



SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired

APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

The information provided in the SDSBVI handbook is designed to acquaint the employees/volunteers of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired with the various policies and procedures set forth as guidelines of employment. Policies and procedures are based on the statutory requirements of the State of South Dakota, regulations passed by the Board of Regents, regulations of the Bureau of Personnel and suggestions of the administration of the SDSBVI.

The Superintendent is the chief administrative officer of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and her actions are subject to review by the Board of Regents. The Superintendent is responsible for the actions of the SDSBVI employees and students. In the absence of the Superintendent, the Principal shall be in charge of all school programs. The Business Manager will be in charge of the school in the absence of the other two administrators. Remember that in any event your first contact should be your immediate supervisor. There may be isolated instances when a decision must be made and you will have to do your best. If student safety and best interests are your primary concern, you will not make any serious misjudgments.

"The material provided in the handbooks is intended as a summary of existing statutes, rule or policies in effect at the time of publication. Such statutes, rules or policies may change at any time and take precedence over this handbook. Contact our Director of Human Resources if you have questions or need to verify current policy."

PURPOSE OF HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to have in writing as many of the policies and procedures as possible so that each employee/volunteer knows what is expected. Not all questions can be answered by such a handbook. If you need help, please:

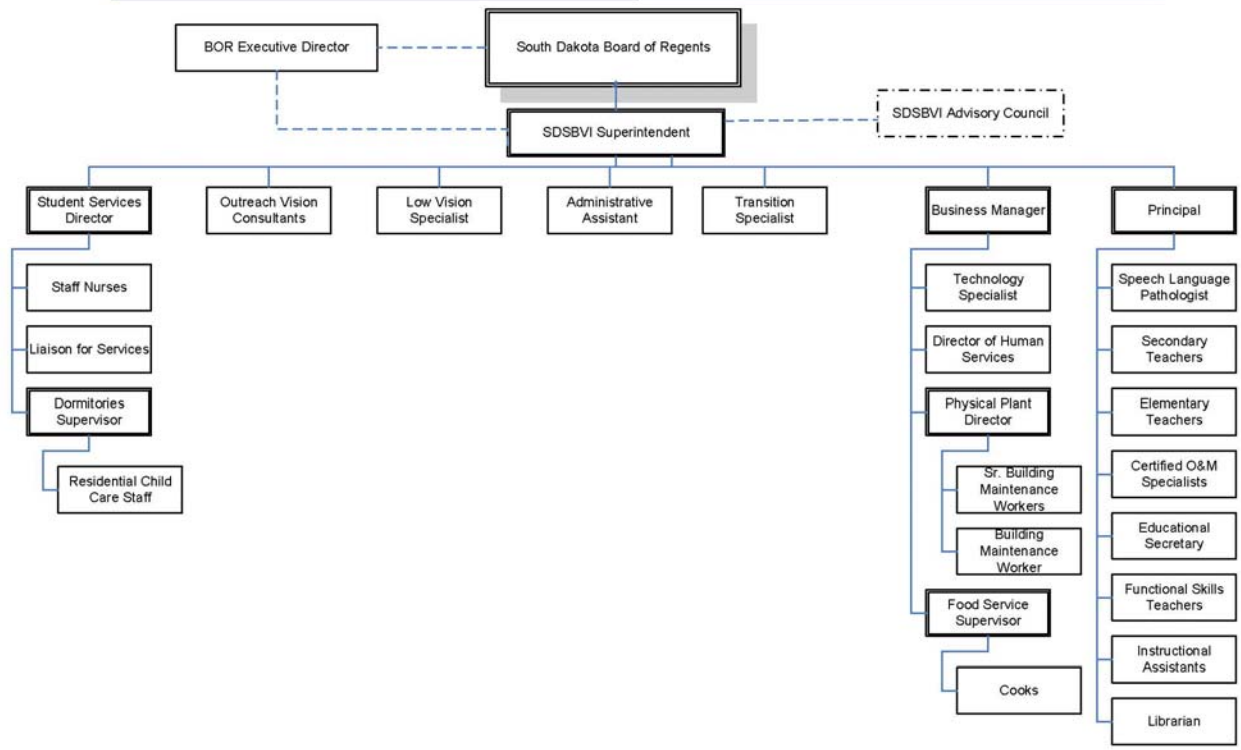
1. Take your questions to the person who is responsible for the answer so that a timely resolution can be found.
2. Make recommendations for improvement to the handbook in writing and give them to the Administrative Assistant.

The policies and procedures provided by this handbook are to be followed and any repeated deviation by an employee will result in disciplinary action or dismissal.

