

# EMERGENCY EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

*Preparing students to step forward with confidence and a vision of lifetime success*



SD School for the Blind  
and Visually Impaired

Dear State of South Dakota Employees,

Public service is essential to maintaining our democratic society, providing services to our citizens, and helping the state and country prosper. Thank you for your dedication to the State of South Dakota and its citizens.

Beyond day-to-day duties, each State employee, regardless of title or pay grade, is responsible to help maintain the public trust. Any misappropriation of resources, conflict of interest or other illegal activity, undermines the confidence citizens have in our State government. It overshadows the otherwise good work being done for society.

In addition to reading and abiding by the personal responsibility policies outlined here, you are asked to report acts that you believe violate these policies. If you see something, please say something. To create a comfortable atmosphere for recounting such concerns, an internal control officer has been appointed in each department. If you do not feel comfortable discussing your concerns with the internal control officer in your department, you may reach out to an internal control officer from another department or contact your human resources manager.

Thank you in advance for representing yourself and your fellow State employees with integrity.

Sincerely,

Governor Dennis Daugaard

Dear Board of Regents Employees,

Integrity. Ethics. Transparency. Protecting the public trust. You and I not only have the responsibility to maintain the very highest standards in these areas, but also to pass these values along to our students. Our society has long depended on higher education to enhance the ability of our democracy to function effectively and fairly for all of the people that call our nation and state home. We must assist students in their search for knowledge, in understanding themselves and their cultural and physical environments, and in developing the wisdom and skills necessary to function as responsible citizens in society.

As a Regental system employee, you play an integral role in carrying out that mission. Each and every employee has a responsibility to demonstrate to each other, our students, and the citizens of the State of South Dakota, a commitment to making stewardship and ethical behavior a part of our everyday activity. Thank you for representing the Board of Regents and your institution with honesty and integrity, and leading by example for the future leaders of South Dakota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Rush". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Rush  
Executive Director and CEO

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- APPENDIX I: INTRODUCTION
- APPENDIX II: BUSINESS OFFICE & HUMAN RESOURCES PROCEDURES
- APPENDIX III: CONFIDENTIALITY
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## INTRODUCTION

The role of the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and its staff is, through the provision of learning experiences and by example, to provide the visually impaired students of this State with a foundation which will enable them to achieve to the best of their abilities, both as children and later as adults. It is a residential facility serving blind, visually handicapped, and/or multihandicapped students from all parts of the state. In addition to the residential students, the School also serves day students who attend classes at the SDSBVI but live at home outside of the school day. Students may be classified as totally blind, legally blind, or partially sighted. Some have additional disabilities and may or may not be functioning at grade level. Some students have all of their classes at the SDSBVI while others are integrated into the Aberdeen public or parochial schools, A-TEC, or Aspire. Many students, especially those 14 years of age or above have part-time jobs either on or off campus. Students also participate in such extracurricular activities as school plays, track, wrestling, swimming, goalball, bowling, and cross-country skiing. Each child is under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) which spells out what services he/she is to receive and how these will be delivered.

## 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. Once a child is accepted for placement, the SDSBVI administrators, faculty, and staff 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.

### OFFICE WORKING HOURS

All staff are to be at work on time and leave when scheduled to leave. Being late for work makes it inconvenient for those people already on duty. If for any reason you are unable to get to work on time, you must call your supervisor. If you need to leave work early, please see your supervisor. Office working hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

### ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

Before a newly hired employee is placed in the work area, the following procedures shall be implemented.

