Visual Impairment Preparation Program (VIP)
Training program for Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation and Mobility Specialists Student Handbook

2014 edition
Revised August 2014
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 students 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.
- Being sure 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
VIP Program Coordinator
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The faculty and staff of the Visual Impairment Preparation Program (VIP) welcome your interest and participation in our program. We are very glad that you are interested in our programs. We have prepared this handbook to give you vital information about our program. The VIP is composed of two parts and we offer two certificates and a Master's 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.

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 welcomes any comment on the Handbook and appreciates any observations on its helpfulness and content.

**IT IS ABSOLUTELY CRITICAL THAT THE STUDENT READ THIS HANDBOOK AND BE FAMILIAR WITH ITS CONTENTS BEFORE CLASSES BEGIN.**
## Faculty and Staff

**Training Program for Professionals in Visual Impairments (VIP)**

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Our Support

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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. 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 the students with visual impairments of Texas. 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, participate in internships and practica, 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 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 (along with Mr. Stafford) 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 begin intensive work on 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. I am now part of an incredible blended family of two HS aged boys (Ryan and Trey) and two beautiful little princesses who are not yet old enough for 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. My interests include my 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 deep 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 Texas Commission for the Blind (before it became Department of
Assistive and Rehabilitative Services), I have now launched out on a new
adventure as full-time faculty in Visual Impairment and Orientation & Mobility
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 home in Nacogdoches.
I'm only 1½ hours from my parents, about 3½ from my youngest
daughter, Erica, and most precious granddaughter, Rylan, and
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. Tracy Hallak – Program Faculty

Education and Teaching Experience

I serve as an Instructor on the SFASU VI/O&M team. I earned a B.S. in
Child Development, with a minor in Special Education, from California
State University, Fullerton, in 1993. From the same university, I earned a
Certification to teach K-12, in 1994, and in 1995 a Certification in Visual Impairment from California State University, Los Angeles. While in California, I taught 4th grade and a K-8th resource classroom for students with visual impairments.

Our family moved to Texas in 1995 (we got here as soon as we could). I took a job as a resource reading teacher for K-6 graders. During this time, I earned a Certification in Orientation and Mobility from Stephen F. Austin State University in 1999, and eventually a Masters in Special Education with an emphasis in Visual Impairment in 2004. I have taught students who are visually impaired, and have provided orientation and mobility instruction for over 17 years.

I have presented at conferences, such as TAER and International AER on a variety of topics including Toys and Play, and Orientation and Mobility with MI/VI Students. I currently am part of a team of professionals developing an orientation and mobility curriculum for infants. Since coming to SFASU, it has been a great joy to mentor and supervise new TVIs and COMS.

Personal

My husband and I maintain our home just south of Ft. Worth and I have an apartment here in Nacogdoches. I have been married for 32 years, have 4 wonderful children and 2 beautiful granddaughters who are the light of our lives. I love coffee, dark chocolate and frozen yogurt. I enjoy reading, scrapbooking, church and time with my family. It has been a great blessing to me to be a team member on mission trips to Africa over the past few summers.

Dr. Vicki DePountis – Assistant Professor

Teaching Experience

I started my career in education teaching secondary school mathematics to students with special needs in public schools. Later, in private industry, I trained professionals in web and print design. During this time, I started studying for TVI and COMS certification. When I finished, I worked for Austin ISD as an itinerant orientation and mobility teacher while pursuing my doctorate. I’m thrilled to be part of the SFA team in an amazing field that draws dedicated professionals.

Education

My bachelor's degree is from New York University in business. At The University of Texas, Austin, I studied mathematics and special education and earned a Master's degree in special education. It was here that I received certification to teach secondary school mathematics and special education. My TVI and COMS certifications, as well as my doctorate are from Texas Tech University.
Personal

My husband and I have lived in Austin, TX for many years. We are excited about starting a new chapter in Nacogdoches. My two grown children, who we cheer on as they find their way through adulthood, live in various parts of Texas. They understand the impact environment, education, and opportunity can have on quality of life. Working with children with disabilities and their families has been challenging and rewarding. I am continuously inspired to learn more in order to do more.

Interest

My husband and I have many varied interests. Our families are in various parts of the world so we treasure any opportunities to get together and have some fun. We like listening to live music, dancing the polka, and any kind of travel. Some of my hobbies are reading, yoga, gardening, and cooking. I also recently started to really -- get into football and now yell at the TV.

Dr. Phoebe Okungu

Teaching Experience

I started as a general education teacher and taught 1st - 8th grades in different years. I had no experience with special education then, but my turning point came one time when teaching English comprehension lesson in 6th grade. We read a story of a student who was progressively losing vision and could not perform most of the school tasks. He had to be transferred to a school that had a teacher who could teach him braille skills. I wanted to be like that teacher so that if it happened to any of my students, I would be able to serve them in my class. I signed up for training in special education at Kenya institute of special education in 1993 and opted to specialize in the area of visual impairments. After obtaining my Diploma (associate degree equivalent), I taught in different schools for the blind and worked as program officer for special education in our school district. Later when I obtained my bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in the same field, I worked as a teacher trainer at Kenya Institute of special education and visiting lecturer at Kyambogo University in Uganda. I have also volunteered to be part of a team that trained teachers for students with visual impairments, for Helen Keller foundation and Perkins International organizations in Sierra Leone, West Africa.

Education

I got my bachelor’s degree in special education (visual impairments) from Kenyatta University in Kenya, and Master of philosophy from the University
of Oslo in Norway in 2005. My research for master thesis was on the factors that influence the development of braille reading efficiency in children. I had a scholarship to take my Ph.D. in special education from Texas Tech University in 2010. I was happy to have opportunities to be involved in working and conducting studies in special education with different professionals in the field. I have enjoyed the opportunities that I have had, to grow in this field and the wonderful personalities and professionals that I have interacted and worked with. It is humbling to see how passionate and committed professionals are in performing their responsibilities.

Personal and Interest

I have two wonderful children (son and daughter) who are now young adults. They live, work, and go to school in Africa. I miss them but hope that one time we’ll be able to live closer to one another again.

I love nature, hence enjoy the mountains, forests and coastal sceneries. I love travelling, meeting new friends, watching movies and live music. I’m still learning to love American football and I hope to get there very soon.

Ms. Heather Munro – Program Faculty TVI/COMS

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. During the last 2 years, I worked for SFA as an adjunct instructor, teaching the low vision course and working with our “blindfold students” on the street. Beginning in the fall of 2014 I will join the Visual Impairment Preparation Program at SFASU as a full-time faculty member. I was recently 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 (AER), and will remain in that capacity until the spring of 2016 at which time I will become 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.