Each employee/volunteer should read the handbook concerning policy and procedure at the beginning of each school year, and updated information should be added immediately to eliminate misunderstandings as much as possible.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Departmental Organizational Chart
August 2009
(Dotted Line Denotes Advisory Relationship)



ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL EMPLOYEES/VOLUNTEERS

Every employee/volunteer should take on certain responsibilities that ensure our students are given the best environment in which to develop as individuals. Each employee/volunteer should:

1. Through example, set high standards of honesty and moral integrity for students to imitate.
2. Be cheerful, but firm in dealing with students.
3. Be an ambassador for the school and for education in general when dealing with parents and the public.
4. Strive to be a good coworker.
5. Realize that every place of employment has problems, but believe that these problems can best be handled in-house and not by the community.
6. Understand that the best way to solve a problem is to deal with it head-on with the person(s) involved instead of sitting around complaining and doing nothing.
7. Understand that each employee/volunteer has a particular function in the school's established goals and objectives, and each is an important member of the school.
8. To provide a safe and healthy environment for the students and other school employees/volunteers.
9. We are acting in place of parents and each of us must deal with students accordingly, using our best professional judgment, fairness and tact.
10. Read the handbook to become familiar with policies and procedures.
11. Follow policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook.

Each employee/volunteer has an opportunity to make friends for him/herself and the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired by the way he/she meets people and provides information.

Sometimes the answer will seem obvious or the questions abrupt. Take time to understand the problem and give answers only when sure of the facts. Refer the persons to another office only when someone is there and can help. Courtesy is the basis for dealing with everyone - in person, by telephone and in letters.

GOVERNANCE

Our school is under the governance of the South Dakota Board of Regents, which is a division nominally within the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs.

A Regent is appointed by the Governor for a six-year term and may be reappointed to successive terms. There are nine members of the Board, including one Student Regent.

They organize themselves and elect a president, vice president and secretary from their memberships. The Board is reorganized into two committees: (A) Committee on Academic and Student Affairs, (B) Committee on Budget and Finance. Each Regent is assigned to act as a special representative of one of the institutions under the Board's jurisdiction. Each year a SDSBVI Ceremonial Representative is appointed by the Board of Regents.

Institutions under the control of the Board:

Black Hills State University, Spearfish

Dakota State University, Madison

Northern State University, Aberdeen

South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Aberdeen

South Dakota School for the Deaf, Sioux Falls

South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, Rapid City

South Dakota State University, Brookings

University of South Dakota, Vermillion

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Advisory Council for the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is selected and approved by the Board of Regents. This committee meets three times a year and offers assistance and support to the Superintendent and the South Dakota Board of Regents.

Committee Members include the following representatives:

- Board of Regents
- Braille and Talking Book Library
- Community Leaders
- Lions Club Representative
- National Federal of the Blind
- Northern State University
- Parent (on-campus student)
- Parent (outreach student)
- School District
- Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired
- South Dakota Association of the Blind
- SDSBVI Instructor
- SDSBVI Outreach Vision Consultant
- SDSBVI Superintendent

HISTORY

The South Dakota School for the Blind was officially opened in Gary, South Dakota on March 1, 1900, under the Board of Charities and Corrections. The citizens of Gary were instrumental in pursuing the location of a state "Blind Asylum" in their community and offered the former Courthouse as a facility. After inspection by the Board of Charities and Corrections it was determined additional accommodations would be needed. The city of Gary constructed a new two-story building according to the plans submitted by the Board of Charities and Corrections. Ground was broken for the facility in July 1899, and the facility was officially presented to the state of South Dakota on March 1, 1900, with a grand reception.

Additional construction on the Gary campus included areas for administration, girls' dormitory, boys' dormitory, auditorium, several barns and a large chicken house. The school kept a large dairy herd, raised hogs and chickens and planted a large garden. They produced milk, meat, eggs and vegetables for their own use and for sale to the community.

In 1945 the School for the Blind was placed under the jurisdiction of the South Dakota Board of Regents.

In 1957-58 the idea of relocating the school surfaced. The major contentions were the inadequacy of the facilities at Gary, the lack of opportunity for city travel experiences and the proximity to a college. In 1959, the State Legislature passed a bill authorizing relocation of the school to Aberdeen. At that same session, \$800,000 was appropriated to build an entirely new set of buildings on the land donated by the citizens of Aberdeen for the purpose. Ground was broken on April 11, 1960, and a one-story building was constructed, with separate areas for classrooms, dormitories and other services. Classes began in the new facility in Aberdeen on September 18, 1961.