1. Following the interview, the employee will contact the SDSBVI Director of Human Resources to set up an appointment to be oriented to the School's personnel, payroll policies, and scheduled paydays as well as to complete forms and provide data as follows:
  - A. Forms To Be Completed
    1. W-4
    2. Personal History Form
    3. Employee Eligibility Verification (I-9)
    4. Background Investigation Form
    5. Direct Deposit Info
  - B. Data To Be Provided
    1. South Dakota State Application
    2. Driver's License
    3. Social Security Number
    4. University/College Transcript (Applies only to Emergency Teacher Aides.)
2. The employee will meet with the Administrative Assistant to be oriented to operating procedures.
3. The substitute will be given a tour of the building by his/her supervisor and a general orientation to the programs offered at the SDSBVI.
4. To view various mandatory films as designated by supervisor and SDSBVI administration.
5. To "shadow" a shift in the assigned work area, to gain knowledge and confidence in the position.
6. Orientation and Mobility experience.

## TYPE OF APPOINTMENT

Emergency (29.5 hours as needed)

## TIMECARDS

The calendar workweek at the SDSBVI is from 12:00 a.m. Sunday morning to 12:00 midnight (a.m.) Saturday night. All emergency employees are required to complete and sign their timecards and then give them to their supervisor. Timecards can be gotten from your supervisor. Timecards are required to be kept at work at all times. The pay cycle runs from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month through the 21<sup>st</sup> of the following month. Falsification of timecards is cause for disciplinary action.

Payday is the last working weekday of the month. Direct deposit slips will be made available on payday.

## PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Each supervisor shall establish a set of key accountabilities and standards for each of his/her emergency employees. Within the first 30 days of employment the supervisor will meet with the employee to go over the performance evaluation. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to monitor the progress of each employee in his/her department. At the end of each school year (May), the supervisor meets with each of his/her employees to go over the year-end comments made on the evaluation. The evaluation is then filed in the employee's file for future reference.

## BACKGROUND INVESTIGATIONS (SDCL 13-49-14.13 - ORI SD920050Z) [updated June 15, 2017]

In order to ensure the protection of our students, it is the South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired's and South Dakota School for the Deaf's policy that each potential employee whether they are permanent or emergency, full or part-time, paid or unpaid, or a volunteer, will undergo a background investigation conducted by the South Dakota Department of Criminal Investigation and FBI before employment or volunteering begins. Any individual found to have a crime involving moral turpitude, including the trafficking of narcotics, that might justify suspension or revocation of a teaching license pursuant to § 13-42-10, or otherwise reveals circumstances that reasonably suggest that the person should not be employed, will not be allowed to begin employment or volunteer. SDSBVI and SDSD may, without liability, withdraw its offer of employment without notice. The HR Director will provide a written notice to the individual with an explanation of why they are being denied employment. Since the individual is not a status employee, they are not entitled to the State of SD appeal process.

1. Upon the advice of the SD DCI, we are changing our policy. Background check on status employees will be completed every five years. Any employee found to have a crime involving moral turpitude, including trafficking of narcotics, that might justify suspension or revocation of a teaching license pursuant to § 13-42-10, or otherwise reveals circumstances that reasonably suggest that the employee should not be employed will receive a disciplinary action in the form of dismissal. Before the employee is disciplined, they will receive a written notice and an opportunity to present reason(s), either in person or in writing, why the proposed action should not be taken.



CSE – Refer to CSE Handbook on Disciplinary Action, Termination of State Employees, and Grievance Appeals.

Faculty – Refer to Faculty Handbook on Termination of State Employees and Steps for Processing a Formal Grievance

Exempt Employees – Refer to Non-Unit Faculty and Non-Faculty Handbook on Termination of State Employees and Grievance Appeals Procedure.

2. Background checks will not be accepted from outside agencies, including local school districts. Background checks will not be shared with outside agencies, including local school districts. Employees will not receive a copy of their background check.
3. Background information is housed in the Human Resources Office, and stored in a locked file cabinet. The information is not part of the employee's personnel file, and is not stored electronically. When an employee leaves employment, HR will shred the employee's background check. The HR Director, Business Manager, and Superintendent are the only authorized personnel to have access to the background information.
4. The HR Director will serve as the POC (Point of Contact) and the Business Manager as the LASO (Local Agency Security Officer) for SD DCI. SDCL Ch. 23-5 and SDCL Ch. 23-6 states that all criminal history records are confidential and any person who discloses this information, beyond the scope allowed, is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor. The LASO is responsible for overseeing guidelines, consequences, and liabilities that could occur from unauthorized use of criminal history records. If an incident would occur, the Security Incident Reporting Form needs to be completed and submitted to SD DCI.