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 Visual Impairment Program Coordinator. We are the very proud parents of two high schoolers (Ryan is a Junior, class officer and Student Council VP; and Trey is a Freshman, also in the Student Council and plays basketball) and two beautiful girls (Vivian Marlowe just started KINDERGARTEN this year, and Iris Jade is not yet old enough for school).

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 SkippyJon 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 :)

**Ms. Donna Wood – Grant Specialist**

Donna is our Grant 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 a summary of her background.

Personal Message

I have been Grant 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.
Program Mission Statement

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 which 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.

General Program Description

The VIP provides training alternatives that lead to two certificates and/or a Master’s of Education in Special Education with a concentration in visual impairment or orientation and mobility. Each of the tracks share 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) 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 a school setting.
Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist program (COMS)

Undergraduate Level – Undergraduates seeking to work as COMS will graduate with a Bachelor of Rehabilitation with an emphasis in Orientation and Mobility. Coursework for the O&M Training Program includes 15 hours of general rehabilitation core courses and 33 hours of additional O&M courses. Courses include two practicum courses and a 6-hour internship which affords 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. Graduates from the O&M Training Program work for state rehabilitation agencies, such as Lighthouses for the Blind and DARS; schools for the blind, and school districts throughout the State of Texas and elsewhere in the United States.

Master's of Education with Emphasis in Orientation and Mobility

Students would complete the 33 hours of coursework as listed above as well as 9 additional hours of coursework and a research project (6-credit hours). Comprehensive Exams will be taken 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 and one in visual impairment. Completers of the TVI program are eligible to work with students 0-22 years old.

Master's of Education in Special Education with a concentration 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 Master's track are required to complete 30 hours of coursework, followed by completion of an independent project (research project) working one-on-one with one of the faulty. In addition, Master's students are required to successfully complete Comprehensive Exams.
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. KC Dignan was the Director of Personnel Preparation at Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. One of her roles was to gather data regarding job availability. The following are a few of the statistics that she has provided.

Projected 3-year attrition

In 2009, the VI consultants projected that 115 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. 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 students will increase by 3% per year over the next 3 years or by 768 more students by 2012. Using a standard caseload formula, an additional 80 FTEs with VI certification will be needed statewide to meet the growth. This is in addition to replacing the retiring VI teachers. If the current ratio of full-time to part-time individuals is applied, the number of individuals needed to result in 80 FTEs is likely to be closer to 98 certified individuals. As a result, we can project that Texas will need at least 219 individuals with VI 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 grows by approximately 1% per year. The 2009 census indicated that 32% receive O&M. In 2012 55% of students received an O&M assessment and 35% were receiving services by a COMS. Applying a standard caseload formula this means an additional 53 full time COMS are necessary to meet the O&M needs. In July 2013, the Texas State Legislature passed a bill that requires ALL students identified as individuals with a visual impairment to receive an Orientation and Mobility Evaluation by a COMS. Therefore, the need for COMS should increase significantly based on evaluation needs alone.
Dr. Dignan concluded her analysis by providing the following data:

**VI teachers**

In January 2009 there were 8,197 students with visual impairment in Texas identified on the Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments. Based on that figure, and in light of the recommended 8 – 12 students per teacher ratio, Texas has a need for between 683 and 1,025 full-time equivalent direct service VI teachers. Currently there are approximately 600 full-time equivalent (FTE) VI teachers. Therefore using this measure, Texas is lacking between 87 and 428 (FTE) VI teachers. (The mean of this range is 257 FTEs.)

This does not accommodate for the number of individuals needed. Approximately 30% of the VI teacher workforce is employed as a VI teacher on a part-time basis. (Of the 209 part-time VI teachers, 65 are dually certified; the remaining either contract with the district or are employed in some other capacity.) The number of individuals needed to fill 257 FTE positions would be much higher. Based on current ratios, the number of individuals needed is closer to 315 full- and part-time VI teachers.

**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, 8 - 12 students is the recommended caseload for O&M specialists. However, not all students need O&M services each year.

According to the Annual Registration of Students with Visual Impairments, 2,655 students were receiving O&M services in January of 2009. If we assume that all students who would benefit from O&M currently receive it, and base the calculations on the suggested 8 – 12 students per teacher ratio, Texas has a need for between 221 and 332 full-time equivalent (FTE) O&M specialists. With 171 full-time equivalent (FTE) O&M specialists, Texas is lacking between 50 and 161 (FTE) O&M specialists. (The mean of this range is 106 FTEs.) 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 48% 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 (2010) 2009 Summary of Need for VI Professionals in Texas. Retrieved from http://www.tsbvi.edu/component/content/article/9-professional-prep/3192-2009-summary-of-need-for-vi-professionals-in-texas.

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 the Visually Impaired (TVI). Unfortunately, students often have a skewed notion of what "Blind Teachers" do. 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 which we DO perform, however, have been outlined very comprehensively in a position paper developed by our professional organization, the Association for Education and Rehabilitation (AER) of Persons with Visual Impairments. The paper was actually written by Dr.
Susan Spungin, who works for the American Printing House for the Blind (AFB) and Dr. Kay Ferrell from the University of Northern Colorado.

The Role and Function of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments

[position paper developed for the Division of Visual Impairment -- Council for Exceptional Children]
Susan Jay Spungin
American Foundation for the Blind
Kay Alicyn Ferrell
The University of Northern Colorado

Infants, children, and youth with visual impairments receive special education and relate services in a variety of settings that bring them into contact with a range of personnel. Perhaps the most important member of this team of professionals is the teacher of students with visual impairments, whose specialized training and experience often establish him or her as the individual best qualified to address the unique learning needs created by a visual impairment. Because of the variety of placement options available, however, there is often confusion about the role, function and mandate of the teacher of students with visual impairments.

The role of the teacher of students with visual impairments is multifaceted and requires recognition by administrators that responsibilities and time commitments are unpredictable and may increase geometrically with each addition to the caseload. The amount of instruction an (consultation required will vary according to individual student needs and will even vary for an individual student from one week to the next. In some cases, the teacher of students with visual impairments will be the primary instructor of the infant, child, or youth with a visual impairment while in other cases the teacher of students with visual impairments will collaborate with and act as a consultant to other members of the team. In all cases, it is the responsibility of the teacher of students with visual impairments to carry out the following specialized activities:

I. Assessment and Evaluation

A. Participate in the multidisciplinary assessment of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments, assuming the primary responsibility to:
   1. Conduct and interpret functional vision assessments.
   2. Obtain and interpret all ophthalmological, optometric, and functional vision reports and the implications thereof for educational
and home environments, to families, classroom teachers, and other team members.
3. Conduct and interpret communication skills assessments in reading and writing readiness and performance, and listening.
4. Recommend and collaborate in appropriate specialized evaluations as needed, such as low vision, orientation and mobility, physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological, adaptive physical education, speech and language, augmentative communication, and vocational.
5. Assist families to assess their own strengths and needs regarding their children’s visual, academic, and functional development.

