

# VI and O&M Preparation

Information about how to become certified in visual impairments or orientation and mobility

SEPTEMBER, 2013

## Training Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and Orientation & Mobility Specialists

### What is VI Preparation in Texas?

Certification to work with students with visual impairments is available, regardless of where you live in Texas. Training is provided through Texas Tech University and Stephen F. Austin State University.

For more information about this flyer, please contact:

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### Who should read this?

- Have you been thinking about a career change? **Are you interested in teaching, but want a non-traditional setting and job assignment?**
- Do you have an interest in working with children with visual impairments (VI)?
- Have you considered being a teacher of students with visual impairments or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist, but don't know how to get certified or get training?
- Are you an independent worker who is active in teams, a good problem-solver, and eternally curious?

**Then a career working with students with visual impairments might be for YOU!**

## What is in this packet?

Beginning your career as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) or O&M specialist through a university program has at least two steps: being accepted in a participating university and being accepted by the certification program. This packet has the following information you need to begin this process:

1. *Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments and Orientation and Mobility Specialists Training in Texas* (this document),
2. *Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals* (white). Read this prior to submitting the university application.

## What are my career or training options?

As a VI professional you have two options:

- teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI),
- certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS).

To learn more about these professions, please read *Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals*, which is the white document included in this packet.

## What are the training prerequisites?

You may seek certification as either a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist. Each is a separate profession with separate professional standards. The prerequisites will vary depending on the training option you choose:

### TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (TVI)

- Teaching certificate, preferably in special education, elementary, or secondary education, and
- Bachelor's degree from an accredited university

### ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY SPECIALIST (COMS)

- Bachelor's degree from an accredited university. SFA also offer an undergraduate degree in O&M.

## What will I be studying?

The specific program of study will depend on the training option (VI or O&M) and on other additional factors. Below is a basic listing of course topics. Exact course titles will vary by university and training option.

### COMMON COURSES (FOR ALL VI PROFESSIONALS)

All students will take the following courses:

- Foundations in Visual Impairments
- Structure and Function of the Visual System (Anatomy)
- Methods for Students with Multiple Impairments
- Basic Orientation and Mobility

### TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (TVI)

In addition to the common courses, the VI certificate program includes:

- Braille
- Academic Methods, and
- Internship/Practicum.

If you are not certified in special education or have not taken an overview course in special education, you must also complete a survey of exceptionalities course to become a Teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI). You will need to coordinate your specific needs with your university advisor.

### O&M SPECIALIST

In addition to the common courses, the O&M program of study requires additional coursework. SFA and TTU address the same competencies; however they arrange their courses a bit differently.

## TTU

- O&M Seminars (6 credit hours)
- 'Blindfold' or 'Cane' (6 credit hours)
- O&M Internship (350 supervised hours)

## SFA

- 'Blindfold' or 'Cane' (two 3 credit hour courses)
- Beginning Internship (3 credit hours)
- Intermediate Internship (3 credit hours)
- Advanced internship (6 credits, 350 supervised hours)

If you already hold a VI certificate and were trained at a university and have already taken the common courses, you will not need to take them again. Most districts do not require O&M specialists to hold an educational certificate.

## How much will the program cost? Is financial assistance available?

Both SFA and TTU have funds to assist with the cost of tuition. Each university distributes funds according to university program guidelines. The specific method used and amount of stipends vary by university. This is a competitive process. You should discuss it with the faculty advisors at the university of your choice. You will be responsible for ordering and paying for your books.

**TTU students will be required to travel to Lubbock and Austin as part of some courses. Students are responsible for these required travel costs.**

You will be responsible for paying for, and ordering your books. However, some ESCs have either books to loan or funds to help defray the cost of the books. Contact your regional education service center for more information.

## How are courses offered?

Courses are offered through a blend of distance learning strategies, such as via the internet, interactive television (ITV), interactive (audio only) internet and face-to-face activities. The exact blend will depend on your location, the university and the specific course. For more information, you should contact the universities listed on the first and last pages of this newsletter.

One face-to-face course is offered by Texas Tech University each semester during the academic year. This course meets every other Saturday at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Austin. For this schedule, please check with the faculty at TTU.

