



# Intermediate Unit 1

SERVING FAYETTE, GREENE, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

## **GUIDELINES FOR CASE SELECTION, CONTINUANCE AND DISMISSAL OF SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

**Special Education Department  
Communication Disorders and Sensory Impairments  
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## **PREFACE**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Intermediate Unit 1 Sensory/Visual Impairment Program is to assist students with visual impairments to access the same relevant and rigorous information as their typically sighted peers in the most efficient mode so they may become confident, responsible, and independent adults in a sighted world.

### **ENDORSEMENT**

Intermediate Unit 1 endorses the utilization of effective and efficient researched-based programs of vision support and orientation and mobility services to the participating public schools within the twenty-five school districts in Fayette, Greene and Washington counties. Teachers of students with visual impairments (TVI) and certified orientation and mobility specialists (COMS) provide these programs and services in compliance with Federal and State Statutes and Regulations. They also adhere to the goal of providing quality programming for students using the best research-based and effective practices. Therefore, the following sections contain an explanation of components that are guidelines for enrollment in, continuance of, and dismissal from vision support programs and services. Eligibility criterion is developed by TVIs and COMS through a combination of screening results and teacher referrals, followed by evaluations and multidisciplinary team decisions. This process of evaluation and multidisciplinary team review is the foundation of enrollment, continuance and dismissal decisions.

## **PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

- To suggest how the teacher of students with visual impairment or the certified orientation and mobility specialist might participate in educational problem solving through the pre-referral/screening process.
- To recommend procedures for the assessment of students with visual impairments.
- To recommend procedures to assess if a student's visual impairment is adversely affecting his/her educational performance.
- To recommend procedures for the assessment of a student with orientation and mobility (O&M) needs.
- To establish criteria for the determination of the severity of the effects of a student's visual impairment.
- To define a common set of criteria for the identification of students with orientation and mobility (O&M) needs.
- To recommend ways of documenting the adverse effect of a visual impairment on a student's educational and functional performance.
- To recommend ways of documenting the adverse effect of a visual impairment on a student's ability to safely and efficiently travel in all environments.
- To propose a variety of service delivery options to promote and develop compensatory skills to minimize the effect of a student's visual impairment.
- To differentiate between vision therapy and vision support services.
- To recommend a common set of exit criteria for the discontinuation of vision support services and/or orientation and mobility services.



# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. Role of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI)**

The Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) is professionally trained to screen, identify, assess, refer, provide intervention strategies and develop individual education programs, provide instruction, and apply applicable laws and policies for students, ages 3-21, who are blind or have visual impairments. The TVI has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Provides assessment of a student's functional vision and determines the impact on a student's educational performance.
- Provides specialized instruction and services required to address the unique educational needs of a visually impaired student.
- Assists the student, parents, special and regular education personnel, and the student's sighted peers in interpreting the visually impaired student's specific eye condition, the educational implications of the visual impairment, and the results of functional vision and learning media assessments.
- Provides instruction in the development and maintenance of skills to meet the student's unique educational needs in the areas of the expanded core curriculum.
- Provides in-service training programs for school personnel and students as well as parents regarding the needs of visually impaired students and adaptations, programs, and services for these students.

## **B. Role of the Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS)**

A Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Provides assessments of a student’s orientation and mobility strengths and needs including O&M functional vision assessment.
- Instructs a student with visual impairment in the development of skills and knowledge that enables him/her to travel with proficiency, safety, and confidence in familiar and unfamiliar environments.
- Prepares and uses equipment and materials, such as tactile maps, models, distance low vision devices, and long canes, to develop O&M skills.
- Provides inservice training to general and special education personnel, sighted peers, and parents concerning the O&M needs of the student.
- Recommends appropriate service delivery model.

## **C. Federal and State Statutes and Regulations**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004) includes visual impairment including blindness as a primary disability. It is defined as “an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.” §300.8(c)(13)

As a related service, visual impairment includes supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education. If Visual Impairment is the primary disability, it is considered special education rather than a related service and consists of “specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, including instruction conducted in the classroom,

in the home, and in other settings”.

