

OPERATING PROCEDURES

SPECIAL FACTORS—BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Goose Creek CISD

101911

Legal Framework: [Special Factors—Blind or Visually Impaired](#)

Category: Admission, Review, and Dismissal Committee

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“Some commenters recommended that the special factors for a child who is blind or visually impaired include a requirement for a clinical low vision evaluation to determine whether the child has the potential to utilize optical devices for near and distance information before providing instruction in Braille and the use of Braille. . . . Section 614(d)(3)(B)(iii) of the Act requires instruction in Braille to be provided unless the [individualized education program] IEP Team determines that instruction in Braille or in the use of Braille is not appropriate for the child. However, the Act does not require a clinical low vision evaluation, and we do not believe it would be appropriate to include such a requirement in the regulations. Whether a clinical low vision evaluation is conducted is a decision that should be made by the child’s IEP Team.” 71 Fed. Reg. 46683-46684 (August 14, 2006).

“The challenge for educators of blind and visually impaired children is how to teach skills that sighted children typically acquire through vision. Blind and visually impaired students use a variety of methods to learn to read, write, and acquire other skills. For reading purposes, some students use Braille exclusively; others use large print or regular print with or without low vision aids. Still others use a combination of methods, including Braille, large print, low vision aids, and devices with computer generated speech, while others have sufficient functional vision to use regular print.” [OSERS Dear Colleague Letter \(June 19, 2013\)](#).

“IEP Teams must ensure that children who are blind or who are visually impaired are provided with the Braille instruction they need in order to receive [free appropriate public education] FAPE and to ensure their meaningful access to the general education curriculum offered to nondisabled students. To this end, IEP Teams for blind and visually impaired students should consider each child's need for appropriate Braille instruction on an individual, case-by-case basis, and without undue delay. Systematic and regular instruction from knowledgeable and appropriately trained personnel is essential for a child to become proficient in Braille. IEP Teams must ensure that the instructional time allotted for Braille instruction is sufficient to provide the level of instruction determined appropriate for the child. For example, if a particular student has little or no skill in Braille reading and writing, the IEP Team may conclude that frequent and intensive instruction in Braille likely would be necessary to enable the student to have meaningful access to the general curriculum.” [OSERS Dear Colleague Letter \(June 19, 2013\)](#).

Application Guidance

- [Sensory Impairments-Services to Students Who Are Blind or have a Visual Impairment](#) (TEA)
- [State Leadership Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) (Region 11 ESC)
- [2017 Guidelines and Standards for Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Texas](#) (TSBVI)
- [Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#) (TSBVI)
- [Programs and Administrative-Information and Resources](#) (TSBVI)
- [American Printing House for the Blind, Inc.](#) (APH-Nonprofit)

Through the implementation of the Goose Creek CISD policies and procedures as outlined in the [Legal Framework](#) for the Child-Centered Special Education Process, the Goose Creek CISD ensures that in the case of a child who is blind or visually impaired, the admission, review,

OPERATING PROCEDURES

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and dismissal (ARD) committee considers the special factors as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Action (IDEA) and its accompanying federal regulations, state statutes and regulations.

PERSONS RESPONSIBLE: VI Teachers, Orientation and Mobility Specialist, ARD Committee Members

TIMELINES: 2020-2021 at each Annual ARD

MATERIALS: eSped forms to include VI Supplement

VISUALLY IMPAIRED (VI) INSTRUCTION

19 TAC § 89.1050(b), TEC 30.002 (5), 34 CFR, §§300.24, 300.320-300.324

Purpose of Instructional Services for students with Visually Impairments (VI)

Maximizing lifelong success is the goal of education. Students with visual impairments have unique learning needs that must be addressed if they are going to access the regular core curriculum and become independent, productive citizens to the greatest extent possible. It is important the most appropriate decisions about development and implementation of programs and services for students with visual impairments are made. (Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Texas: Guidelines and Standards, 2015)

