Visual Impairment Preparation Program (VIP)

Training Program for Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialists Student Handbook

2017 edition

Revised August 2016
We are so delighted that you are interested in the Visual Impairment Preparation Program (VIP)! We are very proud of the program and its many facets and we very much hope that we will be able to provide the kind of pragmatic, comprehensive academic program that will best empower you to serve the needs of individuals who are blind or visually impaired across the state of Texas. As part of that training, we are philosophically committed to:

Providing you with the kind of training that will give you the knowledge and skills necessary for actually serving students in a practical, real-life educational setting.

Ensuring that you feel supported in your academic and practicum experiences.

Giving you opportunities to form relationships with your instructors through open door policies that encourage questioning and exchanges with our faculty.

Making sure that you have a meaningful and positive practicum experience. Making every effort to be sure that you find our classes interesting and enjoyable, as well as relevant.

We truly look forward to having an opportunity to work with you and get to know you as a person as well as a fellow professional. Please feel free to contact us if we can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Michael Munro
Visual Impairment/Orientation & Mobility Program Director
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Mission Statements</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Program Description</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Demand for VI Professionals</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it Means to be a VI Professional (TVI and O&amp;M)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standards - TVI</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O&amp;M Body of Knowledge</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Ethics O&amp;M</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code of Ethics TVI</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things You Should Know About SFA’s Vision Training Program</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Classes are Delivered</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Support</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Requirements and Courses</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admission Requirements</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Apply for Admission</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background Check for Schools</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Pathways and Timelines</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advising Policies and Practices</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University/Program Academic Policies</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O&amp;M Practicum and Internship</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TVI Field Experience and Practicum</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Examination for the Master’s Degree</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statewide Mentoring</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Voluntary Withdrawal from the Program</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal Policies</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some Practical Suggestions</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendices**

Appendix A: Diversity Policy                        88
Appendix B: Checklist of Application Materials      89
Appendix C: Sample Degree Plans                     90
Appendix D: Field Based Experience Chart            92
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E</td>
<td>Paperwork from the TVI Practicum</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F</td>
<td>Comprehensive Exam Rubric</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G</td>
<td>Undergraduate Advising Forms</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H</td>
<td>Process for Obtaining an Emergency Permit as a TVI</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>Process for Obtaining Standard Certificate - TVI</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix J</td>
<td>Academic Integrity Policy</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix K</td>
<td>RSA Grant Recruitment Info</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix L</td>
<td>RSA Grant Payback Information and Forms</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The faculty and staff of the Visual Impairment Preparation (VIP) Program would like to thank you for taking an interest in our program. This handbook will serve as a guide that will provide you with the vital information that pertains to our program.

The VIP Program is composed of two parts; the Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program, and the Teacher of Student with Visual Impairment (TVI) program. In addition to these programs, we also offer a Master of Education in Special Education with a concentration in Visual Impairment.

The Orientation and Mobility program is accredited by the Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP), which is the national accreditation authority. The Teacher of students with Visual Impairments (TVI) program is associated with the Texas Education Agency. It is accredited through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)* and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

This document will provide vital information regarding both of our programs. The Program Handbook is intended to (a) assist students in planning each phase of their studies; (b) familiarize students with the faculty’s general educational policies, expectations, and standards; and (c) assist faculty in their advising of students and in assuring that the program’s policies are applied systematically and fairly. The policies and regulations included in this Handbook apply to all of our students. It is expected that the student has read and is familiar with the policies and procedures included here.

The VIP program welcomes any feedback on the content of this handbook!

PLEASE KNOW THAT IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL THAT THE STUDENT READ THIS HANDBOOK AND BE FAMILIAR WITH ITS CONTENTS BEFORE CLASSES BEGIN.

*The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) formerly known as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)
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Our Most Valuable Resource

Of all the many resources that we are fortunate enough to have available, the most important thing we have to offer students is the wonderful group of people who serve on our faculty. The faculty members of the VIP are all seasoned practitioners in the field of vision. We have spent many years serving the children who are blind and visually impaired in the state of Texas. All of us have a deep commitment to training high quality professionals who will continue this dedication as they, too, make their contributions to the field. We believe that it is ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL for our students to be dedicated, creative, and persistent as they serve individuals with visual impairments. In order to accomplish these goals, we know that their training must be practical and pragmatic.

We as faculty acknowledge the fact that students arrive at our program with unique attributes and characteristics. These factors contribute to the nature of their interactions with faculty, their peers, and the professionals with whom they work. There will be times during the training period when students will be asked to examine their own perspectives as they relate to their roles in our field. Students will be encouraged, and sometimes required, to engage in discourse that provides multiple perspectives of person variables and societal issues and the influence of each in interpersonal interactions.

All of our faculty members are committed to honoring individual diversity by providing sensitive feedback to students diversity. The faculty will respect the student’s diversity as they participate in class discussions, internships, practicums, and other activities required for licensure or graduation.

In addition to respecting the diverse needs of the students in our program, we are also committed to demonstrating respect and esteem to our colleagues in the VIP. It is very important to us that we be viewed as an integrated working team composed of equal members who contribute equally to the development and maintenance of the program. Our team has been extremely close for many years and we are dedicated to continue to maintain the family-like support and concern that has dominated the environment surrounding our team.

Faculty Biographies

Mr. Michael Munro – Visual Impairment Program Coordinator

Teaching Experience

I was a special education teacher, an itinerant teacher of students with visual impairments, and an adjunct instructor before I was hired here at SFA. I am lucky enough to work in a field I love, to work with incredible professionals
here at the university, and to work for some truly amazing new teachers who I KNOW will make an incredible impact on the lives of individual students and the field in general.

Education

I received my Bachelor’s Degree from the University of Texas at Dallas. I received my Visual Impairment certification and master’s degree from SFA. I was trained in the early stages of the program that you are now a part of and I was one of the first to earn a master’s through the Visual Impairment Program at SFA. I am currently a doctoral candidate at Texas A&M University and will soon complete my dissertation.

Personal

I am married and still consider myself a newlywed. My beautiful wife Heather is a talented professional in the field of visual impairment and is dually certified as a COMS and as a TVI. Heather began working with me here at SFA in 2014. I am now part of an incredible blended family of one college student (Ryan), one high school student (Trey) and two beautiful little princesses who are in elementary school (Marlowe - born January 2009 and Iris Jade - born August 2011). We have made our home together here in Nacogdoches.

Interests

Family, Church, Teaching, Learning, Major league Baseball, and working with people in this incredible field.

Ms. Debbie “Cricket” Cady – Program Faculty

Education and Teaching Experience

When I was in the 6th grade, I wrote a research paper on braille, and enjoyed learning the braille alphabet from the World Book Encyclopedia. (I know some of you are saying, -What’s a World Book Encyclopedia?) From that time on, I knew from down in my heart that I wanted to be a teacher of those that were visually impaired.

My dad was a Lion’s Club member in Baton Rouge, Louisiana where we lived at the time. He thought I’d be interested in helping out with the annual outing to Thunderbird Beach theme park, which they sponsored for the Louisiana State School for the Blind and Deaf. Smart man! Good dad! In getting me ready for the event, he set up an opportunity for me to spend a whole school day at that school, visiting, observing, etc. I ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT…and my life as a TVI started right then and there!

I began teaching in the field of visual impairment after graduating with a Bachelor’s from the University of Southern Mississippi in 1978. I taught in Texas and Louisiana, before heading to work on a master’s degree from the
University of Northern Colorado.

In 1990, I graduated from UNC with additional certification in Orientation & Mobility. While in Colorado, with the strong encouragement from Dean Tuttle, my professor, I wrote a booklet, The Functional Vision Evaluation Dilemma: Too Many Pieces and Too Many Parts. I had the opportunity to present my book and assessment kits in Colorado, Los Angeles, and Hawaii AER conferences.

I taught in Colorado for a few years before returning to Texas to continue in the field of both Visual Impairment and Orientation and Mobility. I enjoyed being a mentor for new TVIs and COMS for several years in both fields, while working in the Fort Worth area. For about ten years or so, I also extremely enjoyed being a facilitator at Region 11 Education Service Center for the braille course taught through interactive television by SFASU. After 30-something years of teaching in school districts, rehab centers, and for TCB (before it became DARS), I have now launched out on a new adventure as full time faculty in VI and O&M at SFASU. What a challenge! What an honor! What a responsibility!

Personal Info and Interests

My little poodle, Poppy Joy, and I are enjoying our new home in Nacogdoches. I'm only 1½ hours from my parents, about 3½ from my youngest daughter, Erica, and most precious grandchildren, Rylan and Liam, still too far away from my oldest daughter and son-in-law, Kara and Jayson, who live in San Diego. I enjoy reading, listening to books on CD especially when traveling, walking, singing, good romance and sci-fi movies, and just sitting on my back porch watching the birds congregating around the birdfeeders. Someday soon, I hope to add that I also am a Yoga enthusiast. Someday soon.

Mrs. Heather Munro TVI/COMS – Program Faculty

Teaching Experience

I initially worked as a contract O&M specialist for the Texas Commission for the Blind in Austin, Texas. From there, I took a full-time COMS job with a school district cooperative in the Houston area for 7 years, then moved to the east Texas area to work with a shared services arrangement as both their teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) and COMS. After our youngest daughter was born (2011), I left that position and began working strictly as an independent contractor, with multiple districts – lots of driving, lots of individual district rules to remember. Calendars, documentation, and note-taking are essential! Then again, that’s the case in every job. In 2012 I began working for SFA as an adjunct instructor, teaching the Low Vision course and working with our “blindfold students” on the street. In the fall of 2014 I joined the Visual Impairment Preparation Program at SFASU as a full-time faculty member. I was elected to serve as Vice Chair of the O&M Division (Division 9) of Texas
Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TAER). In the spring of 2016 I became the Chair of Division 9.

Education

I received my Bachelor’s Degree in Rehabilitation from Stephen F. Austin State University, along with my O&M certification. I later earned my Master’s Degree in Special Education with autism/behavior emphasis, and then even later I became certified as a Teacher of the Visually Impaired. I am currently in a doctoral program at Texas Tech University.

Personal

I am fortunate to be married to someone who “gets” my job and what it’s all about; someone I can “talk shop” with – Mr. Michael Munro. My husband is also a TVI and works here at SFASU as the Director of the Visual Impairment/Orientation Program. We are the very proud parents of two teen boys (Ryan is in college, and Trey will graduate HS in 2018), and two beautiful girls (Vivian Marlowe just started 2nd grade this year, and Iris Jade who just began kindergarten).

Interests

Family – we are very close, are blessed with great kiddos and a large extended family, Church – every time the doors are open (Ryan and I are in the praise band), and Reading – the kids and I are huge readers, the girls are currently going through the Little House book series (with the occasional break for Skippy Jon Jones), and the boys are into all sorts. My favorites are memoirs, particularly relating to vision loss (Slackjaw, Now I See You, and about a dozen others). I do accept recommendations :)

DJ (Donna) Dean – Program Faculty

Teaching Experience/Education

I became interested in the field of special education at the age of 11, because of the differences I saw various special education professionals make in the life of my little brother. I began babysitting children with special needs at age 13, volunteered with my grandmother at the Denton State School (she worked there as Head of Food Service), and volunteered with ARC (now called The Arc, for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities). All of which I continued through my first few years of teaching in Denton ISD. I obtained my Bachelor’s degree in Generic Special Education (grades PK-12) and Elementary Education (grades 1-8) at Texas Woman’s University. I taught three years as an Elementary Special Education Resource teacher in Denton ISD before moving to East Texas. After the move I chose to substitute for approximately two years so I could spend time at home with our new baby girl.
I then took a position as a Special Education Resource teacher at LaPoynor Elementary for two years. I was presented with the opportunity to return to college and acquire a certification and master’s degree in teaching individuals with visual impairments from SFASU. I added my certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist in 2009 through SFASU. I have taught 13 ½ years as a TVI and 6 ½ years as a COMS in the same districts. This last year I was elected *Member at Large* on the TAER board. I will hold this position until the spring of 2017. I absolutely love what I do, and the students, parents and professionals I have worked with over the years. I am excited to join the team of faculty in the VI department at SFASU, and look forward to this new season in my life.

**Personal**

I have been married to my husband Reese since 1997. We have three children (two of which are young adults, and one still at home), three grandchildren and one on the way (two of which live with us). I am thrilled to be a part of my daughter’s softball team(s), keeping the books and being their other “mom”. I enjoy church, family, Major League Baseball (Go Rangers!), reading, movies (NOT horror), scrapbooking, and running sound/media for churches and my husband. I love hot tea, local honey (addicted), dark chocolate, and fresh fruit. Our property has many blueberry bushes…YEAH! Plans are currently in the works for mission trips to Belize and Mexico.

**Ms. Jennifer Perry  **COMS CVRT

I completed my formal training in blind rehabilitation at Western Michigan University in Orientation and Mobility and Vision Rehabilitation Therapy. After finishing my internship at Hines VA in Chicago working with adults, I took my first position in Albuquerque working with severely multiply impaired and blind children. This led to a position in El Paso working in traditional educational settings and some special education classrooms for K-12. This led to a position in Indiana where I combined skill sets for multiple populations and worked with babies, pre-school, and in traditional school settings K-12, in addition to working with adults. Finally, I took my instructional versatility to Washington DC, Baltimore, and the surrounding counties of Maryland to work with Veterans at the VA hospital as well as civilians of all age ranges and of all abilities before accepting the offer to be your professor at SFA.

Over the years I served on public transportation boards and transportation committees, gave in-services, and provided instruction to staff at nursing homes, hospitals, optometrist and ophthalmologist offices, and even in local jails and prisons – anywhere that staff needed assistance with adjusting to having a visually impaired person in their classroom or facility. I ran support groups for families as well as individuals, I am certified in both VRT and OM,
and I am a strong proponent of the use of Braille as well as technology for instruction.

Most recently as of 2017, I have entered into a doctoral program at SFA for Educational Leadership with anticipated graduation in 2021. I hope to use the position to expand awareness of the needs and considerations of people who are blind and visually impaired at local, state, and federal levels.

**Ms. Donna Wood – Program Specialist**

Donna is our Program Specialist. We are tremendously lucky to have her as an important part of our team. Without Donna, things in the VIP would grind to a halt pretty quickly. Donna’s efficiency and support enables the entire faculty to do much more than would ever be possible without her. Here is her personal message:

I have been Program Specialist for the Department of Human Services since 1992. I attended Nacogdoches public schools, Massey Business College and Stephen F. Austin State University. Previous employment includes: Secretary for the Nacogdoches Adult Probation Department from 1978 - 1986; Administrative Assistant for the Samaritan Counseling Center of East Texas, Inc., from 1986 - 1991. My ambition/goal is to continue my work with the Department of Human Services. The work is very fulfilling, the staff is wonderful, and it is so rewarding to be able to assist the students enrolled in our program.

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**Program Mission Statements**

**Visual Impairment**
It is the mission of the Visual Impairment Preparation Program (VIP) to train Teachers of students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) and Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) who are practically and pragmatically prepared to meet the needs of persons with visual impairments across the state of Texas and in the nation as a whole. We believe that completers from our program should be equipped to effectively deliver instructional services that provide opportunities for students and clients with visual impairments to be more independent, lead more meaningful lives, and participate to a greater extent in society at large. In order to meet these goals, we believe that it is our responsibility to mentor and educate our graduates in the importance of exhibiting caring and compassionate approaches to instruction and positive beliefs about the worth of all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation or level of disability.

**Orientation & Mobility**
It is the mission of the SFASU Orientation and Mobility program to train candidates to become Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) who are practically and pragmatically prepared to meet the needs of persons with visual impairments across the state of Texas and across the nation as a
whole. Through their training in our program, we believe graduates are prepared to successfully complete the ACVREP national O&M certification examination. We believe graduates from our program are trained to effectively deliver services which provide opportunities for students and clients who are blind or visually impaired to be more independent, lead lives to their fullest potential, and participate to a greater extent in society at large. In order to meet these goals, we believe it is our responsibility to mentor and educate our students to recognize and remove environmental and societal barriers, raise expectations, provide solutions, and exhibit compassionate approaches to teaching O&M skills and techniques, valuing the worth of all individuals regardless of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, or level of disability.

Since 1972, our SFASU Orientation and Mobility (O&M) program has been training candidates to work with persons who are blind or visually impaired. SFASU is proud to offer the only undergraduate O&M training program in the United States.

**General Program Description**

The VIP provides training alternatives which lead to two certificates and/or a Master of Education in Special Education with a concentration in visual impairment or orientation and mobility. Each of the tracks shares common courses and common faculty. Students may pursue a certificate in Orientation and Mobility at the Graduate or Undergraduate level. Applicants who already have a valid teaching credential in the state of Texas are eligible to work toward a TVI. Once the student has completed one of the certificate programs (either O&M or TVI) they are eligible to begin training in the master’s program. Basic requirements for the programs are as follows:

**Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist Program (COMS)**

**Undergraduate Level**

Undergraduates seeking to work as COMS will graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in Rehabilitation, with an emphasis in Orientation and Mobility. Coursework for the O&M Training Program includes 18 hours of general rehabilitation core courses and 33 hours of additional O&M courses. Courses include two practicums and two 3 - credit hour internships. This affords our students with an excellent opportunity to work in a rehabilitation setting, with either children or adults who are blind or have visual impairments, and to use the skills acquired in class. In order to be certified, students must pass the ACVREP national exam for certification in O&M. Graduates from the O&M Training Program work for state rehabilitation agencies, such as The Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), Non-profit agencies, like the Lighthouses for the Blind, as well as schools for the blind and school districts throughout the state of Texas and elsewhere in the United States.
Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist Program (COMS)  
Graduate Level

Students already holding at least an undergraduate degree become eligible for O&M Certification by taking 33 credit hours of prescribed courses. Students who are certified as a teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) can be eligible to add O&M certification by taking 21 credit hours. In order to be certified, students must pass the ACVREP national exam for certification in O&M. Upon successful completion of all requirements for the COMS, graduates will be eligible to work with persons who have visual impairments of any age in either rehabilitation or school settings.

Master of Education with Emphasis in  
Orientation and Mobility

Students complete the 33 hours of coursework as listed above, as well as 15 additional hours of coursework, which includes a research project (6-credit hours). Certain practicum and internship hours (12) are required for certification, but they do not count toward M.Ed. Comprehensive Exams. These must be successfully completed during the final semester.

Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI)

In order to participate in the TVI program, students must already hold a valid State of Texas teacher’s certificate. The TVI training program typically covers a 12-month period and requires 21 semester hours. Students who are working toward the TVI certificate must also pass two Texas Examinations of Educator Standards™ (TExES™) tests – one in braille (TExES™183) and one in visual impairment (TExES™182). Completers of the TVI program are eligible to work with students 0-22 years old.

Master of Education in Special Education with Emphasis in  
Visual Impairment

The M.Ed. requires a total of 36 hours. In most cases, the total hours will include some of the hours required for obtaining a certificate in either one or both of the programs offered in the VIP Program. Students on the track to a master’s degree are required to complete 30 hours of coursework, followed by completion of a 6-hour independent research project, where they will be working one-on-one with a faculty supervisor. In addition, master’s students are required to successfully complete Comprehensive Exams during their final semester.

Employment Demand for Vision Professionals

The demand for vision professionals has always been high in the state of Texas. The problem that most school districts have had is that certified TVIs and O&Ms just weren’t available. Today, more and more opportunities are open
for VI professionals. Dr. K.C. Dignan was the former Director of Personnel Preparation at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. One of her roles is to gather data regarding job availability. The following are a few of the statistics that she has provided:

**Projected 3-Year Attrition**

In 2014, the VI consultants projected that 119 VI professionals will leave the field within the next 3 years. This means an estimated 12% of existing VI professionals will be retiring or moving to another profession or state prior to 2017. The number of professions who exited the field was 48% more than projected in 2012. This gap appears to be growing. This data specifically addresses those who will leave the field, not move from school employment to private contractual work.

At the same time, historical data indicates that the population of students with visual impairments will increase by 2.4% per year over the next 3 years or by 668 more students by 2017. Using a standard caseload formula, an additional 79 FTEs with VI/O&M certification will be needed statewide to meet the growth. This is in addition to replacing the retiring VI professionals. If the current ratio of full-time to part-time individuals is applied, the number of individuals needed to result in 79 FTEs is likely to be closer to 97 certified individuals. As a result, we can project that Texas will need at least 228 individuals with VI/O&M certification in the next 3 years to replace those who are likely to leave and respond to anticipated growth.

Since 2001, when the first data was collected, the percentage of students who receive O&M services has grown by approximately 1.3% per year. The 2014 census indicated that 36% receive O&M. Texas Education Code 30.002 implemented in 2013 now requires that all students identified with a visual impairment receive an Orientation and Mobility evaluation by a Certified O&M Specialist (COMS).

Data from 2014 showed that only 55% of current students received an O&M assessment. Applying a standard caseload formula this means an additional 34-47 full time COMS are necessary to meet the O&M needs of newly identified students. The impact of the 2013 law is not yet known. Based solely on the 2013 legislation, the need for COMS should increase significantly due to evaluation of all students.

Dr. Dignan concludes her analysis by providing the following data:

**VI Teachers**

In January 2014 there were 9,795 students in Texas identified on the Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments. Currently there are 692.5 FTE VI teachers. Based on projections, Texas is lacking between 95 (over the next 1-2 years) and 162 (over 2-3 years) FTE VI teachers.

This does not fully accommodate for the number of individuals needed. As of
2014, 22% of the VI teacher workforce is employed as a VI teacher on a part-time basis and approximately 10% are dually certified. To quote Dr. Dignan, “Texas has a clear and ongoing need for VI professionals.”

O&M Specialists
Determining the need based on a comparison of the data for orientation and mobility services is more complicated. According to the American Foundation for the Blind, a caseload of 8-12 students is recommended for O&M specialists. However, not all students need O&M services each year.

