single district or contract with several districts. If the current ratio of full- to part-time individuals is applied, the number of individual O&M specialists needed to result in 26 FTEs is likely to be closer to 37 individuals.

### **Variance in growth of students with visual impairments and O&M services**

***It is unknown how many of the projected 11,556 students with visual impairments may need O&M services by 2026.***

The gap in the average growth rate of students (1.9% per yr.) and the lack of change typically seen in O&M average caseloads remains a concern. This year, 40% of the total number of students received

O&M services, an increase of 2% or 181 students when compared to 2023. The number of students who may demonstrate educational needs for O&M services over the next three years is challenging to anticipate given that as of January 2024, about 12% of current students had not been evaluated by a COMS.

**Attrition**

It should be noted that the attrition data collected in this survey specifically addresses those who have left the field. The data does not include those who move from school employment to private contractual work, change districts, or retire and re-hire in the same or a different district.

Total attrition increased by 5 individuals this year. Specifically, the ESCs reported that 40 TSVIs and 5 COMS left the field indicating This year’s attrition total of 45 individuals did not include any dually certified VI professionals.

The VI field’s attrition rate of 7% in 2024 is significantly lower when compared to the attrition rate of about 13% of certified teachers in Texas. However, it is an increase of 3% when compared to 2023 when the attrition rate was at 4%. Although the VI field includes O&M specialists who do not have to be certified teachers, this comparison is still a good indicator of the high commitment VI professionals have to their field and the students they serve. In addition, VI professionals in Texas have the added benefit of being paired with a trained, experienced mentor. Support is also offered at both the region and statewide level through education service centers and the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Programs. All these factors may help explain the lower attrition rate in Texas for VI professionals compared to other teaching fields.

**Table 8: Attrition within the Past Year (1-Year Attrition)**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>TSVIs</b>	50	29	40
<b>COMS</b>	11	8	5
<b>Dually certified</b>	2	3	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>

**Attrition Factors**

*Students with visual impairments are a low-prevalence and extremely diverse population. VI professionals are critical to student learning, therefore, a change of just one VI professional in a single district can have a dramatic effect on the annual yearly progress of their students.*

Retention of VI professionals is of critical concern. Unlike other disciplines, even in other high-need subject areas, when a VI professional is unavailable, often there is no one else in the district with the

specific expertise needed to assess and meet the unique educational needs of students with visual impairments.

Factors that consistently impact recruitment and attrition of general and special education classroom teachers influence VI professionals as well. Administrative support, workload, caseload, working conditions and support in their new role are among attrition factors reported in the most current research. Additional considerations unique to the attrition and retention of the VI professional are:

- VI professionals have a unique skill set and can be difficult to find.
- TSVIs make up 0.24% of certified teachers in Texas and O&M specialists are an even smaller group. Consequently, most administrators and educators are unaware of the VI field and the specialized services that a VI professional provides.
- Most VI professionals are mid-career professionals and are likely to have shorter careers in their second field.

In 2024, the attrition rate for VI professionals was 7%, an increase of 3% from 2023. About 6% of TSVIs and 2% of O&M specialists left the field. This may appear to be a small change; however, the loss of 40 individuals this year can have a critical impact on students given that the number of students is likely to increase each year but only a limited number of qualified service providers may be available.

### **Projected 3-year Attrition**

***ESC consultants project that, overall, 152 VI professionals will leave the field within the next 3 years.***

Projected attrition data is valuable for predicting and preparing for the needs of VI professionals in the near future. VI specialists at the ESCs are the best and only source for information on future attrition for VI professionals. Collecting accurate data regarding a VI professional's retirement plans can be challenging. In general, VI consultants at the ESCs must rely on others for the information. Some professionals may be reluctant to share their plans, or their plans may change in the interim period. Others may retire from their job but take another contractual job in another district. Historically, projection totals are below actual attrition, especially for TSVIs. ESCs tend to project that a higher number of COMS will leave the field, and this year was no exception. In 2022, it was projected that 46 COMS would leave the field by 2024. The actual attrition was 5 COMS. One hundred and nine TSVIs were predicted to leave as well; instead, 40 left this year.

