2026 Texas Focus: Together We Thrive: Pathways to Progress for Teams

Connecting and Collaborating with Administrators: What VI Professionals Need to Know

Featuring *The Administrator's Toolbox*

June 4, 2026 | 1:00-2:30 p.m.

Presenters: Chrissy Cowan, Cecilia Robinson, and Brenna Brillhart

Objectives

- Review a toolbox designed to educate administrators on the scope of services and service delivery
- Understand and apply laws to ensure compliance in providing services to students

Pulse Check

- What is your role? TSVI? TDB? COMS? Family member? Administrator?
- To what extent do VI program administrators understand the VI population?
- To what extent do VI program administrators understand the itinerant nature of your job?
- Do administrators typically include VI professionals in the hiring process?
- To what extent are you comfortable advocating for the VI population?

A Brief History

The Administrator's Toolbox

- Originally written by KC Dignan and distributed as a 177-page document circa 2006 for national use
- Rewritten for Texas and reduced to 50 pages by Chrissy Cowan, Cyral Miller, & Cecilia Robinson in 2025-26
- Designed for the TSBVI website
    - Downloadable option
    - Searchable within the document

What is the Toolbox?

- A collection of information, tools and legal references
- Created exclusively for special education administrators who supervise VI programs
- Includes job descriptions, sample interview questions, and considerations (e.g. planning for budget to support professional development)
- Aligned with state and federal guidelines
- Offers just-in-time references

Legal Citations in the Toolbox

A document is included with citations organized in these areas:

- Eligibility
- Evaluation
- Programming
- Information for Families

Purpose of the Toolbox

- Educates and supports administrators who have little or no experience with students who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision
- Addresses unique aspects of a VI program
- Aligned with state and federal guidelines
- Offers suggestions/considerations
- Empowers administrators to build a quality program

Toolbox Organization

- 11 chapters
- Job descriptions and interview documents for 5 types of VI professionals
    - **Itinerant Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments**
    - **Itinerant Teachers of Students who are Deafblind**
    - **Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists**
    - **Deafblind Interveners**
    - **Braillists and Adapted Materials Specialists**
- Legal citations related to the VI population

Chapters

1. Overview of the Toolbox
2. Certification Information
3. Job Descriptions
4. Caseload Analysis and Workload Analysis
5. Recruitment

Chapters (cont'd)

6. Hiring and Employment Options
7. Interview Resources
8. Professional Development
9. Mentoring
10. Performance Evaluations for VI Professionals
11. Expanded Core Curriculum

When do administrators contact their ESCs?

When they:

- Have questions about service delivery and time
- Need clarification on rules and guidelines
- Need support for their VI program
- Have to find additional VI staff
- Seek assistance on understanding purchase requests (e.g. computer with a touch screen)

Common Concerns

"Why is your caseload size a concern?"

"Why do you need to go into the community for service delivery?"

"Why do you need to go to conferences/trainings?"

"What is your job description?"

"Explain your justification of service time to me."

Common Concerns

"What do you do during collaborative consultation?"

"Why do you need to go into the community for service delivery?"

"Why can't you be a TVI/COMS, braillist, and support the AT program?"

"Why does this student need an intervener?"

Using the Toolbox

Examples of Common Concerns

"Why is your caseload size a concern?"

"Explain your justification of service time to me."

"Why can't you be a TVI/COMS, braillist, and support the AT program?"

References to "Why is your caseload size a concern?"

Chapter 4: Caseload Analysis and Workload Analysis

Caseload Analysis:

The *VISSIT* is designed to guide teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) in determining the type and amount of itinerant TVI services to recommend for students on their caseload…This scale supports the TVI in quantifying information for the committee. The *VISSIT* provides guidance so that students get the benefit of an appropriate amount and type of VI service.

…the *O&M VISSIT* helps quantify data and develop recommendations for the amount of time for O&M instructional services (direct and collaborative consultation) per student.

References to "Why is your caseload size a concern?"
Chapter 4: Caseload Analysis and Workload Analysis
Workload Analysis:

The analysis of a workload begins with a review of the caseload data, and takes a deeper dive into the total time a professional is spending on serving the entire caseload. A workload analysis includes time for direct services with students, collaborative consultation services with team members, travel, duty-free lunch time, additional activities necessary to support students' education programs, and non-student-specific activities that are the responsibility of a VI professional

References to "Explain your justification of service time to me."
Chapter 4: Caseload Analysis and Workload Analysis
Workload Analysis:

Workload analysis can help a district determine the need for hiring staff to produce braille materials. The nationally validated tool, *Visual Impairment Scale of Staffing Pattern Analysis (VISSPA)*, has been created to document time in three distinct areas: Documented-Time Activities, Student-Specific Activities, and Non-Student-Specific Activities.