In IDEA 2004, Related Services means transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes speech language pathology and audiology services, interpreting services, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation, early identification and assessment of disabilities in children, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, orientation and mobility services, and medical services for diagnostic or evaluation purposes. Related services also include school health services and school nurse services, social work services in schools, and parent counseling and training. [§300.34(a)]

**Orientation and Mobility Services—**

- (i) Means services provided to blind or visually impaired children by qualified personnel to enable those students to attain systematic orientation to and safe movement within their environments in school, home, and community; and
- (ii) Includes teaching children the following, as appropriate:
  - (A) Spatial and environmental concepts and use of information received by the senses (such as sound, temperature and vibrations) to establish, maintain, or regain orientation and line of travel (e.g., using sound at a traffic light to cross the street);
  - (B) To use the long cane or a service animal to supplement visual travel skills or as a tool for safely negotiating the environment for children with no available travel vision;
  - (C) To understand and use remaining vision and distance low vision aids; and
  - (D) Other concepts, techniques, and tools. [§300.34(c)(7)]

## **II. ELIGIBILITY AND DISMISSAL GUIDELINES**

### **A. Identification**

One of the roles of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) is to participate as a member of the evaluation team in identifying a student who may be in need of assessments to determine possible eligibility for special education or related services. These assessments assist in determining the presence of a disability/disabilities and eligibility/ineligibility for special education and related services as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 2004), Federal Regulations, and PA Chapter 14 Regulations.

The basic phases of the identification process are pre-referral/ screening and referral when indicated.

### **B. Pre-Referral/Screening Process**

The pre-referral/screening process is the first step in deciding whether a student is in need of a referral for a formal evaluation to determine the need for special education/related services or only in need of program modifications within the general education environment.

Screening, by definition, is a process of selection or elimination a student for evaluation consideration. The screening process is completed through group or individual activities which may include:

- Observation of the student in the educational environment
- Screening of near/distance vision and visual field
- Attempt to obtain input from the student, family, nurse, and teachers
- Review of medical and educational records

Screening activities are recommended prior to requesting a formal evaluation. These screening activities do not prohibit a parent from requesting an evaluation at any time, including prior to or during the screening process. See *Referral for Support Services Form* in Appendix A for further explanation.

## **C. Referral for Evaluation**

A referral is a formal written request for assessment of a student with a visual impairment who may need vision support and/or orientation and mobility services. A parent, teacher or other service provider may initiate a referral for the assessment. The assessment focuses on all areas related to a student's visual impairment.

A written referral includes a brief description of the reason(s) for the referral and any medical information provided.

## **D. Assessment/Evaluation**

The Teacher of students with Visual Impairments (TVI) provides assessment of a student's functional vision and determines the impact on his/her educational performance. The purpose of an educational Functional Vision Evaluation (FVE) is to determine how a student functions visually in various environments. This evaluation addresses a student's unique visual needs and their educational implications. The assessment includes input from the student, family, teacher, and other service providers, review of medical and educational records, visual acuity, peripheral vision, depth perception, color vision, and other visual skills. The TVI conducts a Learning Media Assessment (LMA), which is a process of systematically selecting learning and literary media for a student with a visual impairment.

The Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS) provides evaluation of a student's orientation and mobility skills and needs. This evaluation determines if a student's level of skill and knowledge is sufficient to travel with proficiency, safety, and confidence. The assessment is conducted in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

## **E. Assessing Students with Additional Disabilities**

When assessing a student with additional disabilities, observations and interviews are important ways to gather valuable information. For a student with multiple disabilities, a vision loss may not be the most obvious challenge, but it may significantly impact the child's ability to learn.

Information about the effect of vision loss on the student's ability to learn, to communicate and to socialize is an important component of the evaluation. Categories of additional disabilities may include, but are not limited to, hearing loss, motor impairment, and traumatic brain injury.

## **F. Service Delivery Models**

Service delivery to students is the primary focus of IDEA 2004 and is the most important role of the Teacher of students who are Visually Impaired. Service delivery systems allow the teacher to comply with the requirements of IDEA 2004, utilizing a continuum of options, providing services in the least restrictive environment, and facilitating access to the general education curriculum.