According to the Texas Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments, 3,285 students were receiving O&M services in January of 2014 (a 95% increase from 2001) (Dignan, 2014). With 210.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) O&M specialists, Texas is lacking between 90 and 150 FTE O&M specialists. However, it must be noted that given the shortage cited above, and that only 51% have even been evaluated by an O&M specialist, it is likely that not all students who could benefit from O&M are receiving instruction. Also, the impact of part-time O&M specialists is more significant than for VI teachers. Approximately 45% of the O&M specialists in Texas provide services on a part-time basis. These individuals may be dually certified or private contractors working with districts and other agencies or organizations. Therefore, even the average estimated need for 106 O&M specialists should be considered very conservative. The number of individuals needed to fill 106 FTE positions would be much higher; at least 157 O&M specialists. Based on current ratios, the number of individuals needed is closer to 139 full- and part-time O&M specialists. Currently, Texas is able to prepare approximately 20 O&M specialists a year. Clearly, not only is the need great, but the capacity to meet the need is severely limited. Dignan, KC (2014) 2009 Summary of Need for VI Professionals in Texas. Retrieved from tsbvi.edu

Clearly there is a critical need for VI professionals, both TVIs and COMS. In fact, most of the professionals that we train already have confirmed positions before they begin our program. If you are interested in serving as a VI professional, we strongly suggest that you contact your Education Service Center Visual Impairment Specialist and discuss positions which may be available to you.

What it means to be a Vision Professional

Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI)

If you’re thinking of pursuing a career in working with students who have visual impairments, you might like to know a little more about the roles and responsibilities of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI). Unfortunately, students often have a skewed notion of this profession. They’ve seen plays or movies about persons who have visual impairments, and they assume that most of us are like Helen Keller’s teacher, Ann Sullivan. Of course,
that's not an accurate look at the types of jobs the TVI performs. The duties we DO perform, however, have been outlined very comprehensively in a position paper developed by our professional organization, the Council for Exceptional Children Division on Visual Impairment. The paper was actually written by two leaders in the field of visual impairment, Dr. Susan Spungin and Dr. Kay Ferrell.

**The Role and Function of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments**
*A Position Paper of the Division on Visual Impairments*
*Council of Exceptional Children*
*2007*
*Susan Jay Spungin and Kay Alicyn Ferrell*

Infants, children, and youth with visual impairments receive special education and related services in a variety of settings that bring them into contact with a range of personnel. A critical member of this team of professionals is the teacher of students with visual impairments (TSVI), whose specialized training and experience establish him or her as the individual best qualified to address the unique learning needs created by a visual impairment. Because of recent legislation mandating highly qualified general and special education teachers, however, there is often confusion about the role, functions, and responsibilities of the TSVI.

The TSVI is a special educator trained and certified to provide direct instruction, accommodations, and modifications that provide access to the general curriculum for children who are blind or visually impaired. TSVIs are employed in the full continuum of placement options, serving as part of the team providing free appropriate public education to infants, children, and youth with visual impairments in local education agencies, regional collaboratives, and specialized schools. Their role ranges from teacher-consultant, to specialized skills instructor, to classroom teacher. TSVIs work with a wide range of students with a wide range of abilities (Correa-Torres & Howell, 2004; Spungin, 1984; Spungin & Taylor, 1986; Suvak, 2003; Wolfe et al., 2002). They teach the alternative skills that facilitate access to general education, and they teach the expanded core curriculum that supports students in and allows them to benefit from the general curriculum (Hatlen, 1996). In some cases, the TSVI is the primary educator working with the infant, child, or youth with a visual impairment, while at other times the TSVI acts as a consultant to those providing instruction. The roles and responsibilities of the TSVI are unique and varied and require a broad base of professional knowledge and the ability to respond with flexibility to changing conditions (Correa-Torres & Howell).

Parents and educators overwhelmingly report that administrators are not well-informed about appropriate services for students with low-incidence disabilities (Correa-Torres & Howell, 2004; Ferrell & Correa, 2004; Rude et al., 2005). Where students with visual impairment are concerned, administrators often must be reminded that:

- The primary issue when educating students with visual impairments is access to the visual environment and opportunities to learn. Quite simply, students with visual impairments learn differently.
• The role of the TSVI varies from child to child and school to school, depending on individual student needs, general educator requests, school resources, and curriculum content.
• Responsibilities and time commitments are variable and sometimes unpredictable, because they are adjusted according to student and team needs at any given point in time.
• Each addition to the caseload increases time commitments exponentially.
• Paraprofessionals are helpful additions to the educational team, but they do not supplant TSVIs.
• Education is more than academic skill – it is a whole range of behaviors that prepare students for life after school. What typical students learn incidentally cannot be assumed to occur for students with visual impairments unless deliberately taught. (Ferrell, 2004)

Recommendations

Assessment and Evaluation

Visual impairment occurs so infrequently in the school-age population (Adams, Hendershot, & Marano, 1999; Jones & Collins, 1966; Wenger, Kaye, & LaPlante, 1996) that few school psychologists are able to obtain adequate experience evaluating students with this disability. TSVIs are trained not only to conduct formal and informal assessments, but to assist other educational professionals in understanding and interpreting testing results. TSVIs therefore:

1. Participate in the multidisciplinary assessment of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments and assume the primary responsibility to:
   a. Conduct and interpret functional vision assessments.
   b. Obtain and interpret all ophthalmological, optometric, and functional vision reports and explain the implications of these reports for both distance and near vision in educational and home environments, to families, classroom teachers, and other team members.
   c. Modify existing assessment measures and procedures and develop new informal instruments as needed to assess and evaluate disability-specific skills (National Board of Professional Teaching Standards, NBPTS, 2001).
   d. Conduct and interpret communication skills and learning media assessments in reading, writing, and listening, as well as assessments that identify the most appropriate technology configurations for individual students.
   e. Recommend and collaborate in appropriate specialized evaluations as needed, including clinical low vision, orientation and mobility, physical therapy, occupational therapy, behavioral, physical education, speech and language, augmentative communication, aptitude, and vocational skills assessments.
   f. Identify and assist in making individualized accommodations for state- and district-wide performance assessments;
   g. Assist families to assess their own strengths and needs regarding their children’s visual, academic, functional, and social-emotional development.
2. Participate in multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams that develop Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Individual Transition Plans (ITPs), and other planning documents, for infants, children, and youth with visual impairments, and assume the primary responsibility to:
   a. Interpret instructional implications of evaluation results (Riley, 2000).
   b. Contribute to statements of present levels of performance by discussing how performance is affected by the visual impairment (IDEA, 2004, § 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(I)(aa)) and by providing information on students’ learning styles, utilization of visual information, tactual abilities, and other strengths unique to infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.
   c. Inform other members of the educational team about how prescribed medications may impact visual performance (Council for Exceptional Children, CEC, 2003).
   d. Identify goals and objectives in academic areas that require alternative approaches because of the student’s visual impairment.
   e. Identify goals and objectives in areas of the expanded core curriculum.
   f. Identify instructional methods and materials for meeting goals and objectives.
   g. Recommend appropriate service delivery options, including placement, physical education and related services, specialized equipment, modifications to testing procedures, and time frames for implementation.

3. Recommend as early as possible appropriate reading and writing media for the child with visual impairments. TSVIs base such recommendations on the specific needs of individual students, as demonstrated by a thorough communication skills and/or learning media assessment that considers such factors as reading distance, reading rates and accuracy, portability of reading skills, visual fatigue, and tactual sensitivity (Spungin, 1996). IDEA (2004) requires the IEP team to specifically consider braille instruction for each student (§ 614(d)(3)(B)(iii)).

**Educational and Instructional Strategies: Learning Environment**

While the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandates that regular education teachers provide instruction to all students (§ 662(a)(4)), including those with special learning needs, the TSVI acts as the primary mediator of the learning environment for children with visual impairments (Davidson & Simmons, 1984; Simmons & Davidson, 1984). The TSVI implements various strategies to facilitate students’ assimilation into the classroom, school, community and work environment (NBPTS, 2001). In order to accomplish this, the TSVI takes steps to:

1. Assure that the student has all educational materials in the appropriate format, including textbooks, workbooks, handouts, periodicals, multimedia materials, and teacher-prepared supplements.
2. Assure that the student is trained in the use of, and has available, all optical, non-optical, and electronic technology devices necessary for learning.
3. Instruct the student in developmental skills, academic strategies, and other activities that require modification, adaptation, or reinforcement as a direct result of the visual impairment.

4. Recommend seating and other environmental modifications that maximize students’ utilization of visual information and facilitate movement of the student with visual impairments within the class.

5. Assure that the educator providing direct instruction fully understands the unique learning needs of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.

6. Suggest accommodations needed for assignments or testing procedures.

7. Collaborate with teachers and other professionals regarding methods for including students with visual impairments in classroom activities, by promoting, modeling, and demonstrating the use of concrete, active, and structured learning experiences (NBPTS, 2001) that do not leave learning to chance.

8. Act as a catalyst to develop an understanding of visual impairment by classmates and peers without disabilities.

9. Assist family members to understand the impact of visual impairment on family systems and the possible effects on children’s self-esteem (CEC, 2003).

Educational and Instructional Strategies: Accessing the General Curriculum

Students with visual impairments have the same curriculum needs as all children, but their visual impairment itself often imposes restrictions on their ability to access curriculum when presented in the typical method of learning and teaching by the classroom teacher. Students with visual impairments must be taught the necessary skills to obtain access to information (Riley, 2000), particularly in the high-stakes environment of a standards-based curriculum. The TSVI is responsible for providing direct or collaborative instruction in the following areas that are directly related to classroom instruction and to students’ access to the curriculum:

**Literacy (braille, print, aural, electronic).** Literacy includes alphabeticics, fluency, comprehension, computer technology, and writing skills, in either braille or print, according to the student’s needs and as specified in the IEP. For the braille student, these skills usually require introduction to the mechanical aspects of reading and writing, including spatial orientation to the page and use of the brailletwriter, slate and stylus, and electronic devices, and include application and reinforcement of decoding, comprehension, encoding, writing, and composition strategies taught by the classroom teacher. “For a child to be proficient in braille, systematic and regular instruction is essential” (Riley, 2000, p. 36589).

Computer technology is one of the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel (2000). The TSVI is responsible for collaborating with the teacher of computer technology and the classroom teacher to assist the student with visual impairments to use computers. The TSVI must remain current with the variety and range of adaptive technology available (such as hardware and software applications that provide screen access through speech or magnification; refreshable braille displays, PDAs, embossers, scanners, printers, braille translation software, etc.), in order to match technology to individual student characteristics.
When print is the medium indicated for a particular student, the TSVI teaches the utilization of print adaptations (e.g., font size, acetate sheets, print color, background color, contrast, reading stands, magnifiers, and telescopes) and learning devices (e.g., tape recorders, signature guides) that allow students to participate independently in regular classroom activities.

Instruction to develop listening skills is important to students with visual impairments as a foundation for aural learning and reading, as well as for mobility clues, social conversation, and interpretation of a variety of auditory signals received from the environment. Listening becomes particularly important in the secondary grades, when reading assignments increase dramatically in length. TSVIs are familiar with a variety of devices that can convert text to speech and that allow students to control the speed of recorded and electronic speech. Listening skills are sequentially and deliberately expanded during the school years by TSVI instruction.

For most students with visual impairments, keyboarding may be the major means of written communication between the child and his or her peers, family members, and teachers. Touch-typing and keyboarding skills are carefully and thoroughly taught by the TSVI as soon as the student has sufficient fine motor skills. For students with low vision, certain aspects of both manuscript and cursive handwriting (e.g., size, configuration, place-keeping, proofreading, reading aloud) are the responsibility of the TSVI. The TSVI teaches signature writing and additional handwriting skills that may be needed by students who are blind.

TSVIs also perform a variety of tasks that facilitate students’ integration into classroom routines by transcribing, proofreading, and interlining brailled assignments to facilitate review by classroom teachers, as well as producing brailled materials for students to use in classroom activities (CEC, 2003). The TSVI also provides instruction in other expressions of literacy, such as braille music, computer braille, and foreign language braille codes.

Mathematics. Mathematics skills emerge as a visual skill and develop into advanced graphical and spatial relationships. Children with visual impairments thus need specific instruction, including the abacus, talking calculator, concrete materials, and tactile graphics, to understand and reproduce these relationships in a non-visual format.

Tactual Skills and Tactile Graphics. The development of tactual skills is not confined to the reading of braille. The TSVI provides instruction in tactual skills in a variety of environments and functional applications, assisting children with visual impairments from infancy to use their fingers and hands in order to explore, identify, discriminate, and appreciate all tangible materials in the environment. TSVIs are skilled in describing photographs and drawings to convey meaning and in creating tactile representations of graphical images, including maps, to assure access to the same information available to classmates (NBPTS, 2001).

Organization and Study Skills. Skimming braille or print materials, outlining in braille or large print, searching for significant information in recorded materials, and other note taking, report-writing, and reference methods are fundamental study skills which require instruction by the TSVI because of the unfamiliarity of the media to most classroom teachers.

Second Language Learners. TSVIs also support the instruction of children with visual impairments who are learning a second language (Milian & Pearson, 2005; NBPTS, 2001). Depending on the approach to bilingual instruction, this
support includes at least preparation of materials in both English braille and in the student’s native language. The second language learner has the same educational needs as all children with visual impairments, and the TSVI contributes to the educational team in much the same way.

**Educational and Instructional Strategies: Teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum**

The TSVI is also responsible for a number of areas that support student access to the general curriculum. Often referred to as the expanded core curriculum (Hatlen, 1996), these strategies facilitate students’ participation in a variety of educational activities by developing skills acquired incidentally by children without visual impairments.

**Social Interaction Skills.** Reduced vision often interferes with human interaction. Not only is the amount of shared experience reduced, but the inability to use facial expressions and other forms of non-verbal communication to both receive and convey information can lead to misperceptions and misunderstandings. Some research indicates that children with visual impairments have difficulties initiating interactions with peers and spend much of the school day in silence (Erwin, 1991). The TSVI creates opportunities for children with visual impairments to interact with others and instructs students in appropriate behaviors and conversations (Sacks, Lueck, Corn, & Erin, 2005).

**Orientation and Mobility.** Most of the orientation and mobility needs of students with visual impairments are the responsibility of the certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS). The responsibilities of and the relationship between the TSVI and COMS can differ according to student age, so responsibilities are collaboratively defined through the IEP. For example, the TSVI may assume responsibility for assuring that students develop in sensory motor, gross, and fine motor domains, while the orientation and mobility specialist assumes responsibility for instruction in environmental orientation and travel within the community. Children with visual impairments often must be taught to explore and move around in space and to be aware of the environment around them. They must learn to use tactual, auditory, and olfactory cues to identify their position in space and the relative position of other persons and objects around them. When working collaboratively, TSVIs can reinforce pre-cane, travel, and orientation skills introduced and monitored by the COMS (Wolffe et al., 2002). In some cases, the TSVI is dually certified both as a teacher and an orientation and mobility specialist.

**Communication Development.** Infants, children, and youth with visual impairments may experience difficulties in language acquisition and application. TSVIs are knowledgeable about the ways in which a visual impairment can affect receptive and expressive communication and employ specific strategies to encourage use of functional, reality-based language. In addition, TSVIs collaborate with other team members to instruct students with multiple disabilities in the use of manual communication, communication boards, and other augmentative communication techniques. Visual impairments impose restrictions on the use of these procedures, and the TSVI helps to devise alternative methods to make them accessible to infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.

**Motor Development.** The TSVI is knowledgeable about areas of motor development for infants, children, and youth with visual impairments that may be
affected by visual impairment (for example, body image, body in space concepts, visual motor coordination, abnormal reflex patterns, locomotion, balance, rotation, weight transfer, gait, and posture). The TSVI works collaboratively with early interventionists, physical education teachers, COMS, and occupational or physical therapists to develop and enhance motor skills in infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.

**Concept Development.** The TSVI shares with other professionals the responsibility for the development of basic concepts, which are often at risk without vision to mediate and integrate other sensory information. Future learning is dependent upon the student’s thorough understanding of basic spatial, environmental, social, and mathematical concepts, which lead to categorization, symbolization, and higher level thinking skills. The TSVI, in collaboration with the COMS, introduces these concepts systematically and sequentially within the context of other instruction.

**Vision Utilization.** For the student with low vision, the utilization of visual information contributes to achievement in every skill area: academic, psychomotor, self-help, vocational, motor, and social skills. The TSVI provides “regular and intensive intervention” (Riley, 2000, p. 36589) to assist children with visual impairments to use and interpret visual information under a variety of conditions.

**Activities of Daily Living.** Thorough knowledge of the activities and techniques of daily living and personal management skills is needed to create independence so that students with visual impairments may integrate more easily into culture and society. TSVIs share responsibility with family members and other professionals for instruction in such areas as personal hygiene, eating habits, manners, dressing, grooming, verbal and nonverbal communications, and developing a positive self-image.

**Physical Education and Sports.** TSVIs assist physical education teachers in integrating the child with visual impairments into the regular physical education curriculum by suggesting strategies for participation in team and individual sports. Visual impairments often unnecessarily restrict movement and may result in poor physical fitness (Oh, Ozturk, & Kozub, 2004), unless systematic efforts are made to include children with visual impairments in physical education and recreational activities (Tutt & Brasher, 2006). Children with visual impairments who are included in regular physical education classes are more likely to participate in organized sports activities as adults (Rizzo et al., 2003).

**Human Sexuality.** TSVIs, parents and others share the responsibility for gradual, sequential instruction in human sexuality for students with visual impairments. Because these programs assume that much information has previously been attained visually, the student with visual impairments may need a specific hands-on curriculum taught by appropriate, well-prepared professionals.

**Career Education.** Career education curricula that are developed for children without visual impairments may need supplementary explanation and instruction from a TSVI. This instruction may include field trips into the community to explore work opportunities and job requirements, interviews with adults with visual impairments about their various occupations, and assessment of individual abilities. While career education is often neglected (see Wolffe et al., 2002), it is one area that directly relates to the future employability of individuals with visual impairment.
Vocational Counseling and Training. Vocational counseling and transition to vocational opportunities are integral parts of programs designed for students with visual impairments. The TSVI, in conjunction with the vocational counselor or teacher, involves students with visual impairments and their parents in this counseling process. The TSVI assists in the assessment of vocational strengths and weaknesses and facilitates students’ participation in work-study, vocational training, and other appropriate experiences.

Leisure and Recreation. The TSVI, parents, and community agencies share a responsibility to expose the student to, and provide learning opportunities in, a wide variety of leisure time activities that have carry-over value to adult life.

Transition. The TSVI assists in the smooth transition of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments and their parents from one placement to another, by working with other team members, including parents, to identify appropriate options, preparing new teachers to accept students with visual impairments, and providing ongoing consultation. Such services regularly occur at the transition from early intervention to preschool programs, from preschool to school-age programs, from elementary to secondary programs, and from secondary to post-secondary and adult services, but may also be necessary when a major change in placement occurs (e.g., from regular class to special class, or from residential school to regular class placement), or even in the regular grade level progression within the same educational facility.

Fine Arts. Music, visual arts, performing arts, and dance are common childhood experiences that help to unite members of society through an appreciation of nature, spirituality, and aesthetics. Children with visual impairments are sometimes directed towards music to express their creativity and are often assumed to be unable to participate in other art forms. TSVIs can assist fine arts teachers to include students with visual impairments in class activities by adapting procedures and modifying materials. TSVIs encourage students with visual impairments to express themselves through art, music, and/or dance and help students explore various media, use other senses for expression, and provide braille music when appropriate (NBPTS, 2001).

Reasoning. The ability to reason, especially in the abstract, may require specific instruction from the TSVI. Students may need assistance in the development of thinking, decision-making, and problem solving skills, and in learning to live with occasional frustration and failure.

Guidance and Counseling

TSVIs provide guidance and counseling to infants, children, and youth with visual impairments and their families to:
1. Interpret implications of visual impairment for overall development.
2. Facilitate understanding of society’s attitudes concerning visual impairment and assist students and families in formulating their responses to misconceptions, lowered expectations, and prejudice.
3. Explore similarities and differences in relation to all children.
4. Develop social awareness of self, others, and the community at large.
5. Encourage social interactions with peer groups and adult role models (CEC, 2003).
6. Identify functional, academic, and vocational potential.
7. Encourage home involvement in program objectives.
8. Promote independence and self-advocacy skills in infants, children, and youth.
9. Develop positive evaluations of self-worth by providing opportunities to both achieve and fail (Chang & Schaller, 2002).
10. Plan for adult life by exploring options for college, technical or trade school, job coaching programs, industrial enclaves, and other post-secondary placements, as well as identifying independent living arrangements in the community.
11. Identify other sources for additional guidance and counseling services.

**Administration and Supervision**

The TSVI, depending on the model(s) of service being utilized (specialized school, special class, resource room, itinerant, or teacher consultant) has a variety of administrative roles. In a large program, this may include supervision of other TSVIs, in addition to working with directors of special education, principals, regular classroom teachers, and other educational and related services personnel. Some of the most common activities in this area may include:

1. **Communication with Administrators.** TSVIs keep administrators informed concerning:
   a. Student information (e.g., visual status, grade level, educational needs).
   b. Program goals and activities.
   c. Program evaluation.
   d. Screening and referral procedures.
   e. Relationships between the program for students with visual impairments and regular and special education programs and support services.
   f. Funding requirements for consultation, instruction, salaries, travel time, travel expenses, instructional materials, technology, preparation time, conferences, and benefits.
   g. In-service needs for TSVIs, as well as for other regular and special education personnel.
   h. Staff scheduling requirements, including adequate time for planning, preparation, report writing, travel, direct instruction, team meetings, and staff conferences, as well as the need for flexibility in assignments and instruction that may occur outside the school day and building.
   i. Physical facilities, including design and selection of classroom environments and office space, as well as adequate storage space for instructional materials and equipment.
   j. Student scheduling, including preparation of a master schedule to be given to the supervisor and principal(s) of the building(s) in which students are served.
   k. Equipment needs, particularly in the area of technology, but also including materials and learning devices.