Individuals who function as dually certified have both VI and O&M expertise. Projecting the attrition of dually certified personnel appears to be especially difficult with a reliable degree of accuracy. This is a fluid group. Based on district need, an individual may function as dually certified one year but not the next. The information below includes individuals who are dually certified in both categories (and cannot be added). The "Overall" data reflects all VI professionals and has been adjusted for dually

certified VI professionals. It is important to note that the data addresses individuals who will *leave the field*. The data does not include those who move from school employment to private contractual work, change districts, or retire and re-hire in the same or a different district.

**Table 9: Projected 3-Year Attrition**

Projections	2022	2023	2024
TSVIs <sup>1</sup>	109	132	124
COMS <sup>1</sup>	34	36	38
<b>Overall<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>143</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>162</b>

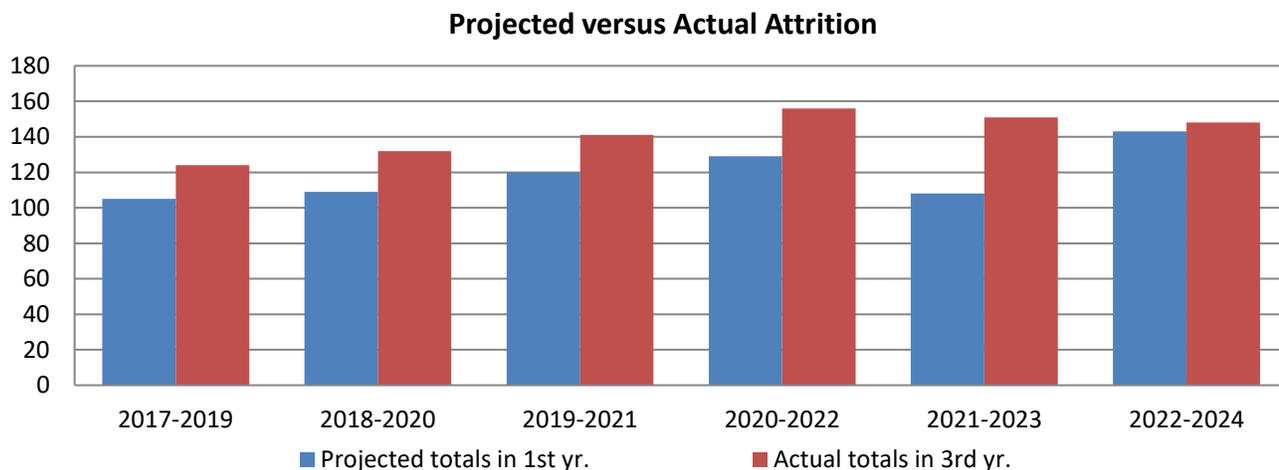
<sup>1</sup>Projections by ESC consultants reflect job expertise, not assignment. As a result, TSVIs and COMS include data for dually certified staff and cannot be totaled. "Overall" includes all VI professionals and is adjusted for dually certified VI professionals.

In 2024, VI specialists at the ESCs estimate 162 VI professionals will leave the field over the next 3 years, a loss of 124 TSVIs and 38 COMS. The projected number of TSVIs estimated to leave is 8 less than last year. If the 162 total is proven to be correct, we can expect that 18% *existing* VI professionals will retire or otherwise leave the field prior to 2027.

### Projected vs. Actual Attrition

***VI professionals at the ESCs are the best and only source for statewide information on attrition over the past year and projected attrition over the next three years.***

Although ESC projections are the most accurate source available, real attrition has often been underestimated. As illustrated in the graph below, ESC-estimated three-year attrition numbers are typically under the actual totals; however, projections were extremely close to the actual number of VI professionals who left the field between 2016 and 2018. Looking at the 3-year time frame, in 2022 it was projected that 143 people would leave the field by 2024. The field lost 152 VI professionals this year, a difference of 9 individuals. This is smallest gap in the most recent projected vs. actual attrition data.



## Anticipated Need

Interpreting and understanding the need for educational professionals traditionally relies on several factors, including the number of posted positions and recommendations from knowledgeable professionals. Below, Table 10 and the graph that follows, are data from each of these areas. The expected student growth of 950 students over the next 3 years should be kept in mind when considering the anticipated need for VI professionals who will serve them.

