



ESE Program Information Sheet - Visually Impaired (VI)

Definition: Students who are visually impaired include students who are blind, have no vision or have little potential for using vision, or students who have low vision. The term visual impairment does not include students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual perceptual and/or visual motor difficulties.

The corresponding definition is found in State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03014, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.).

Overview: Including students who are VI can seem overwhelming to many general education teachers. However, once systems for supporting these students are in place, and with the assistance of a vision support teacher, inclusion of these students can be a very positive experience for all. Students who are considered visually impaired may vary substantially in their vision abilities, ranging from having low vision to having no vision.

State Laws and Regulations: The rule referenced below is specific to VI. Please refer to [Volume I-B: Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules, Excerpts Related to Exceptional Student Education](#) (PDF, 9MB) for a complete listing of laws and regulations applicable to exceptional student education.

- [6A-6.03014, F.A.C., Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students Who Are Visually Impaired](#)

General Resources: The following Resources will provide educators with information concerning Students who are Visually Impaired.

- [Florida's Educational Opportunities for Students with Sensory Impairments \(8.5 x 11\)](#) (PDF, 821KB)
- [Florida's Educational Opportunities for Students with Sensory Impairments \(folded booklet style\)](#) (PDF, 1MB)
- [Accommodations: Assisting Students with Disabilities \(2010\)](#) (PDF, 488KB)

Websites:

- [Florida Division of Blind Services](#)
- [Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Library Services](#)

National Resources:

- [American Council of the Blind](#)
- [American Foundation for the Blind \(FBA\)](#)

- [American Printing House for the Blind](#)
- [Blind Children's Center \(BCC\): Publications and Resources](#)
- [Bookshare](#)
- [Center for Exceptional Children \(CEC\): Blindness and Visual Impairment](#)
- [Disability.gov](#)
- [National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities \(NICHD\): Blindness/Visual Impairment](#)
- [National Federation of the Blind](#)
- [National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped \(NLS\)](#)
- [ReadThisToMe.org](#)
- [Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic](#)
- [Toll-Free Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) Information Line](#)

Tips to support inclusion: Although knowing the general characteristics of vision impairment (VI) is helpful, teaching strategies for students with VI still need to be individualized. It is important for teachers to realize the wide range of abilities and characteristics students with VI may exhibit.

- *First and foremost, make the environment safe.* You must make an individual plan for the child with VI for emergencies (fire drills and other school emergency procedures) and make sure the plan is written down for all staff and substitutes. Also, become aware of potential dangers to a visually impaired child in your classroom and ensure that walkways are clear, and that doors and cabinets are secured either open or shut. Remember to inform the visually impaired student if furniture has been moved.
- Become familiar with the “sighted guide technique.”
- Have materials transferred into the student’s appropriate reading medium.
- Use real/concrete items as much as possible. Don’t assume the student knows what to do with the items.
- Read aloud anything written on the board and use verbal directions in addition to visual aids.
- Use tactile graphics and raised-line drawings to improve the student’s ability to understand line drawings or graphs.
- During class discussions, have each person state his or her name before speaking.
- Allow the student with VI to tape lectures.
- Use highlighters, felt pens, and raised/bold lined paper for low vision students.
- Consider what will help students with low vision to take notes in your classroom – perhaps sitting close to the chalkboard or center of an activity.