2. **Supervision of Paraeducators.** Many schools utilize paraeducators to supplement the instruction provided by TSVIs (Forster & Holbrook, 2005).
These individuals carry out a variety of roles, as braille transcriber, materials adapter, and sometimes academic tutor. Because these individuals have not received formal training, they may not understand how visual disability affects teaching and learning. It is essential that the TSVI supervise paraeducators assigned to students with visual impairments, particularly in braille reading and writing, mathematics, and other academic content areas.

3. **Record Keeping.** Teachers indicate that paperwork consumes too much valuable instructional time and thus decreases their effectiveness with students (Correa-Torres & Howell, 2004). Nevertheless, TSVIs must:
   a. Maintain records of student assessments, IEPs, IFSPs, ITPs, other planning documents, periodic reviews, progress reports, and signed parental release forms.
   b. Coordinate ordering of textbooks among classroom teachers and instructional materials centers.
   c. Maintain a materials and equipment inventory.
   d. Exchange information about students with visual impairments with appropriate personnel following school district or agency policies regarding confidentiality.
   e. Maintain program-wide student census information for purposes of annual count and eligibility for federal quota funds through the American Printing House for the Blind.
   f. Act as case manager, when and if appropriate.

4. **Case Finding and Student Referral Procedures**
   a. Act as a vision consultant for system-wide vision screening, materials, follow-up and recommendations.
   b. Participate in school districts' annual Child Find programs.
   c. Maintain a referral/communication system with nurses and other school staff.

5. **Services Development**
   a. Coordinate ancillary groups and individuals, such as para-educators, transcribers, recordists, readers for students with visual impairments, counselors, COMS, academic tutors, and rehabilitation teachers.
   b. Assist in the initiation of new services as well as coordinating existing ones to bring the varied and necessary related services to the educational program.
   c. Maintain on-going contact with parents to facilitate understanding of their children’s abilities, progress, future goals, and available community resources.
   d. Attend professional meetings (in and out of the district) concerned with the education of students with visual impairments.
   e. Pursue new developments in the education of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.
   f. Prepare grants for curriculum expansion and acquisition of materials and equipment.

**School Community Relations**

School and community involvement requires the TSVI to be prepared to promote the program to school personnel, boards of education, and other groups
within the community. Includes acting as a liaison for the program for students with visual impairments with:

1. Parents and families (including extended family members) demonstrating cultural competence with individuals from diverse backgrounds.
2. Private and public agencies and schools, including those serving individuals with visual impairments.
3. Medical specialists and hospitals, particularly neonatal intensive care units and low vision clinics.
4. State department of education personnel (particularly the state consultant for visual impairment) and instructional materials centers.
5. Related services personnel.
6. Early interventionists.
7. Recreation resources.
8. Transition and rehabilitation specialists.
9. Parent and advocacy groups.
11. Child study teams.
12. Volunteer groups (including those producing braille).
13. Other public and private resources within the community.

The role of the TSVI is multifaceted and requires recognition by administrators that responsibilities and time commitments are unpredictable and increases exponentially with each addition to the caseload. The amount of instruction and consultation required varies according to individual student needs and may even change for an individual student from one week to the next. Both administrators and teachers must approach their roles with flexibility and creativity in order to meet the dynamic, complex needs of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments and their families within a rapidly changing service delivery system.

**Position**

It is the position of the Division on Visual Impairments of the Council for Exceptional Children that a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for infants, children, and youths who are blind or have low vision, including those with multiple disabilities, requires the special education services of a teacher of students with visual impairments, regardless of the severity of the visual impairment or the presence of additional disabilities. The TSVI participates in the provision of FAPE by taking responsibility for the functions outlined above.

The above article with the full references are available at:

http://community.cec.sped.org/dvi/resourcesportal/positionpapers


**Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS)**

The Orientation and Mobility Division of the primary professional organization in
Visual Impairment, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) has developed the standards for the roles and responsibilities of COMS. The most important mission of the O&M program is to educate students to fulfill these important roles.

**Orientation and Mobility Specialist Roles, Responsibilities, and Qualifications**

Approved by O&M Division membership through mail ballot Spring 2004 (Approval percentage: 99%)

This paper sets out to briefly summarize the roles and responsibilities of orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists that are unique among the professionals who provide services to children, adults, and older persons who are blind or visually impaired. The complete listing of the competencies required of O&M specialists is available from the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP) and can be obtained by requesting the document entitled, the Academic and Clinical Competencies for O&M Specialists. A full description of the roles and responsibilities of professionals who provide O&M services, also available from ACVREP as well as the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER), is set forth in the document, A Professional Standard for the Practice of Orientation and Mobility.

Role and responsibilities: The ultimate goal of O&M service is for people who are blind or visually impaired to acquire the skills needed to move about their daily environments safely, as independently as possible, and with purpose. To do this, O&M specialists provide children and adults who are blind or visually impaired with the skills needed to establish and maintain orientation within an environment and move through it safely and efficiently. In addition to developing skills and techniques for safe and purposeful movement, the O&M specialist provides the services necessary to use these skills for carrying out activities in the environments that people use daily, including home, school, work, and community settings.

This is accomplished by interventions that develop skills and techniques to:

- gain information about the environment, and their movement through it, with their remaining senses including kinesthetic, proprioceptive, auditory (including localizing, echolocation, and use of sound shadows), visual, tactile, haptic, vestibular and olfactory senses;
- reliably negotiate obstacles, drop-offs and other hazards in the path of travel through the correct use of the human guide technique, indoor and outdoor self-protective techniques, cane techniques, and effective use of visual, auditory, and other sensory information.
- establish orientation to an environment, plan movement through the environment to reach desired destinations, and maintain orientation while moving through environments.
- understand concepts of the body and its position, movements and direction, and of the environment, including the relationships between objects and within spatial systems (particularly for those whose visually impairment is
congenital);
• problem-solve, reorient when lost, procure assistance, and deal with the public;
• negotiate complex indoor and outdoor environments that include streets and intersections, commercial retail settings, and public transit vehicles and facilities.

Essential responsibilities unique to the O&M specialist include:
• evaluating present and future travel needs, current orientation and travel abilities, and goals;
• evaluating environments for travel demands;
• developing goals and objectives for O&M service;
• providing intervention and experiences for independent movement in daily environments at home, school, work, and in the community, including, as appropriate, mass transportation.

Qualifications: Academic knowledge and competencies required to provide orientation and mobility services:
• Medical aspects of visual impairments and their effects on visual functioning;
• Sensory motor functioning including the development, use, and assessment of sensory systems and motor skills for using indoor and outdoor O&M skills and techniques in a range of environments;
• Psycho-social aspects of blindness and visual impairments, including adjustment processes which may accompany visual impairment and concomitant disabilities;
• Human growth and development over the lifespan, including how they are affected by visual impairments, and interventions that can facilitate growth and development of visually impaired children and adults in relation to their movement and orientation;
• Concept development of people who are visually impaired;
• Multiple disabilities of visually impaired children and adults and implications for orientation and mobility;
• Systems of orientation and mobility including the long cane and adapted canes and mobility devices, electronic travel aids, dog guides, and optical and non-optical devices as well as the use of ambulatory aids by people who are visually impaired;
• Orientation and mobility skills and techniques including guide techniques; protective and orientation techniques; techniques for using canes and adaptive devices; use of landmarks, clues and cues, and search patterns; soliciting and declining assistance; analysis of intersections and traffic patterns; street-crossing techniques; and use of public transportation;
• Instructional methods, strategies and assessment of orientation and mobility;
• Philosophy of orientation and mobility including code of ethics, certification standards, and empowerment and advocacy issues;
• Professional information, including sources of current literature, research, resources and professional organizations, and environmental accessibility standards;
• Development, administration and supervision of O&M programs.

Clinical practice competencies required to provide orientation and mobility service:
The clinical O&M competencies address the skills that O&M specialists are required to demonstrate for the development of the O&M skills and techniques. The clinical competencies that are unique to the practice of O&M fall into the following categories:
• evaluate and maximize the use of functional vision in travel environments;
• evaluate and maximize the use of auditory, kinesthetic, tactual, and other sensory information;
• modify or adapt instruction in situations that affect O&M lessons such as adverse weather, noise, emotional upset, fatigue, etc.;
• maintain an appropriate distance between student and O&M specialist to provide for effective instruction and safety, and provide discretion in the timing of interventions according to students need for support and opportunities to achieve independence;
• teach sidewalk travel including negotiating driveways, and corner detection and negotiation.

### Standards

**Teacher for Students with Visual Impairments (TVI)**

In order to successfully complete the TVI program offered by the VIP Program, students must demonstrate mastery of the following Knowledge and Skill preparation standards, which are essential for an entry level TVI. As such, these standards are essentially the guiding and foundational objectives for our TVI program. These criteria were developed and approved by the Council for Exceptional Children and are the guiding curricular principles of our program.

**Council for Exceptional Children -- Initial Special Education Teachers of Individuals who are Blind/Visually Impaired Specialty Set**

**Initial Preparation Standard 1**

**Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences**¹

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<tr>
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<table>
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¹ The knowledge described in this Standard is applied to skills in other Standards.
| ISCI 1 K4 | ICC 2 K4 | Family systems and the role of families in supporting development |
| ISCI 1 K5 | ICC 3 K4 | Cultural perspectives influencing the relationships among families, schools, and communities as related to instruction |
| ISCI 1 K6 | ICC 3 K3 | Variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures and their effects on relationships among individuals with exceptionalities, family, and schooling |
| ISCI 1 K7 | ICC 2 K3 | Characteristics and effects of the cultural and environmental milieu of the individual with exceptionalities and the family |
| ISCI 1 K8 | ICC 2 K5 | Similarities and differences of individuals with and without exceptionalities |
| ISCI 1 K9 | ICC 2 K7 | Effects of various medications on individuals with exceptionalities |
| ISCI 1 K10 | ICC 3 K1 | Effects an exceptional condition(s) can have on an individual’s life |
| ISCI 1 K11 | ICC 3 K2 | Impact of learners’ academic and social abilities, attitudes, interests, and values on instruction and career development |
| ISCI 1 K12 | ICC 3 K5 | Differing ways of learning of individuals with exceptionalities, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and strategies for addressing these differences |
| ISCI 1 K13 | ICC 6 K1 | Effects of cultural and linguistic differences on growth and development |
| ISCI 1 K14 | ICC 6 K2 | Characteristics of one’s own culture and use of language and the ways in which these can differ from other cultures and uses of languages |
| ISCI 1 K15 | ICC 6 K3 | Ways of behaving and communicating among cultures that can lead to misinterpretation and misunderstanding |

| B&VI1K1 | B&VI2K1 | Development of the human visual system |
| B&VI1K2 | B&VI2K2 | Development of secondary senses when vision is impaired |
| B&VI1K3 | B&VI2K3 | Effects of visual impairment on development |
| B&VI1K4 | B&VI2K4 | Impact of visual impairment on learning and experience |
| B&VI1K5 | B&VI2K5 | Psychosocial aspects of visual impairment and cultural identity |
| B&VI1K6 | B&VI3K1 | Effects of visual impairment on receptive and expressive literacy and communication |

| Skills |
| B&VI1S1 | B&VI2S1 | Select and develop teaching strategies addressing age, visual impairment and visual prognosis |
### Use strategies to address the effects of visual impairment on the family and the reciprocal impact on the individuals' self-esteem

### Select, adapt and use instructional strategies to address the impact of additional exceptionalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation Standard 2</th>
<th>Learning Environments</th>
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<td>B&amp;VI2K2</td>
<td>B&amp;VI5K2</td>
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| **Skills**              |                       |
| ISCI 2 S1               | ICC 5 S1              | Create a safe, equitable, positive, and supportive learning environment in which diversities are valued |
| ISCI 2 S2               | ICC 5 S2              | Identify realistic expectations for personal and social behavior in various settings |
| ISCI 2 S3               | ICC 5 S3              | Identify supports needed for integration into various program placements |
| ISCI 2 S4               | ICC 5 S4              | Design learning environments that encourage active participation in individual and group activities |
| ISCI 2 S5               | ICC 5 S5              | Modify the learning environment to manage behaviors |
| ISCI 2 S6 | ICC 5 S6 | Use performance data and information from all stakeholders to make or suggest modifications in learning environments |
| ISCI 2 S7 | ICC 5 S7 | Establish and maintain rapport with individuals with and without exceptionalities |
| ISCI 2 S8 | ICC 5 S8 | Teach self-advocacy |
| ISCI 2 S9 | ICC 5 S9 | Create an environment that encourages self-advocacy and increased independence |
| ISCI 2 S10 | ICC 5 S10 | Use effective and varied behavior management strategies |
| ISCI 2 S11 | ICC 5 S11 | Use the least intensive behavior management strategy consistent with the needs of the individual with exceptionalities |
| ISCI 2 S12 | ICC 5 S12 | Design and manage daily routines |
| ISCI 2 S13 | ICC 5 S13 | Organize, develop, and sustain learning environments that support positive intra-cultural and intercultural experiences |
| ISCI 2 S14 | ICC 5 S14 | Mediate controversial intercultural issues among individuals with exceptionalities within the learning environment in ways that enhance any culture, group, or person |
| ISCI 2 S15 | ICC 5 S15 | Structure, direct, and support the activities of paraeducators, volunteers, and tutors |
| ISCI 2 S16 | ICC 5 S16 | Use universal precautions |
| B&VI2S1 | B&VI5S1 | Design multi-sensory learning environments that encourage active participation in group and individual activities |
| B&VI2S2 | B&VI5S2 | Provide access to incidental learning experience |

### Preparation Standard 3

#### Curricular Content Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI3K1</td>
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#### Skills

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 3 S2</td>
<td>ICC 7 S7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Sequence, implement, and evaluate learning objectives based on the expanded core curriculum for individuals with visual impairments

Obtain and organize specialized materials to implement instructional goals

**Preparation Standard 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tr>
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<td>ISCI 4 K5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI4K1 B&amp;VI8K1</td>
<td>Specialized terminology used in assessing individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI4K2 B&amp;VI8K2</td>
<td>Alternative assessment techniques for individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVI4K3 B&amp;VI1K4</td>
<td>Basic terminology related to the function of the human visual system.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>ISCI 4 S9</td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI4S1 B&amp;VI8S1</td>
<td>Administer and interpret vision-related assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI4S2 B&amp;VI8S2</td>
<td>Use functional evaluations related to the expanded core curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI4S3 B&amp;VI8S3</td>
<td>Select, adapt, and use assessment information when tests are not validated on individuals with visual impairments</td>
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### Preparation Standard 5
#### Instructional Planning & Strategies

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISCI 5 K1</strong> ICC 7 K5 Roles and responsibilities of the paraeducator related to instruction, intervention, and direct service</td>
<td><strong>ISCI 5 S1</strong> ICC 7 S2 Develop and implement comprehensive, longitudinal individualized programs in collaboration with team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISCI 5 K2</strong> ICC 4 K1 Evidence-based practices validated for specific characteristics of learners and settings</td>
<td><strong>ISCI 5 S2</strong> ICC 7 S3 Involve the individual and family in setting instructional goals and monitoring progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISCI 5 K3</strong> ICC 6 K4 Augmentative and assistive communication strategies</td>
<td><strong>ISCI 5 S3</strong> ICC 7 S4 Use functional assessments to develop intervention plans</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI4K1</strong> B&amp;VI5K1 Strategies for teaching new concepts</td>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K2</strong> B&amp;VI4K2 Strategies for teaching visual efficiency skills and use of print adaptations, optical devices, and non-optical devices</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K3</strong> B&amp;VI4K3 Strategies for teaching organization and study skills</td>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K4</strong> B&amp;VI4K4 Strategies for teaching tactual perceptual skills</td>
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<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K5</strong> B&amp;VI4K5 Strategies for teaching adapted physical and recreational skills</td>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K6</strong> B&amp;VI4K6 Strategies for teaching social, daily living, and functional life skills</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K7</strong> B&amp;VI4K7 Strategies for teaching career-vocational skills and providing vocational counseling</td>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K8</strong> B&amp;VI4K8 Strategies to prepare individuals with progressive eye conditions to achieve a positive transition to alternative skills</td>
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<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K9</strong> B&amp;VI4K9 Techniques for teaching human sexuality</td>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K10</strong> B&amp;VI6K1 Strategies for responding and understanding the implications of non-verbal communication as a substructure of language</td>
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<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K11</strong> B&amp;VI6K2 Strategies for teaching listening and compensatory auditory skills</td>
<td><strong>B&amp;VI5K12</strong> B&amp;VI5K12 Strategies for teaching group and cooperative learning skills</td>
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<thead>
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<th>B&amp;VI4S4  B&amp;VI8S4</th>
<th>Participate in the standardization process for local and state assessments</th>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI4S5  B&amp;VI8S5</td>
<td>Interpret and apply background information and family history related to the individual’s visual status</td>
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<td>ISCI 5 S5</td>
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### Preparation Standard 6  Professional Learning & Ethical Practice

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<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Models, theories, philosophies, and research methods that form the basis for special education practice</th>
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- Access rights to specialized equipment and materials for individuals with visual impairments
- Historical foundations of education of individuals with visual impairments as related to traditional roles of specialized and public schools around the world
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B&amp;V6K3</th>
<th>B&amp;VI1K3</th>
<th>Incidence and prevalence for individuals with visual impairments</th>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;V6K4</td>
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<td>Basic terminology related to the function of the human visual system</td>
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### Skills

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<tr>
<th>ISCI 6 S1</th>
<th>ICC 9 S1</th>
<th>Practice within the CEC Code of Ethics and other standards of the profession</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S2</td>
<td>ICC 9 S2</td>
<td>Uphold high standards of competence and integrity and exercise sound judgment in the practice of the professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S3</td>
<td>ICC 9 S3</td>
<td>Act ethically in advocating for appropriate services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S4</td>
<td>ICC 9 S4</td>
<td>Conduct professional activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S5</td>
<td>ICC 9 S5</td>
<td>Demonstrate commitment to developing the highest education and quality-of-life potential of individuals with exceptionalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S6</td>
<td>ICC 9 S6</td>
<td>Demonstrate sensitivity for the culture, language, religion, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation of individuals</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S7</td>
<td>ICC 9 S7</td>
<td>Practice within one’s skill limits and obtain assistance as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S8</td>
<td>ICC 9 S8</td>
<td>Use verbal, nonverbal, and written language effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S9</td>
<td>ICC 9 S9</td>
<td>Conduct self-evaluation of instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S10</td>
<td>ICC 9 S10</td>
<td>Access information on exceptionalities</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S11</td>
<td>ICC 9 S11</td>
<td>Reflect on one’s practice to improve instruction and guide professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S12</td>
<td>ICC 9 S12</td>
<td>Engage in professional activities that benefit individuals with exceptionalities, their families, and one’s colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S13</td>
<td>ICC 9 S13</td>
<td>Demonstrate commitment to engage in evidence-based practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISCI 6 S14</td>
<td>ICC 1 S1</td>
<td>Articulate personal philosophy of special education</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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<th>B&amp;VI3S1</th>
<th>Use strategies to address the effects of visual impairment on the family and the reciprocal impact on the individuals’ self-esteem</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Select, adapt and use instructional strategies to address the impact of additional exceptionalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V6S3</td>
<td>B&amp;VI1S1</td>
<td>Articulate an instructional philosophy that responds to the specific implications of visual impairment within the general curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V6S4</td>
<td>B&amp;VI1S2</td>
<td>Articulate a professional philosophy that draws on specialized knowledge of visual impairment within the continuum of instructional options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V6S5</td>
<td>B&amp;VI9S1</td>
<td>Participate in the activities of professional organizations in the field of visual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V6S6</td>
<td>B&amp;VI9S2</td>
<td>Advocate for educational policy related to visual impairment</td>
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### Preparation Standard 7: Collaboration

#### Knowledge

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K1</td>
<td>K1</td>
<td>Models and strategies of consultation and collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2</td>
<td>K2</td>
<td>Roles of individuals with exceptionalities, families, and school and community personnel in planning of an individualized program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K3</td>
<td>K3</td>
<td>Concerns of families of individuals with exceptionalities and strategies to help address these concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K4</td>
<td>K4</td>
<td>Culturally responsive factors that promote effective communication and collaboration with individuals with exceptionalities, families, school personnel, and community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI7K1</td>
<td>B&amp;VI10K1</td>
<td>Strategies for assisting families and other team members in transition planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI7K2</td>
<td>B&amp;VI10K2</td>
<td>Services, networks, publications for and organizations of individuals with visual impairments</td>
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#### Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISCI 7</th>
<th>ICC 10</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>S1</td>
<td>Maintain confidential communication about individuals with exceptionalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>S2</td>
<td>Collaborate with families and others in assessment of individuals with exceptionalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>S3</td>
<td>Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>S4</td>
<td>Assist individuals with exceptionalities and their families in becoming active participants in the educational team</td>
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<td>S5</td>
<td>S5</td>
<td>Plan and conduct collaborative conferences with individuals with exceptionalities and their families</td>
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<td>S6</td>
<td>S6</td>
<td>Collaborate with school personnel and community members in integrating individuals with exceptionalities into various settings</td>
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<td>S7</td>
<td>S7</td>
<td>Use group problem-solving skills to develop, implement, and evaluate collaborative activities</td>
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<td>S8</td>
<td>S8</td>
<td>Model techniques and coach others in the use of instructional methods and accommodations</td>
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<td>S9</td>
<td>S9</td>
<td>Communicate with school personnel about the characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptionalities</td>
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<td>S10</td>
<td>S10</td>
<td>Communicate effectively with families of individuals with exceptionalities from diverse backgrounds</td>
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<td>S11</td>
<td>S11</td>
<td>Observe, evaluate, and provide feedback to paraeducators</td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI7S1</td>
<td>B&amp;VI10S1</td>
<td>Structure and supervise the activities of Para educators and others who work with individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI7S2</td>
<td>B&amp;VI10S2</td>
<td>Plan and implement literacy and communication and consultative support within the general curriculum and the expanded core curriculum</td>
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</table>
Orientation and Mobility Body of Knowledge

Orientation and mobility graduates must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a multitude of competencies in O&M. These are listed below in the body of knowledge.

