VI and O&M Preparation in Texas

Information on how to become certified in visual impairments or orientation and mobility
September 2016

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 VI and O&M Preparation in Texas, you can contact:

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<tr>
<th>General Information:</th>
<th>Stephen F. Austin State University:</th>
<th>Texas Tech University:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Shore, COMS</td>
<td>Michael Munro (VI)</td>
<td>Rona Pogrund, Ph.D. (VI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired</td>
<td>Stephen F. Austin State University</td>
<td>Texas Tech University</td>
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<td>1100 W. 45th St.</td>
<td>936-468-1036</td>
<td>(806) 252-8026</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austin, TX 78756</td>
<td><a href="mailto:munromicha@sfasu.edu">munromicha@sfasu.edu</a></td>
<td>(512) 206-9213 (TSBVI)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
<td>Stephen F. Austin State University</td>
<td>Nora Griffin-Shirley, Ph.D. (O&amp;M)</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional">http://www.tsbvi.edu/how-do-i-become-a-vi-professional</a></td>
<td>936-468-1142</td>
<td>Texas Tech University</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:djean@sfasu.edu">djean@sfasu.edu</a></td>
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<td>Website:</td>
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<td><a href="http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment/">http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment/</a></td>
<td>Website:</td>
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<td><a href="http://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell/index.php">http://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell/index.php</a></td>
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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. Reviewing the following information prior to submitting the university application will assist in this process:

1. **VI and O&M Preparation** (this document),
2. **Typical Roles and Responsibilities of VI Professionals**.

What are my career or training options?
There are two types of VI professional preparation at the university level:

- 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**.

What are the training prerequisites for a TVI and a COMS?
You may seek certification as either a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) or as an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist. Although a VI professional may choose to become dually certified as both a TVI and an 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) prerequisites**
- Initial teaching certificate, preferably in special education, elementary, or secondary education, and
- Bachelor’s degree from an accredited university

For information on how to obtain a Texas Teaching Certificate you can follow this link: [http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Certification/](http://tea.texas.gov/Texas_Educators/Certification/)

**Orientation and mobility specialist (COMS) prerequisite**
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. SFASU and TTU address the same competencies; however they arrange their courses a bit differently.

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<td>O&amp;M Seminars (6 credit hours)</td>
<td>‘Blindfold’ or ‘Cane’ (two 3 credit hour courses)</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘Blindfold’ or ‘Cane’ (6 credit hours)</td>
<td>Beginning Internship (3 credit hours)</td>
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<tr>
<td>O&amp;M Internship (3 credit hours, 350 supervised hours)</td>
<td>Intermediate Internship (3 credit hours)</td>
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<td>Advanced internship (6 credits, 350 supervised hours)</td>
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If you already hold a VI certificate and were trained at a university, have already taken the common courses, and have worked in the field since you competed your training, 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 SFASU 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.**

SFASU O&M candidates will be required to come to the Nacogdoches campus for 6 weeks of training in the summer. Room and board is provided during that time on campus. Students are responsible for these required travel costs.

You will be responsible for ordering and paying for 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. Go to [www.tsbvi.edu/esc#ESC](http://www.tsbvi.edu/esc#ESC) for ESC contact 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 on seven Saturdays at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Austin. For this schedule, please check with the faculty at TTU.

**Is coursework available in the area of deafblindness?**

Texas Tech University offers a Dual Sensory Impairment (Deafblind) Graduate Certificate. The coursework is available as a stand-alone certificate or an area of emphasis with the Master of Education in Special Education. For additional information go to: [http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/certificate/dual-sensory-impairment/](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/certificate/dual-sensory-impairment/). Funding assistance may be available for tuition and fees. Contact Lottie Tomko for more information: [ltomko@esc3.net](mailto:ltomko@esc3.net).
**Should I contact my regional education service center (ESC)?**

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 at your ESC 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 (SFASU 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.
- ESC personnel tend to know about TVI and O&M positions open in their region.

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. See a map and a link to the list of VI professionals at the regions.

**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 website for information. You can find more information at the following sites.