- **Monitoring** – A student is seen by the Teacher of the Visually Impaired intermittently throughout the school year.
- **Consultation** – A student receives regularly scheduled services from the Teacher of the Visually Impaired throughout the school year. The teacher can meet with a student directly or indirectly by consulting with faculty and/or staff.
- **Supportive** – The student is seen directly by the Teacher of the Visually Impaired 1-2 times/week. Functional vision assessment is ongoing throughout the school year. A minimal amount of material preparation and/or adapted aids may be needed. In addition, the Teacher of the Visually Impaired may provide direct support to pertinent individuals, and make recommendations for changes in a student's learning environment.
- **Integrated** – A student in this model requires direct service from the Teacher of the Visually Impaired 3-5 times/week. The teacher frequently needs to adapt or modify materials. A student may need to be introduced to some new tangible aids or new skills, e.g., multiplying on an abacus, keyboarding, or life skills. The Teacher of the Visually Impaired provides regular communication to pertinent individuals regarding the student's needs.

- **Intensive** – A student in this model will most likely require intensive daily instruction by the Teacher of the Visually Impaired in order to facilitate academic progress and participation in the general education classroom. A student may learn to use tangible aids and technology to facilitate written communication. A student’s educational program will require frequent material preparation and instruction in disability specific skills throughout the school year. The Teacher of the Visually Impaired is responsible for communicating a student’s visual strengths and needs to all pertinent individuals on a regular basis.
- **Comprehensive** – A student in this model is one who needs almost total intervention by the Teacher of the Visually Impaired in the adaptation, modification and preparation of materials. A student in this model is usually learning to use some type of assistive technology. Consultation with school personnel may occur on a daily basis to facilitate a student’s participation in the general education classroom.

As a student's needs change and skills develop, the appropriateness of the delivery model, frequency and amount of service must be reevaluated and adjusted accordingly. The service delivery model may change during the course of a student’s academic career.

## **G. Dismissal Information**

A student, whose primary disability is Visual Impairment, must be reevaluated prior to being dismissed from special education. A decision to dismiss is based upon IEP Team input (e.g., parents, teacher, specialist(s), etc.) and initiated by the Teacher of the Visually Impaired or any other team member. A student who receives vision services as a related service may be dismissed through the IEP process unless Visual Impairment is listed as a secondary disability and/or is specified in the Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP).

### **III. PENNSYLVANIA’S APPROACH TO THE NATIONAL AGENDA**

*The National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities* is a grass-roots reform movement aimed at improving the education of students with visual impairments, deaf-blindness, and visual and multiple disabilities. The efforts of the movement are organized around ten priorities that are stated as goals.

Pennsylvania’s Approach to the National Agenda (PANA) is a customization of the National Agenda to meet the educational needs and priorities of these children and youths in the commonwealth. PANA contains a set of goals and actions designed to ensure positive educational outcomes (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011).

#### **Goal 1: Referral**

Students and their families will be referred to an appropriate education program within 30 days of identification of a suspected visual impairment. Teachers of students with Visual Impairments) and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) specialists will provide appropriate quality services.

#### **Goal 2: Parents**

Policies and procedures will be implemented to ensure the right of all parents to full participation and equal partnership in the education process.

#### **Goal 3: Universities**

Universities with a minimum of one full-time faculty member in the area of visual impairment will prepare a sufficient number of TVIs and COMS for students with visual impairments, to meet personnel needs throughout the country.

#### **Goal 4: Caseloads**

Caseloads will be determined based on the assessed needs of the students.

**Goal 5: Placement Options**

Local education programs will ensure that all students have access to a full array of service delivery options.

**Goal 6: Assessment**

All assessments and evaluations of students will be conducted by or in partnership with personnel having expertise in the education of students with visual impairments and their parents.

**Goal 7: Instructional Materials**

Access to developmental and educational services will include an assurance that textbooks and instructional materials are available to students in the appropriate media and at the same time as their sighted peers.

**Goal 8: Core Curriculum**

All educational goals and instruction will address the academic and expanded core curriculum (ECC) based on the assessed needs of each student with a visual impairments.