## Should I contact my regional education service center?

Each regional service center has at least one VI contact. You are ***strongly encouraged*** to contact the VI consultant at your regional service center (ESC) for various reasons.

- The VI person or team will be a source of support and resources for you in the future. Why not start the relationship early?
- If you take courses that have an ITV component (SFA summer courses), you ***must*** make sure that your region is participating.
- VI programs at your regional service centers have resources that may be helpful. These may include reference materials, journals and specialized equipment. Some ESCs provide assistance with textbooks.
- VI programs sponsor workshops at the service center. They also help support professional development for VI professionals in their region. "Support" may include travel assistance to attend statewide conferences.
- Someone at the ESC may be your mentor. Start the relationship on a positive, pro-active note by letting them know about you.

If you would like to find out more about regional VI services, the VI staff or other information, go to the TSBVI website and click on your region. You can find a map and a link to the list of VI professionals at the regions at: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/component/content/article/1235-texas-personnel-serving-students-with-visual-impairments>

## Who should apply?

Of course, you must have an interest in and a commitment to working with children with visual impairments. Most VI professionals work as itinerant professionals. **Therefore, as teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) or an O&M specialist, you must be prepared for on-the-job travel.**

In addition, you must realize that this is an *intense* program. The instructional content is exactly the same as traditional courses on campus. While the length of instruction is the same, ITV and interactive courses will have fewer meetings (but for more hours each time). Internet courses also require a substantial time commitment.

## How do I apply?

Each university has specific requirements and procedures. You must contact the faculty at the university or visit their web site for information. You can find more information at the following sites:

### SFA

#### 1. APPLY TO THE SFASU GRADUATE SCHOOL

- a. Use the Texas Common Application found at [https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c\\_start.WBX](https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX)

#### 2. OTHER SFASU PROGRAM AND SCHOOL INFORMATION

- a. : SFA accepts students into the VI program in the spring of each year to be eligible for grant awards. New students typically take all of their courses as a group, starting in the summer of 2014 and are referred to as a "cohort". The deadline for application to the 2014-15 cohort is March 17, 2014, the third Monday in March. Students who want to join the program at other times will be considered but may not be eligible for grant monies. For more information visit <http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment/>

### TTU

#### 1. APPLY TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

- a. Go to <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/gradschool/> and click the "Apply Now" link. Follow the instructions to apply to the Graduate School. There is a \$60 application fee, and it can be completed online. You do not need GRE scores if you are only applying for a certification program (and not a Master's Degree).
- b. If seeking a certification, under "Select Your Major" choose "*Teaching Certificate in College of Education even if you already have your teacher's certification.*" Under "Major Area of Interest" write in "**Visual Impairment**" or "**Orientation & Mobility**".
- c. You can check your admission status online. For assistance, the Graduate School Admissions phone number is [806-742-2787](tel:806-742-2787). If you are having application problems, please call Pam Smith at [806-834-2969](tel:806-834-2969) or Anita Page at [806-834-1515](tel:806-834-1515) in the College of Education for help.

#### 2. APPLY TO THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

- a. Once you have been accepted into the Graduate School, you can apply to the College of Education. Go to <https://appserv.itts.ttu.edu/EAMT/Pages/TEPApplicant/Apply.aspx> which is the Tech Teach- Educator Preparation Program application and sign in using the eraider name and password that you should have gotten after applying to the Graduate School. Click on "Supplemental" and choose Visual Impairment or Orientation and Mobility.
- b. If you are interested in seeking a Master's degree in Special Education you need to go to <http://educgo.educ.ttu.edu/applications/gradapp/candidate/apply/selectdegree>

#### 3. APPLY TO THE REACH ACROSS TEXAS PROGRAM

- a. Go to: <http://cms.educ.ttu.edu/research/sowell/students/cert-application>. The application for a stipend award needs to be printed out and faxed to [806-742-2326](tel:806-742-2326) or mailed to the Sowell Center address at the bottom of the page.

**NOTE:** Both universities require **official** transcripts from **all** previous universities you attended. You should order an **official copy of your university transcript(s)** to be sent directly to the university as soon as possible – even if you have not completed your university or program application. Sometimes it takes time to have your request processed and sent. Don't let this hold up your application.