In 1968 an Activities Building was completed at a cost of \$165,000. The unit houses a gymnasium-auditorium which provides space for physical education, recreation, music, drama and other large and small group activities.

In 1970 the name South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped was adopted. This change reflects the fact that students who are visually impaired as well as blind can receive services. This was not a new development; the majority of students since 1900 have had some degree of usable vision.

A federally funded program to serve deaf-blind students was begun in 1972 as a part of the nationwide response to the rubella epidemic of the mid-sixties. Because of their reduced ability to learn through visual or auditory modes, different teaching methods were introduced. In 1979 serving the deaf-blind was added to the responsibility of the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped and the program was funded by the state.

The South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped has had a strong history of including students in the public schools and community activities, because an integrated approach to teaching the blind and providing "hands on" experiences are appropriate for the students. The school has also introduced new technologies as they have become available, including large print, voice output for our computers, Reading Edge, talking encyclopedia and low vision aids. Curriculum developments, new teaching methods and integrated use of the therapy programs have been adopted to better serve the students. In 1984 a Work Experience Program was started to provide students an opportunity to develop practical skills through both on-campus and off-campus employment.

After the introduction of PL 94-142, there were increasing requests from public schools for assistance with evaluating students who are visually impaired. The SDSVH also developed a Multifaceted Evaluation Program to assist schools in planning programs for students who are being educated in their home districts. In 1981 the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped, in a response to growing requests from parents and local school districts, hired its first Consultant to travel and work with visually impaired students in their homes and public schools. Currently, there are four Outreach Vision Consultants who provide this service and a Transition Specialist who assists older students statewide. In addition, consultation in the area of adaptive technology is also available to local schools.

On the recommendation of the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped Advisory Council and with the support of the South Dakota Board of Regents, the South Dakota Association of the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota, the school requested a name change during the 1998 legislative session. On July 1, 1998, the South Dakota School for the Visually Handicapped became the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. During the 2000 Legislative Session funding was earmarked for six weeks of summer programs.

SCHOOL SONG: "From Across Fair South Dakota"

MUSIC BY: Doris Atteberry

WORDS BY: Rochelle Foley

SCHOOL SONG: "SDSBVI 2001"

MUSIC BY: David Lee Brown, Artist-In-Residence

WORDS BY: SDSBVI Students

SCHOOL MOTTO: Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow through Education

The motto "Visions of a Brighter Tomorrow through Education" was adopted in 1987. With the assistance of the public relations staff from Northern State University, a review of the school's public relations activities was conducted and a distinctive logo was created. The black-on-white logo depicted a large oak tree. Beside the tree, and moving away from it, were five people holding hands - two adults and three children. The leading figure, a child, was using a long cane. The tree represented security and growth; the movement away from the tree symbolized independence.

SCHOOL COLORS: Blue and Gold

SUPERINTENDENTS

Miss Dora Donald	1900-1903
Mrs. Mary Wood	1903-1907
Mrs. L.A. (Donald) Humbert	1907-1909
Mrs. Lelia Curl	1909-1918
Mrs. Otis Rule	1918-1935
Mr. H.H. Stephenson (Acting)	1935-1937
Mr. Vincent Linn	1937-1943
Mr. Sam Van Voorhis	1943-1953
Mr. Walter Hack	1953-1968
Mrs. Walter Hack (Acting)	1968
Mr. George McCrea	1968-1976
Mr. John Hudson (Acting)	1976-1977
Mr. Jules Cote'	1977-1979
Mr. Dean North (Acting)	1979
Mr. Charles Boyer	1979-1986
Mr. Dean North (Acting)	1986
Dr. Marjorie A. Kaiser	1986-present

ROLE AND MISSION

The role and mission of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is to provide statewide services to meet the educational needs of children with sensory impairments from birth through twenty-one in South Dakota by serving in a dual leadership and resource role in the statewide efforts to serve these students. This mission will be carried out through cooperative efforts with all appropriate state agencies, educational cooperatives, local education agencies and colleges and universities. It is recognized that the mission of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a significant part of the continuum of services in the statewide delivery system for children in need of special education or special education and related services.