**Goal 9: Transition**

Transition services will address developmental and educational needs (birth through high school) to assist students and their families in setting goals and implementing strategies through the life continuum commensurate with a students' aptitudes, interests, and abilities.

**Goal 10: Professional Development**

To improve students' learning, service providers will engage in ongoing local, state, and national professional development.

While all ten goals are critical to the success of children and youths with visual impairments, deaf-blindness, and visual and multiple disabilities, **Goal 8**, which addresses the expanded core curriculum (ECC), has been identified as a priority. The ECC is the total set of disability-specific skills, which students with visual impairments need to learn in order to lead full, independent lives. The need for instruction in each area of the ECC is determined through the assessment of individual students.

#### **IV. Expanded Core Curriculum**

There are nine ECC areas. These include the following, which are defined by the American Foundation for the Blind:

**Compensatory Skills** – skills needed by students who are blind and/or visually impaired in order to access all areas of core curriculum. Mastery of compensatory skills will usually mean that the student who is visually impaired has access to learning in a manner equal to that of sighted peers.

**Functional Skills** - refers to the skills that students with multiple disabilities learn that provide them with the opportunity to work, play, socialize, and take care of personal needs to the highest level possible.

Compensatory and functional skills include such learning experiences as:

- Concept development
- Spatial understanding, study and organizational skills
- Speaking and listening skills, and
- Adaptations necessary for accessing all areas of the existing core curriculum.

Communication needs will vary, depending on degree of functional vision, effects of additional disabilities, and the task to be done. Children may use the following to communicate:

- Braille
- Large print
- Print with the use of optical devices
- Regular print
- Tactile symbols
- A calendar system
- Sign language, and/or
- Recorded materials

Regardless, each student will need instruction from a teacher with professional preparation to instruct students with visual impairments in each of the compensatory and functional skills they need to master. These compensatory and functional needs of the visually impaired child are significant, and are not addressed with sufficient specificity in the existing core curriculum.

**Orientation and Mobility** - As a part of the expanded core curriculum, orientation and mobility is a vital area of learning. Teachers who have been specifically prepared to teach orientation and mobility to blind and visually impaired learners are necessary in the delivery of this curriculum. Students will need to learn about themselves and the environment in which they move - from basic body image to independent travel in rural areas and busy cities. The existing core curriculum does not include provision for this instruction. It has been said that the two primary effects of blindness on the individual are communication and locomotion. The expanded core curriculum must include emphasis on the fundamental need and basic right of visually impaired persons to travel as independently as possible, enjoying and learning from the environment through which they are passing to the greatest extent possible.

Orientation and Mobility skills include, but are not limited to the following:

- Using human guide techniques (also known as sighted guide)
- Using standard and adaptive canes
- Using orientation components to determine where one is in space
- Moving through space by walking or using a wheelchair
- Using self-advocacy skills

**Social Interaction Skills** – Almost all social skills used by sighted children and adults have been learned by visually observing the environment and other persons, and behaving in socially appropriate ways based on that information. Individuals who are blind or visually impaired do not learn social interaction skills as casually and incidentally as their sighted peers. Social skills must be carefully, consciously, and sequentially taught to students who are blind and visually impaired. Nothing in the existing core curriculum addresses this critical need in a satisfactory manner. Thus, instruction in social interaction skills becomes a part of the expanded core curriculum as a need so fundamental that it can often mean the difference between social isolation and a satisfying and fulfilling life as an adult.

Skills needed to respond appropriately and participate actively in social situations include:

- Shaking hands
- Maintaining good eye contact with a speaker
- Turning toward others when speaking or being spoken to
- Using language to make a request, decline assistance, or express a need
- Expressing emotion and affection appropriately
- Participating appropriately in conversations in various situations

**Independent Living Skills** – This area of the expanded core curriculum is often referred to as "daily living skills." It consists of all the tasks and functions persons perform, in accordance with their abilities, in order to lead lives as independently as possible. These curricular needs are varied, as they include skills in:

- Personal hygiene
- Food preparation
- Money management
- Time management
- Organization
- Cleaning
- Clothing care

Some independent living skills are addressed in the existing core curriculum, but they often are introduced as splinter skills, appearing in learning material, disappearing, and then reappearing. This approach will not adequately prepare students who are blind and visually impaired for adult life. Traditional classes in home economics and family life are not enough to meet the learning needs of most students who are visually impaired, since they assume a basic level of knowledge, acquired incidentally through vision. Students without visual impairments acquire skills and knowledge by casually and incidentally observing and interacting with their environment. It is more difficult for students who are blind and/or visually impaired. They must learn with direct, sequential instruction by knowledgeable persons.

