

Visual Impairment (VI)

A child who has visual impairment, including blindness, is one who has an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects his/her educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Definition

A student with a visual impairment is one who has been determined by the following evaluations to have a need for special services

- **A vision report** by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist which determines (a) whether the child has no vision or has a serious visual loss after correction OR whether the child has a progressive medical condition that will result in no vision or a serious visual loss after correction; (b) visual loss in exact measures of visual field and corrected visual acuity at a distance and at close range OR best estimates if exact measures cannot be obtained (c) prognosis, whenever possible.
- **A functional vision evaluation (FVE)** by a professional certified in the education of students with visual impairments or a certified orientation and mobility specialist. The evaluation must include (a) the performance of tasks in a variety of environments (b) require the use of both near and distance vision; (c) a determination of the child's reading and writing skills and needs and (d) recommendations concerning the need for a clinical low vision evaluation and an orientation and mobility evaluation.

NOTE: The CFISD contracts with the Center for Sight Enhancement at the University of Houston to conduct Functional Low Vision Assessments and participates in Region 4 Education Service Center's Project D.O.V.E.S, a program which provides for additional Functional Low Vision Assessments from the Center for Sight Enhancement. A CFISD teacher for the Visually Impaired accompanies the family and collaborates with the optometrist. The district receives a written report following the evaluation and the Center for Sight Enhancement is available for follow-up support for one year following the evaluation. If the Teacher of the Visually Impaired needs to further consult with the optometrist, the child's parent guardian will be asked to sign a release of information. Teachers of the Visually Impaired also receive ongoing training delivered by optometrists and provided by Region 4 Education Service Center.

- A learning media assessment (LMA) by a professional certified in the education of students with visual impairments. The evaluation must include recommendations concerning (a) which specific visual, tactual, and/or auditory learning media are appropriate for the student; (b) appropriate reading and writing media, including the child's future needs for instruction in Braille or the use of Braille, and (c) whether there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area.
- An orientation and mobility evaluation performed by a Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS), in a variety of lighting conditions and a variety of settings including in the child's home, school, and community and in settings unfamiliar to the child.

A student who has a visual impairment is functionally blind if, based on the preceding evaluations, the student will use tactual media, which includes braille, as a primary tool for learning to be able to communication in both reading and writing at the same level of proficiency as other children of comparable ability The multi-disciplinary team must determine the child's strengths and weaknesses in Braille skills.

Initial Referral and Evaluation

- Eye exam report should be completed by doctor and given to VI specialist.
- Student should be observed by VI specialist.
- FVE and LMA should be completed by VI specialist.
- VI specialist should conference with the evaluation staff involved regarding modifications needed for assessment.
- Evaluation staff will complete assessment using recommended modifications.
- There are few instruments appropriate for measuring IQ for students who are VI. If a student is very young or is severely impaired, developmental scales may be administered instead of intelligence tests.
- Students who are determined to be VI may not be labeled SLD.

Required Evaluation Forms

- FIE (completed after FVE and LMA, including present levels of performance and recommendations for students who are eligible)
- Evaluation report for visual impairment (Part A), completed by a physician
- Functional Vision Evaluation Report (Part B), completed by a certified teacher of the visually impaired
- Learning Media Assessment (Part B), completed by a certified teacher of the visually impaired.
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist must participate in making the determination of eligibility
- The scope of any reevaluation of a student who has been determined, after the full individual and initial evaluation, to be eligible CFISD's special education program on the basis of a visual impairment must be determined by a multidisciplinary team that includes an appropriately certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist.
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ARD/IEP Requirements

- Obtain consent for release of confidential information
- VI specialist should complete or review VI supplement at each ARD/IEP meeting
- Provide Texas School for the Blind information to the parents
- Certified teacher of the visually impaired must be present for all ARD/IEP meetings
- Orientation and Mobility Specialist must participate in making the determination of eligibility and make recommendations for programming.