## Can I get a master's degree?

Getting a master's degree is an important and admirable goal. It should be considered fully. Both Stephen F. Austin and Texas Tech universities offer master's degrees in education (M.Ed.).

The courses described here will contribute to certification as a VI professional; either as a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) or an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist. The courses will not provide all of the requirements for a master's degree in either of those areas, but those at the graduate level can apply towards a master's degree.

If you are considering a master's degree, even if you are not sure, you should talk to the advisor at the university of your choice as soon as possible. This information may affect how you complete the application procedures.

Please note the grant provides support for certification courses. Students seeking a master's degree will need to self-pay or seek funding elsewhere.

## What are the acceptance criteria?

**The goal of this program is to train and employ VI professionals to work with students with visual impairments. Therefore, in order to be accepted, you will have to make a commitment to work with children with visual impairments in Texas.**

Each university has specific acceptance criteria and procedures. These are also affected by whether you want certification-only, or want a master's degree. Also, each university has timelines for submitting documentation. **You must contact the university of your choice for requirements and timeline information.** Contact information is on the first and last pages of this newsletter.

## Can I get an emergency or probationary certification?

### TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (TVI):

It is possible to get a probationary certificate. TTU and SFA have a VI probationary certification program that requires the completion of two specified courses and enrollment in a third before applying for the probationary certification as a TVI. This program allows individuals to serve as a TVI in their district with the agreement that they will then complete the remainder of the courses required for full certification as a TVI.

Contact SFA or TTU for information about their probationary certificate program.

There are no probationary or emergency certifications available for O&M specialists.

## How will the didactic portions of the courses be taught?

The courses are a blend of didactic (or lecture-type information) and skill-based learning. The didactic portion will be taught through a blend of the following methods: Internet, ITV and face-to-face meetings. More information about the skill-based training follows:

### ITV/TETN

ITV (interactive television) sessions will require you to travel to a participating ESC for your first two summer classes only. These classes are usually held on Monday and Wednesday from 4:30-7:30 PM. **ONLY SFA uses the ITV system for their summer courses.** You should contact your service center prior to sending your application to SFA. For the ITV portion of the instruction, you will sit in a room with other students in your cohort and participate in discussions via an interactive audio-visual device that looks like a TV. You will be able to speak directly to the instructor and students at other sites. After the summer, the other courses will be delivered over the internet.

### INTERNET

The Internet is used throughout the programs; either for all of a course or some part of all courses. The instructor will be available via phone, discussion and/or email, and correspondence.

You will be able to participate in the Internet-based courses and activities at your convenience. Specific deadlines will be set for each module or unit. You must meet the deadlines; this isn't an independent study course. It will be very important for you to develop and stick to a schedule.

SFA also uses an interactive program, Collaborate, as part of their internet instruction. It will be used to provide instruction during the fall and spring semesters. SFA typically only uses the interactive audio portion of Collaborate as most people do not have enough band width to use the video portion of the program. These classes are held in the evenings, usually for two hour sessions every other week. SFA has no internet-only classes.

#### FACE-TO-FACE

TTU offers 1 course each semester during the year on 7 Saturdays at TSBVI. Additionally, TTU requires skill-based instruction at Texas Tech in Lubbock or Austin for specific modules in some of the courses.

## How will the skill-based portions of the training be taught?

Several courses have skill-based components that are taught face-to-face.

#### BASIC O&M

During Basic O&M students will meet with a facilitator for approximately 20 hours of instruction. Scheduling will vary by university. The skill-based training will be conducted at a university or an outreach site.

#### CANE COURSES

O&M specialists take a total of 6 credit hours of instruction on how to use the cane while under blindfold. Both SFA and TTU offers two separate 3-credit courses. Both are taken in a single summer.

The cane courses must be conducted on a face-to-face basis. These courses will be offered at the TTU and SFA campuses. **Pending availability of funds**, students who attend these courses **on-campus** may be provided with a stipend to cover **some** or all of their tuition, housing and/or assistance for travel.