“Since students with visual impairments have unique learning needs, instructional teams should consider creative strategies to meet those needs. IDEA requires consideration of present levels of performance in both academic and functional areas. Texas law specifically notes that there will need to be flexibility on the part of school districts to meet the special needs of children with visual impairments (TEC 30.002 (5)). General and special education teachers are primarily responsible for instruction in the academic content, with the support of VI professionals to accommodate or modify instructional design and materials to address the impact of visual impairment.” (Educating Students with Visual Impairments in Texas: Guidelines and Standards, 2015)

For a student from birth through two years of age with visual and/or auditory impairments, an individualized family services plan (IFSP) meeting must be held in place of an ARD committee meeting in accordance with 34 CFR, §§300.320-300.324, and the memorandum of understanding between the Texas Education Agency and the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services.

Referrals for VI or O&M Services

When considering Instructional Services for students with visual impairments, the service

provider will collaborate with other evaluation specialists in the initial REED meeting. Based on the results of the evaluation, the service provider will make recommendations about the need for service and make recommendations for service delivery time, and frequency and duration of services. After considering the recommendations made by the service providers, the ARD committee will determine whether or not the student is eligible for the service.

The 83rd Legislature made changes to the TEC section requiring an orientation and mobility evaluation performed by a certified orientation and mobility specialist as part of special education eligibility considerations for children with a suspected visual impairment. The new law requires that a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) be part of the multidisciplinary team that performs re- evaluations for purposes of continuing eligibility for special education for students with vision impairment.

Service Delivery

Once the ARD committee determines the need for service, service delivery options may include indirect/consultation, direct service, community-based activities, or a combination of these options. IEP goals and objectives addressed by VI and O&M service providers may be collaborative with classroom teachers' goals and objectives.

A student's need for Vision or O&M services may vary over time. A student's needs may differ in intensity and focus during the student's school years. These fluctuations are reflected in the IEP plan and should be fluid and flexible, based on immediate educational needs at any time during the student's educational process. Consideration for services may be especially necessary during periods of transition between schools or into community activities. Other considerations are when there are significant changes to the IEP and/or vocational considerations.

Instruction should reflect the assessed needs of each student in all areas of academic and disability- specific core curriculum. These areas of emphasis have also been called the **Expanded Core Curriculum**. Assessments in all areas that determine each child's strengths and weaknesses can be used to assist the ARD committee build a program that truly addresses life-long competencies. The expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments includes:

- compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes
- orientation and mobility
- social interaction skills
- independent living skills
- recreation and leisure skills
- career education

- use of assistive technology
- visual efficiency skills
- self determination

Not all areas will have equal urgency each year, but to make informed decisions on where to focus, it is essential to measure progress and functioning across all areas. The ARD committee should prioritize needs in order to develop an appropriate and comprehensive educational program for students with visual impairments.

Ordering Textbooks for the Visually Impaired (Large Print and Braille)

Requests for Large Print and Braille textbooks are provided to the Brailist by the TVI. The Brailist orders all Large Print and Braille textbooks from the Instructional Materials Administrative Assistant at the Administration Building.

Students not identified as receiving special education services

Related services are those services defined in federal regulations (300.24) that are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. VI and O&M services are only available to students served in special education.

Referral for a Student in the Initial Evaluation Process (VI and O&M)

1. The Coordinator for Evaluation will notify the VI Team that oversees Vision and O&M services will be addressed in an initial evaluation. Consent will have already been obtained by the campus evaluation staff member.
2. The campus evaluation staff member uploads the *Notice of Release/Consent to Request Confidential Information* form so that staff can contact the physicians.
3. The service providers will review the file and complete an evaluation based on the referral.
4. If the service providers determine that a complete evaluation is warranted, the service providers will conduct the evaluation and incorporate their evaluation into the integrated Full and Individual Evaluation report in the respective sections.

Standalone Evaluation

An evaluation should be completed by the recommending service provider.