### WORKER'S COMPENSATION CLAIMS PROCEDURE

As a South Dakota state employee, you are covered by an insurance program that pays medical and disability benefits for work-related injuries and diseases. The Worker's Compensation Program for state employees is administered by the Bureau of Human Resources.

**Injury Reporting Procedure:** If you are injured or contract an occupational disease on the job, you must report it as soon as possible. Report the circumstance of the injury or disease to your **immediate supervisor and/or the Director of Human Resources for filing the electronic First Report of Injury form, no later than three (3) business days after the occurrence.** Failure to notify your supervisor or the Director of Human Resources may result in denial of your claim. Within seven (7) calendar days after the employer has knowledge of the injury, the electronic First Report of Injury form must be filed within the Bureau of Human Resources.

The web link for filing is <http://benefits.sd.gov/workerscompensation.aspx>.

**If you fail to report your claim on time, it may be denied.** Keep in touch with your human resource office to assure the claim is properly filed and monitored. All claims will be thoroughly investigated by the Bureau of Human Resources.

**Selection of Medical Practitioner:** You have the right to initially select a medical practitioner. Before seeing your practitioner you need to obtain a Workmen's Compensation Work Status Report Form from the Director of Human Resources. These forms are also located in the infirmary, staff lounge, and houseparent supervisor's office. This form needs to be completed by the practitioner and then returned to the Director of Human Resources. **If you want to change medical practitioners, you must submit a written request to the Bureau of Human Resources for approval.** If your medical practitioner refers you to another practitioner for further treatment, you do not need permission to see that practitioner. **But remember—if another medical practitioner is consulted for a second opinion without referral or the Bureau of Human Resources' approval, it will be at your own expense!**

**You also need to give prior notification to the State's Managed Care Program for hospitalization or surgery, unless it is an emergency.**

If you have already seen a medical practitioner about your injury or disease, be sure that your employer includes the medical practitioner's full name and complete address on the Employer's First Report of Injury form. If the medical practitioner's name and address are not on the Employer's First Report of Injury form, please send that information to the Bureau of Human Resources as soon as possible. This same information applies to hospital or other medical practitioners.

Your medical practitioner must submit a report to Dakota Care fourteen (14) days after treatment. A medical bill should be attached to the report for faster processing. You must get prior approval from the Bureau of Human Resources to purchase orthopedic devices or physical therapy equipment.

Any medications prescribed by your physician for the work-related injury or disease must be paid for with your prescription card.

**Filing for Disability Benefits:** You cannot be paid for lost work time unless you are incapacitated for seven (7) consecutive days. Make sure the person who files worker's compensation reports in your department notifies the Bureau of Human Resources when you have been off work beyond this period.

No compensation for lost time payments can be made until the Bureau of Human Resources has received such notice.

If you are placed on Temporary Total Disability (according to SDCL 62-4-3), it is your responsibility to:

1. Provide the Bureau of Human Resources with a medical practitioner's slip indicating the period of time you will be unable to work.
2. Notify the Bureau of Human Resources if your medical practitioner releases you to return to work or if you intend to resign or change employers.

If you fail to furnish this information, your benefits could be delayed or suspended. Legal action is possible in cases of fraudulent claims, for example, if a person returns to work while receiving disability benefits.

An agreement regarding compensation and a voucher payable to the injured employee will be mailed to your employer's office which filed the Employer's First Report of Injury. You must sign the agreement and the voucher and return them to the Bureau of Human Resources.

Every effort will be made to allow you to return to work as soon as possible. At a minimum, you should maintain weekly contact with your supervisor or Director of Human Resources.