1. **Know Professional Information**
   1.1 Identify and describe basic laws and regulations that affect O&M services, e.g., IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), Rehabilitation laws, ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act), Medicare, etc.
   1.2 Identify and describe resources for consumers to obtain services, support, and/or information related to visual impairment [e.g., dog guide schools, NAPVI (National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments), NFB (National Federation of the Blind), ACB (American Council of the Blind), Department of Veterans Affairs, BVA (Blinded Veterans Association), etc.].
   1.3 Identify and describe professional resources pertinent to the O&M profession, e.g., AFB (American Foundation for the Blind), JVIB (Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness), AER (Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired), ACVREP (Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals), etc.
   1.4 Identify and describe the major historical events and persons responsible for the establishment of the O&M profession as it exists today.

2. **Understanding Relevant Medical Information**
   2.1 Describe the anatomy and physiology of the visual system.
   2.2 Describe common eye conditions/etiologies (macular degeneration, RP, ROP, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, CVI, optic nerve hypoplasia, refractive errors, etc.) of consumers and their implications on visual functioning, and be able to interpret eye reports.
   2.3 Describe the basic anatomy and physiology of the auditory system and be familiar with the components of audiological reports.
   2.4 Describe basic procedures necessary to react appropriately to medical situations (e.g., insulin reaction, seizures, etc.) during O&M lessons.

3. **Understand and Apply Learning Theories to O&M**
   3.1 Describe basic principles of learning theories and their implications for O&M instruction.

4. **Plan and Conduct O&M Assessment**
   4.1 Develop a plan for O&M assessment that includes obtaining and interpreting medical, education, and rehabilitation reports; interviewing the consumer and relevant others; and selecting appropriate assessment tools, materials, activities, and settings.
   4.2 Assess the consumer’s present level of functioning in each of the following areas as related to O&M: vision, senses, orientation and mobility skills, social/emotional issues, concepts/cognition, medical and physical limitations, and personal goals.
   4.3 Based on the O&M assessment, determine the consumer’s O&M needs and/or make recommendations for services, mobility devices and/or systems.
(e.g., long cane, etc.), and additional assessments.

4.4 Describe the roles of related professionals (OT, PT, low vision specialists, rehabilitation specialists, optometrists, teachers, ophthalmologists, etc.) who provide relevant O&M assessment information.

4.5 Conduct ongoing assessment to monitor progress, to determine the need for change in instructional strategy or O&M program, and to determine when the skill level is sufficient to graduate or move on.

5. Plan O&M Programs
5.1 Describe service delivery models for O&M programs such as itinerant, center-based, and residential.
5.2 Develop O&M goals and objectives/benchmarks for individualized programs.
5.3 Describe the components and process for the development of early intervention, education, and applicable rehabilitation plans [e.g., IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan), IEP (Individualized Educational Program), IWRP (Individualized Written Rehabilitation Program), etc.].

6. Teach O&M Related Concepts
6.1 Describe the relationship of O&M-related concepts (body, environmental, and spatial) to purposeful movement.
6.2 Describe the impact of visual impairment on the development of concepts and how consumers develop concepts.
6.3 Provide instruction to facilitate the development of O&M-related concepts (e.g., body, environmental, and spatial, etc.).
6.4 Teach life skill concepts related to O&M, e.g., money organization, social skills, time management, etc.

7. Teach Orientation Strategies and Skills
7.1 Develop orientation skills through the use of environmental features (e.g., sun, sounds, slopes, etc.).
7.2 Facilitate optimal development of the consumer’s spatial organization skills using strategies such as cognitive mapping and spatial updating.
7.3 Assist the consumer in route planning using various approaches such as route shapes, mapping skills, and compass directions.
7.4 Teach problem-solving strategies related to establishing and maintaining orientation while traveling, using instructional approaches such as drop offs, re-orientation, planning alternative routes, hypothesis testing, etc.
7.5 Familiarize consumer to novel environments using techniques appropriate for persons with various frames of reference (object-to-object, self-to-object).
7.6 Compare and contrast approaches for orienting dog guide handler to new environments versus long cane users.

8. Teach Mobility Skills
8.1 Know the mechanics of locomotion that affect efficient mobility, e.g., integration of reflexes, muscle tone, coordination, balance, gait patterns, posture, etc.
8.2 Identify and describe basic O&M skills, including protective and human guide techniques, and the rationale for teaching these skills.
8.3 Determine appropriate mobility device and/or system by considering advantages, disadvantages, and consumer's needs and preferences, including, but not limited to human guide, long cane, dog guide, ETA, functional vision, and AMD.

8.4 Identify and describe O&M cane skills, (e.g., cane use with a guide, diagonal technique, two-point touch, etc.) and the rationale for teaching these skills.

8.5 Apply appropriate sequence of street crossing instruction, i.e., simple to complex.

8.6 Teach consumers to analyze intersections in simple and complex environments.

8.7 Identify and describe traffic controls (e.g., uncontrolled, 2-way and 4-way stops, traffic signal systems, roundabouts, yields, etc.) and implications for consumer crossings.

8.8 Identify and describe street crossing techniques and when to apply them, such as determining when to begin crossing, alignment, use of pedestrian button, etc.

8.9 Teach consumers how to access, plan, and execute simple and complex transportation systems, including buses, rail, and Paratransit.

8.10 Teach travel in special environments, including adverse weather conditions, rural areas, airports, malls, stores, gas stations, etc.

9. **Teach Use of Senses**

9.1 Explain principles of vision development as they apply to visual efficiency training.

9.2 Teach use of optical and non-optical low vision devices for O&M tasks.

9.3 Teach visual skills that optimize O&M performance, e.g., eccentric viewing, scanning, tracking, tracing, etc.

9.4 Teach consumer to use tactile information for O&M-related tasks.

9.5 Teach consumer to interpret kinesthetic and proprioceptive information to maximize O&M skills during movement/travel, such as using time-distance estimates, making accurate turns, recognizing/using slopes, etc.

9.6 Teach auditory skills to maximize effective movement/travel, e.g., use sounds to align/position self, echolocation, Doppler effect, etc.

10. **Teach Consumers who have Additional Disabilities**

10.1 Describe the implications of additional disabilities upon O&M instruction, e.g., physical impairments, cognitive disabilities, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury, etc.

10.2 Adapt instructional strategies for consumers with additional disabilities, e.g., physical impairments, cognitive disabilities, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments, traumatic brain injury, etc.

11. **Teach Diverse Consumers**

11.1 Describe the implications of diversity, including age and cultural differences, as they relate to potential adaptations in O&M instruction.

11.2 Apply principles of human development and the aging process to O&M instruction.

12. **Analyze and Modify Environment**
12.1 Analyze travel environments to identify and overcome potential barriers to consumer access in home, school, work, or community environments.

13. **Know the Psychosocial Implications of Blindness and Visual Impairment**

13.1 Identify and describe factors to be considered to minimize the psychosocial impact of vision loss upon consumers with congenital or adventitious visual impairments and their families.

13.2 Identify strategies to assist consumers during the process of adjustment to visual impairment, including providing resources, informational counseling, etc.

**CLINICAL PRACTICE COMPETENCIES**

1. **Communication and professional relationships** - Candidate is able to establish and maintain effective communication and professional relationships with students, families, colleagues, and supervisors, including individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

2. **O&M assessment** - Candidate is able to plan and conduct individualized comprehensive O&M assessments, synthesize the findings in a professionally written report, and communicate results with students, families, and members of the individualized intervention/education/rehabilitation team, as appropriate.

3. **Instructional planning** – Candidate is able to plan for individualized O&M instruction through the:
   - review and interpretation of relevant records and reports;
   - selection and preview of potential training areas (e.g., home, school, work, or community);
   - design and/or procurement of instructional materials and appropriate devices (with appropriate medical consultation regarding optical devices);
   - provision of accurate information regarding options for mobility systems (e.g., long cane, dog guide, electronic travel devices) to student and family so that students can make informed choices regarding the most appropriate option for a given time;
   - collaboration with student, family, and colleagues to develop appropriate goals and behavioral objectives; and development and sequencing of individual lessons based on student abilities, needs, and goals.

4. **Instruction** - Candidate is able to effectively teach and reinforce the following elements of O&M instruction across a range of environments (such as indoor, residential, and light business):
   - Concepts related to independent movement and orientation (such as body, laterality, directionality, spatial, environmental, and time-distance).
   - Mobility techniques, including, but not limited to, basic skills, cane skills, adapted mobility devices, route travel, street crossings, and the use of public and other transportation systems.
   - Orientation skills, including, but not limited to, use of cognitive processes; landmarks; cardinal directions; room, store, and community familiarization; address system; independent information gathering; route planning; and maps.
• Use of low vision in maintaining safe and independent movement and orientation (such as use of non-optical devices, use of optical devices in conjunction with eye care professionals, use of visual skills, and incorporating vision use with cane or other mobility systems).
• Use of remaining senses (other than vision) in maintaining safe and independent movement and orientation (such as the use of auditory skills, reflected sound, tactile recognition, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic awareness).

5. **Monitoring and safety** - Candidate is able to effectively monitor orientation and mobility skills, recognize potentially dangerous situations, and intervene as appropriate to ensure student safety.

6. **Facilitating independence** - Candidate is able to facilitate student independence and problem solving ability across a variety of travel situations, in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

7. **Professionalism** - Candidate demonstrates professional conduct consistent with the Code of Ethics for Orientation & Mobility Specialists, finds and accesses appropriate resources, keeps on-time scheduling, and follows and maintains appropriate record keeping and reporting procedures.

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**Code of Ethics**

Practitioners in the fields of TVI and O&M are bound by strict Codes of Ethics. These Codes outline appropriate behavior and performance in the field of vision. The Codes for both fields are provided below. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Code that applies to you.

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**Code of Ethics for Orientation & Mobility Specialists**

**Preamble**

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Specialists recognize the significant role that independent movement plays in the overall growth and functioning of the individual and are dedicated to helping each individual attain the level of independence necessary to reach his or her full potential. Orientation and Mobility Specialists gather, develop, and utilize specialized knowledge in accomplishing this with all professions. The possession of specialist knowledge obligates the practitioner to protect the rights of the individuals who must avail themselves of the particular service. To assure the public of our awareness of this obligation, we commit ourselves to this Code of Ethics.

In order to fulfill this obligation, O&M Specialists pledge themselves to standards of acceptable behavior in relation to the following five commitments:
Commitment to the Student; Commitment to the Community; Commitment to the Profession; Commitment to Colleagues and Other Professionals; and Commitment to Professional Employment Practices.
It is the responsibility of each O&M Specialist to adhere to the principles in the Code and encourage colleagues to do the same.

1. **Commitment to the Student**
   1.1 The O&M Specialist will value the worth and dignity of each individual.
   1.2 It is the responsibility of the O&M Specialist to strive at all times to maintain the highest standards of instruction.
   1.3 The O&M Specialist will take all reasonable precautions to insure the safety of the student from conditions which interfere with learning.
   1.4 The O&M Specialist will respect the confidentiality of all information pertaining to the student. He or she will not divulge confidential information about any student to any individual not authorized by the student to receive such information unless required by law or unless withholding such information would endanger the safety of the student or the public.
   1.5 Before beginning instruction with the student, the O&M Specialist will make every attempt to obtain and evaluate information about the student which is relevant to the O&M instruction.
   1.6 The O&M Specialist will respect the rights of the student and/or parent/guardian to participate in decisions regarding the instructional program.
   1.7 Decisions regarding continuing or discontinuing instruction will be made with the student and will be based upon evaluation of the student's needs, abilities, and skills. The decisions will be made in the student's best interest, independent of personal or agency convenience.
   1.8 The O&M Specialist will provide sufficient information regarding the various types of O&M guidance devices and will explore with the student which device will best meet specific needs.
   1.9 The O&M Specialist will seek the support and involvement of the family and/or guardian in promoting the student's instructional goals and in advancing his or her continued success. This will include sharing information with the family that will facilitate the student's welfare and independence, but not communicating information that violates the principles of confidentiality.
   1.10 The O&M Specialist will ask the consent of the student and/or guardian before inviting others to observe a lesson or before arranging to have the student photographed or tape-recorded.
   1.11 The O&M Specialist will make all reports objective and will present only data relevant to the purposes of the evaluation and instruction. When appropriate, the O&M Specialist will share this information with the student.
   1.12 The O&M Specialist will endeavor to provide individuals involved with the student sufficient knowledge, instruction, and experiences relative to O&M so as to facilitate the goals of the student.
   1.13 The O&M Specialist will not dispense or supply O&M equipment unless it is in the best interest of the student.
   1.14 The O&M Specialist will not allow consideration of personal comfort or convenience to interfere with the design and implementation of necessary travel lessons.
   1.15 The O&M Specialist will be responsible for services to students who are
referred and will provide adequate ongoing supervision when any portion of the service is assigned to interns or students teachers who are enrolled in O&M university programs, with the understanding that each individual will function under strict supervision.

2. Commitment to the Community
2.1 The student will not be refused service by the O&M Specialist because of age, sex, race, religion, national origin or sexual orientation.
2.2 The student shall not be excluded from service because of the severity of his/her disabilities unless it is clearly evident that he cannot benefit from the service. The O&M Specialist will attempt to influence decision making which establishes the rights of individuals to receive service.
2.3 The O&M Specialist will contribute to community education by defining the role of O&M in the community, by describing the nature and delivery of service, and by indicating how the community can be involved in the education and rehabilitation process.
2.4 The O&M Specialist will not engage in any public education activity that results in the exploitation of his/her students. Exaggeration, sensationalism, superficiality, and other misleading activities are to be avoided.

3. Commitment to the Profession
3.1 The O&M Specialist will seek full responsibility for the exercise of professional judgment related to O&M.
3.2 To the best of his or her ability, the O&M Specialist will accept responsibility, throughout his/her career, to master and contribute to the growing body of specialized knowledge, concepts, and skills which characterize O&M as a profession.
3.3 The O&M Specialist will interpret and use the writing and research of others with integrity. In writing, making presentations, or conducting research, the O&M Specialist will be familiar with and give recognition to previous work on the topic.
3.4 The O&M Specialist will conduct investigations in a manner that takes into consideration the welfare of the subject, and report research in a way as to lessen the possibility that the findings will be misleading.
3.5 The O&M Specialist will strive to improve the quality of provided service and promote conditions that attract suitable persons to careers in O&M.
3.6 The O&M Specialist will, whenever possible, support and participate in local, state, and national professional organizations.
3.7 The O&M Specialist will accept no gratuities or gifts of significance over and above the predetermined salary, fee, and/or expense for professional service. 3.8 The O&M Specialist will not engage in commercial activities that result in a conflict of interest between these activities and professional objectives with the student.
3.9 The O&M Specialist involved in development or promotion of O&M devices, books or other products, will present such products in a professional and factual way.
3.10 The O&M Specialist will report suspected and/or known incompetence, illegal or unethical behavior in the practice of the
profession.
3.11 The O&M Specialist will strive to provide fair treatment to all members of the profession and support them when unjustly accused or mistreated.
3.12 Each member of the profession has a personal and professional responsibility for supporting the O&M code of ethics and maintaining effectiveness.

4. Commitment to Colleagues and Other Professionals
4.1 The O&M Specialist will engage in professional relationships on a mature level and will not become involved in personal disparagement.
4.2 The O&M Specialist will communicate fully and openly with colleagues in the sharing of specialized knowledge, concepts, and skills.
4.3 The O&M Specialist will not offer professional services to a person receiving O&M instruction from another O&M specialist, except by agreement with the other specialist or after the other specialist has ended instruction with the student.
4.4 When transferring a student, the O&M Specialist will not commit a receiving specialist to a prescribed course of action.
4.5 The O&M Specialist will seek harmonious relations with members of other professions. This will include the discussion and free exchange of ideas regarding the overall welfare of the student and discussion with other professionals regarding the benefits to be obtained from O&M services.
4.6 The O&M Specialist will not assume responsibilities that are better provided by other professionals who are available to the student.
4.7 The O&M Specialist will seek to facilitate and enhance a team effort with other professionals. In such situations where team decisions are made, the O&M Specialist will contribute information from his or her own particular perspective and will abide by the team decision unless the team decision requires that he or she act in violation of the code of ethics.

5. Commitment to Professional Employment Practices
5.1 The O&M Specialist will apply for, accept or offer a position on the basis of professional qualification and will act with integrity in these situations. 5.2 The O&M Specialist will give prompt notification of any change of availability to the agency or school where s/he has applied.
5.3 The O&M Specialist will give prompt notification of any change of availability or nature of a position.
5.4 The O&M Specialist will respond factually when requested to write a letter of recommendation for a colleague seeking a professional position.
5.5 The O&M Specialist will provide applicants seeking information about a position with an honest description of the assignment, conditions of work, and related matters.
5.6 The O&M Specialist will abide by the terms of a contract or agreement, whether verbal or written, unless the terms have been falsely represented or substantially changed by the other party.
5.7 The O&M Specialist will not accept positions where proven principles of O&M practice are compromised or abandoned, unless the position is accepted with the intention of amending or modifying the questionable
practices and providing that they do not participate in the behavior which
violates the code of ethics.
5.8 The O&M Specialist will adhere to the policies and regulations of the
employer except where he or she is required to violate ethical principles
indicated in this code. To avoid possible conflicts, the O&M Specialist will
acquaint the employer with the contents of this code.
5.9 The O&M Specialist may provide additional professional service through
private contracts, as long as these services remain of the highest quality
and do not interfere with the Specialist's regular job duties.
5.10 The O&M Specialist will not accept remuneration for professional
instruction from a student who is entitled to such instruction through an
agency or school, unless the student, when fully informed of the services
available, decided to contract privately with the Specialist.
5.11 The O&M Specialist will establish a fee for private contracting in
cooperation with the contracting agency or school that is consistent with
the reasonable and customary rate of that particular geographic region.
5.12 When providing additional service through private contracts, the O&M
Specialist will observe the agency or school's policies and procedures
concerning outside employment, including the use of facilities.

(Adopted by Interest Group #9 of the American Association of Workers for the
Blind, July 1973 and by its successor, the Association for Education and
Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired.) Revised by AER Division Nine,
July 1990 Approved by AER International Board, April 1991

**Code of Ethics for**

**Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments**

**PREAMBLE**

The educator's primary commitment is to the students served. Educators are
dedicated to help individuals attain maximum independence and to reach their
fullest potential. The educator recognizes and protects the rights of students
served. Educators pledge themselves to standards of acceptable behavior in
relation to the following commitments:

1. Commitment to the persons served.
2. Commitment to the community.
3. Commitment to the profession.
4. Commitment to colleagues, other professionals, and to professional
   employment practices.

It is the duty of each certified educator to adhere to the spirit and the letter of the
code of ethics and to encourage their colleagues to do the same. The following is
a set of principles approved by the AER International Board for the conduct of
teachers of students with visual impairments. These principles provide a guideline
for ethical practice.
1. COMMITMENT TO PERSONS SERVED
The Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments:
1.1 Believes in the dignity and uniqueness of each student served.
1.2 Provides high quality services and strives to become and remain proficient in professional practice.
1.3 Takes all reasonable precautions to insure the safety and health of the student served.
1.4 Protects the student served from conditions interfering with their personal growth, including physical or emotional harassment or abuse.
1.5 Respects the confidentiality of all information pertaining to the student and his or her family. The educator will not divulge confidential information about any student and family to any individual not authorized by the student or family to receive such information unless required to do so by law or unless withholding such information would endanger the safety of the student, the family or the public.
1.6 Before beginning services, obtains and evaluates relevant information about the student served at the minimum or a higher level that what is required by the right to education laws.
1.7 Respects the rights of the students and their families to participate actively in decision making relating to services they receive and fosters involvement at the minimum or a higher level than what is required by the right to education laws.
1.8 Seeks the support and involvement of the family and/or guardian in promoting student's instructional goals and in advancing his or her continued success.
1.9 Prepares objective and timely reports of services provided at a minimum or higher level than is defined in the right to education laws.
1.10 Maintains responsibility for services to students referred to them and provides ongoing supervision when any portion of the service is assigned to interns or student teachers who are enrolled in supervised training programs.
1.11 Recognizes those services beyond the scope of their professional preparation and/or capabilities and refers to appropriate resources or services.
1.12 Maintains an awareness of, and abides by the right-to-education laws, policies, and other laws pertaining to their work with students and their families.
1.13 Strives, at all times, to maintain the highest level of instruction, including assessment, evaluation and instructional planning and to maintain an instructional environment that is conducive to learning.
1.14 Secures the consent of the student, the family/guardian and/or the school before allowing others to observe lessons, photograph, or tape the student.
1.15 Endeavors to provide individuals involved with the student with sufficient knowledge, instruction and experiences in their area of expertise to facilitate realization of the student's educational goals.
1.16 Respects the worth, culture, and dignity of each individual, including exhibiting courtesy and temperance in situations of conflict and adheres to the principles of equal opportunity for all students with visual impairment or blindness regardless of sex, race, religion, or national origin.
1. 17 Acts as an advocate for children served, and empowers the family and child with self-advocacy.

2. COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY
The Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment.
2.1 Educates the public about the capabilities of persons with visual impairment or blindness, the benefit of appropriate services, and the causes, implications and prevention of blindness or visual impairment.
2.2 Takes appropriate action to insure that students and their families are not exploited by public education activities, fund raising activities, or any other manner
2.3 Strives to develop a continuum of high quality comprehensive community services.