**Recreation and Leisure Skills** – Skills in recreation and leisure are seldom offered as a part of the existing core curriculum. Rather, physical education in the form of team games and athletics is the typical way in which physical fitness needs are met for students without visual impairments. Many of the activities in physical education are excellent and appropriate for students who are visually impaired. In addition, however, these students need to develop activities in recreation and leisure that they can enjoy throughout their adult lives. Most often students without visual impairments select their recreation and leisure activity repertoire by visually observing activities and choosing those in which they wish to participate. The teaching of recreation and leisure skills to students who are blind and visually impaired must be planned and deliberately taught, and should focus on the development of life-long skills.

Skills to ensure student’s enjoyment of physical and leisure-time activities including:

- Making choices about how to spend leisure time
- Actively participating in physical and social recreational activities
- Trying new leisure activities
- Following rules in games and activities at an appropriate level
- Maintaining safety during leisure activities

**Vocational/Career Education**— There is a need for general vocational education, as offered in the traditional core curriculum, as well as the need for career education offered specifically for students who are blind and visually impaired. Many of the skills and knowledge offered to all students through vocational education can be of value to students who are blind and visually impaired. Career education in an expanded core curriculum will provide the student who is visually impaired with the opportunity to learn first-hand the work done by the bank teller, the gardener, the social worker, the artist, etc. It will provide the student opportunities to explore strengths and interests in a systematic, well-planned manner.

Because unemployment and underemployment have been the leading problems facing adults who are visually impaired in the United States, this portion of the expanded core curriculum is vital to students, and should be

part of the expanded curriculum for even the youngest of these individuals.

Skills that enable students who are visually impaired to move toward working as an adult include:

- Exploring and expressing preferences about work roles
- Assuming work responsibilities at home and school
- Understanding concepts of reward for work
- Participating in job experiences
- Learning about jobs and adult work roles at a developmentally appropriate level

**Sensory Efficiency** – Sensory efficiency includes instruction in the use of residual vision, hearing, and the other senses (e. g., learning how to use optical devices, hearing aids, augmentative communication devices, etc.). In addition, learning how to integrate all senses to counter the impact of any missing or impaired sense is also integral to this area (e. g., learning how to use tactual, gustatory, and olfactory input rather than visual cues to identify one's personal possessions, or using hearing and the other senses to identify people one knows without visual cues).

Skills that help students use the senses, including any functional vision, hearing, touch, smell (olfactory) and taste (gustatory). Examples of sensory efficiency skills may include:

- Using optical aids
- Using augmentative and alternative communication devices
- Using touch and vision to identify personal items
- Organize sensory input
- Frequent use of breaks for over-stimulation of the senses
- Use of auditory materials

**Self-Determination** – This area of the ECC highlights the importance of believing in oneself, while understanding one's abilities and limitations. Students learn from successes and failures how to achieve one's goals in life. Self-determination is the ability for people to control their lives, reach goals they have set and take part fully in the world around them.

**Technology** – Technology is a tool to unlock learning and expand the

horizons of all students. It is added to the ECC because technology is an integral component of the education of students who are blind and/or visually impaired. For the student who communicates using braille, it allows him/her to access and produce materials identical to typically sighted peers. It gives students who are blind the capability of independently storing and retrieving information. Technology has leveled the playing field for individuals with visual impairment and is an essential part of the ECC.

