

Poudre School District
Integrated Services

Guidelines for Serving Students Identified as Visual Impairment, Including Blindness



Educate....Every Child, Every Day

Fort Collins, CO
www.psdschools.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In

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DEFINING VISION SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

Addressing lifelong success is the goal of education. Students with visual impairments, including blindness 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

Guidelines for

THEORY OF ACTION

If we, in the vision services department (i.e. Teacher of the Visually Impaired/Orientation & Mobility Specialist, and Braillist), provide services using a continuum of inclusive practices to develop and provide accessible learning opportunities in a variety of environments through relevant and research based practices, then students with a visual impairment including blindness will

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INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

Students in Poudre School District who are determined to have a disability under current federal and state guidelines will receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). This will include a continuum of services designed to meet each student's individual needs as defined in their IEP, with those services generally being viewed as support services to general education, rather than a place where services are provided.

The Continuum of Services is provided

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Program Component 1: Eligibility

Eligibility is determined through the IEP process, based upon a medical report, functional vision evaluation and learning media assessment.

Visual Impairment, Including Blindness – Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Eligibility criteria
3/2013

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Federal law 34 CFR §300.304(c)(4) requires that “the child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability” and 34 CFR §300.304(c)(6) 10 “the evaluation is sufficiently comprehensive to identify all of the child’s special education and related services needs”. Therefore, it is recommended that an evaluation of orientation and mobility skills by a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS)

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Must have documented hearing and vision losses that, if considered individually, may not meet the requirements hearing impairment or visual impairment, but the combination of such losses adversely affects the student's educational performance; or
Has a documented medical diagnosis of a progressive medical condition that will result in concomitant hearing and visual losses that, without special education intervention, will adversely affect the student's educational performance

Program Component 2: Expanded Core Curriculum

Evaluations of all areas of the expanded core curriculum (ECC) are used to determine individual student programs.

For children who are blind or visually impaired, evaluations to document the present level of academic and functional performance for the development of the individualized education program (IEP) are required by the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). (34 CFR §300.320 (a)(1)) The term expanded core curriculum is used to define concepts and skills typically learned incidentally by sighted students that must be sequentially presented to the student who is blind or has low vision. The expanded core curriculum areas include; (A) needs that result from the visual impairment to enable the student "to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and (B) other educational needs that result from the visual impairment.



rainbows, clouds, and sky. Some are too large to experience completely, such as a building, mountain ranges, and oceans. Other items are too tiny or too delicate to understand through touch, including small insects, a snowflake, or an item under a microscope. Fragmented concepts can impede social, academic, and vocational development.

Sensory Efficiency (includes visual, tactual and auditory skills): Students who are blind and students with low vision need systematic instruction to learn efficient use of their senses.

- o Instruction in *visual efficiency* must be individually designed and may include using visual gaze to make choices, tracking car movements when crossing the street, responding to visual cues in the environment, and/or using optical devices such as magnifiers and telescopes.
- o For most students with visual impairments including blindness, an increased reliance upon *tactual* skills is essential to learning. These skills should be considered as part of the IEP development. It takes more detailed “hands on” interaction and repetition to tactually understand a concept, such as relative size, that may be readily captured with a glance.
- o Systematic instruction in *auditory* skills is critical for successful mobility and learning. Students must learn to effectively use their hearing to respond appropriately to social cues, travel safely in schools and across streets, learn from digital media and use echolocation for orientation.

Orientation and Mobility (O&M): Safe and efficient travel throughout the environment is a critical component in the education of students with visual impairments including blindness. Orientation & Mobility evaluation and instruction should begin in infancy with basic spatial concepts, purposeful and exploratory movement, and progress through more independent age r appropriate motor and travel skills in increasingly complex environments. Vision provides the primary motivation for infants to begin to move their bodies, to raise their heads to see people, to reach toward objects, to move through the environment and to begin to play. Significant delays and differences in meeting motor milestones can impact overall development. The blind child needs to know how classrooms or other environments are arranged in order to independently move with confidence. Systematic orientation to a space may be needed before the placement and function of furniture and objects is understood. More advanced age r appropriate travel skills such as street crossings, bus travel and community experiences are needed, as the student gets older.