#### ANATOMY OF THE EYE

At TTU, the eye course requires a weekend in Lubbock for hands-on and interactive training such as dissecting a cow's eye, learning how to do a functional vision evaluation and a learning media assessment, using optical devices, etc.

#### ACADEMIC METHODS

At TTU, the academic methods course for teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) requires a weekend in Austin for the Assistive Technology component of the course which includes hands-on learning about the latest technological advances used with students with visual impairments.

#### PRACTICUM OR INTERNSHIP

The VI and O&M training options both require field experiences, known as either a practicum or internship. These will be arranged on an individual basis. Typically, the practicum/internship will be in the local area. However, each practicum/internship experience must meet certain basic requirements. **As a result, it may be necessary to travel from your existing job location for a portion or all of the practicum/internship. It is possible that O&M specialists will need to go out of their area or even Texas.**

##### O&M internship

In O&M, the field experiences (internship and practicum) are completed under the supervision of an Academy (ACVREP) certified O&M specialist who meets the criteria for internship supervisors and who has been selected by the university to do so. Internship involves providing orientation and mobility services on a full-time basis. **This important experience usually happens away from your home community.** Faculty will make all arrangements.

##### VI practicum/internship

Teachers of students with visual impairments (TVI) complete a practicum/internship. It will be supervised by university faculty or an by an university designee. During that period you will need to work as a TVI, completing a series of professional experiences. It is possible that you will need to travel beyond your district for a limited period of time in order to complete those experiences. For those students already working with a probationary certificate, their internship can be done with their existing caseload of students.



## Does it make a difference which university I attend?

**NO.** BOTH UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS ADDRESS THE SAME SET OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES, RESPOND TO THE SAME SET OF ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, AND OFFER TRAINING WHICH WILL ENABLE YOU TO BE CERTIFIED AS EITHER A TEACHER OF STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (TVI) OR AN ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY (O&M) SPECIALIST.

There are differences. You must evaluate both programs and determine which best meets your needs. Stephen F. Austin admits new students in the summer semesters. Other students may be admitted on a case-by-case basis. This block of students, known as a cohort, take classes together via the Internet and ITV systems. Texas Tech University accepts new students year round and offers courses predominately via the Internet.

**IMPORTANT:** additional information is available from both universities. You should contact both universities to determine which is best for your situation. You can find information on their websites. The addresses are:

**SFA:**

[HTTP://WWW2.SFASU.EDU/VISUAL-IMPAIRMENT](http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment)

**TTU:**

<http://cms.educ.ttu.edu/research/sowell/default> (NOTE: if you have trouble with the website, please contact Robin Rekieta at 806-834-1322 or [robin.rekieta@ttu.edu](mailto:robin.rekieta@ttu.edu).)

### MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENTS

If you are interested in getting a master's degree as a TVI and/or an O&M specialist, you must discuss this with the faculty at SFA and TTU. Each university has different requirements. You will be able to complete all of your coursework via on-line courses.

In order to help you make that decision, you should contact each university to discuss its application and acceptance policies. It will not be necessary to declare whether or not you are seeking a degree during the first semester; however, you should be actively exploring this possibility as soon as possible.

## I heard braille is hard. Is it?

Braille is a new code to most pre-service professionals. As such, it can be a challenge. Learning braille is like learning a new code; not another language, but a new system for English. The key to mastering braille is the necessity for *daily practice*, every day, even on weekends. Sighted VI professionals learn braille visually, not tactually as a student with a visual impairment does.

All teachers of students with visual impairments must learn braille in order to be fully certified and to have access to a probationary certificate. You will be required to take a Braille TExES exam. You will be able to take and pass the Braille TExES exam prior to being certified. The Braille TExES exam is offered two times a year and you will be able to take the exam following the completion of the course.

Like all of the courses in the sequence, the braille course is **EXTREMELY RIGOROUS** in any situation, and even more so when taught in a condensed fashion, such as during a Summer Session.

If you are considering taking the braille course over the summer, the course will be condensed. If you will not have several hours to devote to braille each day (including weekends), you are advised to wait until the course is offered during the long semester. If you take it from SFA over the ITV during the summer, plan on traveling to the ESC two times a week.