If you have any questions concerning your claim, please contact the South Dakota BHR Worker's Compensation Program (605-773-3148)

DIRECT CARE POLICY (This applies only to Emergency Houseparents, Teacher Aides, and Work-Study Students.)

The following procedures are mandatory for Emergency Houseparents and Teacher Aides to allow them the responsibility of direct care (supervision) of students at the SDSBVI.

1. Required to attend the in-service training provided by their supervisor before entering employment at the SDSBVI.
2. Required to attend all trainings, workshops, etc. requested by their supervisor and/or SDSBVI administration.
3. Required to attend all revised trainings, workshops, etc. requested by their supervisor and/or SDSBVI administration.

Work-Study Students will never be allowed to be left solely in charge of student or allowed alone with students for any reason. They are required to attend trainings, workshops, etc. requested by their supervisor and/or SDSBVI administration.

#### REPORT, REQUIRED )

1. Always complete the BEHAVIOR REPORT (pink form) and an ACCIDENT, INCIDENT & UNSAFE CONDITION REPORT (yellow form) when student behavior involves self-injury, injury to others or intentional destruction of property. The Behavior Report (pink form) must always be filled out and, when possible, complete the "Behavior" link in Infinite Campus.
2. These forms are to be completed and distributed or emailed before leaving the present work shift. Copies are to be given to the Case Teacher, Case Manager, Principal, Student Services Director, and Dorm Supervisor. The Nurses and Superintendent receive a copy of the yellow form only if there was an injury and the original is turned into the Risk Manager.
3. To qualify as "injury," the results of student behavior must require attention at the Infirmary. Superficial scratches that stop bleeding after washing with soap and water and blotting are not injuries, except in the case of specific students with special medical needs as directed by the Nurses. Scratches or cuts that require a bandage are considered injuries.
4. Write simply, clearly and concisely about direct observations only and remember the A-B-C format. (A = Antecedent, B = Behavior, C = Consequence)

## VISITATION GUIDELINES

Parents, relatives, and friends are welcome in the dormitories, but there are a few guidelines to protect students' privacy. Please make arrangements with staff on duty. No visitors of the opposite gender, other than parents, should go past the "exit" signs in the dorm. Visiting hours are posted by each dorm. It is the SDSBVI policy that all bedroom doors must be open any time there is guest and also at bedtime.

### **DORMITORY VISITING HOURS:**

Monday -- Friday: 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM and 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM

Saturday: 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM – 10:00 PM

Sunday: 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM and 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

## DINING ROOM GUIDELINES (revised February 2016)

- Each child will be offered servings from the three basic food groups.
- There will be choices available within the food groups (i.e. raw or cooked vegetables). If the person helping the student gets his/her plate knows the preference, please tell the kitchen staff. Also, the adults should try not to "bias" the kid's choices based on their personal likes/dislikes.
- The students should be encouraged to try (at least three bites) of each item on the plate.
- In order to receive a sweet dessert (cake, cookies, bars, pudding, ice cream) the student needs to eat  $\frac{3}{4}$  of what's on the plate. Fresh fruit and vegetables can be provided any time; even if the main course wasn't finished.
- No "seconds" on milk or sweet desserts will be provided.
- Liquid intake should be monitored to make sure the student is not going to drink so much that s/he will not "have room" for the meal.
- The evening snack guidelines are the same as those for dessert. If supper isn't eaten, the student will still be offered an evening snack of fruits or vegetables.
- Access to both the candy/snack and pop machines is available to the students after school until 4:00 PM and from 7:00 – 9:00 PM. On weekends, the hours run from 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.
- Whole or skim milk will be on the table for those students identified in eating programs; otherwise, all milk is 1 percent low fat and chocolate milk is "no fat" with no more than two servings per meal per student.
- Bread is available upon request.
- No pop is allowed in the dining room.
- Students should be encouraged to drink water with each meal and frequently throughout the day, particularly in warm weather or when exercising.
- Shoes, flip flops, or sandals must be worn in the Dining Room. Going barefoot or wearing socks is not allowed in the Dining Room.