B. Participate in the multidisciplinary team to develop Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individualized Education Programs IEPs), and other similar documents, for infants, children, and youth with visual impairments, assuming the primary responsibility to:

1. Contribute to statements of present levels of performance by discussing how performance is affected by the visual impairment and by providing information on students’ learning style, utilization of visual information, and other strengths unique to individual infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.
2. Identify goals and objectives in specialized areas related to the visual needs of the student.
3. Identify instructional methods and materials for meeting goals and objectives.
4. Recommend appropriate service delivery options, including class placement, physical education, related services, specialized equipment, adaptations in testing procedures, and time frames for implementation.

C. Recommend as early as possible appropriate reading and writing media for the child with visual impairments.
Teachers of students with visual impairments base such recommendations on the specific needs of individual students, as demonstrated by accuracy, portability of reading skills, visual fatigue, and tactual sensitivity.

II. Educational and Instructional Strategies: Learning Environment
The teacher of students with visual impairments usually acts as the primary mediator of the learning environment for children with visual impairments and implements various strategies to facilitate students’ assimilation into the classroom and school environment. In order to accomplish this, the teacher of students with visual impairments takes steps to:
A. Assure that the student has all educational materials in the appropriate media.
B. Assure that the student is trained in the use of, and has available, all devices and technological apparatus necessary for learning.
C. Instruct the student in academic subjects and activities and developmental skills requiring adaptation and reinforcement as a direct result of the visual impairment.
D. 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.
E. Assure that the teacher or other professionals providing direct instruction fully understands the unique needs of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.
F. Suggest modifications needed in assignments or testing procedures.
G. Collaborate with teachers and other professionals regarding various methods for including students with visual impairments in routine learning experiences.
H. Act as a catalyst in developing understanding of visual loss by children without disabilities.

III. Educational and Instructional Strategies: Adapting the Curriculum

Children with visual impairments have the same curriculum needs as all children, but their visual impairment itself often imposes restrictions on their ability to access any curriculum presented in its usual method of learning and teaching. In order to assure access, the teacher of students with visual impairments is responsible for providing direct or collaborative instruction in the following areas:

A. Braille Reading and Writing including braille readiness, braille reading instruction, and writing skills. These skills usually require introduction to the mechanical aspects of reading and writing, including spatial orientation to the page and use of the braille writer and the slate and stylus, and include application and reinforcement of decoding, comprehension and encoding strategies (introduced by the classroom teacher) to braille materials. The teacher of students with visual impairments also provides instruction in braille mathematics, braille music, the computer braille code, and foreign language braille codes.

B. Visual Efficiency — for the student with low vision, the utilization of visual information underscores achievement in every skill area: academic, psychomotor, self-help, vocational and social skills. The teacher of students with visual impairments instructs infants,
children, and youth in the utilization and interpretation of visual 
information under a variety of conditions.

C. **Print Adaptations and Learning Devices** — The teacher of 
students with visual impairments instructs students with visual 
impairments in the utilization of reading adaptations (e.g. use of 
print, acetate sheets, reading stands, magnifiers, and telescopes) 
and learning devices (e.g. abacus, tape recordings, calculator) in 
order to participate independently in regular classroom activities.

D. **Orientation and Mobility** — Many of the orientation and mobility 
needs of students with visual impairments are the responsibility of 
qualified orientation and mobility instructors. (In some cases, the 
teacher of students with visual impairments is dually certified both 
as a teacher and an orientation and mobility instructor.) The 
responsibilities of and the relationship between the teacher of 
students with visual impairments and the orientation and mobility 
inspector must be clearly defined. It is possible that the teacher of 
students with visual impairments will 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 
must be taught to move in space and to be aware of the 
environment around them. They must learn to use tactual and 
auditory cues to identify their position in space and the relative 
position of other persons and objects around them.

E. **Handwriting** - For the students with low vision, certain aspects of 
both manuscript and cursive handwriting (e.g., size, configuration, 
place-keeping, review) are often the responsibility of the teacher of 
students with visual impairments. The teacher of students with 
visual impairments also teaches signature writing, and if 
appropriate, additional handwriting skills to students who are blind.

F. **Typewriting** — For most students with visual impairments, typing 
may be the major means of communication between the child and 
his or her peers, family members, and teachers. Typing and 
keyboarding skills are carefully and thoroughly taught by the 
teacher of students with visual impairments as soon as the student 
has sufficient fine motor skills.

G. **Use of Technology** - The teacher of students with visual 
impairments is responsible for collaborating with the teacher of 
computer technology to assist the student with visual impairments 
in computer access through software and hardware applications
that produce screen and print enhancements, speech access, and braille output.

H. Listening Skills — 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 print reading assignments become long and laborious. Students with visual impairments begin to develop listening skills in infancy, and these skills are sequentially and deliberately expanded during the school years.

I. Study Skills — Skimming braille or large print materials, outlining in braille or large print, searching for significant information in recorded materials, and other note taking and report-writing skills are fundamental study skills which require instruction by the teacher of students with visual impairments because of the unfamiliarity of the media to most classroom teachers.

J. Motor Development - The teacher of students with visual impairments is knowledgeable about potential problem areas in motor development for infants, children, and youth with visual impairments (such as body image, body in space concepts, visual motor coordination, abnormal reflex patterns, locomotion, rotation, weight transfer, gait, posture). The teacher of students with visual impairments works collaboratively with early interventionists, physical education teachers, orientation and mobility specialists, and occupational or physical therapists to develop and enhance motor skills in infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.

K. Concept Development — The teacher of students with visual impairments shares with other professionals the responsibility for the development of basic concepts, which is 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.

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

M. Tactual Skills - The development of tactual skills is not confined
to the reading of braille. The teacher of students with visual impairments 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 well in order to explore, identify, discriminate, and appreciate all tangible materials in the environment.

N. Communication Development — Infants, children, and youth with visual impairments may experience difficulties in language acquisition and application. Teachers of students with visual impairments 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, teachers of students with visual impairments collaborate with other team members in instructing students with multiple disabilities in the use of manual communication, communication boards, and other argumentative communication techniques. Visual impairments impose restrictions on the use of these procedures, and the teacher of students with visual impairments helps to devise alternative methods to make them accessible to infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.

O. Activities of Daily Living — Thorough knowledge of the activities and techniques of daily living or personal management skills is needed to create independence so that students with visual impairments may integrate more easily into their culture and society. Teachers of students with visual impairments 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.

P. Physical Education - Teachers of students with visual impairments 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, unless systematic efforts are made to include children with visual impairments in physical education and recreational activities.