3. COMMITMENT TO THE PROFESSION
The Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment:
3.1 Strives to improve the quality of his or her services and the services of other practitioners. 3.2 Interprets and uses the writings and research of others with integrity.
3.3 Contributes to the growing body of knowledge, expertise and skills of the profession, including conducting and reporting research in an ethical and professional manner.
3.4 Supports and participate in staff development activities, training, and in state of provincial, regional and national conferences whenever feasible.
3.5 Maintains the necessary skills and certification of those skills.
3.6 Facilitates and enhances team efforts by sharing specialized knowledge, resources, experience, concepts and skills and by contributing relevant information and abiding by team decisions made on behalf of, and with students and their families.
3.7 Accepts no gratuities or gifts of significant value over/above the predetermined salary, reimbursed expenses, or fee for services. 3.8 Engages in no activity which results in an actual or implied conflict of interest.
3.9 Exposes incompetence and illegal or unethical behavior.

4. COMMITMENT TO COLLEAGUES, FELLOW PROFESSIONALS AND THE PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYER
The Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment:
4.1 Shares knowledge, concepts and skills with colleagues.
4.2 Offers professional services to a student receiving services from another practitioner of a similar discipline only by agreement with the other practitioner, after that practitioner has terminated services, or when quality services cannot be provided by the other practitioner.
4.3 Maintains professional relationships with colleagues, employers, the student and the family.
4.4 Assumes no responsibilities that are better provided by other practitioners who are available to the student served.
4.5 Conducts himself or herself with integrity in all professional actions in accordance with recognized standards for personnel practice.
4.6 Responds factually when complying with a request to provide
references for a colleague.
4.7 Adheres to the policies and regulations of employers, except where these require violation of ethical principles such as those contained in this code.
4.8 Accepts no remuneration for a professional service from a person who is entitled to such service through an agency or school at a lesser cost, unless the student and family is fully informed of services available and chooses not to avail themselves of them.
4.9 Charges fees for services, if such fees are permissible, that are consistent with the reasonable and customary rate of the particular geographic region within which he or she is working.
4.10 Provides applicants seeking information about a position or a service with an honest description.

Adopted by Divisions 3, 8, 12, and 13, July 1992
Approved by AER International Board, October, 1992

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**Things You Should Know About SFA’s Visual Impairment Preparation Program**

Visual Impairment is a very small field. There are less than 40 programs in the United States that offer masters degrees/certification in our field. SFA is one of two programs in the state of Texas. We prepare students for certification in Orientation & Mobility and to work as Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments. Several things make our program distinctive:

At SFA we have the only undergraduate program in Orientation and Mobility in the United States. The O&M certification is the same for students with a Bachelor’s or a Graduate student.

While we offer all of our graduate programs through distance learning, we emphasize contact with the students through either interactive television or online meeting via Internet platforms. In every class that the student takes, there will be some sort of direct interaction with the instructor.

Practicum Instructors visit TVI students who are beginning their career multiple times to provide hands on, onsite support with the teacher’s individual caseload.

- Students in all of our programs get exposed to faculty from both the COMS and the TVI programs. This provides them with a broader understanding of the field and their responsibilities in it. ALL Texas students who complete the SFASU Visual Impairment/Orientation & Mobility program are eligible for a mentor support for up to two years from TSBVI Outreach.

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**How Classes Are Delivered**

One of the reasons that it has been so difficult to obtain training in becoming
either a TVI or a COMS has to do with the scarcity of programs and the requirements that students leave their homes for extended periods of time or travel long distances to participate in training programs. Our certificate programs have been fortunate enough to have consistent state and federal support in providing programs that require the least possible amount of interruption in our student's lives. SFA's VIP is dedicated to providing high quality instruction for the student with a minimum amount of time away from home by using distance education techniques.

The O&M graduate program DOES require the student to participate in on-campus training that lasts approximately six weeks. This is referred to as “boot-camp” or the "blindfold" course. During this time, students live on the SFASU campus (expenses are typically covered by our state or federal grant) and they participate in extensive simulation training where they are required to wear a blindfold as they are taught techniques for using a cane. Students are also required to take part in community-based activities that are used to help build instructional skills. The O&M undergraduate program provides the same blindfold training over the 16-week spring semester (at a different pace).

For the rest of the program, our goal is to provide the maximum amount of student support possible through a variety of distance learning technologies. Basically, you can expect your training to be provided in the following ways:

- Instruction for SPE 516 – Structure and Function of the Visual System (Eye course) and SPE 517 – Communication Skills for Persons with Visual Impairment (Braille course) are currently offered over Interactive Television (ITV). In ITV classes, the students will gather at their Education Service Center. The instructor will be at Stephen F. Austin, at one of the Texas ESC sites, or at a prearranged satellite location. The mode of instruction is similar to video conferencing and allows for real-time interaction between students and instructor. This platform is used primarily for class discussions, project sharing, and question and answer sessions.

- Distance instruction for all other courses currently uses Blackboard Collaborate: Collaborate is an online learning platform used to share presentations and facilitate classroom discussions between and among faculty and students. Through the use of a computer and microphone, class members meet together to share ideas and develop knowledge. You will receive the bulk of the information for your training courses from faculty websites and/or D2L pages. You will access this material on your own computer, at your own home or office, whenever you choose to work on the class. Many of your assignments and tests will also be administered over the Internet. We, as a class, might also use discussion boards to further instruction. In general, discussions are used either to review for exams or to discuss material, which is covered, on assignments.

- Several of the undergraduate courses are provided in a face-to-face format.
Financial Support

For several years, the VIP Program has been supported by both a federal and a state grant. We have been the recipient of a grant to help provide support to students who pursue training in visual impairment or orientation and mobility.

The state grant is provided from the State of Texas through the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The grant provides support to students in Texas who are pursuing training as a TVI or a COMS. Texas residency is required.

The federal grant is provided through the Rehabilitation Services Agency (RSA) of the US Department of Education. This grant supports graduate students who are pursuing training in orientation and mobility. This grant is open to candidates across the US but is limited to post-baccalaureate (graduate) students. We are, therefore, able to offer full stipends to students entering the program. This support is awarded on a competitive basis. These stipends will be sufficient to cover tuition and fees to the university. Books and supplies are the responsibility of the student. Stipends will be paid to selected students who are working on initial endorsements in either visual impairment or orientation and mobility. The student must pay for extra classes needed to earn a master's degree in the program (if they so choose).

Because stipends are paid by a grant, you need to know that there is a mandatory payback of funds if the student does not both (1) complete the program and (2) serve in a capacity covered by the grant (working with students who have visual impairments in the area trained--TVI or O&M) after the program here at SFA is completed. The goal is that you enter the field and that you work in a capacity in which you are trained. Students must work (in a VI or O&M capacity) approximately two years for every one year that stipends were received.

- For the 21 hour TVI program, students are expected to teach as a TVI in Texas for 2 years to pay back the grant support /satisfy requirements.

- For the 33-hour O&M program, students are expected to gain ACVREP certification and work as a COMS for approximately 3 years to pay back the grant support /satisfy requirements.

- Students receiving federal or state grant funding may have time-sensitive payback periods specified by each grantor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Requirements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Completion Requirements</td>
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</table>
In order to gain accreditation as either a COMS or TVI through completion of any of the programs offered by the VIP program, the student must fulfill the following requirements:

**Orientation and Mobility – graduate**
Successfully complete all required didactic courses
Complete practicum courses (120) hours
Complete internship (350) hours
Pass the national certification exam from Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP)

**Orientation and Mobility – undergraduate**
Successfully complete all required didactic courses
Complete practicum courses (120) hours
Complete internship (350) hours
Pass the national certification exam from Academy for the Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP)

**Teacher of students with Visual Impairments**
Successfully complete all required didactic courses Complete practicum
(350) hours
Pass two TExES exams: braille and visual impairment

**Master of Education**
Successfully complete 36 hours of didactic instruction in visual impairment / orientation and mobility.

Practicum hours that are required for individual certifications may not apply toward the master’s degree.

Successful completion of an individual research project, which is conducted one-on-one with the student’s SPE 570 faculty advisor.

Passing the comprehensive exams for the candidate’s specific area. (You MUST be enrolled at SFASU in the semester in which you satisfy comps.)
The course listings below represent typical classes that are taken in order to fulfill the requirements in each of our programs.

### Orientation and Mobility – Graduate Certification Program:

**Course: SPE 500—Advanced Clinical Practicum in Orientation and Mobility**
- Semester: Summer
- Credits: 6 semester hours (total)
- Description: Six semester hours, two lecture hours, and 10 laboratory hours per week. This provides the student with the opportunity to study and practice the skills and concepts needed by individuals who are blind or visually impaired, so that they may safely travel in all environments.

**Course: SPE 515—Foundations in Visual Impairment**
- Semester: Fall
- Credits: 3 semester hours
- Description: Class provides a broad overview of various aspects of blindness (e.g., agencies which provide services to persons with visual impairments, psychological and sociological aspects of blindness, history of the field).

**Course: SPE 516 Structure and Function of the Visual System**
- Semester: Summer
- Credits: 3 semester hours
- Description: This class is designed to familiarize the student with the various parts of the visual system and their impact on the process of seeing. The Functional Vision/Learning Media Assessment process is also introduced.

**Course: SPE 518 Orientation and Mobility Skills and Concepts**
- Semester: Spring
- Credits: 3 semester hours
- Description: Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness and mobility are introduced and emphasized.

**Course: SPE 519 Low Vision**
- Semester: Spring
- Credits: 3 semester hours
- Description: Visual assessment and intervention methods for persons with low vision.
Course: SPE 552 Instructional Strategies for Individuals with Visual and Multiple Impairments
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Students are required to study a wide array of conditions that often accompany vision loss as well as educational programming considerations, and assessment.

Course: SPE 593 Intermediate Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Class combines online instruction with a requirement that students complete 60 hours supervised practicum experience teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with a visual impairment. Prerequisite: SPE 500.

Course: SPE 594 Advanced Clinical Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Two hour seminar and five-hour lab per week. Supervised practicum experience requiring a minimum of 60 hours of teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with a visual impairment.

Course: SPE 595 Internship/Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Semester: Summer
Credits: 3-6 semester hours
Description: Supervised internship experience requiring a minimum of 350 hours teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with a visual impairment. Prerequisites: SPE 500, 593, 594 and permission of instructor.

Teachers of the Visually Impaired wishing to become Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) only need to take SPE 500, 519, 593, 594 and SPE 595 if a transcript review shows they have taken SPE 515, 516, 518, and 552 or their equivalent. SPE 500 is known as the blindfold course, and involves 60 to 65 clock hours of instruction under blindfold, as well as approximately 25 hours of seminar. The course is typically offered to graduate students during the summer, on-site at the SFASU campus for 5 to 6 weeks of daily classes. Travel and living expenses for these students may be covered by grant funding if approved.

Orientation and Mobility – Undergraduate Certification Program

Undergraduate students in Orientation and Mobility are required to take the following courses:

Rehabilitation Services core: RHB 220, 325, 381, 383, 405, and EPS 485
Additional required courses which are taught by the VIP faculty: RHB 340, 400, 401, 402, 493, 495, 496, SPE 442, 445, plus 3 elective hours from: RHB 222,
Rehabilitation Services Core Courses:

RHB 220. Introduction to Rehabilitation Services - A survey of the historical development of the present rehabilitation service system. An introduction to the agencies and their services.

RHB 325. Foundations in Visual Impairment – A broad overview of various aspects of blindness (e.g. agencies which provide services to persons with visual impairments, psychological and sociological aspects of blindness, history of the field, etc.)

RHB 381. Interviewing and Helping Skills - An introduction to the utilization of interpersonal communication skills and the various methods of intervention used in human services delivery, a one hour per week laboratory to enhance effective communication and interview skills is included. Prerequisite: RHB 220

RHB 383. Psycho-Social Aspects of Disability - Provides an understanding of persons with disabilities emphasizing psychological, social, and medical aspects.

RHB 405. Rehabilitation Process and Practice - A study of the process and practice of rehabilitation including intake, individual assessment, planning, utilization of client and community resources, implementation, and follow up. Prerequisites: RHB 220, RHB 383.

EPS 485. Human Growth and Development - the study of normal growth and development emphasizing social and emotional areas.

Courses in Orientation and Mobility Concentration:

Course: RHB 340 Structure and Function of the Visual System
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: This class is designed to familiarize the student with the various parts of the visual system and their impact on the process of seeing. The Functional Vision/Learning Media Assessment process is also introduced.

Course: RHB 400 Beginning Clinical practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Semester: Spring
Credits: 6 semester hours
Description: Three hours of lecture and 4 hours of laboratory per week. An analysis and implementation of those skills, techniques and principles that enable the person with a visual impairment to move independently with safety and efficiency. Prerequisites: Consent of the instructor.
Course: RHB401 Intermediate Clinical Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: 3 hours of lecture and approximately 6 hours of laboratory per week. Field instruction in orientation and mobility under the supervision of the university faculty and/or approved COMS. Prerequisites: RHB 325 and 400, or instructor approval. Class provides a broad overview of O&M theory, skills, and strategies in O&M instruction.

Course: SPE 442 Instructional Strategies for Individuals with Multiple Disabilities and Visual Impairments
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Students are required to study a wide array of conditions that often accompany vision loss as well as educational programming considerations, assessment, and adaptation of environments for these students. Prerequisites: RHB 400.

Course: RHB 402. Advanced Clinical Practicum in Orientation and Mobility
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: 3 hours of lecture and approximately 6 hours of laboratory per week. Field instruction in orientation and mobility under the supervision of the university faculty and/or approved COMS. Class provides advanced instruction of O&M theory, skills, and strategies in O&M instruction. Prerequisites: RHB 325, 400, and 401.

Course: SPE 445 Orientation and Mobility Skills and Concepts
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness and mobility is considered. Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness and mobility are emphasized. Prerequisites: RHB 400.

Course: RHB 493-D Workshop in Rehabilitation Persons with Low Vision
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Visual assessment and intervention methods for persons with low vision. Prerequisite: RHB 340 or instructor approval
Course: RHB 495 Internship I
Semester: Summer
Supervised work experience in rehabilitation services agencies and school systems. Allows the student to apply personal values, theory and a philosophy of working with persons with disabilities. Prerequisite: RHB 400, 401, 402.

Course: RHB 496 Internship II
Semester: Summer
Practical work experience as described in RHB 495.
Prerequisite: RHB 400, 401, 402

Certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) – UNDERGRADUATE ONLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RHB 340 – Eye Class</td>
<td>Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>RHB 325 – Foundations in Visual Impairment</td>
<td>Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>RHB 400 – Blindfold (6 hours)</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 442 – MIVI</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 401 – Beginning Practicum</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 445– Basic O&amp;M</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHB 493 – Workshop in Rehabilitation – Low Vision</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHB 402– Intermediate Practicum</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHB 495– Internship I</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHB 496– Internship II</td>
<td>Summer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The following are the classes that are required for completion of the TVI certification program.

**Course: SPE 515 Foundations in Visual Impairment**
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Class provides a broad overview of various aspects of blindness (e.g. agencies which provide services to persons with visual impairments, psychological and sociological aspects of blindness, history of the field).

**Course: SPE 516 Structure and Function of the Visual System**
Semester: Summer
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: This class is designed to familiarize the student with the various parts of the visual system and their impact on the process of seeing. The Functional Vision/Learning Media Assessment process is also introduced.

**Course: SPE 517 Communication Skills for Persons with Visual Impairments**
Semester: Summer
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Requires the student to master uncontracted and contracted braille, Nemeth Code, and rudimentary slate and stylus.

**Course: SPE 518 Orientation and Mobility Skills and Concepts**
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness and mobility is considered. Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness and mobility are emphasized.

**Course: SPE 551 The Role of the Teacher of Persons with Visual Impairments**
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Formal and informal assessment instruments appropriate for visually impaired students; sources and operation of special equipment, adaptation of curriculum for visually impaired learners.
Course: **SPE 552 Instructional Strategies for Individuals with Visual and Multiple Impairments**
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Students are required to study a wide array of conditions that often accompany vision loss as well as educational programming considerations, assessment, and adaptation of environments for these students.

Course: **SPE 558 Practicum in Visual Impairment**
Semester: Fall and Spring
Credits: 3-6 semester hours
Description: Students are required to do a Functional Vision Assessment and Learning Media assessment as well as attend an IEP Team meetings, write IEPs, and various other activities that certified TVIs perform.

**Master of Education Program**

Typically, students who enter the master’s program have already finished either the COMS or the TVI program. This means that they come to the program with 18 to 21 of the needed 36 semester hours. Since this is the case, students continuing into the M.Ed. program are required to complete the following classes.

Course: **SPE 520 Teaching Literacy Skills for Students with Visual Impairments**
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: This class examines important areas related to the development of literacy for students with visual impairments. topics including pre-Braille skills, teaching Braille to students who also use print as one of their literacy tools, and literacy skills as they relate to students who have multiple impairments.

Course: **SPE 519 Low Vision**
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours

Course: **SPE 521 Teaching the Expanded Core Curriculum to Students with Visual Impairments**
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hour
Description: The expanded core curriculum includes areas such as assistive technology, compensatory skills, career education, independent living
skills, recreation & leisure, etc. This class provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the importance of the expanded core curriculum and how it should be taught.

Course: SPE 556 Infancy and Early Childhood for Individuals with Visual Impairment
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: This class provides an in-depth examination of how learning takes place during the first five years of life of persons with visual and visual/multiple impairments. It also provides students with vital information about educational programming and intervention strategies that apply to these children.

Course: SPE 573 Leadership in Visual Impairment
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Designed to facilitate effective and practical development of leadership qualities, training, advocacy, and program development to improve the lives and/or educational outcomes of children, youth, and adults who are blind or visually impaired. This course will provide training that addresses leadership and program development in the areas of visual impairment.

And your research/capstone course
Course: SPE 570 Independent Project in Visual Impairment
Semester: Fall and Spring
Credits: 6 semester hours (broken up in two 3-semester hour courses)
Description: This is the capstone class of the M.Ed. program. In this class, students develop and execute their own research project. The student will work under the direction of a faculty person in a one-on-one arrangement.

Program Admission Requirements

Requirements for admission depend on the program in which the student wishes to participate. The following are the requirements for each area.

Orientation and Mobility – Undergraduate
There are no admission requirements specific to the O&M concentration for the undergraduate program. Any undergraduate student who is in good standing with the university is free to participate in the program after appropriate advising.

Orientation and Mobility – Graduate Certificate
In order to be eligible for this program, the applicant must have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited university. This degree may be in any field.
Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments
In order to be eligible for this program, the applicant must have at least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited university. Applicants to the TVI program must also have a valid teacher’s certificate from the Texas Education Agency in order to be admitted to the program. Training provided to teachers from other states must meet their state requirements.

**Additional Admission Requirements**

Prospective students must:

1. have a minimum **overall 2.5 Grade** Point Average (based on a 4.0 system) and a 2.8 Grade Point Average on the last 60 hours of your college work for admission to the university.

2. demonstrate a proficiency in both reading and writing. The applicant will be required to submit 3 written essays which will be evaluated in terms of content, grammar, and spelling.

3. demonstrate a fit between the program’s goals and the applicant's goals and interests, as described in a written statement which is submitted at the time of application.

4. indicate their previous participation and experience in people oriented activities. For the TVI program, while previous (or current) placement as a teacher in special education is not required, prior extensive experience with individuals with disabilities is an important consideration.

5. provide satisfactory recommendations: One letter must be provided from the applicant’s current supervisor if the participation in the O&M or TVI certificate programs alone is anticipated. If the applicant is interested in pursuing a master's degree, three letters should be submitted.

6. submit ALL materials required before any consideration of the applicant’s status will be undertaken. Completion, organization, and presentation of all required application materials will be considered as part of the admission process.

An example of the admissions rubric which is used to evaluate applications is included as Appendix A.

**Cohort Admission Policy**

Grant Funded Students- It is the policy of the VIP Program to admit grant funded students to their graduate level programs in a single cohort. This means that **STUDENTS ARE TYPICALLY ADMITTED ONCE PER YEAR**. Decisions are made regarding admissions at the end of March, and each new cohort starts their program at the beginning of the first Summer term (usually in late May or early
June). Once admissions decisions have been made, NEW GRANT FUNDED STUDENTS WILL TYPICALLY NOT BE ADMITTED UNTIL THE NEXT ADMISSIONS CYCLE.

Students can join on a limited basis at other times of year (due to prerequisite requirements) and will be considered for funding when available. Students who are self-pay are encouraged to participate in the program in the same course cycle as those in the cohorts. Those students seeking admission to the program at a period other than the time described above will be admitted to the program in a case-by-case basis. THOSE STUDENTS WHO COMMIT TO THE PROGRAM THROUGH SELF-PAY WILL BE GIVEN PRIORITY CONSIDERATION FOR FUNDS AS SOON AS THEY BECOME AVAILABLE.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>How to Apply for Admission</th>
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In order to apply for admissions, the applicant should complete the following steps:

1. Complete and submit the Texas Common Application. Your major is Special Education and area of specialty is either Visual Impairment or Orientation & Mobility. This is available at [https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX](https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX) After you have completed and submitted the application print a copy and send it, along with the rest of the packet, to Donna Wood at the following address:

   Department of Human Services  
   Visual Impairment Program – Attn: Donna Wood  
   Stephen F. Austin State University PO Box 13019 – SFA Stating Nacogdoches, TX 75962

   Students working toward an endorsement only should still indicate desire for master's degree on the Texas Common Application. This is done to ensure efficient processing of your application. You are not required to pursue the M.Ed.

2. Print out the separate VIP Program application form from the website, complete it and return it with all required materials to the VIP Program offices at the above mentioned address.

3. Submit a letter of recommendation from your current supervisor to Ms. Wood. If you intend to apply for a master's degree, you must also submit two additional letters.

   Submit 3 essays in which you explain  
   a. your philosophy of teaching;  
   b. your understanding of the role of a TVI or COMS; and  
   c. your reasons for deciding to pursue the career change into or your into the field of visual impairment.
4. Submit official copies of your university and college transcripts from EVERY university or college you have attended. These are to be submitted to Ms. Wood or Mr. Munro as well.

5. In addition, students may be required to complete a phone interview with the VIP admissions committee.

We will not be able to register students if ALL of these are not on file:
A checklist of all the paperwork required is provided in Appendix B.