## FEEDING PROGRAMS

All SDSBVI students will have a feeding skills evaluation completed at the time of their placement. This evaluation will be done by the Dormitories Supervisor when the student is an independent eater and who is using no adaptive equipment. When there are chewing/swallowing concerns or issues related to positioning or adaptive equipment, the evaluation will be conducted by the Speech/Language Pathologist with consultation from the Dormitories Supervisor and the Occupational Therapist as needed. Any modifications to diet textures, adaptive equipment, assistance, and set-up at meals will be determined as a result of the evaluation.

All permanent and temporary dorm staff, teaching staff and instructional assistants will be trained on general dining skills related to visual impairment at the time of hire. All permanent and temporary dorm staff, teaching staff and instructional assistants will be trained on specific feeding procedures for individual students who need them by the Speech/Language Pathologist on an ongoing basis. No staff will assist in feeding students without training. The Director of Human Resources has the list of employees who have gone through the training.

The feeding procedures for students who require assistance and adaptive equipment will be posted in the dining room. Any concerns related to feeding procedures will be referred to the Dormitories Supervisor or Speech/Language Pathologist for reevaluation. Any concerns related to nutrition and hydration or weight will be referred to nursing.

Any recommended changes in either feeding procedure and adaptive equipment or hydration and nutritional intake make by parents or health professionals should be reported to the Nurses and the Speech Language Pathologist and documented in writing.

## LOUNGE

The Staff Lounge should be a pleasant and relaxing place to take a break. It is a place to be used by all staff, and the following suggestions are made relative to the Lounge.

1. Everyone should do their part to keep the Lounge clean at all times.
2. No meetings should be scheduled in the Lounge.
3. Student behaviors or student related problems should not be discussed in the Lounge.
4. The Lounge is not a workroom - offices, classroom, or respective areas should be used for work.
5. During working hours breaks in the Lounge should be kept to 15 minutes (excluding lunch time).
6. Coffee drinkers are expected to contribute to the coffee stock.
7. Label items with your name before putting in the refrigerator.

## MAINTENANCE REQUESTS (August 2016)

UNSAFE CONDITIONS should be reported immediately through the use of a REPORT OF ACCIDENT, INCIDENT OR UNSAFE CONDITION Form which may be obtained from the Business Manager.

Requests for minor room changes such as light bulbs, moving of furniture or requests for the maintenance staff to fix minor items not related to the safety or well-being of staff and students should be reported on a Maintenance Request Form and placed in the Physical Plant Manager's mailbox in the Staff Lounge. Maintenance requests may also be made by e-mail; be sure all maintenance department employees receive these requests.

## SCHOOL FACILITIES, USE OF (updated August 2016)

The schools have a schedule of charges to be followed under which part of the facility can be rented to groups not part of the school. For permission and rates, contact the Superintendent or Business Manager for SDSBVI rental or the Physical Plant Manager for SDSD rental. Any groups using the school's facilities must complete a release of liability form (forms are available from the Business Office) and provide proof of insurance coverage.

## CODE OF CONDUCT (August 2016)

All persons acting in any capacity for a state agency should demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, and honesty in all public activities. The protection of confidential information from inappropriate use is of utmost importance and should be handled accordingly. No person acting in any capacity for a state agency shall use the funds, property, equipment, supplies, or labor of the State for a purpose which is for the private benefit of such person or any other individual or group of individuals unless the same benefit is available to the general public on equal terms or the use is in accordance with State policies and/or ordinances.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

The following support services are available at the SDSBVI and may be located as follows:

<u>Service</u>	<u>Room</u>	<u>Phone</u>
a) Student Services Director / Counselor	153 (Spicer Hall)	626-3189
b) Infirmary / Nurse	202	626-2279
c) Technology Specialist	by West Conf Rm	626-2604
d) Speech	248	626-2580
e) Low Vision Specialist	178 (Dining Room)	626-3977
f) OT/PT	270	626-2580
g) Maintenance	Lions Den & Garage	626-3990 626-7832
h) Principal	222	626-7833
i) Educational Secretary	226	626-2581
j) Transition Specialist	245	626-2333

## TEACHING CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Some ideas we have about the visually impaired are things we've heard but not thought about...