Q. Human Sexuality - Teachers of students with visual impairments, parents and others share the responsibility for gradual, sequential instruction in human sexuality for students with visual impairments. Because programs in sex education for students without disabilities
assume that much visual information has been previously attained, the student with visual impairments may need a specific hands-on curriculum taught by appropriate, well-prepared professionals.

R. Career Education - Career education curricula that are developed for children without visual impairments may need supplementary instruction from a teacher of students with visual impairments. This instruction may include field trips into the community to explore world opportunities and job requirements, interviews with adults with visual impairments about their various occupations, and assessment of individual abilities.

S. Vocational Counseling - Vocational counseling and transition to vocational opportunities are integral parts of programs designed for students with visual impairments; and the teacher of students with visual impairments, in conjunction with the vocational counselor or teacher, involves students with visual impairments and their parents in this counseling process. The teacher of students with visual impairments assists in the assessment of vocational strengths and weaknesses and facilitates students' participation in work-study, vocational training, and other appropriate experiences.

T. Leisure and Recreation - The teacher of students with visual impairments, parents, and community agencies share a responsibility to expose the student to, and provide learning opportunities in, a wide variety of leisure time activities which have carry-over value to adult life.

U. Transition - The teacher of students with visual impairments assists in the smooth transition of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments from one placement to another, by working with other team members, including parents, to identify appropriate options, preparing new teachers to accept the 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, and from secondary to 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.

IV. Guidance and Counseling
Teachers of students with visual impairments provide guidance and counseling to infants, children, and youth with visual impairments and their families to:
A. Interpret implications of visual impairment for overall development.

B. Facilitate understanding of society's attitudes concerning visual impairment and to assist students and families to formulate their responses to misconceptions, lowered expectations, and prejudice.

C. Explore similarities and differences in relation to all children.

D. Develop social awareness of self, others, and the community at large.

E. Encourage social interactions with peer groups.

F. Identify functional, academic, and vocational potential.

G. Encourage home involvement in program objectives.

H. Promote independence in infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.

I. 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.

J. Refer to other sources for additional guidance and counseling services.

V. Administration and Supervision
The teacher of students with visual impairments, depending on the model(s) of service being utilized (residential 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 teachers of students with visual impairments, 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:

A. Communication with Administrators -- Teachers of students with visual impairments keep administrators informed concerning:
1. Student information (e.g., visual status, grade level, prototype).
2. Program goals and activities.
3. Program evaluation.
4. Screening and referral procedures.
5. Relationships between the program for students with visual impairments and regular and special education programs and support services.
6. Funding requirements for consultation, instruction, salaries, travel time, travel expenses, instructional materials, preparation time, conferences, and benefits.
7. In-service needs for teachers and consultants of students with visual impairments, as well as for other regular and special education personnel.
8. Staff scheduling requirements, including adequate time for planning, preparation, report writing, travel, direct instruction, team meetings, and staff conferences.
9. Physical facilities, including design and selection of classroom environments and office space, as well as adequate storage space for instructional materials and equipment.
10. 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.
11. Equipment needs, particularly in the area of technology, but also including materials and technological devices.

B. Record Keeping
1. Maintain records of student assessments, IEPs, IFSPs (and other planning documents), periodic reviews, progress reports, and signed parental release forms.
2. Maintain material and equipment requests.
3. Exchange information about students with visual impairments with appropriate personnel following school district or agency policies regarding confidentiality.
4. 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.

C. Case Finding and Student Referral Procedures
1. Act as a vision consultant for system-wide screening, materials, follow-up and recommendations.
2. Participate in school district’s annual Child Find program.
3. Maintain a referral/communication system with nurses and other school staff.

VI. School Community Relations
School and community involvement requires the teacher of students with visual impairments to be prepared to interpret the program to school personnel, boards of education, and other
groups within the community. Activities include:

A. Acting as a liaison for the program for students with visual impairments with:
   1. Private and public agencies and schools, including those serving individuals with visual impairments.
   2. Other public and private resources within the community.
   3. Parents and families (including extended family members).
   4. Medical specialists and hospitals, particularly neonatal intensive care units.
   5. Related services personnel.
   6. Early interventionists.
   7. Recreation resources.
   8. Transition specialists.
   9. Parent and advocacy groups.
   11. Child study teams.
   12. Volunteer groups.

B. Services Development
   1. Coordinate ancillary groups and individuals, such as classroom aides, transcribers, recordists, readers for students with visual impairments, counselors, orientation and mobility instructors, and rehabilitation teachers.
   2. 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.
   3. Maintain on-going contact with parents to facilitate understanding of their child’s abilities, progress, future goals, community resources, etc.
   4. Attend professional meetings (in and out of the district) concerned with the education of students with visual impairments.
   5. Keep abreast of new developments in the education of infants, children, and youth with visual impairments.
   6. Prepare grants for curriculum expansion and acquisition of materials and equipment.

**Position**

It is the position of the Division on Visual Impairments that every infant, child, and youth with a visual impairment is entitled to the services of a teacher of students with visual impairments, regardless of the severity of the disability or the presence of additional conditions. 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.
Obviously TVIs are very busy people who are responsible for instruction in many, many areas of their students’ lives. The thing that isn’t immediately obvious from the list of responsibilities above is how rewarding and intriguing this job can be.

Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS)

Standards for the roles and responsibilities of COMS were developed by 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). 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:

- assessing present and future travel needs, current orientation and travel abilities, and goals;
- assessing 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, students must demonstrate mastery of the following Knowledge and Skill 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 with Exceptional Learning Needs who are Blind/Visually Impaired**

**Standard 1  Foundations**

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<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI2 S1</td>
<td>Select and develop teaching strategies addressing age, visual impairment and visual prognosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Standard 3  Individual Learning Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC 3K 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects an exceptional condition(s) can have on an individual’s life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC 3K 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of learners’ academic and social abilities, attitudes, interests, and values on instruction and career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC 3K 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variations in beliefs, traditions, and values across and within cultures and their effects on relationships among individuals with exceptional learning needs, family, and schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC 3K 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural perspectives influencing the relationships among families, schools, and communities as related to instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC 3K 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differing ways of learning of individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and strategies for addressing these differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI3 K1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of visual impairment on receptive and expressive literacy and communication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI3 S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use strategies to address the effects of visual impairment on the family and the reciprocal impact on the individuals’ self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI3 S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select, adapt and use instructional strategies to address the impact of additional exceptionalities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standard 4  Instructional Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC 4K 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-based practices validated for specific characteristics of learners and settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for teaching new concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for teaching visual efficiency skills and use of print adaptations, optical devices, and nonoptical devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for teaching organization and study skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies for teaching tactual perceptual skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K5</td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K6</td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp; VI4 K9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Skills**