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired understands this responsibility to include:

- Direct educational programs and services to students who are blind and visually impaired including the multihandicapped and deaf-blind, in Aberdeen and at other designated locations, with appropriate emphasis on the "disability specific skills" of Braille, orientation and mobility, technology, daily living, leisure, community interaction and work experience;
- Residential services for those students whose needs are better served in such an environment;
- Educational evaluations and interpretation of results for parents and public school teachers and recommendations for appropriate educational programming and placement;
- Consultative services for local school districts, cooperatives and parents to assist them in developing child identification procedures and an appropriate education program;
- Supplementary services, including summer programming to reinforce educational growth, provide for special skills training and assist students in understanding their vision loss and their own abilities;
- Development of the school in Aberdeen as a resource center for information about vision loss, educational materials, methods and equipment to serve educators, parents and the public;
- Parental and family involvement in all aspects of the child's educational program with a full explanation of parental rights and responsibilities as well as an understanding of vision loss;
- Cooperative efforts with the Division of Education in the identification of students who are visually impaired and the delivery of appropriate educational programs and services as a part of the continuum of services;
- Cooperative efforts with the colleges and universities in personnel preparation and staff development in the field of vision loss through internships, seminars, research projects and other professional development activities;
- Cooperative efforts with the Office of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired in the development and implementation of transition plans and vocational readiness;
- Cooperative efforts with the South Dakota State Library in the provision of curriculum and support materials for students, teachers and parents; and
- Cooperative efforts with blind consumers through the S.D. Association for the Blind and the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota to increase public knowledge and acceptance of blindness and to support quality programs and services.

PHILOSOPHY

The role of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is to participate in the development of well-rounded citizens. Our responsibility is to provide the specialized training necessary for the achievement of personal independence for students throughout the state who are blind or visually impaired.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure that all resident children, who are blind or visually impaired, have access to appropriate education programs and services.
2. Ensure the quality of educational programs and services for children who are blind or visually impaired.
3. Maximize the delivery of services statewide through outreach programs designed to meet the identified needs of students, parents, and local school districts.
4. Create a quality teaching and learning environment that promotes student growth through education and related experiences, both in the classroom and within the community.
5. Develop the SDSBVI as a center of excellence, modeling successful practices and programs for students with vision loss.
6. Execute responsible and accountable management of allocated resources.
7. Foster collaborative relationships with the Department of Education and Cultural Affairs, local school districts, state universities as well as other agencies, service providers and consumer groups.
8. Foster collaborative partnerships with parents/guardians in the education of children who are blind or visually impaired.
9. Increase public understanding of vision loss and appreciation for quality educational programs for children.
10. Seek competitive compensation for all classifications at the SDSBVI.
11. Provide and maintain appropriate facilities, equipment, and other resources for the SDSBVI.

It is our belief that there are no special or unique dispositions to be cultivated within children who are blind, deaf/blind or visually handicapped that are not common to all children. Curriculum modifications such as instruction in orientation and mobility or tactile and auditory reading systems, while unique to blind or visually handicapped child, are merely specialized methods of obtaining the goals believed necessary for all children.

We believe it imperative to begin working with the family as early as possible to optimize the educational potential of the home environment.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

1. To individualize instruction in order that the student may develop, at his/her own rate, utilizing the tactile, visual and auditory medium best suited to his/her needs.
2. To provide for individual personal interaction among students and staff.
3. To provide a warm, understanding and supportive on-campus dormitory system.
4. To help mobilize educational and social service forces in support of the child who has a handicap, particularly those who are visually impaired.
5. To encourage the inclusion of contemporary methods of education within the school program.
6. To strive for continuous improvement of instructional program.
7. To supplement the on-campus classroom and extracurricular opportunities through cooperative programming with local public day schools.
8. To optimize the use of visual, auditory and haptic avenues of communication for students in the school.
9. To acquaint the student with the specialized equipment available to him/her.
10. To develop a command of the fundamental processes of language, reading, writing and numbers, as well as to develop social literacy and an understanding of the natural laws and conditions of our world.
11. To assist students in the development and achievement of post school plans.

12. To prepare students for gainful employment.
13. To encourage independent living habits.
14. To develop the independent travel ability of each student to its fullest potential.
15. To prepare students for life in a sighted world.
16. To develop an appreciation of the fine arts.
17. To optimize the physical development and ability of each student.
18. To stimulate worthy and creative use of leisure time.
19. To help develop a positive self-concept on the part of each student.
20. To help foster within the general public the concept that persons who are blind, deaf/blind or visually handicapped are capable, independent individuals with normal desires and aspirations.
21. To help educate employers regarding the capabilities of persons who are blind, deaf/blind or visually handicapped.

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS

A person is visually impaired if sight limitations interfere with acquiring information from and interacting with the environment. These sight limitations may relate to eye problems that effect central, peripheral, binocular or color vision. Conditions which limit affective use of vision may be partial or total and be of a temporary, reversible, progressive, or permanent nature.

The age of onset is crucial to the impact of the loss on learning activities. It may be necessary to make environmental modifications or utilize instructional techniques utilizing the other senses. The need for and intensity of specialized programming including equipment, materials, and instructional techniques will depend upon each individual's ability to cope with his/her visual limitation, the severity of the loss, and the task to be done.

