

## Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired

VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (INCLUDING BLINDNESS) means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. (34 CFR §300.8(c) (13))

Teachers of the Blind/Visually Impaired (i.e., TVIs) provide vision services\* to students with a diagnosed medical eye condition affecting the functioning of the eye and related acuity issues.

\*To receive vision services, a student must go through the special education eligibility process and be identified as a student with VI [i.e., Visual Impairment (including Blindness)]. To qualify, a student must meet ALL of the following criteria:

- 1) Medically documented visual impairment or blindness – Loudoun County Public Schools follows Virginia State Guidelines.
  - The child with visual impairment demonstrates one or more of the following:
    - Visual acuity is better than 20/200 but worse than 20/70 [in the better eye with best possible correction] at a distance and/or near; or
    - Visual field restriction in the better eye of remaining visual field of 70 degrees or less but better than 20 degrees
    - Conditions including, but not limited to:
      - oculomotor apraxia
      - cortical visual impairment
      - progressive loss of vision, which may, in the future, have an adverse effect on educational performance
      - functional vision loss where field and acuity deficits alone may not meet the aforementioned criteria
  - The child with blindness demonstrates one or more of the following:
    - Visual acuity in the better eye with best possible correction of 20/200 or less at a distance and/or near; or
    - Visual field restriction in the better eye of remaining visual field of 20 degrees or less
- 2) The loss of visual acuity results in an adverse effect on educational performance in one or more instructional areas.
- 3) Lack of instruction in reading and math has been ruled out as the determinant factor in the eligibility decision.
- 4) Limited English proficiency has been ruled out as the determinant factor in the eligibility decision.
- 5) Specially designed instruction is required to meet the unique needs that result from the child's disability and to ensure access to the general curriculum. The nature of the instruction requires significant adaptation to the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction that cannot be reasonably provided solely through general education.

For students who are deaf-blind, there are specific additional criteria for eligibility in both visual and auditory impairment. "Eligibility as a child with deaf-blindness. The group may determine that a child has deaf-blindness if the definition of 'deaf-blindness' as outlined in 8 VAC 20-81-10 is met." 8 VAC 20-81-80 K. "Deaf-blindness' means simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, the

combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.” 34 CFR §300.8 (c)(2); 8 VAC 20-81-10.

An eligibility or IEP team may request a Functional Vision Assessment when a suspicion exists that a student has a visual impairment due to a diagnosed medical eye condition. A Functional Vision Assessment is conducted by a Teacher of the Blind/Visually Impaired to determine how a child uses his/her vision to perform a variety of near and distant tasks as well as to assess a student’s visual acuity, visual field, contrast sensitivity, color vision, and light sensitivity. The report is used with other evaluation reports (e.g., psychological, educational, etc.) to determine whether or not the student meets the special education eligibility criteria for Visual Impairment (VI).

### **Orientation and Mobility Services**

As indicated in the Virginia Regulations, orientation and mobility (O&M) services are provided to Blind or visually impaired children by qualified personnel to enable those children to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in school, home, and community; and includes travel training instruction and teaching children the following, as appropriate:

- Spatial and environmental concepts and use of information received by the senses (e.g., sound temperature, and vibrations) to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel (e.g., using sound at a traffic light to cross the street);
- To use the long cane or service animal to supplement visual travel skills or as a tool for safely negotiating the environment for students with no available travel vision;
- To understand and use remaining vision and distance low vision aids; and
- Other concepts, techniques, and tools.

Documentation of a student’s Blindness or visual impairment must be included in the IEP to be considered for O&M instruction as a related service. The IEP team determines what O&M services, if any, would be appropriate for the student. Key times when further O&M assessment may be indicated include whenever visual function or travel needs change or at transition periods (i.e., kindergarten, middle school, and high school).

### **Questions?**

Contact Elizabeth Martinez, Ph.D., Supervisor for Blind/Visually Impaired Program  
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### **Resources**

Virginia Department of Education: Visual Impairment including Blindness

([http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_blind/index.shtml](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_blind/index.shtml))

2010 Guidelines for Working with Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired in Virginia Public Schools

([http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special\\_ed/disabilities/sensory\\_disabilities/visually\\_impaired\\_blind/visually\\_impaired\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/special_ed/disabilities/sensory_disabilities/visually_impaired_blind/visually_impaired_guidelines.pdf))

Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (<http://vsdb.k12.va.us/>)