| ICC 4S1 | Use strategies to facilitate integration into various settings |
| ICC 4S2 | Teach individuals to use self-assessment, problem-solving, and other cognitive strategies to meet their needs |
| ICC 4S3 | Select, adapt, and use instructional strategies and materials according to characteristics of the individual with exceptional learning needs |
| ICC 4S4 | Use strategies to facilitate maintenance and generalization of skills across learning environments |
| ICC 4S5 | Use procedures to increase the individual’s self-awareness, self-management, self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem |
| ICC 4S6 | Use strategies that promote successful transitions for individuals with exceptional learning needs |
| B& VI4 S1 | Select and adapt materials in Braille, accessible print, and other formats |
| B& VI4 S2 | Teach the use of braillewriter, slate and stylus, and computer technology to produce Braille materials |
| B& VI4 S3 | Teach the use of the abacus, talking calculator, tactile graphics, and adapted science equipment |
| B& VI4 S4 | Prepare individuals for sighted guide and pre-cane orientation and mobility instruction |
| B& VI4 S5 | Teach literacy skills to individuals who have vision loss as well as other disabilities |
### Standard 5  Learning Environments/Social Interactions

#### Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K1</td>
<td>Demands of learning environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K2</td>
<td>Basic classroom management theories and strategies for individuals with exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K3</td>
<td>Effective management of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K4</td>
<td>Teacher attitudes and behaviors that influence behavior of individuals with exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K5</td>
<td>Social skills needed for educational and other environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K6</td>
<td>Strategies for crisis prevention and intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K7</td>
<td>Strategies for preparing individuals to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K8</td>
<td>Ways to create learning environments that allow individuals to retain and appreciate their own and each other's respective language and cultural heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5K9</td>
<td>Ways specific cultures are negatively stereotyped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI5K1</td>
<td>Strategies used by diverse populations to cope with a legacy of former and continuing racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI5K2</td>
<td>Classroom organization to accommodate materials, equipment, &amp; technology for vision loss and other disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;VI5K3</td>
<td>Importance of role models with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S1</td>
<td>Create a safe, equitable, positive, and supportive learning environment in which diversities are valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S2</td>
<td>Identify realistic expectations for personal and social behavior in various settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S3</td>
<td>Identify supports needed for integration into various program placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S4</td>
<td>Design learning environments that encourage active participation in individual and group activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S5</td>
<td>Modify the learning environment to manage behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S6</td>
<td>Use performance data and information from all stakeholders to make or suggest modifications in learning environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S7</td>
<td>Establish and maintain rapport with individuals with and without exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S8</td>
<td>Teach self-advocacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S9</td>
<td>Create an environment that encourages self-advocacy and increased independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S10</td>
<td>Use effective and varied behavior management strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S1 1</td>
<td>Use the least intensive behavior management strategy consistent with the needs of the individual with exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S1 2</td>
<td>Design and manage daily routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S1 3</td>
<td>Organize, develop, and sustain learning environments that support positive intra-cultural and intercultural experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC5S1 4</td>
<td>Mediate controversial intercultural issues among individuals with exceptional learning needs within the learning environment in ways that enhance any culture, group, or person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Standard 6 Language**

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<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC6 K1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC6 K2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC6 K3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC6 K4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I6K1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I6K2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC6 S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC6 S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I6S1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Standard 7 Instructional Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC7 K1</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC7 K2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC7 K3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC7 K4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC7 S4</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC7 S5</td>
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<td>ICC7 S6</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC7 S7</td>
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<td>ICC7 S8</td>
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<td>ICC7 S9</td>
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<td>ICC7 S10</td>
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<td>ICC7 S11</td>
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<td>ICC7 S12</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC7 S13</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC7 S14</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC7 S15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I7S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I7S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I7S3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I7S4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Standard 8  
**Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 K1</td>
<td>Basic terminology used in assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 K2</td>
<td>Legal provisions and ethical principles regarding assessment of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 K3</td>
<td>Screening, prereferral, referral, and classification procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 K4</td>
<td>Use and limitations of assessment instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 K5</td>
<td>National, state or provincial, and local accommodations and modifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8K1</td>
<td>Specialized terminology used in assessing individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8K2</td>
<td>Alternative assessment techniques for individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S1</td>
<td>Gather relevant background information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S2</td>
<td>Administer nonbiased formal and informal assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S3</td>
<td>Use technology to conduct assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S4</td>
<td>Develop or modify individualized assessment strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S5</td>
<td>Interpret information from formal and informal assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S6</td>
<td>Use assessment information in making eligibility, program, and placement decisions for individuals with exceptional learning needs, including those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S7</td>
<td>Report assessment results to all stakeholders using effective communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S8</td>
<td>Evaluate instruction and monitor progress of individuals with exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC8 S9</td>
<td>Create and maintain records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8S1</td>
<td>Administer and interpret vision-related assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8S2</td>
<td>Use functional evaluations related to the expanded core curriculum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8S3</td>
<td>Select, adapt, and use assessment information when tests are not validated on individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8S4</td>
<td>Participate in the standardization process for local and state assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I8S5</td>
<td>Interpret and apply background information and family history related to the individual's visual status</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Standard 9 Professional and Ethical Practice

#### Knowledge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICC9 K1</th>
<th>Personal cultural biases and differences that affect one's teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 K2</td>
<td>Importance of the teacher serving as a model for individuals with exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 K3</td>
<td>Continuum of lifelong professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 K4</td>
<td>Methods to remain current regarding research-validated practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None in addition to the Initial Common Core

#### Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICC9 S1</th>
<th>Practice within the CEC Code of Ethics and other standards of the profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S2</td>
<td>Uphold high standards of competence and integrity and exercise sound judgment in the practice of the professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S3</td>
<td>Act ethically in advocating for appropriate services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S4</td>
<td>Conduct professional activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S5</td>
<td>Demonstrate commitment to developing the highest education and quality-of-life potential of individuals with exceptional learning needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S6</td>
<td>Demonstrate sensitivity for the culture, language, religion, gender, disability, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation of individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S7</td>
<td>Practice within one's skill limits and obtain assistance as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S8</td>
<td>Use verbal, nonverbal, and written language effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S9</td>
<td>Conduct self-evaluation of instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S10</td>
<td>Access information on exceptionalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S11</td>
<td>Reflect on one's practice to improve instruction and guide professional growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S12</td>
<td>Engage in professional activities that benefit individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, and one's colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC9 S13</td>
<td>Demonstrate commitment to engage in evidence-based practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I9S1</td>
<td>Participate in the activities of professional organizations in the field of visual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I9S2</td>
<td>Advocate for educational policy related to visual impairment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Standard 10  Collaboration**