Having a letter of acceptance from the Graduate School does NOT necessarily mean that the student has been accepted into the VIP Program. In order to be accepted into our program, the student MUST have a signed letter from Donna Wood stating that their acceptance has been approved by the VIP admissions committee.

Mandatory Note for Persons Working or Seeking Practicum Experience in Texas Public Schools-Background Check

Mandatory Note for Teachers

To complete Certification/Licensing Requirements in Texas related to public education, you will be required to:

1. Undergo criminal background checks for field or clinical experiences on public school campuses; the public school campuses are responsible for the criminal background check; YOU are responsible for completing the information form requesting the criminal background check; the completed information form is due prior to your placement. If you have a history of criminal activity, you may not be allowed to complete field or clinical experiences on public school campuses. At that point, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.

2. Provide one of the following primary ID documents: passport, driver’s license, state or providence ID cards, a national ID card, or military ID card to take the TExES exams (additional information available at www.texas.ets.org/registrationBulletin/). YOU must provide legal documentation to be allowed to take these mandated examinations that are related to certification/licensing requirements in Texas. If you do not have legal documentation, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.

3. Successfully complete state mandated fingerprint background check. If you have a history of criminal activity, you may want to reconsider your major while at SFASU.
### Pathway Through the Programs - Timelines

Students who enter either certificate programs or M.Ed. programs can expect that the following classes will be only offered during the semesters specified. The pathways include courses that may be in addition to those required for a master’s degree. Degree plans for the O&M and TVI programs are included in Appendix C.

#### Certification as a Teacher of students with Visual Impairments (TVI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 517 – Braille</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPE 516 – The Eye Class</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 552 – MIVI</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 515 – Foundations</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 551 – Academic Methods</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 518 – Basic O&amp;M</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 558 – Practicum</td>
<td>Fall and/or Spring</td>
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</tbody>
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#### Master of Education in Special Education with a concentration in Visual Impairment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 517 – Braille</td>
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<td>Spring</td>
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<td>SPE 518 – Basic O&amp;M</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 558 – Practicum</td>
<td>Fall and/or Spring</td>
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**Year 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 520 – Braille Literacy</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 521 – Expanded Core Curriculum</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 573 – Leadership</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 519 – Low Vision</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 556 – Infants and Preschoolers</td>
<td>Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPE 570 (6 hours) – Independent Research</td>
<td>Fall and/or Spring</td>
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Upon completion of the first 12 hours of graduate study, you are required to file admission to candidacy with your major professor and may be required to pass a
Candidacy Exam. You must pass a comprehensive exam covering all required courses prior to graduation.

**Certification as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) Undergraduate**

For information on courses required at the undergraduate level see Page 67-70 or the degree plan form included in the appendix.

**Certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) Graduate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 500 – Blindfold</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 516 – Eye Class</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 515 – Foundations</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 552 – MVI</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 593 – Beginning Practicum</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 518 – Basic O&amp;M</td>
<td>Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPE 519 – Low Vision</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 594 – Intermediate Practicum</td>
<td>Spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPE 595 – Internship</td>
<td>Summer</td>
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**Master’s Degree in Special Education with a concentration in Orientation and Mobility**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
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<td>SPE 500 – Blindfold</td>
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<td>Spring</td>
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<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 521 – ECC</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 570 (6 hrs.) – Independent Research</td>
<td>Fall and/or Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 594 – Intermediate Internship</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 595 – Internship</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*SPE 593, 594, and 595, while required for certification do not count*
towards the 36-hour requirement for a M.Ed. degree.

**Students must take an additional 9 hours from the following: SPE 517 (Summer), SPE 521 (Fall), SPE 551 (Spring), SPE 556 (Spring), or SPE 573 (Fall)

Upon completion of the first 12 hours of graduate study, you are required to file admission to candidacy with your major professor and may be required to pass a Candidacy Exam. You must pass a comprehensive exam covering all required courses prior to graduation.

**Dual Certification as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) and an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 500 – Blindfold</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 516 – Eye Class</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 517 – Braille</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 515 – Foundations</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 552 – MIVI</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 558 – Practicum</td>
<td>Fall and/or Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 593 – Beginning Practicum</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 551 – Academic Methods</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 518 – Basic O&amp;M</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 519 – Low Vision</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 594 – Intermediate Practicum</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 595 – Internship</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Advising Policies and Practices**

**Faculty Advisors**

The counseling faculty is committed to establishing advisement relationships that will support, challenge, and contribute to the professional development of students. Each new student will be assigned to an advisor who is a member of the counseling faculty; however, faculty members are committed to being available to all students in order to provide support whenever possible.

Advisors will make every effort to be available and responsive to the needs of students. It is equally important that students take initiative in establishing contact with their advisors in requesting assistance and guidance, as needed.
Advisors should be consulted promptly if students encounter any problems with coursework, practicum, or any other aspect of the program. Students are responsible for maintaining communication so that the advisor can carry out his or her roles as consultant, advocate, mentor, and monitor. All faculty members post weekly office hours and these times are available on the VIP program page at www2.sfasu.edu/visual-imairment for the purpose of meeting with students. Since most of our programs are based on distance education, we are aware that students will not be able to visit our offices. However, we encourage calls from students during our office hours. Another option is to make an appointment to meet with one of the faculty in a telephone conference or a net meeting on the internet.

Registration

Registration permits are required before students can register for any of the classes in the VIP program. In order to be permitted to register for a class, a student MUST CONTACT THE PROGRAM. Individuals who are in the cohort will be permitted for the next classes in the sequence. Those in the master’s program should notify the program to indicate the course in which they want to enroll for the next semester. If you have questions about which classes you should take, please contact your advisor or one of the faculty members.

*Even though students’ tuition is paid, the program does not register students for classes. It is the student’s responsibility to register or drop from a class and fully adhere to the SFASU withdrawal/drop policies and timelines. The student will be required to repay any grant monies paid on their behalf if they exit the program.

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**University and Program Academic Policies**

**Academic Standards**

The VIP Program is committed to high academic standards and expects all of its students to excel. By university policy, the highest grade assigned for any course is 4.0. The VIP recognizes and enforces a 3.0 cumulative grade-point average for all courses counting toward either a certification or the master’s degree. Students who fail to meet this standard will not be permitted to continue to enroll in the VIP program. Students will receive notification at the end of any semester in which their academic status falls below the minimum requirements.

**Withheld Grades**

Occasionally, there will be an unusual situation that will warrant the assignment of a WH (grade withheld) for a particular class. **THese situations should be viewed as the exception.** A WH grade will be assigned only when the
student can demonstrate some valid reason that coursework cannot be completed. When a WH is a valid grade, the instructor and student must negotiate a plan for the completion of course requirements beyond the end of the semester in which the student is enrolled in the course. To receive a passing grade, students MUST complete and submit the requirement(s) and receive an adequate evaluation prior to the university-regulated deadline during the following semester. **PLEASE NOTE THAT WHs AUTOMATICALLY BECOME “Fs” IN ONE CALENDAR YEAR.**

**Time Limits for Returning to the Program or Transferring Credit**

According to University policy there is a seven-year limit on the time that courses may be applied to current work. If a student has taken an applicable course (either from the VIP or another university) if **MORE THAN SEVEN YEARS HAVE PASSED, THE CLASS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED** and the student will be required to retake the course.

**Transfer of Credits**

According to the Graduate Bulletin, the following is the University’s policy on transferring credit:

Under certain circumstances, a graduate student may transfer from 6 to 12 semester hours of graduate course work taken at other accredited institutions. The student pursuing a master’s degree with thesis may transfer a maximum of 6 semester hours; a student pursuing a master's Degree without thesis may transfer a maximum of 12 semester hours.

To transfer any credit from other institutions, however, the student must submit an official transcript of the courses to be considered and have the approval of the appropriate academic department and academic dean. The work must have been taken not earlier than six years prior to the student’s first graduate enrollment at SFA. Moreover, if the student fails to complete work on the graduate degree at SFA before the expiration of the six years, the transfer credit will not be applicable toward a degree here.

Any course accepted by transfer will carry credit but not grade point value. Moreover, to transfer credit, the student must have earned a grade of B or higher on the course.

The exception is that ALL hours earned in a SFASU certificate program can be considered for transfer into a graduate degree program.
Orientation and Mobility Program-- both graduate and undergraduate

Pre-Internship Requirements:

Before students can start an internship they must complete the pre- internship requirements that include at least 120 hours of practicum and successful completion of two 3-hour seminar/practicum classes. This experience provides the instruction, observation, and supervision needed to prepare the student for an internship. The 120 hours of practicum must include at least 100 hours of observation and direct O&M instruction and up to 20 miscellaneous hours. Pre-internship students should start by observing a COMS teach O&M, and then progress to teaching lessons under the direct supervision of the COMS, then to teaching independently. The supervising COMS determines when the student is ready to begin planning and teaching independently. Fifty of the 100 hours can be teaching blindfolded students as long as that instruction is supervised by a COMS. The miscellaneous hours may include attending conferences relating to O&M, observing other vision specialists, and other activities that will help prepare the student to teach O&M. The miscellaneous hours must be approved by the university supervisor in order to count towards the 120 hours. Liability insurance is also required before students begin any direct instruction.

Internship Requirements:

Students must complete at least 350 direct teaching hours during their internship. The normal internship is set up as a 10 to 12-week full time experience. It is possible to work out some direct teaching hours before the regular internship in order to reduce the number of weeks away from home if proper supervision can be found.

Professional involvement is an essential component of education for students in the Orientation and Mobility Program. The focus of the internship experience is not observation or participation in insignificant jobs, but is learning through experience. Learning is direct and personal as the student becomes a part of the agency and has the opportunity to practice a professional helping role.

Throughout the internship, the student should be exposed to as many different experiences as possible because of the need to view the agency’s various activities in a total perspective. In order to develop this perspective, he or she should be involved in the following general practices of the agency: staff meetings, staffing of students/consumers, home visits, initial interviews and evaluations, agency workshops and seminars, group work activities, observations of professional techniques and procedures in various specialty areas, visitation to other facilities within the community, placement services, pre-vocational training, community surveys, committee membership and participation in agency/school extracurricular activities. Most important to the
meaningful learning experience is that interns be provided with the type of learning experience which allows them to identify with the agency/school and find out how it functions.

The variety in the size, function and services of the agencies/schools participating in the internship experience may, in some cases, require slight modification of the procedures contained in these guidelines. Any exceptions to these procedures must be mutually approved by both the university faculty advisor and the participating agency/school supervisor. Agreement confirming participating and setting the dates for the beginning and end of the internship as well as the due dates for evaluations will be provided prior to a student’s reporting to the agency/school.

The internship experience should enable the students to acquire new and meaningful learning experiences of a practical nature which will better prepare them to enter the field of working with individuals with a visual impairment. During the course of the internship, students should achieve or derive the following objectives:

1. Develop an awareness of abilities and responsibilities in providing services to the visually impaired.
2. Refine techniques of working with individuals with a visual impairment
3. Acquire knowledge of the use of community resources and develop techniques of referral of students to these available resources.
4. Further develop a philosophy for working with individuals with a visual impairment
5. Examine personal values and attitudes concerning work in human services
6. Resolve some ideas as to what kind of professional setting the student wishes to enter

WRITTEN AND SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

Weekly Assignments

A daily log showing what was done with each student, progress made, and copies of all evaluations conducted by the supervising COMS should be mailed each week to the University Supervisor to the following address:

Stephen F. Austin State
University Department of
Human Services Box 3019
Nacogdoches, TX 75962

Internship Assignments

A corrected copy of the skills notebook that was prepared during the blindfold portion of the program will be due when the faculty advisor visits the intern for observation. A file of all required paperwork should be kept up to date and be available to review when the University Supervisor visits the intern for
observations. The completed file must then be submitted to the University Supervisor upon the completion of the internship and before a final grade is determined. The following materials should be included in that file:

1. Copies of evaluations of students that were conducted during the internship including:
   a. Demographic information including vision diagnosis
   b. Assessments of levels of functioning
   c. Instructional objectives
   d. IEP goals and short term objectives
2. Copies of lesson plans that include lesson goals and objectives, instructional plans and routes.
3. Copies of progress reports of students.
4. Cumulative record of total hours showing miscellaneous hours and direct hours.
5. A final copy of the skills notebook.

**Teacher of students with Visual Impairments Program**

*Field based experience*

In order to complete the TVI certification program, each student is required to complete 350 hours of practicum. Historically, these hours were completed at the end of a student’s program. This meant that some of our students would complete their entire course of study without ever having any interaction with a student. Since it has been our experience that the students are quite often the very best teachers and since we as a program are committed to emphasizing practicality rather than theoretical goals and objectives, we now require students to complete 40 hours of field based experience in SPE 516, SPE 515, SPE 551, and SPE 552 with an additional 20 hours required in SPE 518. All of the didactic courses, with the exception of the braille class, have a field based component. These 40 hours are composed of a combination of direct observation of students with visual impairments and other relevant activities. Appendix D provides an example of field based experience options.

*Practicum*

The TVI practicum takes place during the first year that the teacher begins their career in vision. During that academic year, students must generate a minimum of 170 hours. One hundred forty of these hours must be direct services to students who have visual impairments. During this practicum year, supervisors from the VIP visit the practicum teachers repeatedly in their local districts to provide support and demonstration teaching. Appendix E.
ALL STUDENTS WHO ARE SEEKING A MASTER’S DEGREE MUST COMPLETE A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION.

THIS IS A VERY SERIOUS UNDERTAKING AND IS A REFLECTION OF YOU AS A PROFESSIONAL.

YOU CANNOT GRADUATE WITH A M.Ed. WITHOUT SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF COMPS

EXAM GUIDELINES AND REQUIREMENTS:
- You must successfully complete the examination in a semester in which you are registered.
- If you fail to schedule an exam, or are not successful in your exam attempt, you will be required to register for a one credit hour class the following semester if your program is otherwise complete.
- You are eligible to take your comprehensive exam at any time during either of your last two semesters of training.
- It is YOUR responsibility to schedule your comprehensive exams.
- Exams must be scheduled for completion 30 DAYS PRIOR TO THE END OF THE SEMESTER.

The Comprehensive Exam will focus on nine key areas of knowledge covered in the graduate program you have completed. Those areas are:

1. Foundations in Visual Impairment
2. Structure and Function of the Visual System
3. Basic Orientation and Mobility
5. Methods for Working with Students Who Have Visual and Multiple Impairments
6. Advanced Assessment and Instructional Strategies for Students Who Have Low Vision
7. Infancy and Early Childhood Instruction for Students with Visual Impairments
8. Technology for Students Who Have Visual Impairments
9. Educational Evaluation and Assessment of Skills
**Current Comprehensive Exam Format**

The Exam will thoroughly and comprehensively test your knowledge in all areas previously studied. The Exam will be composed solely of essay questions. Some of these questions may be scenario based. Here are instructions that should be followed (as a minimum) for success on the examination:

- You will be provided 6 questions multi-part questions upon which you are to research and compose professional responses.
- You must complete 4 out of the 6 questions.
- You must make sure and effectively address each part of the question you choose fully and support your answers.
- Write an introduction, give your response, and then provide an accurate and reflective conclusion for each question.
- You must use APA format and cite verifiable references in text as well as produce a reference page for each question. You do not need a title page or abstract for your question responses. You do need both in-text citations AND a reference page.
- You can use resources and the Internet but as with your research paper this work must be original and supported by sources.
- You may NOT receive assistance in answering the questions from any individual. You may seek editing assistance from the AARC THIS IS VERY SERIOUS - DO NOT PLAGARIZE, CUT AND PASTE, OR OVER USE OTHER’S MATERIALS.
- Your role here is to demonstrate your knowledge with the support of research NOT to show that you can locate the work of others. You MUST demonstrate the ability to paraphrase, connect ideas, and combine source materials.

***THIS PAPER WILL BE EVALUATED FOR PLAGERISM AND WILL BE PROCESSED WITH AVAILABLE PLAGERISM SOFTWARE AND RESOURCES.***

You should plan to compose about 4+ pages on each question to be comprehensive. One question will typically be drawn from your research project. The Exam will be delivered to you electronically and you will have a set time limit to complete the examination (currently 4-5 days).

**Current Comprehensive Exam Procedures**

**Making Arrangements for the Exam**

Students are required to notify the instructor of their research course (SPE 570 and the Visual Impairment/Orientation & Mobility Program Director at least 2 weeks before they want to take the test. Students will need to identify the date/time period in which they want to complete the Exam. Your comprehensive exam WILL NOT be scheduled within 30 days of the end of the semester. YOU
MUST PLAN EARLY. You may NOT share your questions with any individuals and you may NOT seek assistance in answering questions from anyone. Your integrity matters.

Scoring

Upon completion of the Exam, responses will be reviewed by a minimum of three faculty persons from the Vision Program. All exams will be blind graded, with names or any other identifying information withheld from the reviewer. The student’s responses will be evaluated using the rubric included in the appendix of this handbook. PLEASE review the rubric as you plan your comprehensive examination. In the event that there is a lack of agreement, the 3 reviewers may call in an additional SFASU faculty member to assist. Within 15 working days after the exam is submitted each student will be notified if he or she has been successful or unsuccessful on the Exam.

Retakes

If a student does not successfully complete the Exam, three options are available:

1. If the student is not successful, the reviewing faculty may ask the student to take part an oral question and answer session to clarify their submission or to demonstrate their knowledge. This oral session is NOT limited to topics upon which the student answered for their examination.
2. A student may be asked to re-write 1-2 questions that did not demonstrate mastery of the question.
3. If all other options are completed and the student is still not successful a plan for retaking the exam, with new questions, will be determined. A time will be presented to the faculty for approval. If there is not sufficient time to complete the process during the current semester the student may be required to register for an additional course to satisfy university policy of satisfying comprehensive examination requirements during a semester in which they are registered. No student will be allowed to attempt passage of the Comprehensive Exam more than twice.

Statewide Mentoring

Over the last several years, the state of Texas has been fortunate enough to have a statewide mentoring program for new professionals in visual impairment. When students in the VIP have actually begun to practice in the field, they will be assigned a mentor through the Outreach Program of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TSBVI). The information below is published on the TSBVI website at http://www.tsbvi.edu/mentor-program.
Mentoring VI Professionals

Why do VI professionals need a mentor program?

Pre-service training for VI and O&M certification provides a strong background in theory and practice. The mentor program is designed to support that training by introducing the participants to the unique intricacies and challenges of being an itinerant VI professional and to assist in the transition from learner to VI professional. For example:

- VI professionals work with students with a wide range of both cognitive and visual abilities as well as ages from birth to 21.
- VI teachers or O&M specialists are often the only VI professionals employed by small and rural districts. Consequently, they may be isolated from peers who could provide knowledgeable support.
- VI professionals must also be able to interact frequently and successfully with parents, other teachers, and professionals serving their students and administrators in numerous buildings.
- In order to successfully serve students and meet the demands of the job, well-developed organizational and people skills are a must.

In the past people have completed the course work necessary to become a VI teacher or O&M specialist only to discover that they do not like the varied and demanding role of working with a diverse population of students scattered over a large service area. Some found that they had the necessary skills to work with students, but wanted more assistance gaining skills in the consultative and/or assessment responsibilities of the job. The mentor program was designed to provide support to new VI professionals so that they would feel less isolated and also have an opportunity to learn how experienced VI teachers and O&M specialists handle the many challenges inherent in their jobs.

The Texas Legislature and the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) are currently considering plans to provide mentors to all new educators in Texas. The mentor program for VI professionals is at the forefront of this progressive development in education.

When and for how long is a VI professional assigned a mentor?

A student entering one of the training options to become a VI professional is assigned a mentor during the first semester of coursework or as soon as one is available. The mentor relationship continues through the protégé 's training and extends through the protégé’s first year of employment as a VI professional in Texas schools. In general, the commitment to act as a mentor is for two years.

Who can be a mentor?

- General personal qualifications include good communication skills, a solid understanding of professional knowledge, high standards for self and others, a desire for continued professional growth and an ability to nurture the growth of others.
- Mentors for VI teachers must have a minimum of four years of experience
and written administrative approval and support.

- O&M mentors must be ACVREP certified and have a minimum of three years of experience providing O&M instruction to children with varying levels of visual impairment and cognitive abilities.
- Applications are reviewed and approved by Outreach staff and appropriate ESC consultants.

**What is the application process to become a mentor?**

Those who meet the minimum number of years’ experience can begin the application process. This process includes:

- completing an application (which includes information about the applicant and a recommendation and statement of support from the supervisor or director)
- securing letters of support from the ESC and other knowledgeable professionals
- submitting a resume (required for O&M specialists only)
- attending a 1.5-day training (at no expense to the mentor or district)

- completing the TSBVI on-line Mentor Training Course).

**How are mentors and protégés matched?**

Prior to completing the match, various parties are consulted, including the mentor and the vision consultants at the ESC. If no preference exists, the mentor coordinator will make the match. Once a match is identified, all parties involved need to agree to the pairing of the mentor/protégé team.

Ideally, the mentor will be from a district that is geographically close to the protégé ‘s home district as this facilitates interaction between the pair. However, if a nearby mentor is not available, the protégé may be assigned to a statewide mentor who will travel to the protégé ‘s district for regular visits, provided the protégé is assigned a VI caseload.

In rare instances the only VI professional available to the protégé is their mentor. In this situation the mentor may also assume the role of the intern supervisor, provided both the protégé (intern) and the mentor are comfortable with this arrangement. Prior approval by the mentor coordinator for this type of arrangement is required.

**How will a protégé benefit from having a mentor?**

A mentor is a source of information and support for a protege-UCSC4a guide to a new profession. Some activities a mentor may provide include:

- Opportunities for the protégé to observe the mentor in situations such as conducting evaluations, attending ARD meetings, providing direct instruction and consultations, writing IEP goals, scheduling daily plans, and keeping records
- Introductions to sources for VI-related professional development such as workshops, conferences, web sites, and publications
Informal observations of the protégé working with students during the first year of employment for the purpose of providing supportive feedback

Networking opportunities with other professionals in the field of visual impairment.

