VISUAL IMPAIRMENT
(Including Blindness)

I. DEFINITION

"Visual impairment including blindness" means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness. This impairment refers to abnormality of the eyes, the optic nerve or the visual center for the brain resulting in decreased visual acuity.

Students with visual impairments are identified as those with a corrected visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye or field restriction of less that 20 degrees at its widest point or identified as cortically visually impaired and functioning at the definition of legal blindness.

II. POSSIBLE REFERRAL CHARACTERISTICS

A. Intellectual

1. Shows approximately the same distribution of scores on intellectual tests as sighted individuals, when tests such as auditory-vocal or haptic-motor channels of communication are used

B. Achievement

1. Has relatively normal educational achievement

2. Tends to achieve more poorly in subjects such as mathematics

C. Behavioral

1. Appears "clumsy," especially in a new situation

2. Holds head in an awkward position to look at something or holds a book or other objects in a peculiar position to look at them

3. "Tunes out" when information is on the chalkboard or in a book which the student cannot read

4. Constantly asks a neighbor to tell him/her what is going on

5. Shows signs of fatigue or inattentiveness

6. Exhibits poor self-concept and ego development

D. Communicative Abilities

1. Less effective use of gesture and bodily action

2. Uses less lip movement in the articulation of sounds

E. Physical

    1. Behavior

        a. Rubs eyes excessively

        b. Shuts or covers one eye, tilts head or thrusts head forward

        c. Has difficulty in reading or in other work requiring close use of the eyes

        d. Blinks more than usual or is irritable when doing close work

        e. Holds books close to eyes

        f. Is unable to see distant things clearly

        g. Squints eyelids together or frowns

    2. Appearance

        a. Crossed eyes

        b. Inflamed or watery eyes

        c. Recurring styes

    3. Complaints

        a. Eyes itch, burn or feel scratchy

        b. Cannot see well

        c. Dizziness, headaches, or nausea following close eye work

        d. Blurred or double vision

III. SCREENING INFORMATION

A. Required

    1. Hearing

    2. Vision (To include distance vision and near point vision)

B. **Recommended**

    1.   Formal (Not applicable)

    2.   Informal

        a.   Observation

        b.   Checklists

IV. REQUIRED EVALUATION DATA

A. **Social History**

B. **Individual Intelligence (One required)**

C. **Individual Achievement (One required)**

D. **Adaptive Behavior (One required)**

E. **Communicative Abilities (Required as indicated below)**

A comprehensive language screening measure is required. Screening instruments must be established and validated for such use and assess areas of receptive and expressive language. These instruments cannot be single-word vocabulary measures only. Review of social, educational, and communication history and/or classroom observation of communicative abilities should also be utilized. If the student fails the screening or if language is identified as a problem area, a diagnostic measure is required.

F. **Other**

    1.   Medical

        a.   Physical examination

        b.   Specialized, to include an evaluation by an eye specialist conducted within the past year, comprised of visual acuity and refractive errors, prescription correction where indicated, etiology and prognosis.

    2.   Functional vision determination (Required)

    3.   Student need for braille instruction (Required)

V. OPTIONAL EVALUATION DATA

A. **Orientation and Mobility Assessment**

B. **Sensory and Learning Processes**

C. **Specific Subject Areas**

D.　Vocational Assessment

VI.　EVALUATION DATA ANALYSIS

To appropriately plan for the student with a visual impairment the evaluation team must analyze educational and medical data, as well as the recent determination of visual acuity which addresses the actual functional vision of the student. Effects of visual impairment may vary dependent upon the severity of the impairment, age of onset of the visual condition, the opportunities which have been available for appropriate training and the type and severity of any other disabilities.

Data analysis should also assist in the determination of appropriate learning materials and methods for the student with a visual impairment. These data will also provide a basis for determining what educational modifications, adaptive technology and/or alternative learning media is appropriate for the student with a visual impairment, as well as appropriately credentialed personnel to provide instruction in specific areas of need.

The assessment shall have addressed the student's need for braille instruction. As a result of this assessment the student's strengths and weaknesses in braille skills should have been identified, as well as the learning medium most appropriate for the student's educational progress when braille instruction is indicated. Technologies and related services for use in combination with braille instruction should be identified. The results of the assessment shall be used, as appropriate, to develop the student's IEP.

VII.　PROGRAMMING CONSIDERATIONS

Programming should be based on sound practices including the use of concrete, not abstract, teaching methods, stressing the relationship among things in the environment. Since many social skills are typically learned incidentally through vision, instruction in social skills should be considered when designing the IEP. A variety of special education materials/equipment will assist the student with a visual impairment to benefit from educational experiences. Such items might include large print textbooks, brailled textbooks, adaptive computers, paperless braille writing devices, talking calculators, closed-circuit television systems (CCTVs), wide-lined writing paper, etc.

Students with visual impairments may need instruction in or facilitated through one or more of the following: Braille, large print, auditory or other alternate formatted materials, computer and other technology. Keyboarding skills remain an important communication tool; therefore, instruction should begin in the early years. The computer, with appropriate adaptations (voice synthesis, enlarged screen, refreshable Braille, Braille print-out, etc.), can become an integral part of the student's (and teacher's) ability to perform academic requirements appropriately. Mathematical instruction may be enhanced by the use of an abacus, adapted calculator, and/or other adaptive equipment. Learning aids such as, but not limited to Braille writers (manual and electronic Braillers, tactile graphics), special measurement equipment, timers, etc., may be necessary for appropriate math instruction. An appropriately trained certified teacher can provide instruction in these support areas, allowing many students with visual impairments to compete successfully in a regular academic setting.

Orientation and mobility instruction may be crucial to the student's independent functioning in the school setting. Such related skills as basic concepts, body image and spatial awareness instruction make it possible to develop cane travel skills. Independent travel with a cane may begin in the early elementary grades. The need for instruction in orientation and mobility skills shall be determined by a nationally certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist (COMS).

At least once a year a certified teacher of the visually impaired, or a person who is qualified in braille instruction as determined by the ADE, will conduct an assessment of the educational progress of each student with a visual impairment, in accordance with established standards. [Refer to § 2.54 ("Qualified Examiner" in "Definitions" Section) of the document Special Education and Related Services: Procedural Requirements and Program Standards (ADE, 2008).] The results of the assessment shall be used, if appropriate, in the development of the student's IEP.