### Knowledge

| ICC1 0K1 | Models and strategies of consultation and collaboration |
| ICC1 0K2 | Roles of individuals with exceptional learning needs, families, and school and community personnel in planning of an individualized program |
| ICC1 0K3 | Concerns of families of individuals with exceptional learning needs and strategies to help address these concerns |
| ICC1 0K4 | Culturally responsive factors that promote effective communication and collaboration with individuals with exceptional learning needs, families, school personnel, and community members |
| B&V I10K 1 | Strategies for assisting families and other team members in transition planning |
| B&V I10K 2 | Services, networks, publications for and organizations of individuals with visual impairments |

### Skills

<p>| ICC1 0S1 | Maintain confidential communication about individuals with exceptional learning needs |
| ICC1 0S2 | Collaborate with families and others in assessment of individuals with exceptional learning needs |
| ICC1 0S3 | Foster respectful and beneficial relationships between families and professionals |
| ICC1 0S4 | Assist individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families in becoming active participants in the educational team |
| ICC1 0S5 | Plan and conduct collaborative conferences with individuals with exceptional learning needs and their families |
| ICC1 0S6 | Collaborate with school personnel and community members in integrating individuals with exceptional learning needs into various settings |
| ICC1 0S7 | Use group problem-solving skills to develop, implement, and evaluate collaborative activities |
| ICC1 0S8 | Model techniques and coach others in the use of instructional methods and accommodations |
| ICC1 0S9 | Communicate with school personnel about the characteristics and needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICCI 0S1 0</td>
<td>Communicate effectively with families of individuals with exceptional learning needs from diverse backgrounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCI 0S1 1</td>
<td>Observe, evaluate, and provide feedback to paraeducators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I10S 1</td>
<td>Structure and supervise the activities of paraeducators and others who work with individuals with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B&amp;V I10S 2</td>
<td>Plan and implement literacy and communication and consultative support within the general curriculum and the expanded core curriculum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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.

#### 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:

1. Commitment to the Student;
2. Commitment to the Community;
3. Commitment to the Profession;
4. Commitment to Colleagues and Other Professionals;
5. 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. 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.
Things You Should Know About
SFA’s Vision Program

Visual Impairment is a very small field. There are less than 40 programs in the United States that offer Master’s degrees in our field. SFA is one of two programs in the state of Texas. Several things make our program distinctive:

At SFA we have the only undergraduate program in Orientation and Mobility in the state. The Certification is the same for students with a Bachelor’s or a Grad student. While we offer all of our graduate programs through distance learning, we emphasize contact with the students through either interactive television or net meeting 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.

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 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 program DOES require the student to participate in a six week long class which is called the "blindfold" course. During this time, students live on the SFASU campus (expenses are covered by our state 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.

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 over Interactive Television (ITV): In ITV classes, the students will gather at their Education Service Center. The instructor will be at Stephen F. Austin or at some location in one of the ESC sites. The instructor will be able to see and talk with the students and vice versa. This platform is used primarily for class discussions, project sharing, and question and answer sessions.
- Instruction using 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 that once came in the form of lectures from faculty websites. You will access this lesson on your own computer, at your own home or office, whenever you chose 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 computer chats. In general, chats are used either to review for exams or to discuss material which is covered on assignments.

**Financial Support**

For several years, the VIP has been the recipient of a grant to help support students who pursue training in visual impairment or orientation and mobility. This grant is provided from the State of Texas. We will, therefore, be able to offer full stipends to students 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 students who are working on initial endorsements in either visual impairment or orientation and mobility. Extra classes needed for dual certification or the master's program must be paid for by the student.

Because stipends are paid by a grant, you need to know that there is a mandatory payback of funds if the student does not either (1) complete the program or (2) serve in a capacity covered by the grant (working with students who have visual impairments) after the program is completed. Students must work two years for every one year that stipends are paid. This means that a typical student in will receive stipends for 12-18 months
and will be expected to work with students who have visual impairments for 2-3 years, 2 years for each 1 year of stipends.

Program Requirements

Completion Requirements

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 (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 (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's of Education
  Successfully complete 33 hours of didactic instruction in visual impairment
  A maximum of 6 hours of practicum/internship courses may be included in a candidate’s program
  Successful completion of an individual research project which is conducted one-on-one with the student’s 570 advisor.
  Passing the comprehensive exams for the candidate’s specific area.
Course Requirements

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 hours lecture and 10 hours laboratory per week. Provides the student with the opportunity to study and practice the skills and concepts needed by individuals who are blind or Visually Impaired to 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 considered. Body imagery, concept development, spatial awareness and mobility are 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, assessment, and adaptation of environments for these students.

Course: SPE 593 INTERMEDIATE PRACTICUM IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY
Semester: Fall and Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Two hour seminar and five hours of lab per week. Practicum experience teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with a visual impairment under the supervision of the practicum supervisor. Prerequisite: SPE 500.

Course: SPE 594 ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTICUM IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY
Semester: Fall and Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: Two hours seminar and five hours 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 PRACTICUM IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY (12 HRS)
Semester: Fall and Spring
Credits: 3-12 semester hours
Description: Supervised practicum experience requiring a minimum of 350 hours teaching orientation and mobility to individuals with a visual disability. Prerequisites: SPE 500, 593, 594 and permission of instructor.

Certified 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. O&M certification will only accept courses taken for university credit. Alternate certification courses cannot be used towards O&M certification. SPE 500 is known as the blindfold course and involves 60 to 65 clock hours of instruction under the blindfold as well as approximately 25 hours of seminar. The course is typically offered to graduate students during the summer and students will have to be able to travel to SFASU for 5 to 6 weeks of daily classes. Travel and living expenses for these students may be covered by the grant. Students who live on or near campus may be able to begin training in the fall or spring semester if courses are available.

**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: RHB340, 400, 401, 402, 493, 495, 496, SPE 442, 445, plus, 3 hours from RHB407, 422, SPH172, 272

**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.
- **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.)
- **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
- **383. Psycho-Social Aspects of Disability** - Provides an understanding of persons with disabilities emphasizing psychological, social, and medical aspects.
- **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 and Visual Impairment:

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: Two hours lecture and 12 hours 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: RHB 401 INTERMEDIATE CLINICAL PRACTICUM IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY
Semester: Fall
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: - 3 semester hours, 1 hour seminar and 6 hours of laboratory per week. Field instruction in orientation and mobility under the supervision of the field study director and professional staff of the field study director and professional staff of the cooperating agency, Prerequisites: RHB 325 and 400, or instructor approval. 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: RHB 402. ADVANCED CLINICAL PRACTICUM IN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY
Semester: Spring
Credits: 3 semester hours
Description: 1 hour seminar and 6 hours of laboratory per week, Advanced field instruction in orientation and mobility under the supervision of the field study director and professional staff of the field study director and professional staff of the cooperating agency. (May be taken concurrently with RHB 401) Prerequisites: RHB 325 and 400.
**Course:** SPE 442 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 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.