How do experienced VI professionals benefit from being a mentor?

Tangible benefits include two days of all-expense-paid training to learn how to support a protégé’s professional growth. Additional training and opportunities for networking will be offered at professional conferences. In recognition of their time, travel, and expenses, a small stipend is paid to all mentors assigned to protégés. Serving as a mentor can provide the benefits listed below.

A unique opportunity for professional development and a recognized activity for the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) and ACVREP recertification credit for O&M specialists

An excellent contribution to the field by helping to ensure the continued quality of VI teachers and O&M specialists

A profound sense of personal satisfaction and professional renewal

Opportunities for new bonds and connections with professionals at various levels of professional development.

What support does a school district need to provide to mentors and protégés?

Upon application to the mentor program, all mentors must complete a TSBVI Mentor Training course online and attend a one-time face-to-face training that lasts 1.5 days. Training sessions are conducted once a year, in Austin. All expenses for the training are paid for by the mentor program. Professional release time to attend the training would be helpful.

Once a mentor has been assigned to a protégé, regular contact between the mentor and protégé is needed to foster a supportive relationship. Contact can be made by phone, e-mail, letters, videotape exchange and face-to-face visits.

For the purposes of onsite observations or shadowing, occasional release time may be needed by either the mentor or the protégé. If it will be necessary for the protégé’s school to hire a substitute for time spent observing the mentor, there are limited funds available for this purpose. Prior approval by the mentor coordinator for using these funds will be required. If the mentor and protégé are not employed in the same district, it may be possible for observation days to be scheduled when one district has a professional development day. Since districts often do not have VI-related workshops available for O&M specialists and VI teachers and since mentoring is a recognized activity for the PDAS teacher evaluation process, the time spent mentoring can provide for professional growth and meet criteria for PDAS. Using professional development days also eliminates the problem of not providing scheduled services for VI students on regular school days.
For additional information or to relay comments or ideas, please contact: Chrissy Cowan, TSBVI Outreach Services, Mentor Coordinator
1100 W. 45th Street Austin, Texas 78756
(512) 206-9367
ChrissyCowan@tsbvi.edu

Attachments:
Mentor Application 61 Kb
Mentor Recommendation Form 52 Kb

Mentor Center

VI professionals are a small, elite group spread out over the state. Beginners may lack opportunities to observe seasoned VI professionals in the classroom and itinerant settings. Three times per year we will be providing two days of professional observation at TSBVI and in surrounding school districts for TVIs, COMS, and Texas Tech or Stephen F. Austin students enrolled in VI coursework. You will have the opportunity to discuss what you have observed and ask questions of the instructors. The mentor program pays for hotel, meals, partial travel, and substitute teacher expenses. You just show up and learn!

To be eligible to attend, you must be a student currently working on VI or O&M certification or a VI professional who has entered the field within the last three years. Experienced professionals who are new to Texas are also invited to attend. Your mentor may accompany you to a Mentor Center; she/he is welcome and will receive the same accommodations.

To register go on-line to the TSBVI website (Outreach Pages) and follow the links. Questions? Please contact: Chrissy Cowan, Mentor Coordinator at 512-206-9367 or chrissycowan@tsbvi.edu.

*All students will be required to visit the Mentor Center at least once during their enrollment in the VIP Program.

Students’ Voluntary Withdrawal from the Program

Circumstances inevitably arise in which students choose to withdraw from the program voluntarily from the VIP program. Under such circumstances, students are to first consult their advisor and formally notify the Program Director and their Advisor in writing of their final decision to do so. If at any time, students decide to return, reapplication to the program will be required. Re-admission is not guaranteed.
**Dismissal Policies**

The dismissal of a student from the VIP program is a significant event for both the student and the program faculty. This decision represents the conclusion of the faculty that the student has not demonstrated an adequate level of competency in either academic performance, clinical skills, or in other critical areas of professional conduct. Dismissal action is generally the final outcome of several informal and formal communications with the student regarding his or her unsatisfactory progress through the program and, when appropriate, special efforts at helping the student meet program requirements and training objectives have failed. The final decision regarding whether or not a student should be terminated from the program, or under what conditions a student making unsatisfactory progress will be allowed to continue, is a decision that rests with the VIP program faculty.

**Reasons for Dismissal from the Program**

At any point during the student’s participation in one of the VIP programs, the faculty retains the right to review any student circumstances or personal performances that may negatively affect the student’s competencies for independent professional practice or that may threaten client welfare. The following are offered as examples of circumstances or performances that may be the basis for dismissal action:

1. Failure to maintain minimum academic standards;
2. Unsatisfactory performance in counseling practice courses (e.g., practicum or internship);
3. Academic dishonesty;
4. Criminal misconduct;
5. Failure to comply with established University or Program timetables and requirements;
6. Unethical practices and/or unprofessional conduct in service delivery and/or research.
7. Cognitive, affective, and/or behavioral impairments that obstruct the training process and/or threaten client welfare;
8. If the student is involved in the M.Ed. program, failure to pass the Comprehensive Examination after two retakes;
9. Plagiarism; and,
10. Noncompliance to general university and program guidelines.

*A 3.0 cumulative grade point average for all courses counting toward the M.Ed. degree is the university and program minimum.

Students in the master's program are required to maintain a Grade Point Average of 3.0 or better. If the student's GPA falls below a 3.0, the student will be notified in writing that they are in danger of being dismissed from the VIP program and will either (1) be placed on probation for one semester; or
(2) be dismissed from the program. The procedure for placing a student will face probation or dismissal will include the following steps:

1. The student will be informed by the Program Director in writing of the change in their status.
2. The student will submit a written explanation of the circumstances leading to insufficient academic performance and provide a proposal outlining a plan for improved academic success to the Program Director.
3. The program faculty will review the statement of circumstances and plan for improved academic performance and approve or reject the submitted plan.
4. The decision of the faculty will determine whether the student is placed on probation or dismissed from the program.

If the student is placed on probation and their GPA does not rise to 3.0 during the probationary semester, the student will be dismissed from the program.

**Students who for any reason are unable to complete the program will be required to make arrangements to repay any grant money received for tuition and fees.**

The SFASU Academic Appeals by Students policy (6.3) is detailed below. The Student Academic Dishonesty policy (4.1) and the VIP program’s application of that polity are detailed in Appendix J.

**Academic Appeals by Students (6.3)**

**Original Implementation:** August 31, 1981  
**Last Revision:** July 29, 2014

This policy provides a formal process for students to appeal academic decisions. All relevant documentation under consideration at each step will be forwarded to the appropriate parties at the next procedural level. Any further appeal must be made within ten (10) business days from the conclusion of each step. Recommendations or decisions at each level are generally made within four weeks of receiving the appeal. The burden of proof rests with the student throughout the process.

A student may appeal a final grade if inappropriate criteria were used in determining the grade, the instructor did not adhere to stated procedures or grading standards, or other compelling reasons exist to change the grade. A student may not appeal due to general dissatisfaction with a final grade or disagreement with the instructor’s professional judgment regarding the quality of the student’s work.

It is important to distinguish grounds for grade appeal from questions about quality of instruction. Successful grade appeals must be based on evidence that the student performed at a level sufficient to warrant a different grade. It is important for students to bring to the instructor’s and the department’s attention perceived deficiencies in instruction, but these by themselves do not normally warrant a change in grade.
Aside from final grades, a student may appeal substantial and/or unjustified deviation from academic policies, procedures, and/or requirements.

These steps are to be followed when making an academic appeal:

1. Students must first appeal to the individual with whom they have an academic dispute. In the case of a final grade dispute, they must appeal to the instructor within thirty (30) calendar days after the first class day of the next long semester. Given extenuating circumstances, exceptions to this deadline may be granted by the academic unit head.

2. If the dispute is not resolved, the student may appeal to the academic unit head. The academic unit head then requests a written statement from the individuals involved in the dispute. The academic unit head provides both parties a written recommendation.

3. If the dispute remains unresolved after appeal to the academic unit head, either individual involved in the dispute may appeal in writing to the academic dean. The dean notifies both parties of the continuation of the appeal and provides a written recommendation. Prior to making a recommendation, the dean may refer the appeal to the college council. If the college council has no student members, the dean asks the president of the Student Government Association to recommend no more than two students from that college to be appointed as voting members. The college council reviews all documentation and submits its recommendation to the dean.

4. After a decision is made by the dean, either party may appeal in writing to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The dean’s written recommendation in addition to all documentation is submitted to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The college council may serve as an advisory body to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The provost and vice president for academic affairs evaluates all documentation and any additional oral presentations.

5. The provost and vice president for academic affairs informs the student and all persons involved in the appeal process of the final decision. Faculty members are responsible for the evaluation of student course work conducted in their class and, under normal circumstances, are the sole judge of the grades received by the students in their course.

Cross Reference: Faculty Handbook, Student Handbook and Activities Calendar

Responsible for Implementation: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Contact for Revision: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Forms: None

Board Committee Assignment: Academic and Student Affairs
1. **When in doubt, check with your faculty advisor.** Students may become uncertain or confused as to policy, procedure, course selection or number of other issues. Do not rely upon hearsay. Contact your advisor by telephone, email, or visit during office hours (if you are an on campus student) to verify the accuracy of the information received. However, to insure the best outcome in all advisement contacts, it is critical that the Handbook is first consulted!

2. **Take courses in the recommended sequence.**

3. **Be alert to changes in course offerings.** The course sequence published in this Handbook is usually accurate. Occasionally, however, a course may be added or dropped.

4. **Buy a good quality computer headset complete with earphones and a microphone before the first semester of enrollment.** Students participating in the master’s program will need this for several courses.
Appendices
APPENDIX A
Diversity Policy

The Visual Impairment Preparation Program (VIP) is committed to maintaining an atmosphere that values and appreciates all unique perspectives that students bring to the training arena. Students are expected to refrain from any behavior that makes negatively emphasizes the different characteristics of any fellow student, faculty person, or staff person. This is especially true in terms of race, gender, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation. It is the opinion of the VIP program that effective and pragmatic education can only take place when all members of the learning community are equally valued.

Any student, faculty person, or staff person who feels that they have been denied the respect that their diversity should bring should initiate the following policy as soon as possible:

1. The Program Director should be notified in writing.
2. The Director will then notify members of the faculty about the specific issue.
3. The faculty may choose to interview either one or both parties involved in the incident.
4. The faculty will then make a determination regarding action to be taken.

Perkin’s College of Education Diversity Committee
Statement

In a fast changing pluralistic world and a global knowledge economy stamped by interconnectedness of multiplicities, today’s diversity is a crucial competence to be negotiated by all stakeholders of a community, including that of Higher Education. The Perkins College of Education Diversity Committee seeks to maintain a variety of institutional conversations about diversity as it affects and is affected by a range of institutional dimensions including faculty, staff, and students recruitment and retention; curriculum, pedagogy, and scholarship; campus climate; extracurricular programs and multicultural initiatives; institutional structures, policies and practices; and issues of representation. The committee works to translate such conversation into action plans with clear outcomes, measurable accountability standards, and allocated physical and human institutional resources.
APPENDIX B

REQUIRED PAPERWORK FOR PROJECT VISION

CERTIFICATION ONLY: ___VI ___O&M ___DUAL
STATE ____________ESC REGION (Texas)___

_____Graduate Application with $50 fee paid to SFASU Graduate School*
_____Project VISION Application
_____Official Transcripts from every college attended
_____Documentation of Licensure and/or Teaching Certification
_____One letter of Recommendation from Current Supervisor

_____Written portion of application – Three parts
   1) Philosophy Statement
   2) Description of your personal understanding of role of TVI or COMS, and
   3) Your reason for the career choice or career move into the field of visual impairment

IF DOING A MASTERS:

_____Two Additional letters of Recommendation

**NOTE-
1. Acceptance into the graduate school does NOT mean you have been selected for grant funding
2. THE PROGRAM DOES NOT REQUIRE A GR
APPENDIX C (PART 1)

Stephen F. Austin State University
Graduate Degree Plan for M.Ed. with a
Major in Special Education with a
Concentration in Orientation and Mobility

Name: __________________________ Address: __________________________
SFA ID or SS No. __________________ City: __________________________
Telephone: ______________________ State: ________________

Type of Bachelor’s Degree Earned: __________________________

Institution Conferring Degree: __________________________

Date: __________ Major: __________ Minor: __________

Date of Texas Teacher Certificate (if any): __________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M.Ed. with major in Special Education and a concentration in Orientation and Mobility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses completed thus far:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL FOR DEGREE** 36

**PROGRAM NOTE:** SPE 593, 594, and 595 are practicum and internship courses that are required for ACVREP Certification but are not counted toward the M.Ed.

Upon completion of the first 12 hours of graduate study, you are required to file an admission to candidacy with your major professor and may be required to pass a Candidacy Exam. You must pass a comprehensive exam covering all required courses prior to graduation.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE AND ALL CATALOG REQUIREMENTS RESTS WITH THE STUDENT. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN 6 YEARS.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Major Professor  Student

_________________________________________  __________________________
Department Chair  Certificate Officer

_________________________________________  __________________________
Approval Date  Dean

Revised 06/2013
APPENDIX C (PART 2)

Stephen F. Austin State University
Graduate Degree Plan for M.ED. with a
Major in Special Education and
Concentration in Visual Impairment

Name: __________________________ Address: __________________________
SFA ID or SS No. ____________________ City: __________________________
Telephone: __________________________ State: ________

Zip: ___

Type of Bachelor's Degree Earned: __________________________
Institution Conferring Degree: __________________________

Date: ____________ Major: ____________ Minor: ____________

Date of Texas Teacher Certificate (if any): __________________________

| M.ED. with major in Special Education and concentration in Visual Impairment |
| Courses completed thus far: | Required Courses: SPE 515, 516, 517, 518, 551, 552, 570 (6 – hours total) |
| | 12 hours from: SPE 519, 520, 521, 556, 565, or 573 |

TOTAL FOR DEGREE 36

Upon completion of the first 12 hours of graduate study, you are required to file an admission to candidacy with your major professor and may be required to pass a Candidacy Exam. You must pass a comprehensive exam covering all required courses prior to graduation.

__________________________ __________________________
Department Chair Certificate Officer

RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE AND ALL CATALOG REQUIREMENTS RESTS WITH THE STUDENT. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN 6 YEARS.

Approval Date Dean

Revised 06/2013
All hours must be itemized on SPE 551 Log & Summary Form

**OBSERVATIONS and/or DIRECT SERVICE**
Minimum of 10 hours
Must reflect on a different form for each situation, each day.

- Student with visual impairments in a regular or self-contained classroom
- Residential school students with visual impairments
- Adult client of a rehabilitation agency that serves persons with visual impairments
- Orientation and Mobility Lesson

**VOLUNTEERING**
As needed for a total of 40 hours FBE
- Special student’s sports day
- Special Olympics
- VI Sports or Technology Olympics

**STUDENT/FAMILY INTERVIEWS**
Select at least 1. Each = 2 hours
- An academic student with a visual impairment
- A family member of an academic student with visual impairment

**OTHER INTERVIEWS**
Select at least 1. Each = 2 hours
- COMS or TVI
- VI Rehab Counselor (Texas Commission for the Blind or Lighthouse)
- An adult with a visual impairment
- Members of the National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind
- Member of National Association of Parents of Visually Impaired Children
- A caseworker for your state DARS
- A State Department of Education Consultant who deals with visual impairments
- ESD or ESC educational specialist who works with visual impairments

**TRAINING SESSIONS**
As needed for a total of 40 hours FBE
Documentation of Attendance must be provided

- Any available inservice training session about providing VI services
- VI-specific Webinar sessions

**LITERATURE/MOVIES**
3 max. @ 1.5 hr. each
- Choose a book or movie that relates to the field of VI
- Write up on reaction form
Appendix E - TVI Practicum Paperwork

Stephen F. Austin State University
Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments - Practicum Contract

ACTIVITIES TO BE COMPLETED:

__________ Functional Vision Assessment/Learning Media Assessment***

__________ IEP or IFSP goals and objectives based on FVE/LMA***

__________ Complete VI ARD or IFSP Supplements and Consent Forms

__________ Log of student contacts (170 total hours - minimum)

__________ Record of Monthly Reflections (Journal)

__________ Case study***

__________ VI Specific Assessment Data***

__________ Impact on Student Learning - Pre and Post Appraisal of Student Learning in Selected Assessed ECC Area***

__________ IEP or IFSP goals & objectives and lesson plan based on VI Specific Assessment *

__________ Post Philosophy Statement***

__________ Submission of all designated assignments to LiveText

__________ Submission of additional documentation related to the above assignments on a CD, flash drive, or electronically

*** - these items will be loaded into LiveText

I agree that these assignments will be completed by specified dates unless I receive approval for later submission by the University Supervisor.

_______________________________________________________________
Practicum Student Date

_______________________________________________________________
University Supervisor Date
Your Practicum Notebook

Here are the requirements of your notebook.

1. Files/Tabs - Each section of the notebook or electronic submission should be clearly labeled tabbed. Tabbed sections should include:

   • **Functional Vision Evaluation** - an example of an FVE/LMA that you completed. A critical self-reflection on the experience and quality of your findings must be included with the FVE/LMA. Rubric provided.
   • **IEP or IFSP** - an example of IEP and/or IFSP goals and objectives that you wrote and updated that are directly tied to the FVE/LMA
   • **VI ARD FORMS** - examples of completed ARD supplements and consent forms
   • **Contact Log** - forms (as many as are required) to show the required 170 contact hours with students
   • **Reflection** (Journal) - a copy of your dated journal entries
   • **Case Study** - and observational case study that is an in-depth look at one of your students. The assignment details are outlined in the practicum course syllabus and a rubric is provided.
   • **Specialized Assessment** - documentation of a completed assessment using an assessment that directly relates to the ECC. This assessment should be performed on the same student chronicled in your case study and should provide evidence on how the assessment led to the development and implementation of specific IEP goals and objectives.
   • **Impact on Student Learning** – A pre and post appraisal of student learning based on goals developed from the ECC assessment must be provided. How reappraisal was used to alter/improve/assess instruction must be documented. Rubric provided.
   • **Post Philosophy Statement** - should detail your philosophy as a professional in the field of visual impairment as a result of the instruction, training, and experience that you have received. It should be a minimum of 3 pages long and should highlight changes in your philosophy as a result of your work in the field and in our classes

2. Submit all required assignments to LiveText

3. Provide an additional archived copy of all items to the university supervisor. Place all of the above items in a 1 or 2-inch binder. Include a cover page with your name and write your name on the binding. You will not get the notebook back unless there is a problem. I do recommend that you keep a copy (at least a digital copy in case there is a problem or it gets lost in the mail).
## Comprehensive Exam Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplary 3</th>
<th>Acceptable 2</th>
<th>Unacceptable 1</th>
<th>No Attempt 0</th>
<th>SCORE Q1</th>
<th>SCORE Q2</th>
<th>SCORE Q3</th>
<th>SCORE Q4</th>
<th>TOTAL POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completeness of Response</td>
<td>Student response adroitly addresses all aspects and facets of the questions.</td>
<td>Student response adequately addresses each facet of the question.</td>
<td>Student response fails to address facets of the question.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>/60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Content</td>
<td>Student response clearly relates to the questions; is scholarly, accurate and meaningful. Student includes key elements and relevant examples.</td>
<td>Student response relates to the questions and is correct and coherent. Key elements are present. Scholarship is evident. Student has included adequate examples.</td>
<td>Student response is not relevant to the questions presented or presents minimal discernment of key elements. Student fails to offer examples. Study is not presented in a professional manner.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical and Reflective Thinking</td>
<td>Student response shows insight, critical and reflective thinking. Student includes extensive application of general concepts.</td>
<td>Student response shows some critical and reflective thinking. Student includes application of general concepts.</td>
<td>Student response is limited to factual interpretation. Student fails to apply general concepts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence of Research Based Support</td>
<td>Student response shows extensive knowledge and understanding of current research. Student details supportive arguments and cites sources.</td>
<td>Student response shows evidence of knowledge and understanding of some current research. Student provides some supportive arguments and cites some sources.</td>
<td>Student response fails to show evidence of knowledge and understanding of current research. Student fails to provide supportive arguments or cite sources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Communication Skills</td>
<td>Student responses are presented in a well-constructed, logical way. Acceptable style and grammar are used with no errors.</td>
<td>Student responses are presented in an organized way. Acceptable style and grammar are used with 1-3 errors.</td>
<td>Student responses are disorganized or unclear. Candidate fails to use acceptable style and grammar more than 3 errors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Was the student able to successfully complete at least 3 of the 4 submitted responses? Yes _____ No _____
## Appendix G  Undergraduate Advising Form

**Stephen F. Austin State University**  
**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE -- OFFICIAL DEGREE PLAN**  
Rehabilitation Services (Orientation and Mobility Concentration) - 120 hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Student ID:</th>
<th>Catalog Year</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### I. Core Curriculum (42 hours)

#### A. Communication Component Area (6 hours)
1. English Rhetoric/Component Area (3 hours)
   - ENG 131  
   - ENG 133H  
2. Communication Skills (3 hours)
   - COM 111  
   - COM 170  
   - COM 215  

#### B. Mathematics Component Area (3 hours)
- MTH 110  
- MTH 127  
- MTH 138  
- MTH 143  
- MTH 220  
- MTH 233 (4 hours)  

#### C. Life and Physical Sciences (6 hours)
- AST 105  
- BIO 121  
- BIO 123  
- BIO 125  
- BIO 131  
- BIO 133  
- BIO 225  
- BIO 238  
- CHE 101  
- CHE 111  
- CHE 133  
- CHE 134  
- ENV 110  
- GOL 101  
- GOL 131  
- GOL 132  
- PHY 100  
- PHY 101  
- PHY 102  
- PHY 110  
- PHY 131  
- PHY 132  
- PHY 241  
- PHY 242  

#### D. Language, Philosophy, and Culture (3 hours)
- ENG 200  
- ENG 209  
- ENG 211  
- ENG 212  
- ENG 221  
- ENG 222  
- ENG 229  
- ENG 230  
- ENG 233H  
- HIS 151  
- HIS 152  
- PHI 153  
- PHI 223  

#### E. Creative Arts (3 hours)
- ART 280  
- ART 281  
- ART 282  
- DAN 140  
- MHL 245  
- MUS 140  
- THR 161  
- THR 183  

#### F. American History (6 hours)
- HIS 133  
- HIS 134  

#### G. Government/Political Sciences (6 hours)
- PSC 141  
- PSC 142  

#### H. Social and Behavioral Sciences (3 hours)
- ANT 231  
- ECO 231  
- ECO 232  
- GEO 131  
- PSY 133  
- SOC 137  

### Communication Component Area
1.  
2.  

### Mathematics Component Area
1.  

### Life and Physical Sciences
1.  
2.  

### Language, Philosophy, and Culture
1.  

### Creative Arts
1.  

### American History
1.  
2.  

### Government/Political Sciences
1.  
2.  

### Social and Behavioral Sciences
1.  

### Component Area Option
1.  
2.  

---

*Effective Fall 2014*
III. Orientation & Mobility Concentration (30 hours)

- RHB 340
- RHB 402
- RHB 495

Plus 3 hours from:
- RHB 224
- RHB 407
- SPH 172

IV. Minor (minimum of 18 hours)

V. Electives (to total 120 hours)

\* Hours Completed
\* Hours Remaining

\* Above courses are ALL TRANSFER

\* TOTAL FOR DEGREE

Students must have 42 hours at SFA, 36 hours must be advanced

APPROVALS:

Minor Professor: Date: 

Major Professor: Date: 

Dean of Education: Date: 

CONDITIONS ACCEPTED:

Student: Date: 

TUITION REBATE FOR CERTAIN UNDERGRADUATES

Section 54.0665 of the Texas Education Code authorizes a tuition rebate of up to $1000 for certain undergraduates. The purpose of this program is to provide financial incentive for students to complete their baccalaureate studies with as few courses outside the degree plan as possible. Minimizing the number of courses taken by students results in financial savings to students, parents, and the State. To be eligible for rebates under this program, students must meet all the following conditions:

1. they must have enrolled for the first time in an institution of higher education in the fall semester or later,
2. they must be requesting a rebate for work related to a first baccalaureate degree received from Texas public university,
3. they must have been a resident of Texas and have been entitled to pay resident tuition at all times while pursuing the degree, and
4. they must have attempted no more than three hours in excess of the minimum number of semester credit hours required to complete the degree under the General Bulletin under which they graduated. Hours attempted include transfer credits, course credit earned exclusively by examination, (except that, for the purpose of this program, only the number of semester credit hours earned exclusively by examination), courses dropped after the official census date, for-credit developmental courses, optional internship and cooperative education courses, and repeated courses. Courses dropped for the reasons that are determined by the institution to be totally beyond the control of the student shall not be counted.