How many of your ideas are myths and how many are fact?

- |  |      |       |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. Blind people hear better than sighted people.   | TRUE | FALSE |
| 2. He'll hurt his eyes if he holds a book too close to his eyes.                         | TRUE | FALSE |
| 3. He'll lose sight if he uses his eyes too much.  | TRUE | FALSE |
| 4. They need bright light to see better.   | TRUE | FALSE |
| 5. One "bad" eye means that she's lost half her vision.                                  | TRUE | FALSE |
| 6. All visually impaired kids need glasses.  | TRUE | FALSE |
| 7. All visually impaired children can be helped if they were given books in large print. | TRUE | FALSE |

Answers:

1. FALSE; The visually impaired need to be trained to make maximum use of their listening skills. They cannot hear better, simply because they cannot see well.
2. FALSE; It does not harm the visually impaired to hold their books close to their eyes. They do this to see the print better.
3. FALSE; Unless there is a medical prescription to the contrary, the visually impaired should be encouraged to use their vision.
4. FALSE; Depending upon the child, he/she may need bright or dim lighting. As a result of some eye conditions (cataracts, albinism), a child may require dim lighting in order to feel more comfortable.
5. FALSE; Losing vision in one eye affects depth perception and width of visual field but usually does not affect other aspects of vision. Psychological aspects may become important.
6. FALSE; Glasses do not always correct vision. The visually impaired may wear glasses for some tasks and not for others.
7. FALSE; Not everyone. Sometimes large type can be a detriment depending upon the cause of the visual impairment



## WHO ARE VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS?

Visually impaired children are those whose vision prevents them from functioning educationally, without special materials, training, and/or other assistance. This includes children who:

1. See at 20 feet what a person with “normal vision” sees at 70 feet (20/70 acuity).
2. Read big E on Snellen Chart (20/200 acuity - legally blind).
3. Identify forms or objects from various distances.
4. Count fingers from various distances.
5. Acknowledge hand movements.
6. Have light perception.
7. Have no light perception (totally blind).
8. The above (1-7) relate to visual functioning. How well a child actually sees is called functional vision and is dependent upon many environmental factors.

How a child uses vision (Functional Vision) is the most important consideration for the classroom teacher. Educationally, visually impaired students can be grouped in these ways:

1. Read standard print.
2. Use magnification devices with standard print.
3. Read large print.
4. Use Braille but can see light (useful for mobility).
5. No light perception (Braille users).

## WHAT ARE SOME COMMON VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS?

Albinism - A hereditary condition in which there is a lack of pigment throughout the body, including the eyes. It is usually accompanied by a nystagmus condition (see below). Children with albinism are very sensitive to light and sometimes wear tinted glasses.

Astigmatism - Blurred vision caused by defective curvature of the refractive surfaces of the cornea, as a result of which light rays are not sharply focused on the retina.

Cataract - A condition in which the normally transparent lens of the eye becomes cloudy or opaque.

Glaucoma - A condition in which pressure of the fluid inside the eye is too high. Depending upon the type of glaucoma, visual loss may be gradual, sudden, or present at birth. When visual loss is gradual, it begins with decreasing peripheral vision.

Hyperopia - A condition in which the eyeball is too short from front to back, causing farsightedness.

Myopia - A condition in which the eyeball is too long from front to back, causing nearsightedness.

Nystagmus - Involuntary, rapid movement of the eyeballs from side to side, up and down, in a rotary motion, or a combination of these.