**SFASU**

1. **APPLY TO THE SFASU GRADUATE SCHOOL**
   a. Use the Texas Common Application found at https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX. **There is a $50 application fee**
2. OTHER SFASU PROGRAM AND SCHOOL INFORMATION
   a. SFASU accepts students into the VI and O&M program “Project Vision” 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 2017 and are referred to as a “cohort”. The deadline for application to the 2017-18 cohort is March 20, 2017, 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 on the TVI/O&M program and how to apply for the competitive grant funding, visit the following website: http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment/

TTU

1. APPLY TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
   Go to TTU Graduate School 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 for certification or Master’s Programs any longer.

2. IF SEEKING A CERTIFICATION
   a. 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”.
   b. You can check your admission status online. For assistance, the Graduate School Admissions phone number is 806-742-2787. If you are having application problems, please call April Chavez at 806-834-5629 or Anita Page at 806-834-1515 in the College of Education for help.

3. IF INTERESTED IN A MASTER'S DEGREE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION
   You need to go to: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/apply-now/graduate.php and complete an additional application.

4. APPLY TO THE REACH ACROSS TEXAS VI and O&M PROGRAM
   You can download a copy of the application here: https://www.depts.ttu.edu/education/outreach-and-research/sowell/students/cert-application.php
   The application for a competitive stipend award for tuition assistance for certification courses only needs to be printed out and faxed to 806-742-2326 or mailed to the Sowell Center address at the bottom of the page of the application.

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?

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 permit?

**Teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI):**

It is possible to get an emergency permit to work as a TVI. In order to serve as a TVI in a district before completing the TVI program, a district can apply to TEA for an emergency permit for an individual with the agreement that he or she will then complete the remainder of the courses required for full certification as a TVI. To be eligible for the emergency permit in order to teach students with visual impairments in Texas, you must be currently certified in elementary, secondary, or special education and have satisfied the following requirements: (a) completed six semester credit hours directly related to teaching students with visual impairments and (b) have one creditable year of classroom teaching experience. In addition, you must have demonstrated competency in literary braille and basic Nemeth Code by passing the TExES Braille exam, holding certification as a literary braille transcriber by the Library of Congress, or completing one university course in braille. The University Program will provide the hiring district a Deficiency Plan noting the remaining courses needed by the person being hired. Both the Braille and VI TExES exams must also be passed before becoming fully certified.

Contact SFASU or TTU for information about how to obtain a VI Emergency Permit. There are no emergency permits available for O&M specialists.
How will the lecture portions of the courses be taught?

The courses are a blend of lecture and skill-based learning. The lecture 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/SFASU**

ITV (interactive television) sessions will require you to travel to a participating ESC for your first two summer classes only. **ONLY SFASU uses the ITV system for their TVI summer courses (not needed for O&M coursework).** You should contact your service center prior to sending your application to SFASU. 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 part or all of 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 is not an independent study course. It will be very important for you to develop and stick to a schedule.

SFASU 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. SFASU 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. **SFASU 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 SFASU and TTU offer 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 SFASU 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 for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals (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 by a 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 as a TVI with an emergency permit, 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 State University 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:

SFASU:  [http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment](http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment)

NOTE: If you have any difficulties or questions, please contact Donna Wood –Program Specialist at 936-468-1145 or dwood@sfasu.edu.

TTU:  [http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/visual-impairment/](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/visual-impairment/)

NOTE: If you have trouble with the website, please contact Rita Smith at 806-834-2593 or rita.smith@ttu.edu. TVI specific info:  [www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/visual-impairment/](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/visual-impairment/) and O&M specific info:  [www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/orientation-and-mobility/](http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/orientation-and-mobility/)

**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 SFASU and TTU. Each university has
different requirements. You will be able to complete the extra coursework required for the master’s via on-line courses.

In order to help you make that decision, you should contact each university to discuss its application and acceptance policies. If possible it is preferred that you declare whether or not you are seeking a degree during the first semester.

Do I learn braille?

All teachers of students with visual impairments must learn braille in order to be fully certified and to have access to an emergency permit. You will be required to take the TExES Braille exam. You must 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.