### Posted Positions

***This year the number of existing vacancies, after all typical hiring had been completed, increased from 66.5 to 64.***

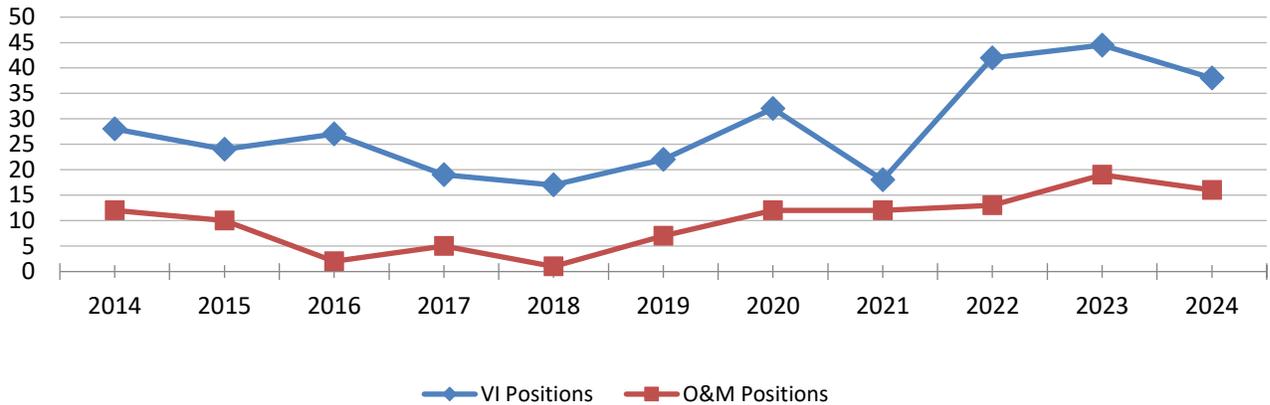
The respondents at each ESC and at TSBVI were asked how many part- or full-time positions were posted in their regions or at TSBVI in September 2024. These data were collected in September and reflect numbers after all regular hiring for the academic year had been completed. These positions remained unfilled and active because districts were unable to find a VI professional, or the positions were opened after the start of the school year.

**Table 10: Posted Positions**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>TSVIs</b>	42	44.5	38
<b>COMS</b>	13	19	16
<b>Dually certified</b>	5	3	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66.5</b>	<b>64</b>

Previous formal and informal data indicates that vacancies alone are not a strong indicator of actual need. The reasons vary. Many administrators will identify a need and encourage an existing educator to become VI certified rather than post a vacancy. Likewise, the need for a private contract TSVI or O&M position may not necessarily be posted.

### Posted Vacancies for VI Professionals



### Recommendations by Knowledgeable Professionals

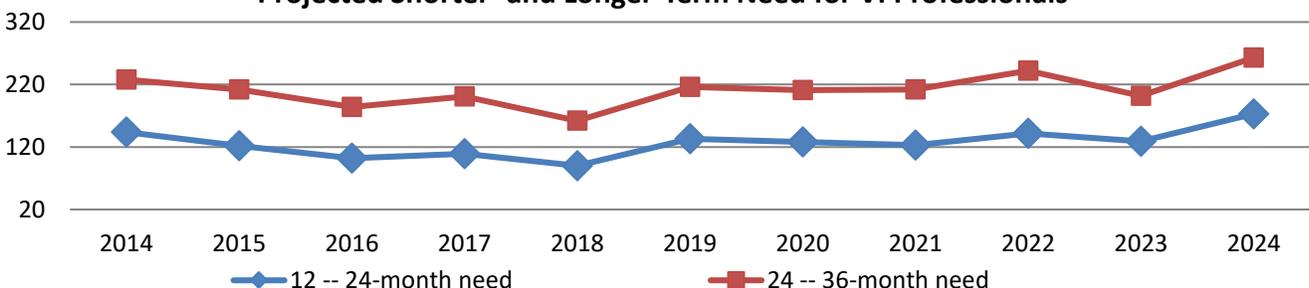
***The projected need for additional COMS continues to grow with ESCs estimating a long-term need of 203 TSVIs and 100 COMS by 2027.***

Regional VI consultants are the experts in visual impairments for their region. VI consultants and TSBVI staff were asked how many TSVIs, O&M specialists, and dually certified personnel were needed in their area based on projected student growth and how many staff are expected to leave the field. The survey asked about projected need, not about positions available.

There are two ways to assess the shorter- and longer-term projected needs: either by job assignment or by professional expertise. The terms “TSVI” or “COMS” indicate a type of expertise as expressed through the certification in a professional discipline. Those in the “dually certified” category hold both certifications and function in both professional disciplines.