Retinitis Pigmentosa - A hereditary degeneration of the retina beginning with night blindness and producing a gradual loss of peripheral vision. Though some persons with this disease lose all of their vision, many do retain some central vision.

Retrolental Fibroplasia (RLF) (Also called Retinopathy of Prematurity - ROP) - Visual impairment caused by oxygen given to incubated premature babies.

Strabismus - Eyes not simultaneously directed to the same object as a result of an imbalance of the muscles of the eyeball.

## TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

1. When approaching a blind student, unless he knows you well, always state your name. Voices are not always easy to identify, particularly in crowds or stress situations.
2. A totally blind child or a child with severe visual impairment may exhibit certain mannerisms (fingers in the eyes or eye poking, rocking, extra movements). Encourage good posture and consult with the resource or itinerant teacher for dealing with this behavior.
3. Tell your student what's going on. Sometimes a conversation doesn't make sense or may convey the wrong meaning if you can't see the expressions on people's faces.
4. For the safety of the visually handicapped child as well as for all other children, doors and cupboards should be all the way open or all the way shut. The visually impaired child should also be told of any changes in the position of classroom furniture.
5. Do not avoid words such as "look" and "see". The visually impaired use these words and other vision oriented words just as the general public does.
6. Be fair and firm. In general, maintain the same standards as the regular classroom teacher. Some visually impaired may try for sympathy. What they should have is empathy and a realization that you are not going to expect less of them than their regular teacher unless there is a good reason for deviating.
7. A visually impaired child will probably operate more slowly than a child with normal sight because the information gathering mechanism is not as efficient.
8. When you are talking about an object or a place, be descriptive. Avoid pointing at an object and saying something like, "its right over there."
9. Do not expect the blind child to get too much out of strictly visual methods of teaching.
10. Good lighting is not always bright lighting.

**CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT** - The child who has been severely visually handicapped since birth or the first few years of life must be taught those body image and spatial concepts which the sighted child normally develops as a matter of course. For example, a child may need to learn such spatial concepts as "above," "below," and "next to" in relation to himself and others. Older students may have difficulty understanding the concepts of rotation and revolution. In addition to developing body image and learning spatial concepts, the visually handicapped child needs concrete educational experiences.

## **LECTURING AND DEMONSTRATING**

1. Be descriptive.
2. Let the student handle the materials before, during, or after a demonstration.
3. Let the student stand/sit near or next to the demonstration.
4. Do not lecture with your back to the window, forcing students to look into the light.
5. Do not expect the blind child to get anything out of strictly visual methods of teaching. If you are presenting something strictly visual and it cannot be put into something that can be felt or be told orally, give the student a different, but related, assignment.

## **WRITING ON THE CHALKBOARD**

1. Write in large, broad print.
2. Read aloud as you write.
3. Use thick, white chalk.
4. Keep the board clean to maximize the contrast.
5. Try not to clutter the board with so much information that students have difficulty seeing materials.

## **CHARTS AND MAPS**

1. Inquire about large print, Braille and tactual maps and globes.
2. Maps on handouts should have clear, bold boundaries.
3. Make tactual maps with yarn and Elmer's glue.

## **WRITING TOOLS**

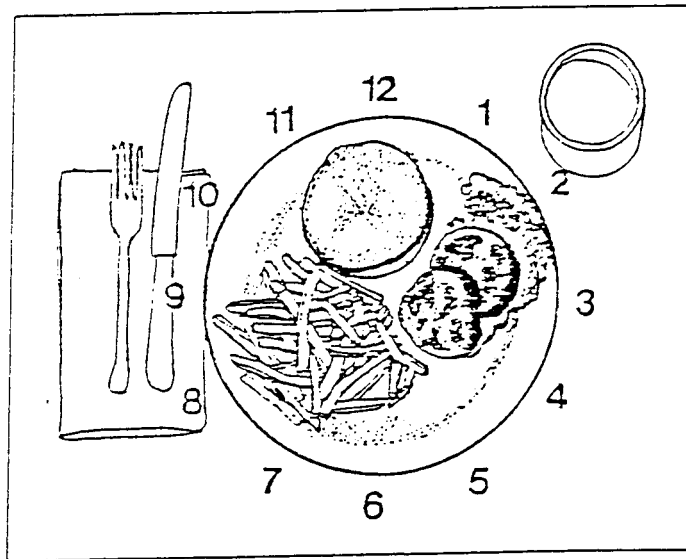
1. Have the student use thick, soft pencils and/or black felt-tip pens.
2. Use nonglossy paper.
3. Use pens/pencils that have thick strokes.