## What are the deadlines for enrollment?

Remember, there are **at least TWO** steps you must complete:

- Applying and being accepted by the university,
- Being accepted into the College of Education Post Baccalaureate Certification Program at TTU.

**AND**

- Being accepted to the *Reach Across Texas* Program at TTU or *Project Vision* as SFA, if you are interested in applying for a competitive stipend award.

These are separate procedures. You MUST complete all of the steps according to the chosen university's procedures. To learn more about the steps for enrolling in the university, visit the websites for the VI programs at SFA and TTU.

#### TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY (TTU)

Texas Tech accepts students throughout the year, although the majority of TTU students begin the program in the fall semester. You must apply to the university and to Reach Across Texas no later than **November 1, 2013 for the Spring semester, May 1, 2014 for the Summer semester or June 1, 2014 for the Fall semester**. There are a limited number of scholarship awards for the spring and summer, since most of the awards are made in the fall. You can begin the program in the spring or summer but may need to find some of your own resources for tuition and fees. Many students start the TVI program in the summer, taking braille and the foundation course and register for the eye course in the fall so that they can start a job as a TVI in the fall with a probationary certification. Once accepted, you must register for the designated courses. For more information visit:

<http://www.educ.ttu.edu/research/sowell/students/cert-application> (NOTE: if you have trouble with the website, please contact Robin Rekieta at 806-834-1322 or [robin.rekieta@ttu.edu](mailto:robin.rekieta@ttu.edu). TTU is revising all their websites.)

#### STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY (SFA)

At SFA VI professionals take their courses as a group, or cohort. This means that everyone starts together and takes their classes together. The cohort is accepted in the spring of 2014 and start courses the first summer session. You must apply no later than **March 17, 2014** the third Monday in March.

For more information visit: <http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment>

**SFA – DEADLINE FOR ADMISSION TO THE 2013 VI & O&M COHORTS: MARCH 17, 2017**

**TTU – DEADLINE FOR ADMISSION FOR SPRING 2014 –NOVEMBER 1, 2013**

**TTU – DEADLINE FOR ADMISSION FOR SUMMER 2014 – MAY 1, 2014**

**TTU – DEADLINE FOR ADMISSION FOR FALL 2014 – JUNE 1, 2014**

## Will I need to get my transcripts?

Yes. You will need to arrange for an **official copy of all of your transcripts** to be sent to the university of your choice. The holder of your transcripts (all previously attended universities) will send them directly to SFA or TTU. Since it may take time for your request to be processed, you are strongly advised to start this process **as soon as possible**. **Do not wait!** You might miss a deadline!

## Will I have a mentor?

We are committed to the mentor program. All participants will be paired with a trained, experienced professional. Mentors are assigned when you have a caseload either when you start working as a TVI or COMS or during the internship phase of your program. Any TVI working on a probationary certification is assigned a mentor right away. To the degree possible, the mentor will be from your home region.

All participants in either the TTU or SFASU VI programs are invited to attend a Mentor Center (free of charge) during their training (and up to a year after completion) at TSBVI where you are able to observe TVIs and COMS working with students at TSBVI and in the local school district.

This is a non-evaluative mentor program. This means that your mentor will not be called upon to provide an evaluation of your skills, either by the university or your district. This is a person to whom you can turn when you have questions and/or concerns about content or skills.



## When will courses be offered?

### TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY

#### Spring

Braille (Internet)  
Basic O&M (face-to-face on weekends at TSBVI in Austin )  
Eye Anatomy (Internet + on-campus weekend)  
Visual and Multiple Impairments Methods (Internet)  
Advanced O&M Seminar (Internet)  
VI Internship (Off campus; sites vary)  
O&M Internship (Off campus; sites vary)

#### Summer I

Cane I & II (TTU campus in Lubbock)  
Braille (6 weeks) (Internet)  
O&M Internship (off campus; sites vary)

#### Summer II

Foundations (internet)  
Basic O&M (internet + on-campus weekend)  
O&M Internship (Off campus; sites vary)