A student may qualify as visually impaired if he/she falls into one of the following categories:

1. Vision loss including blindness defined (ARSD 24:05:24.01:30). Vision loss including blindness is an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

A student with a vision loss has a deficiency in visual acuity that, even with the use of lenses or corrective devices, requires special education or special education and related services.

Partial sight is one or more deficiencies in visual acuity, as follows:

- (1) Visual acuity of no better than 20/70 in the better eye after correction;
- (2) Restricted visual field;
- (3) Limited ability to move about safely in the environment because of visual disability.

Blindness is a deficiency in visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting lenses or a limited field of vision in which the widest diameter subtends an angular distance of no greater than twenty degrees or has a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration.

2. In addition to the state definition, the following may create a significant visual impairment and will be considered by the SDSBVI when services are requested by an LEA.
 - lesions/tumors affecting visual track causing visual limitations
 - degenerating eye condition such as progressive cataract, glaucoma, retinitis pigmentosa, etc.
 - is undergoing medical treatment for an eye problem causing limitation in sight, such as patching
 - experiences significant eye strain, fatigue or other vision related problems

AND

3. The student demonstrates a deficit in visual development based on chronological age and/or ability in one or more of the following areas:
 - academic achievement
 - social development
 - physical development
 - visual/perceptual development
 - orientation to the environment
 - movement within the environment

OR

4. Demonstrates a need for consultation or special vision services from a certified educator of the visually impaired.
 - Whenever the medically documented visual limitations impact learning as verified by an assessment battery and a functional vision testing, educational services must be made available.

The assessment battery should be administered and the results interpreted in consultation with a vision teacher to assure appropriateness of test items as they relate to the vision limitations and to prevent misinterpretation of phenomenon frequently associated with visual impairment.

Decisions regarding needed services should be made with the consultation of a certified teacher of the visually impaired. Eligibility and placement are determined by the student's IEP team.

24:05:24.01:31. IEP team override. If the IEP team determines that a student is eligible for special education or special education and related services because the student has a disability and needs special education even though the student does not meet specific requirements in this chapter, the IEP team must include documentation in the record as follows:

- (1) The record must contain documents that explain why the standards and procedures that are used with the majority of students resulted in invalid findings for this student;
- (2) The record must indicate what objective data were used to conclude that the student has a disability and is in need of special education. These data may include test scores, work products, self-reports, teacher comments, previous tests, observational data, and other developmental data;

- (3) Since the eligibility decision is based on a synthesis of multiple data and not all data are equally valid, the team must indicate which data had the greatest relative importance for the eligibility decision; and
- (4) The IEP team override decision must include a sign-off by the IEP team members agreeing to the override decision. If one or more IEP team members disagree with the override decision, the record must include a statement of why they disagree signed by those members.
- (5) The district director of special education shall keep a list of students on whom the IEP team override criteria were used to assist the state in evaluating the adequacy of student identification criteria.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been working to improve its programs and services to children who are visually impaired since the school first opened. Developments in technology, educational philosophy and eye conditions themselves have necessitated many changes. It has been necessary to continually adapt the program to meet the needs of a diverse population and utilize the current "best practices" in the field.

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired provides a full academic program for students kindergarten through high school. In addition to the subjects normally taught in public schools, special emphasis is given to adapting teaching materials and methodologies to meet the unique needs of the visually impaired. Specialized coursework in independent travel, Braille, activities of daily living, low vision utilization and use of specialized equipment is included. A completely individualized program is developed for each student to meet his/her needs. Parents, our vision specialists and local school district representatives are all involved in planning the students' IEP.

Specialized programs are used to meet special needs. An early learning classroom provides "readiness" activities for preschoolers who are visually impaired. A Functional Living Program meets the needs of a growing population of students who are visually impaired who have one or more additional disabilities which prevent them from functioning on grade level. The Deaf-Blind/Multihandicapped serves children who have handicaps in addition to their vision loss and need a multisensory program.

Faculty and staff at the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired are dedicated to creating an environment in which students can learn the skills necessary for an independent and successful adult life. Our teachers are trained in vision in addition to their academic certification. This means that the SDSBVI can offer a team of educators who understand the impact of vision loss on the students' learning and who work together to help the students meet the challenges.

ADMISSION - Students are referred for admission to the SDSBVI through the local public schools. When a placement team, including the parents, local school district representatives and others as desired, has evaluated a child with a visual impairment and determined that an appropriate educational program cannot be provided within the local school district, placement may be requested at the SDSBVI. Upon receipt of a referral the SDSBVI Admissions Committee reviews the request and all available student data. If necessary, additional evaluations are requested or observations of the child are conducted.