Functioning as a dually certified VI professional primarily reflects district need and therefore is a job assignment and not a unique discipline. Dually certified assignments are also very fluid and vary from year to year. For the purposes of this section of the report, the data reported will be by *professional expertise*, not by job assignment. Understanding the need by expertise informs future training and funding needs. Dually certified VI professionals function as part-time TSVIs and part-time COMS. As such they will be added to both areas as part-time TSVIs and O&M specialists.

### Projected Shorter- and Longer-Term Need for VI Professionals



**Table 11: Projected Short-Term Need: 12–24 Months**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>TSVIs<sup>1</sup></b>	119	107	131
<b>COMS<sup>1</sup></b>	67	49	64
<b>Overall<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>166</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>173</b>

1 Projections reflect job expertise, not assignment. As a result, “TSVIs” and “COMS” include data for dually certified staff in both categories and cannot be totaled. “Overall” includes all VI professionals and is adjusted for dually certified VI professionals.

**Table 12: Projected Longer-Term Need: 24–36 Months**

	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>TSVIs<sup>1</sup></b>	201	172	203
<b>COMS<sup>1</sup></b>	104	129	100
<b>Overall<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>266</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>263</b>

<sup>1</sup> Projections reflect job expertise, not assignment. As a result, “TSVIs” and “COMS” include data for dually certified staff in both categories and cannot be totaled. “Overall” includes all VI professionals and is adjusted for dually certified VI professionals.

The projected short-term and long-term need for VI professionals went up this year. The total increased with ESCs projecting a need for 173 VI professionals within one to two years and 263 within the next three years. The ESCs’ short-term estimation peaked this year while the long-term need estimation was a few lower than 266 in 2022. From 2020 to 2022, the number of students returning to school went down. 2023 was the first year that Texas experienced student growth, and more students returned to school in 2024. This might explain why the projections by the ESCs went up this year for both TSVIs and COMS.

### **Discussion of Projected Need and Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVIs)**

***Texas is projected to need between 152 and 160 TSVIs in the next 3 years to accommodate both attrition and student growth.***

As discussed in the Growth of Students with Visual Impairments and Impact on VI Professionals (pages 14-15), Texas will need between 28 to 36 additional TSVIs to meet the anticipated growth in the number of students with visual impairments.

In addition to meeting the needs related to expected demographic increases, Texas will need to replace TSVIs who leave the field. It is projected that 124 individuals with VI expertise (TSVIs and dually certified professionals) will leave the field prior to 2027.

Combining projected growth and attrition, Texas will need between 152 and 160 new teachers of students with visual impairments in the next 3 years to replace those who are likely to leave and respond to anticipated growth. The ESC projection of 203 TSVIs needed in that time falls within this range.

**Table 13: Projected Need and TSVIs**

Number of TSVIs needed to meet student growth	28 - 36
Number of TSVIs needed due to attrition	124
<b>Total FTE needed by 2027</b>	<b>152 - 160</b>

In the Fall of 2024, 145 individuals were seeking VI certification through a university program in Texas. Forty-seven were working under an emergency permit. Consequently, these TSVIs are already working with students and included in this count as TSVIs. If the university TSVI program completion rates continue to reflect those over the last 3 years, the number of newly certified TSVIs (164) **would likely meet the anticipated need.**

**Discussion of Projected Need and O&M Specialists**

**Texas is projected to need up to 75 additional O&M specialists over the next three years to accommodate both attrition and student growth.**

This year, the projected short-term need for certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) increased by 15 to a total of 64. The projected long-term need decreased by 29 to a total of 100. It is important to consider the following factors when estimating the future need for O&M specialists:

- TEC 30.002 requires that initial evaluations of students with visual impairments include an O&M evaluation.
- Approximately 31% of current students with visual impairments have not received an O&M evaluation to determine whether they need O&M services.
- Currently, there are no reliable statistical projections on the percentage of students with visual impairments who will need O&M services *at any given time.*

**Table 14: Projected Need and COMS**

Number of COMS needed to meet student growth	26 - 37
Number of COMS needed due to attrition	38
<b>Total FTE needed by 2027</b>	<b>64 - 75</b>

As discussed in the Growth of Students with Visual Impairments and Impact on VI Professionals (pages 14-15), Texas will need between 26 to 37 additional O&M specialists to meet the anticipated growth in the number of students with visual impairments.