**Course:** RHB 493-D THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED –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 - 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 401, 402.

**Course:** RHB 496 INTERNSHIP II- Practical work experience as described in RHB 495. Prerequisite: RHB 401, 402.
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’s of Education program

Typically, students who enter the Master’s program have already finished either the COMS or the TVI certification program. The additional courses listed below are required in order to earn a M.Ed. in Special Education with a concentration in visual impairment or orientation and mobility. For detailed information about graduation visit: [http://www.sfasu.edu/registrar](http://www.sfasu.edu/registrar), and click on Graduation and Diplomas.

**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  
**Description:** Visual assessment and intervention methods for persons with low vision.
**Course:** SPE 521 TEACHING THE EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM TO STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS  
**Semester:** Fall  
**Credits:** 3 semester hours  
**Description:** The expanded core curriculum includes areas such as self care, cooking, home management, vocational awareness, social skills, and recreation and leisure skills. This class provides an opportunity to delve deeper into the importance of the expanded core curriculum and how it should be taught. Prerequisite: Certification as a TVI or COMS, or instructor approval.

**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. Prerequisite: SPE 516.

**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.

**Course:** SPE 570 SPECIAL STUDIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION – VISUAL IMPAIRMENT  
**Semester:** Fall and Spring  
**Credits:** Two semesters of a 3 hour course for a total of 6 credits  
**Description:** This is the capstone class of the M.Ed. program. In this course, students learn about the process of developing and conducting research in an academic setting. They will complete a research project under the direction of a faculty member.
Admission Requirements

Obviously, 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 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 have a valid teacher’s certificate from the Texas Education Agency in order to be admitted to the program.

Additional Admission Requirements

Prospective students must:

1. have a minimum of an 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.

2. demonstrate a proficiency in both reading and writing. The applicant will be required to submit a written essay 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 in and prior 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.

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**Cohort Admission Policy**

Grant Funded Students- It is the policy of the VIP to admit grant funded students to their graduate level programs in a single cohort. This means that most **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). Once admissions decisions have been made **NO NEW GRANT FUNDED STUDENTS WILL BE ADMITTED UNTIL THE NEXT ADMISSIONS CYCLE**.

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.
How to Apply for Admission

In order to apply for admissions, the applicant should complete the following steps:

1. Complete and submit the Texas Common Application. 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 and 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, and that are **NOT** interested in getting a Master's degree, should so indicate within the Texas Common Application.

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

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.

4. Submit an essay 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 this career move.

5. Submit official copies of your university and college transcripts from EVERY university or college you have attended. These are to be submitted to Ms. Swift as well.

6. 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. In order to be accepted into our program, the student MUST have a signed letter from Frankie Swift stating that they have been 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, drivers 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](http://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 of the certificate programs or the M.Ed. program can expect that the following classes will be required during the semesters specified. Degree plans for the O&M, TVI and Dually Certified O&M/TVI programs are also included here in Appendix C.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 517 – Braille</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Master of Education in Special Education with a concentration in visual impairment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SPE 517 – Braille</td>
<td>Summer 1 and 2</td>
</tr>
<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>
</table>

**Year 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Semester Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<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>Course</td>
<td>Semester Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<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 – MIVI</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>
</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>

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 **Section 8: Requirements**.

Certification as an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) -- graduate
**Masters Degree in Special Education with a concentration in Orientation and Mobility**

<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>
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<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 – MIVI</td>
<td>Fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 593 – Beginning Internship</td>
<td>Fall</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>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Year 2**

<table>
<thead>
<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>
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<td>SPE 552 – MIVI</td>
<td>Fall</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPE 558 – Practicum</td>
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<td>SPE 594 – Intermediate Practicum</td>
<td>Spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 595 – Internship</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 SEND AN EMAIL to Ms. Frankie Swift who is responsible for ALL registration. If an email is not received, you WILL NOT be registered for classes. If you have questions about which classes you should take, please contact your advisor or one of the faculty.

*Even though students' tuition is paid, they must register themselves. If the student drops following the 4th class day, they will be required to return any grant monies paid on their behalf.

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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 —Grade Withheld— for a particular class. THESE SITUATIONS SHOULD BE VIEWED AS THE EXCEPTION. WHs 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:
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 every class with the exception of the braille class. 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 150 hours. One hundred twenty 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.

**Comprehensive Exam for the Master’s in Education Degree**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehensive Exam Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Comprehensive Exam will focus on seven key areas of knowledge covered in the graduate program you have completed. Those areas are: Foundations in Visual Impairment, Structure and Function of the Visual System, Basic Orientation and Mobility, Methods for Working with Academic Students Who Have Visual Impairments, Methods for Working with Students Who Have Visual and Multiple Impairments, Advanced Assessment and Instructional Strategies for Students Who Have Low Vision, Infancy and Early Childhood Instruction for Students with Visual Impairments, Technology for Students Who Have Visual Impairments, Tests and Measures, Educational Appraisal. Specific topics for each class are listed below.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehensive Exam Format</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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. The Exam will be administered in two testing sessions – morning and afternoon. In each of the sessions, three essay questions will be given. The student will select two of the three questions and answer them. Students should plan to spend between an hour and an hour and a half to answer each question.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Great care should be given to organization, composition, and support of key points with major citations from the literature.

PROCEDURES

Making Arrangements for the Exam
Students are required to notify Ms. Frankie Swift approximately 4 weeks before they want to take the test. Students will need to identify the date, time and location for the Exam. Most importantly, however, the student is required to specify a proctor for the Exam. THIS PROCTOR MUST BE AN ADMINISTRATOR, EDUCATION SERVICE CENTER SPECIALIST, OR MEMBER OF THE VIP FACULTY. The student will provide the Program with the following information regarding the proctor:

- Name and Title
- Organization
- Mailing address
- Telephone number
- Email address

On the Day of the Exam

A minimum of four hours in the morning and four hours in the afternoon will be scheduled for the exam, with additional time allowed if required. Students should plan to complete the Exam in Microsoft Word format on a computer. AN ELECTRONIC COPY OF THE STUDENT'S ANSWERS MUST BE SUBMITTED ALONG WITH A PRINTED COPY.

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 at the end of this section. In the event of a question regarding the outcome of the reviewers, the Department Chair of the Department of Human Services will review the exam and rule accordingly. Within 14 days after the exam each student will be notified if he or she has passed or failed the Exam.

Retakes

If a student does not successfully complete the Exam, an appointment will be scheduled to review the Exam with one of the reviewers. A plan for retaking the exam will be determined at that time and presented to the faculty for approval. No student will be allowed to attempt passage of the
Comprehensive Exam more than three times. If the student is not successful at the end of the third attempt, a remediation plan which may include taking additional course work or individual work with faculty will be developed.

