

USDB Blind Outreach

Policies, Procedures, and Practices

Mission Statement

USDB Outreach Vision Services provides students with blindness and low vision, including those with additional disabilities, who are attending their neighborhood schools, with the skills to lead successful and fulfilling lives. We collaborate with communities, schools, and families, using research based assessments, curriculum, the expanded core, and innovative teaching strategies to achieve the highest level of independence in the home, school, and community.

Policies, Procedures and Practices

Blind Outreach follows the policies set forth by USDB in their [Policy Manual](#). Specific to our division, we have measures in place to ensure students receive eligible services, teachers and administration maintain accurate data and records, and administration can supervise and support our teachers and deal with challenges as they arise. See more information below.

How do LEAs contact USDB staff to discuss student needs and services?

All new students are referred to Blind Outreach using the [USB Vision Services Referral Form](#). Attached to this form must be an [eye report from an eye doctor \(sample\)](#) as well as a signed [consent to evaluate form \(from the LEA\)](#). Once these items are uploaded and the referral form is completed and submitted, it is approved and assigned by a Blind Outreach director. Please see below for more information about how referrals are assigned to an area and how caseloads and assignments are determined.

If a student already has vision services on their IEP, and an LEA needs to contact us to discuss student needs and services, they generally reach out to our Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs) or Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructors. We encourage and support our teachers in establishing and maintaining good working relationships with their LEA's to ensure proper student and IEP team support. In the event that an LEA is unsure who their TVI or O&M is, they may contact the Blind Outreach directors to find out. We also try to establish and maintain good relationships with LEAs and Special Education Directors across the State of Utah.

How do IEP teams determine the amount and type of services needed?

TVIs and O&Ms determine the amount and type of services needed based on assessments and the eye report. Specifically, TVIs use the Functional Vision and Learning Media Assessment and O&M generally use the TAPS curriculum. Other assessments such as the Braille Readiness Grid, the CVI Range by Christine Roman, the High School Readiness Checklist, or a technology assessment may also be used to help determine student needs and gaps in learning and instruction. If an eye report indicates a degenerative eye condition, braille

may be discussed as an option in addition to any other content such as technology or orientation and mobility skills. This is an IEP team decision.

TVIs and O&Ms may also use the [Visual Impairment Scale of Service Intensity of Texas \(V.I.S.S.I.T.\)](#), distributed by the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired or the [Michigan Severity Rating Scales](#) to help determine the appropriate amount of *direct* time a student needs with a TVI or O&M to make progress on their IEP goals. The amount of time a teacher spends on *consult* with an IEP team is also determined by the amount and type of accommodations a student needs as well as the student's severity of vision needs in their educational setting.

After assessments are completed, the TVI and/or O&M presents an amount of time and level of services they feel should be adequate to help students achieve their goals, or have a level of assistance needed through consultation, to the IEP team. Once any discussion about this decision is complete, the time may be added to the IEP.

How are staff assigned/caseloads determined?

Blind Outreach extensively uses the [Caseload Analysis](#) to determine the how many students are on a teacher's caseload based on the amount of monthly time each student requires on their IEP as well as travel, preparation, and other important duties such as new referrals, IEP meetings and assessments, professional development, and mentoring. Other situations, such as a student with severe blindness who functions on a higher academic level ("academic blind") and needs considerable support with their lessons and materials, may also amount to an increased amount of time on the caseload analysis.

Each of these elements comes together to the far right of the caseload analysis where one can see the total including: breaks, based on 30 minutes each work day as per State of Utah guidelines, academic blind minutes, mentoring and professional development, IEP/assessment, and total work minutes based on IEP services, travel, and preparation combine to create the total work minutes for the TVI. The total number of students may also be added. The spreadsheet also provides an FTE based on the total work minutes, as well as some billing elements that are yet to be determined based on USBE board decisions.

Caseload analyses are reviewed with teachers at the beginning, middle and end of the school year to ensure that students are all accounted for, minutes are still correct, and that the teacher has an adequate amount of time to meet the demands of their caseload. If a caseload becomes too small, the teacher may also have more students added to their caseload.

What type of services are provided?

- Pre-Braille and Braille Lessons
- Training on the Use of Technology for the Blind
 - Teaching screen reading software lessons.
 - Braille Notetaker training.
 - Using Google Applications and other educational learning platforms (Canvas)

- iOS and Android software use.
 - Victor Reader Stream and other digital audiobook usage for education and leisure.
 - CCTV devices for low vision students
 - Etc.
- Cortical Visual Impairment strategies, instruction and consultation to help increase visual complexity of students who have multiple disabilities.
- Consultation to school teachers on making accommodations for students in the classroom.
- Placing book orders for students in the preferred format including:
 - Large Print
 - Braille
 - Digital
 - Audio
- Attending IEP Meetings.
- Supporting inservice training programs for school personnel.
- Reporting student progress to parents and teachers who hold the student's file.
- Orientation and mobility lessons including white cane, community, transportation, and school campus travel.
- Other lessons on the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) - The skills students who are blind or have low vision require to succeed in the home, school, and community.

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Accountability Measures

Blind Outreach employs a method of data collection to ensure that students are receiving services as contracted. On a monthly basis teachers must turn in:

- A [Signature Log](#) of students, the minutes served, and a signature from someone at the LEA verifying they were there and provided services.
- A [Work Log](#) detailing the amount of minutes that were spent in each district or charter each day.
- A [Caseload](#) spreadsheet with students, services minutes, and other important information updated monthly.
- [Student Visit Notes](#) to be completed by the teacher after each visit with a student for both consult or direct services.
- Their [Google Calendar](#) updated with their appointments so we can see how they are using their time and where they will be.
- On a quarterly or trimester basis, we have also requested that they share their [Progress Monitoring Reports](#) with us, so that we can ensure they are creating them and sharing them with their IEP teams.

Student minutes are added to a [Minutes Spreadsheet](#) for each teacher by the Outreach Secretary. Teachers have access to this information so they can continually see that their

student services are being met. All these accountability measures allow us to track our teachers and their student's services and help us with dispute resolutions as they arise. Disciplinary measures are issued when teachers do not turn things in in a timely manner.

Supervision

Blind Outreach does not function in a brick and mortar school. For this reason, we visit our teachers onsite in the schools they serve at least once per year, generally in the fall. Mid-year and at the end of the school year we visit with each teacher virtually. This allows us to check on things like student services, mentoring, caseloads, and other items. Blind Outreach Directors also make themselves available for any phone calls, texts, or emails as much as possible.

Professional Development

Opportunities for professional development are provided throughout the school year. Blind Outreach meets as a whole group each year in August at Opening Institute. Here we provide training, updates, materials, and an opportunity for all the teachers to meet together to coordinate services and strengthen collaboration. In the fall and the spring, TVI's and O&M's each have their own day of conferences where relevant and necessary training is provided.

On a monthly basis TVIs and O&Ms each have their own virtual meeting to get training, collaborate, and work together in PLC groups. These trainings are recorded so that teachers who are not able to attend due to IEPs or university coursework can watch them later and still receive credit for professional development. The Outreach Secretary awards professional development credit after conferences and for PLC's annually.

Contacts

For more information or any questions you may have, please reach out to the Blind Outreach Directors:

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