Regional VI consultants project that 38 individuals with O&M expertise (O&M specialists and dually certified professionals) will leave the field by 2027. If the expected student growth is combined with the 3-year projected attrition and based on statewide average student-to-teacher ratios, it is likely that Texas will need between 64 and 75 additional full- and part-time O&M specialists over the next 3 years. The projected longer-term need of 100 made by the ESC consultants, who know their regions best, falls well above this range. It is imperative for districts to ensure that all students with visual impairments receive an initial orientation and mobility evaluation and consideration by an O&M specialist of their need for an evaluation every three years. Only then can the educational team members be assured that those who need O&M instruction will receive it.

In 2024, a total of 19 students completed an O&M program, a decrease of 9 students from the previous year. In 2022, 16 students completed an O&M program representing the lowest number of completers within the last 3 years. In 2020, the pandemic halted O&M internships and prevented students from completing their program and certification. Similar circumstances likely held students back again in 2021 as the pandemic continued to restrict some internship placements. Presuming that orientation and mobility students continue to find challenges in completing their programs, and the number of completers continues at a similar rate over the next 3 years (63), ***it is likely that the need for a minimum of 75 new COMS by 2027 will not be met.***

## **Enrollment to Prepare VI Professionals**

Texas is fortunate to have two collaborative partners who train VI professionals: Texas Tech University (TTU) and Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU). Both schools have graduate programs for TSVIs and O&M specialists. SFASU's undergraduate program for orientation and mobility specialists was discontinued last year. Both universities support and provide courses for VI and O&M students using a combination of virtual learning and in-person courses.

The combination of virtual and in-person options, and supportive funding has had a major impact on the number of VI professionals in Texas. Enrollment increased substantially when virtual learning became available, and it continued to be an option even after the pandemic.

## **Students Registered in Texas Programs**

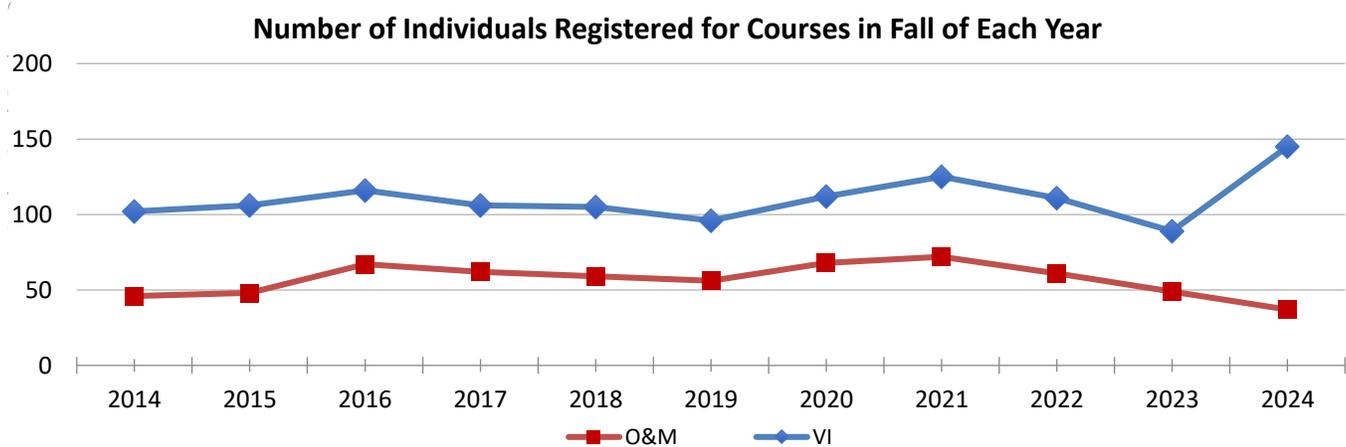
***The total number of Texas students registered for courses leading to VI or O&M certification increased in 2024.***

As noted in the chart below and graph that follows, a total of 182 students registered for courses leading to certification in 2024. The total number of students increased by 56 in VI while the total number of students decreased by 12 in O&M. One hundred forty-five students are seeking VI

certification and 37 are en route to O&M certification. Overall, this year’s data reflects growth in the number of individuals enrolled in a training program in Texas that would lead to VI and O&M certification.