References to "Why can't you be a TVI/COMS, braillist, and support the AT program?"
Chapter 3: Job Descriptions
"Unique Challenges"
"Itinerant Nature of the Job"
"Student Diversity"

Chapter 4: Caseload Analysis and Workload Analysis
Sufficient time should be allotted for materials procurement and preparation, lesson preparation, research, and consultation with agencies and community resources, including medical resources. Due to the heterogeneity of the students, if there are 15 students, there are

at least 15 separate preparations. Is there a better, more cost-efficient way for the VI professional to spend his or her time? For example, would it be more cost-effective to hire a paraprofessional to assist with the materials preparation and brailling then to have the VI teacher completing all of it? Typically, braillists cost approximately one-half to two-thirds of a VI professional.

References to "Why can't you be a TVI/COMS, braillist, and support the AT program?"
Chapter 6: Hiring and Employment Options
Assigning the VI role to an existing special education teacher who does not have flexibility in their schedule and/or the ability to travel between campuses is not advisable due to the in-depth student instruction and support required by VI students who are in multiple classrooms and settings.

Hiring needs should be based on data from the caseload analysis study rather than a number of students. For example, 5 students who require daily, specialized IEP instruction from a TVI may constitute a full caseload. Many students will require ongoing collaborative consultative services and/or time intensive material adaptation.

References to "Why can't you be a TVI/COMS, braillist, and support the AT program?"
Chapter 6: Hiring and Employment Options
A VI professional who has both a TVI certificate and an O&M certificate may be hired to serve in both roles. TVIs and COMS are certified by different entities, and belong to two different professions with different sets of professional standards and practices. They share commonalities - both support the expanded core curriculum, conduct evaluations, and support general education teams. However, each professional certificate reflects specific expertise on educational development for this population. When hiring a professional to serve both roles, ensure that there is separate planning and instructional time for identified goals as required by the IEP.

Examples of Common Concerns
"Why do you need to go into the community for O&M service delivery?"

"Why are you working outside of traditional school hours?"

"Who is responsible for providing transportation for instruction in the community?"

References to "Why do you need to go into the community for O&M services?"
Legal Citations document

O&M services provided to blind or visually impaired children by qualified personnel to enable those students to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in school, home, and community. IDEA 300.34(c)(7)

Chapter 7: Interview Resources

O&M services are mandated by IDEA 300.34(c)(7) to enable students to attain systematic orientation and safe movement within their environments in school, home, and community settings. Therefore, student evaluations and instructional services need to take place in all relevant settings.

References to "Why are you working outside of school hours?"

Chapter 1: Texas Administrator's Toolbox - Overview

Texas Education Code (TEC) 30.002(c)(5) and (e)(5) requires school districts to flexibly make arrangements for services to occur "beyond regular school hours to ensure the student learns the skills and receives the instruction" in the ECC. Some programs offer summer or afterschool services to address these needs. See Chapter 11 for more information on the ECC.

Chapter 11: Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

By law, districts must provide for flexibility to meet the need for ECC instruction, which may require special transportation arrangements, instruction beyond regular school hours and non-traditional settings such as in the home and community. Flexible scheduling for the VI professionals may be necessary. (TEC §30.002(c)(5) and (e)(5))

References to "Who is responsible for providing transportation for instruction in the community?"

Chapter 7: Interview Resources

School districts are responsible for providing transportation necessary for the instruction identified in the IEP. This may take the form of public transportation, school buses, or vehicles supplied by the district. O&M specialists should not be expected to provide student transportation in their personal car. Please note: this refers to student transportation, not the travel that is incurred when the O&M specialist is traveling between students.

Chapter 11: Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

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Examples of Common Concerns

"What does an intervener do and how is this different from a paraprofessional?"

"Why does this student need an intervener?"

"How do I interview someone for this position?"

Examples of Common Concerns

- "What does an intervener do and how is this different from a paraprofessional?"
  - Chapter 3: Job Descriptions
  - Chapter 7: Interview Resources
- "Why does this student need an intervener?"
  - Chapter 1: Overview
  - "Additional Considerations for Students who are Deafblind"
- "How do I interview someone for this position?"
  - Chapter 7: Interview Resources
  - Deafblind Intervener Interview Questions

Your Turn

- Issues you are seeing in your districts?
- Would you be comfortable sharing the toolbox with an administrator?

Additional Resources

Guidelines and Standards for Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Texas

What is the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)?

A Paraeducator's Handbook for Working with Students with Visual Impairments

Check Back with Us

- When *The Administrator's Toolbox* is online
- If you or your administrator have questions or need additional information