## **V. TOOLS**

### **Screening Tools**

Screening tools consist of a variety of tools including, but not limited to:

- Medical and educational record review
- Visual acuity screening
- Peripheral field screening
- Observations in a variety educational environments
- Portfolio/ Student work samples
- Teacher input
- Family input
- Student input

### **Evaluation Tools**

- Ann Arbor Learning Inventory
- American Printing House for the Blind (APH) Diagnostic Reading Scales (Large Print and Braille)
- APH Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessment (FV/LMA)
- Barraga Visual Efficiency Scale
- Basic Reading Inventory
- Boehm Test of Basic Concepts
- Burns and Roe Reading Assessment
- Braille Assessment Inventory
- Color Vision Testing Made Easy
- Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Range
- Feinbloom Low Vision Acuity Test

- Field Testing
- Functional Vision Evaluation Kit
- Hiding Heidi Contrast Test
- Hill Performance Test of Selected Positional Concepts (O&M)
- ISAVE Program from APH
- Ishihara Color Discrimination Test
- Jerry Johns Reading Inventory
- LEA Visual Acuity Tests
- Learning Media Assessments
- Lighthouse Activity Cards
- Motor Free Visual Perception Test
- Oregon Project for Visually Impaired and Blind Preschool Children
- Print Size Assessment
- Reading Comprehension Proficiency Test
- Social Skills Assessment Tool for Children with Visual Impairments
- South Carolina Functional Visual Skills Assessment
- Texas School for the Blind (TSBVI) Assessment Kit
- TSBVI TAPS Screening/Curriculum Program
- Test of Visual Motor Integration
- Vision Associates "Play Assessment of Functional Vision"
- Vision Associates Screening Tools
- Vision Screening for Young Children Early Intervention Program

### **Transition Tools**

- TSBVI social skills assessment kit
- Interest and skills inventory
- APH Transition Tote
- Intermediate Unit 1 HOMES Assessment
- Intermediate Unit 1 Transition Surveys

## **VI. HOME ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL (H.O.M.E.S.) PROGRAM**

Due to the increasing demands placed upon students with visual impairments in their academic programs, there exists a need to find a way to effectively provide instruction in the area of life skills. Many of these skills can be provided within the parameters of a student's orientation and mobility program. From this need, the Intermediate Unit 1 H.O.M.E.S. program was conceived. The program is designed to provide students a full-day experience in addition to other related services.

The primary goal of the H.O.M.E.S. program is to increase each student's level of independence in the following life skills areas:

- Food preparation skills
- Shopping skills
- Laundry skills
- Cleaning skills
- Money management skills
- Computer/technology skills
- Socialization skills
- Recreation and leisure skills
- Orientation and mobility skills integrated across all instructional areas

The H.O.M.E.S. program provides students who are blind/visually impaired with the opportunity to meet and learn compensatory skills, to carry out career exploration activities, to acquire orientation and mobility skills and to practice appropriate social skills in a variety of educational and community settings. Each year a theme is established and theme-based lessons are followed. The students often participate in community service projects.

## VII. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (AT)

**Assistive technology device** means any piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. [§300.5]

**Assistive technology service** means any service that directly assists a child with a disability in the selection, acquisition, or use of an assistive technology device. The term includes:

- The evaluation of the needs of a child with a disability, including a functional evaluation of the child in the child's customary environment;
- Purchasing, leasing, or otherwise providing for the acquisition of assistive technology devices by children with disabilities;
- Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing or replacing assistive technology devices;
- Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as those associated with existing education and rehabilitative plans and programs;
- Training or technical assistance for a child with a disability or, if appropriate, that child's family; and
- Training or technical assistance for professionals (including individuals providing education or rehabilitative services), employers, or other individuals who provide services to, employ, or are otherwise substantially involved in the major life functions of that child. [§300.6(a-f)]

Assistive technology in special education refers to any devices or services that are necessary for a child to benefit from special education or related services or to enable the child to be educated in the least restrictive environment. (34 C.F.R. §300.308). The IDEA uses the definition of assistive technology from the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals With Disabilities Act (Tech Act) of 1988, which was added to the IDEA in the 1990 amendments to the law.