**Table 15: Number of Students in Training Programs**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Visual impairments</b>	111	89	145
<b>Orientation and mobility (including undergraduates)</b>	61	49	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>182</b>



**Students completing Texas certification programs**

***Fifty-one individuals completed VI training and 16 completed their O&M program in 2024.***

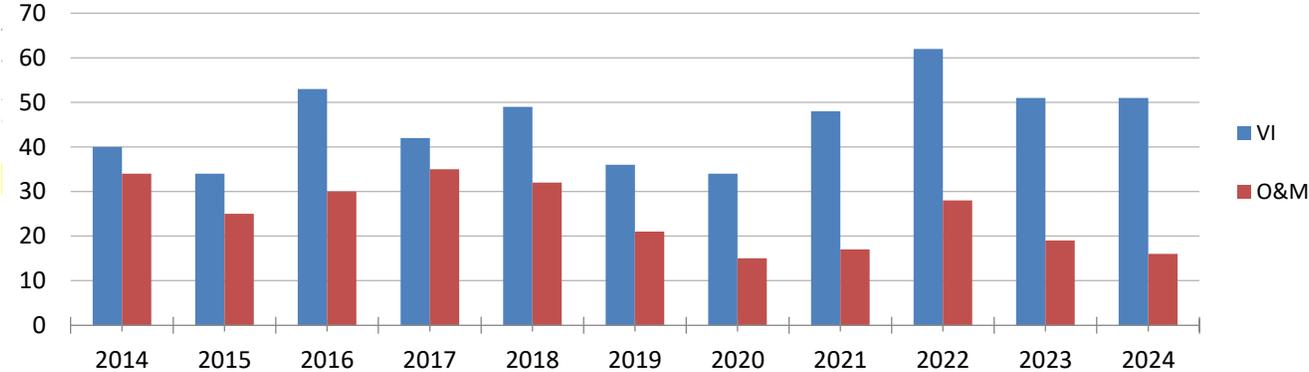
Table 16 and the graph below show that in 2024, a total of 67 Texas residents completed their certification programs. This is a decrease of 3 individuals compared to 2023. It includes graduates of both the TSVI and O&M program. The number of TSVI and O&M program completers in 2022 was the highest within the past 3 years, with a total of 62 TSVI and 28 O&M completers. It should be noted that unlike students seeking VI certification, who may be eligible to work as a TSVI under an emergency permit before completing their program, O&M candidates must complete their entire program and obtain certification before they can start working as an O&M specialist in Texas public schools. It is important to consider that during the pandemic, O&M students were not able to complete their internships, their university programs and, essentially, the certification process which would have allowed them to support the growing number of students eligible for O&M services.

In addition, O&M certification is a national certification and valid in any state. It is also applicable for all age groups, not just for the birth to age twenty-one population served by the public school system in Texas. It is hoped that school districts will be able to consistently hire graduating O&M specialists, otherwise positions could be filled outside of education and/or the state.

**Table 16: Number of Individuals Completing Certification Programs**

	2022	2023	2024
<b>Visual impairments</b>	62	51	51
<b>Orientation and mobility (including undergraduates)</b>	28	19	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>67</b>

**Number of Individuals Completing Certification Programs**



**University Students receiving Financial Assistance in Texas Certification Programs**

***A higher number of students enrolled in the SFASU and TTU VI and O&M training programs received financial support through Texas grants.***

In 2024, 83.5% of students in personnel preparation programs (VI certification and O&M) received financial assistance. Sixty-five percent of those in the TSVI certification programs and 18% students enrolled in the O&M programs received assistance. Tuition support continues to be a strong incentive for enrollment, especially considering that gaining a certification to work with students with visual impairments does not typically lead to an increase in salary.

**Table 17: Percentage of Students Receiving Support through Texas Grants**

	2022	2023	2024
Percentage of students receiving TX stipends	63%	88%	83.5%

Enrollment in the VI and O&M university programs increased by 44 to a total of 182 in 2024. Financial assistance continues to support most of those enrolled, and funding will remain an essential factor in the training of new TSVIs and COMS. In addition to the need for continued funding for student tuition going forward, and as the university programs continue to grow to meet statewide shortages, there is also a need for increased program operation funding, particularly funds to hire additional full-time faculty to improve program quality and meet teacher candidate needs.