The SDSBVI Admissions Committee makes its decision based upon the child's visual status, identified needs, program requested by the local placement team and child's medical status. Each placement is based on the child's needs at a given point in time, and none run beyond one year. Options include day program, either full-time or part-time, residential or foster care and a combination of services provided by the Aberdeen public and parochial school systems, Hub Area Multi-District Vocational Center, Aberdeen Area Adjustment Training Center, Northeastern Mental Health Center and St. Luke's Midland Regional Medical Center. The first 45 days of any placement is used for evaluation, the SDSBVI administrators, faculty and staff then meet with the parents and representatives of the local public school to develop an appropriate Individual Educational Plan. This plan is reviewed at least annually, and the child's need for continued services is assessed.

INDEPENDENT LIVING AND WORK EXPERIENCES - Independent living skills are included in the educational program for all students at the SDSBVI. Students need to learn to adapt their environments and adapt to their environments for maximum independence. Students learn to care first for their own personal needs and then expand their skills to care for their environment. Students are taught nutrition, money management, meal planning, shopping and food preparation. They learn to clean their rooms, wash their laundry and do minor home repairs. Developing the necessary skills for independent travel, including sighted guide, cane and use of public transportation are a part of the curriculum. In addition, students become familiar with and utilize community resources to meet their recreational, health, transportation and employment needs.

Students can live in the on-campus apartment where they have an opportunity to put into practice the skills they have learned. They are also responsible for their own time management and leisure activities.

Students also have opportunities to prepare for future employment. Students have opportunities to begin with on-campus jobs for which they apply, are interviewed, receive training and ongoing evaluation. The SDSBVI utilizes Project Skills funding for employment experiences off-campus. A Transition Specialist is responsible for working with students, parents, local school districts and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired to develop a plan for moving from the educational environment into the world of work. This cooperative nature of the program ensures carry-over from student to adult services. Students have had part-time employment off-campus in a variety of jobs ranging from data entry to care of animals.

DUAL ENROLLMENT - Enrollment in both the SDSBVI and the Aberdeen public or parochial school system has proven to be beneficial for some students. In each case such enrollment is determined by individual student needs and has been done with all age groups and in a variety of subject areas. When dual enrollment is desirable, the child's home school district is responsible for tuition charged by the Aberdeen district. When students are enrolled in any program outside of the SDSBVI, our administrators and faculty members assume responsibility for necessary in-services, preparation of supplementary materials and coordination of the program. Dual enrollment allows students to take classes which are not offered on our campus and to ease the transition back into their local school districts. Some students have the option of receiving diplomas from both the SDSBVI and the Aberdeen public schools if they meet necessary requirements.

TRANSITION - Whether transition means returning to a public school classroom, going to another educational setting or joining the workforce, the SDSBVI personnel work together with other schools and agencies to make the move as smooth as possible. The student is involved in each step of the process. It is important to develop a plan which meets the student's individual needs and can be implemented by those who will be directly involved.

SUMMER SCHOOL - Summer school is offered to students statewide. Programs may include extended school year for students, specialized skills, computer adaptations, and social/recreational activities. Specific programs offered, ages served, and duration of activities will be determined annually.

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired is a state institution providing the option of residential services to student who are blind, visually impaired and deaf/blind who attend the school. Students generally utilize the residential facilities when distances are too great to return home daily or when the IEP calls for training beyond the normal school day. Many students return home every weekend; others, who must rely on public transportation go home less often. Some students utilize foster care during some weekends and vacations.

Students are housed in two separate dorm wings: Herseth Hall for the boys and Spicer Hall for the girls. The Kitchen and Dining Room, Student Services Director's Office and Nurses' Office are located near the dorm areas. The dorms are supervised by a Dormitory Supervisor and staffed from 2:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. Work-study students from Northern State University and Presentation College are used along with full-time staff to ensure appropriate adult/student ratios for all dorm activities.

The Dormitory Program is designed to complement the educational program, with those activities normally learned in a home environment included on the child's IEP. Personal care skills, caring for their belongings and developing social, leisure and recreational skills are all addressed in the Dormitory Program. Each student is assigned a Case Manager who works as a member of the team to ensure carry-over and consistency.

Weekly activities include arts and crafts, story time, swimming lessons and use of the library and gymnasium. Students may take part in scouting, Swim Team, and other community programs. Students enjoy shopping, movies, video games and other community based activities. The Aberdeen community and Northern State University also provide numerous opportunities for cultural and recreational activities.