1. The campus evaluation staff member must provide notice to the parent, obtain consent, and upload it for evaluation.
2. The report will be a standalone report completed as an addendum to the Full Individual Evaluation.
3. A review ARD must be held upon completion of the evaluation.

Three Year Reevaluations

1. The campus evaluation staff should include the service provider in the REED process.
2. The service provider will make recommendations to the scope of the evaluation.
3. The evaluation information will be incorporated into the integrated Full Individual Evaluation report.

Transfer Students

1. Campus will hold transfer ARD.
2. Document the Vision and O&M if applicable of recommended service time(s) from the prior district in the transfer ARD paperwork.
3. If the records from the prior district do not include a VI or O&M evaluation, campus staff should contact the district and specifically ask for a copy of the records.
4. If the records from the prior district include a VI and O&M evaluation, the service provider will review the evaluation and determine whether or not a reevaluation will be required.
5. The following paperwork needs to be submitted to the Program Manager, Itinerant Instructional Services, ASAP following a transfer ARD:
 - a. VI or O&M IEP from prior district
 - b. Copy of FVE, LMA, Expanded Core Curriculum, and O&M evaluation, if available
 - c. Most current eye report
 - d. Any other relevant data
 - e. A copy of the schedule of services and deliberations from the transfer ARD stating the amount of Vision and O&M service time
 - f. Proposed date for annual ARD

ARD Meetings

1. The ARD Facilitator, Department Head, and/or Campus Based Evaluation Team member will notify service provider of the date and time as soon as possible.
2. The service provider will complete an annual summary, update goals and objectives, and propose new goals and objectives, and collaborate with other service providers/teachers to draft goals and objectives. The service provider will also make recommendations for frequency, location, and duration of services by entering this information on the Schedule of Services page.
3. Collaborative goals and objectives, if appropriate based on individual needs, can be co-implemented with the classroom teacher. Collaborative goals and objectives must be developed by TVI or COMS in collaboration with another service provider/teacher. Service providers are responsible for indicating on the goal/objective form which specific IEP objectives that he/she will be working on collaboratively with the teacher. VI and O&M will be designated as implementers on the goals and objectives page as

well.

4. The VI teacher will complete the VI Supplement in eSped and address the Benefits of Braille.

Dismissal from Services

A student may be considered for dismissal from VI or O&M when one or more of the following conditions exist:

- a. The student has developed the performance components needed to progress toward educational goals established in the IEP;
- b. The area of concern being addressed does not interfere with the student's ability to function or make progress in his/her educational setting;
- c. Environmental or curricular adaptations have been established to allow for achievement of educational goals;
- d. The student's need for remediation and/or compensation in the area(s) being addressed are being fully met by the student's educational or other service providers without the need for continued support;
- e. The student's rate of progress in the educational environment in the area(s) being addressed continues to be steady and commensurate with the student's overall level of progress in other areas despite a decrease in services;
- f. The student's level of educational functioning in the area(s) being addressed has reached age level, grade level, and / or level of intellectual potential; and/or
- g. Services are no longer affecting change in the student's level of function or rate of skill acquisition

Dismissal Process

1. When a student meets one of the dismissal criteria, the service provider may recommend an evaluation to consider dismissal from services.
2. The service provider will communicate the need for a REED meeting to the campus evaluation staff.
3. The campus will provide Notice of Evaluation to the parent and obtain consent for the evaluation.
4. A new Full Individual Evaluation will be conducted, and the service provider will add his/her evaluation information into the integrated Full Individual Evaluation report.
5. A review ARD must be held to review the evaluation and recommendations for services. The following scenarios may occur. All decisions regarding eligibility and services are determined by the ARD committee.
 - a. Dismissal from VI services if the student no longer demonstrates an educational need for service.
 - b. Changes to service delivery model, either from direct services to consultation, consultation to direct services, or a new combination of the two.

OPERATING PROCEDURES

SPECIAL FACTORS—BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Goose Creek CISD

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- c. Updated focus of services and any new goals for the IEP.