### Summary

This report reviewed characteristics and indicators of need for VI professionals in Texas. In September 2024, Texas had 904 individuals (819.8 FTEs) providing vision-related services, either directly to students or in a leadership and/or technical-assistance capacity. After adjusting for 90 dually certified professionals, there are 849 individuals providing direct service either on a full- or part-time basis. The total includes the following full- or part-time individuals:

- 631 teachers certified in visual impairments (TSVIs) or 533 FTEs, a decrease of 33 individuals or 39 FTEs
- 308 certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) or 243 FTEs, a decrease of 39 individuals or 33 FTEs
- 90 dually certified professionals, an increase of 6 individuals from 2023, and is the highest total on record within the last 3 years

In addition, there are:

- 55 regional or statewide leadership or technical-assistance specialists; approximately 43.5 FTEs
  - 29 individuals or 24 FTEs are at the regional education service centers (ESCs)
  - 26 individuals or 20.8 FTEs are at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired either in Outreach or Short-Term Programs

With a current total of 29, the number of individuals providing leadership and technical assistance at the ESCs remained the same as in 2023. The time available to assist districts and families increased: ESCs reported 24 FTEs this year and 21.3 FTEs in 2023.

The total number of VI service providers available to serve students in 2024 decreased to 904 individuals (adjusted for dually certified professionals) from 983 in 2023. The number of *full-time TSVIs decreased by 46 to a total of 435 individuals; full-time COMS decreased by 27 to a total of 178*

individuals. The number of *part-time TSVIs increased* by 13 to a total of 196; *part-time COMS decreased* by 12 to a total of 130.

The VI field saw a decrease in the number of VI professionals *fluent in Spanish* (-14) and those who are *African American* (-16). The number of *Hispanic* VI professionals decreased by 2 while *Asian American* VI professionals decreased by 3. *Slight increases* include an addition of 1 TSVI fluent in Spanish and 13 COMS who are Hispanic. None of the VI professionals was Native American. Despite a decline in the cultural diversity of the VI field, continued efforts to expand diversity to reflect the student demographic are still needed.

This report uses a knowledgeable informant model and considers the recommendations of the VI specialists at the regional ESCs to be the best indicators of real need in Texas. These professionals have extensive knowledge of their districts and region. ESC estimates continue to indicate a growing need for additional VI professionals over the next three years. Their *projected longer-term need* overall for VI professionals is 263 (adjusted for dually certified professionals). This is an increase of 10 individuals in the longer-term need of 253 made by the ESCs in 2023.

An examination of *attrition, projected attrition, student population growth* and need within the past year continued to yield striking results. This year's attrition total is 45 individuals, an increase of 4 individuals from last year. Attrition for the last 5 years is 49 across all VI professionals.

The projected 3-year attrition is estimated at 162 or 18% of all VI professionals. In 2023, the projected attrition was 17% of all VI professionals. This year, it is projected that 114 TSVI, 28 COMS, and 10 dually certified professionals will leave the field in three years. Although the ESC VI consultants are the best predictors for attrition and we have seen the projected vs. actual attrition gap almost close in the past, even they have underestimated attrition for VI professionals over the past several years. Therefore, it is likely that as retirements are realized, attrition over the next 3 years will continue to be a pertinent factor in planning for an adequate number of VI professionals.

A long-term examination of growth patterns predicts that the number of students with visual impairments needing services will continue to increase by at least 1.7% each year, or by 559 additional students over the next three years. It is expected that Texas will have at least 11,489 students with visual impairments by 2027. Therefore, Texas could see a need for 36 additional full-time equivalent TSVIs and 37 full-time equivalent COMS by 2027 to accommodate student growth alone.

Considering the average projected increase in the statewide student population each year in addition to anticipated attrition, Texas could see a need for 152-160 additional full-time equivalent TSVIs and 64-75 full-time equivalent COMS by 2027. The longer-term need estimated by the ESCs parallels these projections for both TSVIs and COMS.

Clearly, based on student growth and projected attrition, Texas continues to have a need for VI professionals. *University certification programs* are working diligently to meet that need. In 2024, the statewide total number of students entering VI and O&M certification programs at Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas Tech University increased by 44 students (+56 in TSVI programs, -12 in O&M programs) to a total of 182 individuals. About 83.5% of students are receiving financial support. Sixty-seven students (37%) *completed* their university programs (51 in VI and 16 in O&M). In 2023, 51% completed the university programs. Since 2022, the decline in those completing their programs may likely be related to challenges brought on by the pandemic in 2020. Despite an increase in the number of students completing both the TSVI and O&M programs in 2022, the trend of an imminent shortage of new VI professionals continue across the state. Please refer to the Executive Summary on page three for more information.