**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](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 following is the University's policies on Academic Appeals by Students (A - 2)

Original Implementation: August 31, 1981
Last Revision: January 29, 2008
Good communication between faculty and students will make disputes between them infrequent, but if disagreements occur, it is university policy to provide a mechanism whereby a student may formally appeal faculty decisions. When a student uses the appeals procedure, all parties should endeavor to resolve the dispute amicably at as early a stage as possible
and in compliance with applicable laws, regulations and policies. The faculty member, after considering the outcome of the appeals process, shall retain complete academic freedom to make the final determination on the matter and to assign semester grades.

All materials under consideration at each step will be forwarded to the appropriate parties at the next procedural level. These steps are to be followed when making an academic complaint:

All materials under consideration at each step will be forwarded to the appropriate parties at the next procedural level. These steps are to be followed when making an academic complaint:

• In the event of course-related complaints or disputes, the student must first appeal to the instructor for a resolution of the matter and must do so within 30 days after the first class day of the next long semester. Given extenuating circumstances, exceptions to this deadline may be granted.

• If a complaint or dispute is not satisfactorily resolved, the student may appeal to the academic chair/director of the academic unit in which the complaint or dispute is centered. If a formal complaint is to be registered, it should be made in writing stating the specific issues. The faculty member will respond with a written statement to the academic chair/director.

• If the complaint or dispute is still unresolved after appeal to the academic chair/director, the student or faculty member may appeal in writing to the dean of the academic college in which the complaint or dispute is centered. The dean will notify the faculty member or student of the appeal.

• If a resolution of the matter is not reached, the dean may refer the appeal to the college council of the college in which the complaint or dispute is centered. The college council will evaluate the oral and written statements of the student and the faculty member. If the college council does not have at least one student member, the president of the Student Government Association will be asked by the dean to recommend no more than two student representatives from that college to serve for each case. The college council will submit its recommendation to the dean of the academic college.

• If a resolution of the matter is not reached, the student or the faculty member may appeal in writing to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The dean's written recommendation in addition to all previous materials will be submitted to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The college council of the college in which the complaint or dispute is centered may serve as an advisory body to the provost and vice president for academic affairs in the appeal process. The provost and vice president for academic affairs will evaluate all previous materials and any additional oral presentations from the
student and faculty member.

- After making a decision, the provost and vice president for academic affairs will inform the student and all persons involved in the appeal process of the final recommendation of the matter within a reasonable period of time.

**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

### Some Practical Suggestions

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.
APPENDIX B
Checklist for Application Rubric

REQUIRED PAPERWORK FOR PROJECT VISION

CERTIFICATION ONLY: ___VI ___O&M ___DUAL ESC REGION____

_____Graduate Application with $25 Fee ($50 as of Spring ‘14)
_____Project VISION Application
_____Official Transcripts (must show teaching certification if doing VI)
_____One letter of Recommendation from Current Supervisor

_____Philosophy Statement, understanding of role of TVI or COMS, and reason for career move

IF DOING A MASTERS:

_____Two Additional letters of Recommendation
Appendix C - Degree Plans

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: _____ Zip: _____________

Type of Bachelors 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>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL FOR DEGREE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PROGRAM NOTE: SPE 593, 594, and 594 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 SIX YEARS.

Major Professor ___________________ Student ___________________

Department Chair ___________________ Certificate Officer __________

Approval Date ___________________ Dean ___________________

Revised 06/2013
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 Bachelors 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 |
| | 36 |
| 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.

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

_________________________ __________________________
Major Professor Student

_________________________ __________________________
Department Chair Certificate Officer

_________________________ __________________________
Approval Date Dean

Revised 06/2013
# Appendix D
Field Based Experience Chart

## FIELD EXPERIENCES
**SPE 551**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum of 20 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student with visual impairments in a regular or self contained classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential school students with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult client of a rehabilitation agency that serves persons with visual impairments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation and Mobility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT/FAMILY INTERVIEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select at least 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An academic student with a visual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family of a student with an academic student with visual impairment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAINING SESSIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As needed for a total of 40 hours FBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any available inservice training session about providing VI services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOLUNTEERING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As needed for a total of 40 hours FBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special student’s sports day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Olympics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI Sports or Technology Olympics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OTHER INTERVIEWS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select at least 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMS or TVI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a VI Rehab Counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Texas Commission for the Blind or Lighthouse)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An adult with a visual impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, Member of National Association of Parents of Visually Impaired Children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix E
Practicum Paperwork

Stephen F. Austin State University
Vision Program (VI and O&M)
Practicum Contract

ACTIVITIES TO BE COMPLETED:

________ Functional Vision Assessment/Learning Media Assessment

________ IEP or IFSP goals and objectives

________ Complete VI ARD or IFSP Supplements and Consent Forms

________ Log of student contacts (150 total hours)

________ Reflection (Journal)

________ Case study

________ Assessment

________ Post Philosophy Statement

________ 1 or 2 inch notebook of above items

________ Qualifying Exam (Must make 80 to pass course)

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. Tabs - Each section of the notebook should be tabbed (separated). Tabbed sections should include:

   **Functional Vision Evaluation** - an example of an FVE/LMA that you completed
   **IEP or IFSP** - an example of IEP and/or IFSP goals and objectives that you wrote and updated
   **VI ARD FORMS** - examples of completed ARD supplements and consent forms
   **Contact Log** - forms (as many as are required) to show the required 150 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 details are outlined in the syllabus and should be 3-4 pages.
   **Assessment** - documentation of a completed assessment using one of the assessment instruments you learned about in SPE 551 or SPE 552. 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.
   **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. 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)

As always call if you have any questions.
## Appendix F
### Comprehensive Exam Rubric

**Comprehensive Exam Rubric**

Name: Pass Fail

Question number:

Semester: Date: Evaluator:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Possible</th>
<th>Superior</th>
<th>Above Average</th>
<th>Meets Expec.</th>
<th>Below Expec</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
<th>Point Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thoroughness</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soundness of logic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to pragmatic practice</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of research cited</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound conclusions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writer's Fundamental Rules</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Organization</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possible total: 135 points Points scored: _________
Stephen F. Austin State University

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) support for Orientation and Mobility Training Program

Rehabilitation Services Administration Grant

Financial Support toward a Bachelor Degree in Rehabilitation.

Tracy Hallak, Project Investigator
Donna Wood, Grant Administrator
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. Once a student reaches Junior status at the university, they are eligible to apply 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. Traditional (undergraduate/on campus) and non-traditional (distance education) students are eligible to apply for RSA grant funds. Once students complete graduate or complete their training program they are eligible to sit for the national certification exam through ACVREP.

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75962-3019
Phone: 936.468.1145
E-mail: hallaktracy@sfasu.edu

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