Assistive technology: Technology permits students with visual impairments to access the general curriculum, to increase literacy options and to enhance communication. There are a variety of high and low tech assistive technology tools in 15Tc(the)Tj/T 11ff, 1.36070TA05-0005/A0 38250Tel1(0

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blindness. The law requires the IEP team to first look at placement in general education with recommended accommodations and/or modifications.

After considering educational needs in both the general curricula and the expanded core the IEP team must carefully select

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and Responsibility 1: Certified Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) / Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COSM)

Teacher of the Visually Impaired: TVI certified teachers of students with visual impairments perform required evaluations and instruction.

Certified teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) are team members

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Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists: COMS perform required evaluations and instruction.

Movement, independent or supported, is critical for learning. Orientation & mobility

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Roles and Responsibilities 3: Service Delivery

An established procedure for documenting student needs and the vision professional's time is best practice.

The following are examples of service delivery time options:

Students require intensive instructional time when beginning to learn braille. A certified TVI should provide braille instruction on a daily basis, often for 1 ½ hours a day. Additional hours per day may be

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to ensure consistency in programming. Consultation is a model that can be used effectively to support a variety of educational purposes. Consultation services can be used to ensure that a student has multiple opportunities in a day to use a particular skill and those modifications are implemented throughout all instructional settings.

The time needed for an individual student from vision professionals can be expected to change over his

Roles and Responsibilities 4: Determining Appropriate Caseloads for Vision Professionals

Written caseload guidelines are used to evaluate caseloads of vision professionals.

It is important that caseloads allow for necessary instruction and services to meet the unique educational needs of students with visual impairments. Each TVI/COMS provides current caseload information when evaluating caseloads. The Guidelines for Caseload Formula for Teachers Certified in the Area of Visual Impairment, 2003 (www.cde.state.co.us) may provide valuable information related to the individual needs of each student.

Factors to be considered when determining caseloads may be based upon:

Number of schools served impacts the time spent traveling (to

APPENDIX

Additional Resources

For additional information on the education of students with visual impairments:

Websites

Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals:

<http://www.acvrep.org>

American Council for the Blind of Colorado: <http://www.acbco.org>

American Foundation for the Blind: www.afb.org and Family Connect website

www.afb.org/familyconnect.org

American Printing House for the Blind: www.aph.org

Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired: www.aerbvi.org

Bookshare: www.bookshare.org

Colorado AER: www.co.aerbvi.org

Colorado Department of Education (CDE): www.cdestate.co.us

Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB): www.csdb.org

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AT A GLANCE

1. Eligibility is determined by an IEP team based upon a medical report, functional vision evaluation and learning media assessment.
2. Vision professionals provide expertise specific to visual impairments prior to and during the full and individual evaluation.
3. Evaluations of all areas of the expanded

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is a medical report signifying a visual problem sufficient to qualify as a student with visual impairment?

Under Federal law, the local school district must use a variety of assessment tools and strategies and not any single measure or assessment as the sole criterion for determining whether a child is a child with a disability or determining an appropriate educational program for the child. Eligibility for services as a student with visual impairment is determined based upon a medical report, a functional vision evaluation and a learning media assessment that indicate that there is a visual impairment that even with correction adversely affects a child's educational performance.

2. How is it determined whether a student will read braille?

A Learning Media Assessment is a required evaluation for determining each student's literacy medium. A certified teacher of students with visual impairments must conduct this evaluation; it will include recommendations for the use of visual, tactual, and auditory learning media. Decisions on whether a student should learn and use braille for literacy includes evaluating the efficiency with which the student gathers information from various sensory channels, the types of general literacy media the student uses, or will use, to accomplish reading and writing tasks and the literacy media the student will use for reading and writing. MoTj/38STT913S.224.0004Tc[(li)5j/TT16TD.0

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(NASDSE) has endorsed the term "Expanded Core Curriculum" to describe areas that should be included in the comprehensive

ACRONYMS

ACE

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NIL No Vision
NIMC National Instructional Materials Access
Center
NLS National Library Service
O & M Orientation and Mobility
OCR Office of Civil Rights
OD Right Eye
OP Object Perception
OS Left Eye
OSEP Office of Special Education Program
OT Occupational Therapy
OU Both eyes
Part B Special Education services ages 3-21
PART C IDEA/Early Intervention

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