Assistive technology also includes specialized transportation equipment

such as "special or adapted buses, lifts, and ramps." [34 C.F.R. §300.16(b)(14)]. An August 1990 Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) letter interpreted the definition of "related services" to include assistive technology. (16 EHLR 1317, 1990). The letter emphasized that the determination of what constitutes a free appropriate public education must be made on an individual basis and any needed services must be included in the student's IEP. See also OSEP Letter, 24 IDELR 854. Technological skills are crucial to function in today's world. To successfully interact in today's society, the student with visual impairment needs to explore different assistive technology options.

To achieve success in school, and later in life, people who are blind or visually impaired need access to a toolbox filled with a variety of tools, so they can select the appropriate tool for any given task. Some students may do well without using any AT devices. Some may benefit by using only a few, while others require several AT devices in combination. To know what assistive technology tools are appropriate for a student with a visual impairment, a consultation with a TVI and other educational team members should be completed. A student with visual impairment may benefit from an assistive technology screening/evaluation to determine what tools are appropriate to help him/her access information and to complete schoolwork.

### **Assistive Technology Evaluation**

The IEP team refers a student for an AT evaluation. Data is collected in a variety of situations and educational environments to determine options that will help the student succeed in the general education classroom. The goal is to obtain tools that provide equal access to the same information available to typically sighted peers.

Once the initial evaluation is completed, a student's needs are periodically reviewed to ensure continued access to the appropriate tools.

## **Types of Assistive Technology**

### **Low-Tech Devices**

The term low-tech device is used to refer to the simplest tools that generally involve no lenses, computers, or electronics. These tools enhance a student's use of vision and/or other sensory channels.

Examples of low-tech devices include:

- A reading stand
- Bold markers for writing
- Dark-lined paper
- A large-print/talking calculator
- A hat or visor to decrease the glare of overhead lights or the sun
- Acetate overlays to decrease glare
- Raised or tactile lines/pictures
- Auditory book
- Hand-held magnifier
- Monocular
- Single switch
- Braille writer
- Enlarged material
- Long cane

### **High-Tech Devices**

The term high-tech device is used to refer to a computer or other device that provides students with visual impairment access to information.

Examples of high-tech devices include:

- Tablet with applications
- Screen magnification software
- Video magnifier
- Screen reader
- Braille display
- Braille translation software
- Note taker
- Electronic books/players
- Global Positioning System (GPS)

## **VIII. RESOURCES/WEBSITES**

**Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (ACVREP)**

<http://www.acvrep.org>

**American Foundation for the Blind**

<http://www.afb.org>

**American Printing House**

<http://www.aph.org>

**Blind & Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh**

<http://www.pghvis.org>

**BookShare**

<http://www.bookshare.org>

**Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services**

<http://www.cwds.state.pa.us>

**Expanded Core Curriculum**

<http://www.ecc.org>

**Family Connect**

<http://www.familyconnect.org>

**Intermediate Unit 1**

<http://www.iu1.org>

**National Federation of the Blind**

<http://www.nfb.org>

**National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC)**

<http://www.nimac.us>

**Pennsylvania's Approach to the National Agenda (PANA)**

<http://www.panationalagenda.com>

**Pennsylvania Department of Education**

<http://www.pde.state.pa.us>

**Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network**

<http://www.pattan.net>

**Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic**

<http://www.rfbd.org>

**Texas School for the Blind**

<http://www.tsbvi.org>

**U. S. Department of Education**

<http://www.ed.gov>

## **IX. APPENDICES**

### **Vision Forms**

- Orientation & Mobility Severity Characteristics Worksheet
- Orientation & Mobility Severity Rating Scale
- Orientation & Mobility Severity Summary
- Referral Forms
- Parent Input Form
- Teacher Input Form
- Classroom Observation Form
- Vision Severity Characteristics Worksheet for Students with Additional Impairments
  1. Purpose & Development
  2. Professional Judgment Factors
- Vision Severity Summary for Students with Additional Impairments

### **H.O.M.E.S. Forms**

- Independent Skills Score Sheet
- Parent Input
- TVI/Student Interview Questions

### **Vision AT Form**

- Vision AT Initial Intake Screening Form
- Vision AT Parent Input Form