OUTREACH VISION CONSULTANT PROGRAM

The Outreach Vision Consultant Program provides ongoing contact between parents and public school personnel working with children with visual impairments and the resources of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The Vision Consultants are all trained in working with the visually impaired and are available to provide consultation and support in person and over the telephone.

They may help teachers structure the classroom environment, provide feedback on the effectiveness of teaching methods or materials, research eye conditions or teaching strategies, conduct in-services for teachers and students, demonstrate particular techniques, locate materials and equipment, loan materials and equipment and assist parents and teachers in accessing other resources and services. They can also take part in IEP meetings and conduct individual assessments.

These services are designed to assist local school districts in implementing appropriate educational programs for children who are visually impaired who can be served within the local district. The number of visits is determined by the child's individual needs and the desires of the parents and teachers. The intent of the program is to be as flexible and responsive as possible.

There are currently four Outreach Vision Consultants. Two are located at the school in Aberdeen and serve the northeastern and north central parts of the state. The third has an office in Mitchell and serves the south central portion. The Outreach Vision Consultant for the western part of the state has an office in Rapid City. Dividing the state into four territories helps to reduce travel time and increase time spent working with and for students. Each Outreach Vision Consultant will have an active caseload of approximately 30-50 students at any given time.

LOW VISION SPECIALIST

The SDSBVI has designated a Low Vision Specialist position to focus attention on the visual needs of students at home, at school, and in the community. The Low Vision Specialist specifically addresses functional vision and works with the student, teachers and family to follow through on medical recommendations.

The Low Vision Specialist serves on the Pre-Evaluation and Evaluation teams at the SDSBVI, conducts functional vision evaluations, and writes reports. The Low Vision Specialist provides input into the IFSP/IEP for students, including both goals and accommodations as appropriate.

The Low Vision Specialist follows up on recommendations from ophthalmologists and optometrists for magnification, lighting and other optical or assistive technology devices, trains students (teachers and parents) in the use of specific devices for near and distant tasks, and monitors usage of devices after initial training.

The Low Vision Specialist may provide information and assistance to schools who conduct routine vision screenings.

TRANSITION SERVICES

The SDSBVI makes a Transition Specialist available to assist public schools working with transition for students with visual impairments.

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Transition Program is designed to help students with visual impairments, their families and school districts with transition planning. The Outreach Transition Specialist may provide technical assistance, assistance in writing transition plans, information and referral regarding other supportive agencies, programs and services, assistance in identifying and securing employment, identification of transportation needs, identifying adaptive technology needs and sources, and options of long-range residential and vocational goals.

The SDSBVI Outreach Transition Specialist is available to provide assistance to students with visual impairments on a statewide basis. This position is jointly funded by SDSBVI and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Under federal and state law a child with a handicap must be evaluated before an Individual Educational Plan is developed, and follow-up evaluations must be conducted at least every three years. South Dakota statute also requires that a Braille assessment be completed for every child who visual acuity is 20/200 or less.

Under our state's special education regulations, a child who is visually impaired must be examined by a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist. This is essential for good eye care. Although some eye conditions are stable, others are not and must be closely monitored so that corrective action can be taken when necessary. In addition, children become easier to test as their ability to communicate increases and more precise information can be obtained.

However, information contained in a medical eye report often leaves the classroom teacher without the concrete information needed to serve a child in the classroom. Does 20/200 mean the child needs Braille? Can he see the board if he's in the front row? Should he take part in volleyball? Is direct or indirect lighting preferable? How does the child's vision affect his other test scores? How should ability and performance be compared?

The role of the SDSBVI multidisciplinary assessment team is to assist in translating what is known about the eye condition into practical terms for the classroom. The team, which is selected based on the individual needs of the child being referred, represents a variety of discipline areas. Their goal is to get to know the child's strengths and weaknesses, modes of learning and interacting with both people and the environment. All information is analyzed by the team so that appropriate recommendations can be made.

When an evaluation is requested by a local school district, the first step is to gather background data, including previous eye reports, educational and/or medical testing and current IEPs for review. If the child is a new referral, the Outreach Vision Consultant may visit the school or home and talk about the specific concerns that have prompted the request. A team of evaluators is selected based on the child's age, developmental level and specified needs.

There is no charge for any evaluations conducted by the SDSBVI faculty and staff. (If desired, ophthalmological, optometrical, audiological, psychological, physical and occupational therapy evaluations can be obtained at a reasonable cost from local providers, who then become part of the team.) If a child has not had a medical eye exam, one must be completed either before or during our evaluation of the child.