## Appendix

### Methodology

The annual survey of VI professionals in Texas asked about the number of people *functioning* as VI professionals. These individuals may be TSVIs, 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 education service centers (ESCs) or Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). Those who provide leadership or technical assistance may have full- or part-time positions.

TSBVI serves as a statewide resource, with a concentration of students and VI professionals. As a result, TSBVI data were collected separately from that of the ESCs. Unless otherwise noted, TSBVI data are included in the data presented in this report. Data from TSBVI includes information about TSBVI professionals who provide direct services via the Comprehensive Program and who provide statewide training, short-term services, and leadership via the Short-Term Programs and Outreach Programs.

This survey captures information about the number of *individuals* working with students with visual impairments in the state of Texas in either a full- or part-time capacity. It does *not* gather information on the number of districts that employ full- and/or part-time VI professionals. Individuals who work part-time but in multiple districts are considered “full-time VI professionals.” The reference to “full-time” or “part-time” refers to the total employment of the VI professional, not to how long a specific district employs a VI professional.

Texas employs both full- and part-time VI professionals. Full-time professionals are those who work at least .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 VI workforce (31% of the TSVIs and 42% of the O&M specialists).

When relevant, information about full-time equivalent (FTE) positions is also presented. The number of 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 needs data reflect statewide totals of a combination of TSVIs and O&M professionals. Data on each profession is also included separately. When appropriate, data on dually certified VI professionals are also presented.

For the purposes of this survey, professionals who provide both O&M and VI services (dually certified) are counted as part-time TSVI and part-time O&M. Although they may be full-time employees of a district or cooperative, dually certified professionals are considered part-time TSVIs and part-time COMS. As a result, dually certified individuals appear on both the TSVI and O&M tables as part-time professionals. This results in a variance between the data listed in the Statewide Totals table (Table 1) and the combined totals of the Direct-Service Provider tables (Tables 2 and 3). Simply adding the discipline-specific totals would result in double-counting some individuals. Statewide totals are adjusted for dually certified professionals.

## References

- Correa-Torres, M., & Johnson Howell, J. (2004). Facing the challenges of itinerant teaching: Perspectives and suggestions from the field. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 98, 420–433.
- DiSchiano, Zach (October 2017). 4 Key Factors Impacting Teacher Retention. Retrieved from <https://www.tasb.org/news-insights/4-key-factors-impacting-teacher-retention>
- Griffin-Shirley, N., Pogrund, R., & Grimmet, E. (2011). View of dual-certified vision education professionals across the United States. *Insight*, 4, 15–21.
- Ingersoll, R., & Merrill, L. (updated 2014). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force*. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED566879>.
- Morath, Mike, TEA Commissioner of Education. Pocket Edition 2023-24 Texas Public School Statistics. Retrieved from <https://tea.texas.gov/about-tea/news-and-multimedia/brochures/pocket-edition>
- Smith, Todd G., Ph.D. (May 2021). Employed Teacher Demographics 2014-15 through 2020-21. TEA PEIMS data. Retrieved from <https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/employed-teacher-demographics-tgs210603.pdf>
- Landa, Jeremy B., Ph.D. (March 2023). Employed Teacher Attrition and New Hires 2011-12 through 2022-23. TEA PEIMS data. Retrieved from: <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/educator-data/employed-teacher-attrition-and-new-hires.pdf>
- Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. (2023). *Annual registration of students with visual impairments and Deafblind Child Count*. Austin, TX <https://www.tsbvi.edu/db-child-count-vi-registration>
- Texas Education Agency: Employed Teacher Attrition and New Hires 2015-16 through 2024-25 <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/educator-data/employed-teacher-attrition-and-new-hires-2024-2025.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency: Employed Teacher Demographics 2016-17 through 2023-24 <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/educator-data/employed-teacher-demographics-2023-2024.pdf>
- Texas Education Agency: Enrollment in Texas Public Schools 2023-24 <https://tea.texas.gov/reports-and-data/school-performance/accountability-research/enroll-2023-24.pdf>