#### Fall

Eye Anatomy (Internet + on-campus weekend)  
Foundations (Internet *or* face-to-face on weekends at TSBVI in Austin)  
Braille (Internet)  
Basic O&M (Internet + on-campus weekend)  
Visual and Multiple Impairments Methods (internet)  
Intermediate O&M Seminar (Internet)  
O&M Internship (Off campus; sites vary)  
VI Internship (Off campus; sites vary)

### STEPHEN F AUSTIN

#### Summer

Anatomy  
Braille  
Clinical Practicum in O&M (6 hours)  
Practicum in O&M (3 to 6 hours)

#### Fall

Foundations  
Methods in visual and multiple impairments  
VI Practicum  
Intermediate Practicum in O&M (3 hours)

#### Spring

Basic O&M  
Academic Methods  
Practicum in VI  
Advanced Clinical Practicum in O&M (3 hours)

## Let's review your action steps?

1. **Read** the enclosed *Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals* (white).
2. **Determine** which university program fits best with your lifestyle and learning style, and other factors. Contact each university for more information.
3. **Send** for an OFFICIAL copy of your transcript(s).  
You may choose to have the transcripts sent directly to the university.
4. **Apply** to the university of your choice. You will find links so that you can apply online at:
  - SFA: <http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment>
  - TTU: <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/gradschool/prospect.php> Click on "Domestic Students" and then click on "Apply Now!" and follow the instructions found previously in this newsletter.
5. **Talk** to your advisor at the university.  
This is likely to be one of the university faculty listed below.
6. **Register** for the first course.
  - **TTU students:** Your advisor will help you to understand what course and the procedures for completing this step on-line.
  - **SFA students:** Do not register until you receive an e-mail telling you which class, section and CRN # to use in registration.
7. **Complete** all of the scheduled activities.

## How can I get more information?

If you want more information, or have a special circumstance, *please do not hesitate to contact:*

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# Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals

Taken from *Quality Programs for the Visually Impaired*, developed by Nancy Toelle

The **Teacher of Visually Impaired Students (TVI)** has the following roles and responsibilities:

- o Has primary responsibility for specialized instruction and services required to meet the unique educational needs of her visually impaired students.
- o Possesses the skills and abilities necessary to provide and coordinate this specialized instruction.
- o Assists the student, parents, special and regular education personnel, and the student's sighted peers in
  - understanding the unique educational needs and learning characteristics of visually impaired students,
  - becoming aware of services and support available from local programs for visually impaired students,
  - acquiring information regarding local, state, and national resources for the education of visually impaired students, and
  - 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.
- o Consults regularly with the classroom teacher, other regular and special education personnel, parents, and others to coordinate programs and services for the visually impaired student.
- o Assists the site administrator and teachers in making environmental adjustments for the student in the school.
- o Shares responsibility with classroom teachers in the identification of instructional areas in which the student requires assistance.
- o Assures that large-type or braille texts, supplementary materials, educational aids, and equipment needed by the visually impaired student, and the classroom teacher, are provided in a timely manner to ensure the student's maximum participation in all classroom activities (appropriate educational materials may be prepared or adapted by the VI teacher, or they may be obtained from educational, clerical, or transcriber services.)
- o Provides instruction in the development and maintenance of skills to meet the student's unique educational needs in the following areas, as indicated in the IEP:
  - low vision & visual efficiency skills,
  - concept development & academic skills,
  - daily living skills,
  - career & vocational education skills,
  - communication skills (these skills include braille reading and writing as appropriate),
  - social/emotional skills and abilities, & sensory motor skills.
- o Prepares sequential and meaningful instruction geared to the student's assessed needs, IEP

goals and objectives, functioning, and motivational levels. This instruction should be reflected in weekly or monthly lesson plans, as appropriate.