After the child is evaluated, the team reviews the data as a group and identifies specific recommendations based on the child's needs. These recommendations are given to the parent and local school representative at an exit meeting. A written report is mailed to both parents and school district. After the child returns home, the Outreach Vision Consultant will follow up to offer assistance in carrying out the recommendations.

In most cases these evaluations take three days. In all cases, the child is accompanied by a family member and, if at all possible, someone from the local school district.

EXPANDED CORE CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

*Handout Prepared by Dr. Marje Kaiser, Superintendent, SDSBVI, Revised February 2009)
The Expanded Core Curriculum is explained in more detail in Appendix G of the Blind and Visually Impaired Students: Educational Service Guidelines, written by Dr. Phil Hatlen.*

The term “expanded core curriculum” originated with Dr. Phil Hatlen, one of today’s leaders in the field of blindness and education. The term combines what both research and experience has taught us, namely, that children with vision loss need both a sound academic curriculum and attention to the skills they will need to live effectively with a visual impairment. These “skills of blindness” are organized and taught through the “expanded core curriculum.”

The unique needs of children who are blind or visually impaired are recognized in the IDEA, various OSEPS Policy Guidance documents, The National Agenda, and the NASDSE Educational Service Guidelines. The components of the expanded core curriculum should be considered by the IEP team and included in the child’s educational plan. **The “expanded core curriculum” is an essential part of the Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) to which children with vision loss are entitled under law.**

It is important to understand that the skills in the expanded core curriculum should be taught as they are developmentally appropriate. Students build new skills on those previously learned. These are not “one shot” experiences; they need to be a part of the ongoing educational process grade by grade.

Orientation and Mobility: Instruction in orientation and mobility teaches students to move safely and efficiently in their schools and communities. It spans learning from basic body image to independent travel in busy cities. It incorporates orientation to the environment and mapping skills as well as route planning and use of public transportation. It is taught only by certified Orientation and Mobility instructors.

Compensatory Academic Skills, including communication: These are the skills that blind children need to access the academic curriculum. Included here are concept development, spatial awareness, organizational skills and listening skills. It also includes the communication mode or modes that will be used for reading and writing (Braille, large print, tactile symbols, recorded materials, etc.)

Social Interaction Skills: Because children with visual impairments cannot learn by casual observation (incidental learning), they need to learn the skills of social interaction through careful, conscious, sequential teaching. Mastery of appropriate social interaction skills can mean the difference between social isolation and a satisfying adult life.

Independent Living Skills: These skills are the ones needed to live as independently as possible. It includes personal hygiene, food preparation, care and selection of clothing, care of one’s environment, shopping, accessing community services, self-advocacy, money management, time management, and organizational skills. As with social skills, these skills require sequential instruction and attention to the daily opportunities for learning.

Recreation and Leisure Skills: Physical fitness is as essential for children with vision loss as for their sighted peers. Physical activity is basic to both health and overall stamina. Children with vision loss frequently are reluctant to take part in activities that require moving through space or in active competition. Often opportunities for physical development are denied. It is important that students have opportunities to develop recreational and leisure activities that they can use for a lifetime.

Career Education: Unemployment and under employment are chronic problems for individuals with vision loss. The best antidote is career education that begins early and addresses the specific needs of the child with a vision loss. Not only will this involve the exploration of a wide variety of jobs, but opportunities for job shadowing and work experiences while still in school. It is essential that students learn firsthand about a variety of occupations and those that best match with their skills and interests. They need to become good self-advocates, able to explain to a potential employer how they can do the job.

Assistive Technology: Technology is not actually a separate curricular area, but rather a tool, which can serve as a great equalizer, allowing the student with a visual impairment access to printed materials. For a Braille user it will mean producing materials for his personal use and to share with others. For other students it may involve a screen reader, note-taker, enlarged text or other devices. Assistive technology enhances communication and provides access to expanded sources of information. Selecting the appropriate assistive technology (right tool at the right time), teaching the student how to use it, and having technical support are critical to success.

Sensory Efficiency Skills: Although vision loss varies greatly, some children can learn to use their remaining vision more efficiently. They may use specific optical devices in the classroom and community, which requires specific training. Developing the other senses to provide essential environmental cues is also critical to understanding and interacting with the world. Travel skills, social awareness, and academic skills are examples of areas influenced by learning to interpret and use sensory information effectively.

Self-Determination: Sometimes called self-advocacy, this skill area requires students to develop problem-solving skills and interact effectively with others to get things done. Being able to analyze a situation and determine the best course of action takes practice, but without it, students cannot develop into successful students and effective members of society. It is self-determination that takes a student from dependence to independence.