Effective Fall 2014
APPENDIX H  EMERGENCY PERMIT FOR TVI

Process for Obtaining the Emergency Permit for Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) in Accordance with TAC Chapter 230, Subchapter F, Rule §230.77, Section (f)(2)(B)

Step 1 Teacher candidate applies for a position as a TVI.

In order for an individual to be eligible to apply for a TVI position under an Emergency Permit, he or she must meet the following criteria (extracted from TAC Chapter 230, Subchapter F, Rule §230.77, Section (f)(2)(B)):

(B) Visual impairments. An individual must:
(ii) have satisfied the following requirements:
   (I) have completed six semester credit hours directly related to teaching students with visual impairments; and
   (II) have one creditable year of classroom teaching experience, as defined in Chapter 153, Subchapter CC, of this title;
(iii) have demonstrated competency in literary braille and basic Nemeth Code by passing the approved braille examination, holding certification as a literary braille transcriber by the Library of Congress, or completing one university course in braille; and
(iv) have verified that the employing school district, cooperative, or ESC has one or more fully certified teachers of students with visual impairments available as a mentor and to provide support.

Step 2 When hired, the district/co-op/ESC completes the on-line TEA form “Emergency Permit” (Search for: TEA-EDCERT 02410-2010) and submits the form and $57 fee, payable by the school district, to TEA. The form is used by the school district HR representative to collect information needed to process an emergency permit online for an uncertified educator. The hiring district needs to select one of two options under “Certification Plan” on the form. If the candidate has completed all coursework, but has not passed both required TExES exams, the first box is selected. If the candidate has remaining coursework, the second box is selected, indicating the semester hours remaining (see Step 3 for information about a Deficiency Plan). The teacher candidate provides information requested on the form and signs it.

Note: If the teacher candidate is contracting for more than one district, only one of the districts needs to submit the Emergency Permit application and fee.

Note: The district does NOT need to send a letter home to parents of students with visual impairments. The TVI position is not the educator who teaches the majority of the instructional day so is exempt from the “highly qualified” designation under NCLB guidelines.

Step 3 The University Certification Officer needs to provide the hiring district a copy of the teacher candidate’s Deficiency Plan indicating how many semester hours have been completed and the remaining hours needed to complete the VI certification program. This plan will also go into the candidate’s certification file at the University and will be updated each time the Emergency Permit is renewed (up to three years maximum).

Step 4 A mentor who is certified as a teacher of students with visual impairments is required to be assigned to individuals teaching under an Emergency Permit. This mentor is assigned by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Mentor Program. The name of the assigned mentor is provided to the district and the University Certification Officer to be filed in the teacher candidate’s folder.
Step 5  Once the Emergency Permit has been issued by TEA, the teacher candidate will be hired as a TVI for one year. The permit can be renewed for up to three years, if needed. While teaching with the Emergency Permit, the TVI has the legal rights and responsibilities of a fully certified TVI (e.g., signing FVE/LMAs, signing IEP paperwork, etc.).

Step 6  The University Certification Officer prints a copy of the Emergency Permit from the Educator Preparation Program’s “green screen” TEA-SBEC website and puts it in the teacher candidate’s certification folder. The student’s social security number or TEA ID# can be used to locate the certificate, once it is issued.

Step 7  In order to receive the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments Supplemental: Early Childhood-Grade 12 certificate, the individual will need to complete all coursework from a TEA-approved program in visual impairment (currently Texas Tech University or Stephen F. Austin State University), pass both the Braille TExES and the VI TExES exams, be recommended by the approved educator preparation program, and apply for the certificate with TEA.

Certification Officer at Stephen F. Austin State University:
Katie Snyder  snyderke1@sfasu.edu
936-468-1740

Contact for questions:
Ruth Smith, Manager, Educator Certification
Texas Education Agency, State Board for Educator Certification
Ruth.Smith@tea.state.tx.us
512-936-8400
APPENDIX I

APPLYING FOR YOUR STANDARD CERTIFICATE

Certificate recommendations require the following:
- All coursework completed
- All grades posted
- Degree conferred on final transcript – (one week after graduation)
- Field experience completed (student teaching/internship)
- Certification tests completed for specific certificate (PPR and Content) *
- An online application submitted to TEA (www.tea.state.tx.us)
- Payment to TEA for the certificate and fingerprint check

Earliest dates to apply for certificates each semester:
- December graduates may begin applying November 1st
- May graduates may begin applying April 1st
- August graduates may begin applying July 1st

Do NOT apply until your TExES testing is completed.

Please note – recommendation cannot be made by SFA until degrees have been conferred on the final transcript. If you are seeking certification only, recommendation cannot be made until all coursework/field experience is complete and grades are posted. Students should be notified by TEA that they have been recommended by SFA within 4-6 weeks of graduation/coursework completion.

Application Procedures:
- Go to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) website at www.tea.state.tx.us
- On the left hand side of the screen, click on the link for Educator Certification.
- On the left hand side of the screen, click on the link for Educator LOGIN/ACCOUNT SET UP
- After you have logged in to your account, click on Applications on the left side of the Educator Main Menu and select Standard Certificate Texas Program
- Answer questions on the applicant’s affidavit
- Choose Stephen F. Austin State University as the entity
- Indicate specifically the certificate for which you are applying (EC-6 Generalist, 4-8 Math, 8-12 Life Science, etc.) – DO NOT CHOOSE MASTER TEACHER UNLESS YOU ARE IN THE MASTER PROGRAM AND HAVE COMPLETED TExMat EXAMS!
- Complete the remaining portion of the application and select SFASU University based, College Recommendation
- Submit your application
- Submit your payment and fingerprint fee
- After payment for fingerprints has been made, students will receive an email with instruction on how to make arrangements for the fingerprint scan

Additional Information:
An educator who holds a Standard Texas Teaching Certificate has the option to take any content TExES exam by using the Certification by Exam option. If you are successful on these exams, they can be added to your certificate. Please note: Additional exams will not be available until the Standard Certificate has been issued by TEA. Clearance from SFA is not needed to take the additional exam.

You will be required to renew your certification every five years! You log on to this same page to renew!
APPENDIX J  ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Student Academic Dishonesty Policy: 4.1

Definition of Academic Dishonesty Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to:

- Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials on any class assignment or examination;
- Falsifying or inventing of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or,
- Helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism.

Plagiarism is presenting words or ideas of another person as if they were one’s own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- Submitting an assignment as one’s own work when it is at least partly the work of another person;
- Submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the internet or another source; and/or,
- Incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one’s paper or presentation without giving the author credit.

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty Penalties may include, but are not limited to reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, re-submission of the work, make-up exam, failure of the course, or expulsion from the university.

For the purposes of this and this program, as part of the Visual Impairment/Orientation & Mobility Preparation (VIP) Program, any indication of academic dishonesty as defined by SFASU and the Perkins College of Education, as described above, in the VIP Program handbook, and in each course syllabus, will result in the following consequences:

1st offense – The student will receive an F in the course. A Report of Academic Dishonesty will be filed with the Associate Dean of Student Services and Advising. Failure of the course does not rule out further actions on the part of the program and/or SFASU. The student’s status/continuation in our graduate (M.Ed.) program will be determined by consensus of the VIP Program faculty. This may result in program discontinuation, and the student must repay associated grant fees as per initial agreement.

The student must self-pay to retake the course at a later date. All regular course assignments must be completed, along with a “re-taker packet” which requires additional coursework determined by the instructor (for instance, the student may be asked to write and submit a thesis paper on ethical practices). If the course is satisfactorily completed (passed with an A or B) on the second attempt, SFASU will replace the original (F) grade.

2nd offense – Dismissal from the VIP Program, and student must repay associated grant fees as per initial agreement. These consequences do not rule out further actions on the part of the VIP Program and/or SFASU.

PROTECT YOUR INTEGRITY. BE HONEST, FOLLOW THE RULES, DO YOUR OWN WORK, AND DO NOT SHARE IT WITH OTHERS.
Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Grant

Financial Support in support of post baccalaureate certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist.

SFASU Visual Impairment/Orientation and Mobility Program
Tel: 936.468.1145

What does it mean to be a “RSA Scholar?”

The Commissioner for the Rehabilitation Services Administration has identified a need for qualified personnel in the field of rehabilitation. An RSA Scholar prepares to work with the State-Federal system of vocational rehabilitation, in this case as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Most graduate students seeking O&M certification who apply for the SFASU Visual Impairment Preparation (VIP) program are eligible for RSA grant funds. These funds help students pay for tuition. Students are eligible for additional funds each semester in which they take required courses specific to the area of Orientation and Mobility.

What is expected of you, the RSA Scholar recipient while in school?

- First and foremost, you must complete an application
- Sign and date a “payback” agreement PRIOR to the initial disbursement of any funds.

What is expected of you, the RSA Scholar recipient AFTER graduation?

- You must obtain and maintain employment in the field in which you were trained (O&M).
- The length of your employment obligation is the full-time equivalent of 2 years for EACH year of scholarship assistance provided. The length of this obligation varies depending on the number of years that you receive RSA funds.
- Employment opportunities may include public schools, state agencies, hospitals and private contract.
What if you leave the program?
If you fail to complete the program, you will be financially responsible to repay any RSA Grant funds you received.

How will you know how much time/money you need to repay?
Each semester you will be provided with the total amount of funds you have received.
Upon graduation, you will be provided with an “Exit” letter documenting the amount of time requirement it will take to “repay” your debt.

History and Purpose of the RSA Grant.
Stephen F. Austin State University has had the privilege of having the RSA Long-Term Training grant since the early 1970’s. This grant will assist students, the State-Federal vocational rehabilitation system, and individuals with disabilities. This grant allows students to fund college tuition through a “payback” provision. Once students graduate or complete their training program they are eligible to sit for the national certification exam through ACVREP.

Stephen F. Austin State University
Visual Impairment Orientation & Mobility Program
P.O. Box 13019 SFA Station
Nacogdoches, TX
75962-3019
Phone: 936.468.1145
E-mail: dwood@sfasu.edu

The contents of this brochure were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.
After applying for competitive RSA Grant funding, which covers tuition and fees, each scholar must visit with the Project Director to discuss and make sure that they fully understand the terms and conditions of receiving the funds. When each scholar is admitted into the RSA Grant program, they sign a RSA Payback Agreement Form, a copy of which they retain for their records. Scholars are then kept up-to-date with information regarding the amount they receive each semester, and the amount of time in the field needed to repay the Grant funding. This approximates two years for every year of funding. The timeframe that the service obligation must begin is no later than 2 years after exiting the program.

It is the student’s responsibility to keep in communication with the grant Project Director on a regular basis, both during the coursework, and upon completion of the courses. After exiting their coursework, and job searching, the RSA scholar should never assume that any certain employment in the field meets the qualifications established in the Payback Regulations, without first discussing the employment opportunity with the Project Director.

The employment obligation must be met by obtaining and maintaining employment in the field in which the scholar was trained. In other words, for grant funding received while being trained as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist, the student must obtain and maintain employment as a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist. Each year, the scholar must provide required documentation of verification of qualifying employment, as well as their contact information, until they complete their payback obligation.

Each scholar, upon exiting the training program, must either supply documentation to support the fact that they have obtained qualifying employment, or they must provide repayment of the scholarship. There are two instances in which scholar repayment of actual monetary funds received must be submitted to the government, upon the receipt of an official repayment letter from the Rehabilitation Services Administration:

1. Scholar drops out, is dismissed or removed from the program, or voluntarily leaves the program.
2. If a scholar has not obtained qualifying employment within the two-year grace period.

The following pages contain the required paperwork that must follow each scholar that receives RSA Grant funding:

- Application
- Agreement
- Fund Summary
- Employment Verification
APPLICATION FORM
for
RSA Orientation & Mobility Stipend (Project COMIT)

Prior to receiving any RSA Grant Funding, the applicant must:
• Fill out this form accurately and completely
• Mail it along with 3 letters of recommendation and complete transcripts to:
The VI/O&M Department, P.O. Box 13019 - SFA, Nacogdoches, TX 75962

This application is for the program, starting in: Fall _________ Spring _________ Summer _________

1. PERSONAL DATA

Name___________________________________________________________________________

First               Middle               Last

Home Address____________________________________________________________________

Number             Street              City               State               Zip

Telephone Number _________________________ Social Security # _________________________

Driver's License # _________________________ E-mail: ____________________________

Mailing Address (if different) ______________________________________________________

Number             Street              City               State               Zip

Date of Birth ________________ Sex _____ Race _____

M - Male       C - White-Non-Hispanic Origin
F - Female     B - Black-Non-Hispanic Origin
               S - Hispanic
               O - Asian or Pacific Islander
               I - American Indian or Alaskan Native

Do you feel, based on your current situation, that you will able to physically perform your duties as an O&M Specialist, with or without accommodations, in order to fulfill the payback requirements of the RSA scholarship?  Yes _____ No _____

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Institution</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Attendance Dates (Month and Year)</th>
<th>Graduation</th>
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3. EMPLOYMENT

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<th>Dates</th>
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<th>City</th>
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4. LETTER OF APPLICATION: Include an informal letter of application in longhand, indicating your interest in a stipend and your objectives in the field of rehabilitation.

5. REFERENCES: Give the names of three (3) persons whom you have asked to write letters of recommendation to the SFA O&M Program. These should be persons who are acquainted with you and your work and employers in rehabilitation-related agencies/facilities, if applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
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6. LOCATION REFERENCES: Please list the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of three (3) non-students who will know where you are located, in the event that your address changes and we need to get in contact with you. These references may be immediate family members, relatives, or friends, etc.

<table>
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<th>Name and Relationship to you</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
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This Scholarship Agreement is entered into on the date noted below in compliance with Federal regulations at Title 34 of the CFR (Code of Federal Regulations), Part 386 related to the Long-Term Training Program funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Education. The Federal regulations noted above in this Agreement and the RSA Long-Term Training Scholarship Manual have been made available to me by Stephen F. Austin State University’s Graduate Rehabilitation Services Training Program that awarded the scholarship funds. The Director of said program and institution, by signing this Agreement, acknowledges that the terms and conditions of the scholarship have been fully disclosed to the scholar by providing all applicable information.

I, __________________, agree to abide by the stipulations noted below as conditions of receipt of the scholarship for training in the Graduate Rehabilitation Services Training Program at Stephen F. Austin State University.

My receipt of these scholarship funds is predicated upon the expectation that I will maintain or seek employment in a designated State rehabilitation agency or in a nonprofit rehabilitation agency, professional corporation, professional practice group, or related agency providing services to individuals with disabilities under an agreement with a designated State agency.

Under the terms of the Long-Term Training Program, scholarship funds include all disbursements or credits for student stipends, tuition and fees, and student travel in conjunction with training assignments.

Therefore, as a designated Long-Term Training scholar, I agree to:

1. Maintain employment related to Orientation and Mobility
   a. in a nonprofit rehabilitation agency or related agency, including a professional corporation or professional practice group through which the agency has a service arrangement with the designated State agency.
   b. on a full- or part-time basis; and
   c. for a period of not less than the full-time equivalent of two years for each academic year for which scholarship assistance was received, within a period, beginning after I complete the training for which the scholarship was awarded, of not more than the sum of the number of years required in this paragraph and two additional years; and

2. Repay all or part of any scholarship received, plus interest, if I do not fulfill the requirements of paragraph 1 of this agreement (immediately above), except as the Secretary of Education by regulations may provide for repayment exceptions and deferrals.
3. The employment obligation as applied to a part-time scholar will be based on the accumulated academic years of training for which the scholarship is received.

4. Until I have satisfied the employment obligation described above, I will inform the Graduate Rehabilitation Services Training Program at Stephen F. Austin State University which awarded the scholarship of any change of name, address, or employment status and will document employment satisfying the terms of the Agreement.

5. Subject to the provisions in 34 CFR 386.41 of the Federal regulations, regarding a deferral or exception, if I enter repayment status under 34 CFR 386.43(e), the amount of the scholarship that has not been retired through eligible employment will constitute a debt owed to the United States that –
   a. will be repaid by me, including interest and costs of collection as provided in 34 CFR 386.43; and
   b. may be collected by the Secretary of Education in accordance with 34 CFR Part 30, in the case of a failure to meet the obligation of 34 CFR 386.43.

Signing this agreement also certifies that I was provided the RSA scholarship payback information.

____________________________  ______________________________
Name                                                                        Date

____________________________
Social Security #

____________________________  ______________________________
Project Director or other Grant Official                                  Date
Certification of Eligibility for Federal Assistance in Certain Programs

I understand that 34 CFR 75.60, 75.61, and 75.62 require that I make specific certifications of eligibility to the U.S. Department of Education as a condition of applying for Federal funds in certain programs and that these requirements are in addition to any other eligibility requirements that the U.S. Department of Education imposes under program regulations. Under 34 CFR 75.60 B 75.62:

I. I certify that

A. I do not owe a debt, or I am current in repaying a debt, or I am not in default (as that term is used at 34 CFR Part 668) on a debt:

1. To the Federal Government under a nonprocurement transaction (e.g., a previous loan, scholarship, grant, or cooperative agreement); or

2. For a fellowship, scholarship, stipend, discretionary grant, or loan in any program of the U.S. Department of Education that is subject to 34 CFR 75.60, 75.61, and 75.62, including:
   - Federal Pell Grant Program (20 U.S.C. 1070a, et seq.);
   - Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) Program (20 U.S.C. 1070(b), et seq.);
   - State Student Incentive Grant Program (SSIG) 20 U.S.C. 1070c, et seq.);
   - Federal Perkins Loan Program (20 U.S.C. 1087aa, et seq.);
   - Income Contingent Direct Loan Demonstration Project (20 U.S.C. 1087a, note);
   - Federal Stafford Loan Program, Federal Supplemental Loans for Students [SLS], Federal PLUS, or Federal Consolidation Loan Program (20 U.S.C. 1071, et seq.);
   - Cuban Student Loan Program (20 U.S.C. 2601, et seq.);
   - Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program (20 U.S.C. 1070d-31, et seq.);
   - Jacob K. Javits Fellows Program (20 U.S.C. 1134h-1134l);
   - Patricia Roberts Harris Fellowship Program (20 U.S.C. 1134d-1134g);
   - Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Program (20 U.S.C. 3221-3262);
   - Rehabilitation Long-Term Training Program (29 U.S.C. 774(b));
   - Paul Douglas Teacher Scholarship Program (20 U.S.C. 1104, et seq.);
   - Law Enforcement Education Program (42 U.S.C. 3775);
   - Indian Fellowship Program (29 U.S.C. 774(b));

OR

B. I have made arrangements satisfactory to the U.S. Department of Education to repay a debt as described in A.1. or A.2. (above) on which I had not been current in repaying or on which I was in default (as that term is used in 34 CFR Part 668).

II. I certify also that I have not been declared by a judge, as a condition of sentencing under section 5301 of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 (21 U.S.C. 862), ineligible to receive Federal assistance for the period of this requested funding.

III. I understand that providing a false certification to any of the statements above makes me liable for repayment to the U.S. Department of Education for funds received on the basis of this certification, for civil penalties, and for criminal prosecution under 18 U.S.C. 1001.

_____________________________________________                       _____________________________
Signature                                                Date

_____________________________________________
Typed or Printed Name