- o Provides assistance to the classroom teacher in academic subjects and activities of the classroom that, as a direct result of the student's visual impairment, require adaptation for the student.
- o Provides initial and ongoing assessment:
  - consults with assessment team to determine appropriate testing materials and modifications needed,
  - assists with assessments when needed,
  - interprets assessment results when needed.
- o Conducts functional vision/learning media assessments and produces written reports.
- o Attends ARD and IEP meetings for students with visual impairments.
- o Schedules time efficiently for assessment, instruction, planning, preparation of materials, travel, and conferences with relevant school and other key individuals.
- o Maintains ongoing contact with parents to assist them in the development of a realistic understanding of their child's abilities, progress, and future goals.
- o Provides in-service training programs for school personnel and students and education for parents regarding the needs of visually impaired students and adaptations, programs, and services for these students.
- o Makes available pamphlets, films, and other public information materials that may be useful in developing realistic and unprejudiced attitudes toward visually impaired students.
- o Coordinates with other personnel, such as transcribers, readers, counselors, O&M specialists, career/vocational education staff, and rehabilitation counselors.
- o Maintains a current reference library of professional materials and resources.
- o Acquires information and training about current research, development, and technology.
- o The Classroom Teacher (regular, special class, or resource specialist has the following roles and responsibilities:
- o Provides instruction in appropriate academic and non-academic content areas to the visually impaired student in the classroom.

- o Works cooperatively with the teacher of visually impaired students to
  - identify the student's areas of educational need, including unique education needs,
  - coordinate instruction and services to meet these needs,
  - provide, in a timely manner, classroom materials that need to be reproduced in another medium,
  - determine mutually convenient times during the school day for scheduling the teacher of visually impaired students to work with the student,
  - modify classroom procedures and environment to meet the specific needs of the visually impaired student for participation in classroom activities, and
  - exchange information concerning the visually impaired student with parents and other individuals on a regular basis.

The **Orientation and Mobility Specialist** has the following roles and responsibilities

- o Instructs the visually impaired student in the development of skills and knowledge that enables him or her to travel independently, based on assessed needs and ability.
- o Teaches the visually impaired student to travel with proficiency, safety, and confidence in familiar and unfamiliar environments.
- o Consults regularly with sighted peers, parents, classroom teachers, physical education teachers, and/or other special education personnel to assist in home and classroom environmental modifications, adaptations, and considerations and to ensure reinforcement of appropriate O&M skills that will encourage the visually impaired student to travel independently in these settings.
- o Works with the teacher of visually impaired students to conduct the functional vision assessment as it relates to independent travel.
- o Conducts assessments that focus on both long and short-term needs of the student.
- o Includes in the assessment report the needs and strengths of the student and an estimate of the length and frequency of service necessary to meet identified needs.
- o Prepares sequential and meaningful instruction geared to the student's assessed needs, IEP goals and objectives, functioning, and motivational levels. This instruction should be reflected in weekly or monthly lesson plans, as appropriate.
- o Prepares and uses equipment and materials, for example, tactile maps, models, distance low vision devices, and long canes, for the development of O&M skills.
- o Transports the student with parent permission to various community locations, as necessary, to provide meaningful instruction in realistic learning environments.

- o Is responsible for the student's safety at all times and in all teaching environments while fostering maximum independence.
- o Evaluates the student's progress on an ongoing basis with progress reports each 6/9 weeks as required.
- o Keeps progress notes on each student.
- o Participates in necessary parent conferences and meetings.
- o Provides inservice training to regular and special education personnel, sighted peers, and parents concerning the O&M needs of the student and
  - § appropriate methods and procedures for interacting with the visually
  - § impaired person that will foster maximum independence and safety.
- o Provide O&M instruction, where appropriate, in a number of specific areas: body imagery,
  - § laterality,
  - § environmental concepts,
  - § gross and fine motor skills related to independent travel,
  - § sensory awareness, stimulation, and training,
  - § spatial concepts,
  - § compass direction concepts,
  - § sighted guide procedures
  - § basic protective and information-gathering techniques
  - § orientation skills
  - § map skills
  - § cane skills,
  - § use of residual vision
  - § low vision devices related to travel skills
  - § urban, suburban, and rural travel,
  - § travel in business districts,
  - § procedures for crossing streets including how to deal with traffic control signals,
  - § use of public transportation systems,
  - § procedures for use of the telephone for information gathering and for emergencies,
  - § procedures for interacting with the public
  - § knowledge and application of community address systems,
  - § procedures for travel and independent functioning in places of public accommodation,
  - § skills of daily living,
  - § sensory/motor skills in coordination with the physical or occupational therapist and teacher of visually impaired students, and
  - § skills for independent living.