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.

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 SFASU 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:

1. Applying and being accepted by the university
   AND
2. Being accepted to the Reach Across Texas Program at TTU or Project Vision at SFASU, 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 SFASU 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, 2016 for the Spring semester, May 1, 2017 for the Summer semester or June 1, 2017 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. Many students start the TVI program in the summer, taking braille and the foundation course so that they can start a job as a TVI in the fall with an emergency permit. Once accepted, you must register for the designated courses. For more information visit: http://www.depts.ttu.edu/elearning/cert-prep/visual-impairment/

Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU)

At SFA, VI and O&M professionals typically take their courses as a group, or cohort. This means that most students start together (in the summer) and take their classes in a set sequence. Other students can join the program in other semesters on a limited basis based on prerequisites. The cohort applications are accepted in the spring of 2017 and courses start the first summer session. You must apply no later than March 20, 2017, the third Monday in March. Once you have applied to the SFASU graduate school using the Apply Texas common application found at https://www.applytexas.org/adappc/gen/c_start.WBX, you can then apply for acceptance and funding. For more information visit: http://www2.sfasu.edu/visual-impairment

- SFASU – Deadline for admission to the 2017 VI & O&M Cohorts – March 20, 2017
- SFASU – Deadlines for limited admission other semesters – please contact the program

- TTU – Deadline for admission for SPRING 2017 – NOVEMBER 1, 2016
- TTU – Deadline for admission for SUMMER 2017 – MAY 1, 2017
- TTU – Deadline for admission for FALL 2017 – JUNE 1, 2017

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 Graduate School at the university of your choice. The holder of your transcripts (all previously attended universities, including community colleges) will send them directly to SFASU 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?

In Texas, all participants are 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 an emergency permit 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. Mentor Centers are hosted 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?

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<th><strong>Stephen F Austin State University</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Summer</strong></td>
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<td>Braille (6 weeks) (Internet)</td>
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<td>Foundations (internet)</td>
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<td>O&amp;M Internship (Off campus; sites vary)</td>
<td>Methods in visual and multiple impairments</td>
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<td><strong>Fall</strong></td>
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<td>Eye Anatomy (Internet + on-campus weekend)</td>
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<td><strong>Spring</strong></td>
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<td>Braille (Internet)</td>
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<td>Foundations (face-to-face at TSBVI in Austin)</td>
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<td>Eye Anatomy (Internet + on-campus weekend)</td>
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<td>Visual and Multiple Impairments Methods (Internet)</td>
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<td>Advanced O&amp;M Seminar (Internet)</td>
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Let’s review your action steps:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
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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 Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) has the following roles and responsibilities:

- Has primary responsibility for specialized instruction and services required to meet the unique educational needs of her visually impaired students.
- Possesses the skills and abilities necessary to provide and coordinate this specialized instruction.
- 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.
- 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.
- Assists the site administrator and teachers in making environmental adjustments for the student in the school.
- Shares responsibility with classroom teachers in the identification of instructional areas in which the student requires assistance.
- 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.)
- 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.

From *Quality Programming for Students with Visual Impairments*
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.

From Quality Programming for Students with Visual Impairments
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.

From Quality Programming for Students with Visual Impairments
The Orientation and Mobility Specialist has the following roles and responsibilities:

- 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.
- Teaches the visually impaired student to travel with proficiency, safety, and confidence in familiar and unfamiliar environments.
- 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.
- Works with the teacher of visually impaired students to conduct the functional vision assessment as it relates to independent travel.
- Conducts assessments that focus on both long and short-term needs of the student.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Transports the student with parent permission to various community locations, as necessary, to provide meaningful instruction in realistic learning environments.
- Is responsible for the student's safety at all times and in all teaching environments while fostering maximum independence.
- Evaluates the student's progress on an ongoing basis with progress reports each 6/9 weeks as required.
- Keeps progress notes on each student.
- Participates in necessary parent conferences and meetings.
- 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.
- 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.

From Quality Programming for Students with Visual Impairments
- 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.

From Quality Programming for Students with Visual Impairments