## **TESTING**

1. The student may answer orally, in writing, by typing or by taping.
2. Partially sighted students may need large print tests.
3. You might want to tape the test.
4. You may need to allow extra time for these students to complete exams. Usually, time-and-half is acceptable.

## HOW DO VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN FIND THE FOOD ON THEIR PLATE?

To find food on a plate, visually handicapped imagine the plate is a clock. They are told at what time the food is placed. On this plate, the hamburger is at 12 o'clock, the salad is at 3 o'clock and the french fries are at 8 o'clock. Visually handicapped kids, just like you, think dessert should be all the time! (NOTE: This technique is only useful for students who have an understanding of an analogue clock face.)



What time is milk at? (x0010,0 z)

## HOW DO VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN FIND THEIR CLOTHES AND TOYS?

Visually handicapped kids have to be very neat. They aren't always but they should be. They have to put their things in the same place every day in order to find them.

To pick out what to wear in the morning, visually handicapped kids may feel the texture of their clothes. They know jeans feel different than wool pants. They may remember in what order their clothes are hung in their closet or use some other system.

In order to decide what top matches what bottom, aluminum clothing tags can be sewn in each piece of clothing. On the tags, there are Braille markings indicating the color. Visually handicapped children must learn what colors go together.

## BRAILLE ALPHABET

The basis of Braille is a rectangular "cell" formed by six raised dots, two horizontal by three vertical.

	1..4	..	4..1	
For Writer Work	2..5	..	5..2	For Slate Work
	3..5	..	6..3	

The dots have been numbered arbitrarily. In the above illustrations, one side is labeled "For Writer Work" and the other side is labeled "For Slate Work." The student who uses a braillewriter writes from left to right; the student who uses a slate writes from right to left.

The symbols for the first ten letters of the Braille alphabet use only Dots 1, 2, 4 and 5. The symbols for the next ten letters are formed by adding Dot 3 to each of these symbols. Since Louis Braille was a Frenchman, and there is no "w" in the French language, the Braille alphabet which he devised conformed to the pattern of adding Dots 3 and 6 to the symbols for the first five letters of the alphabet to form the symbols for the last five. However, a symbol for "w" has been created, and therefore the pattern is broken.

## For Writer Work

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
⠁	⠃	⠉	⠙	⠑	⠋	⠗	⠈	⠊	⠚
k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
⠅	⠇	⠍	⠝	⠕	⠏	⠑	⠗	⠎	⠞
u	v	x	y	z		w			
⠥	⠺	⠭	⠽	⠵		⠻			

Letter	Dots	Letter	Dots	Letter	Dots
a	1	k	1-3	u	1-3-6
b	1-2	l	1-2-3	v	1-2-3-6
c	1-4	m	1-3-4	w	2-4-5-6
d	1-4-5	n	1-3-4-5	x	1-3-4-6
e	1-5	o	1-3-5	y	1-3-4-5-6
f	1-2-4	p	1-2-3-4	z	1-3-5-6
g	1-2-4-5	q	1-2-3-4-5		
h	1-2-5	r	1-2-3-5		
i	2-4	s	2-3-4		
j	2-4-5	t	2-3-4-5		

What is shown is known as Grade I Braille, that is, there is a Braille character for every print character. Grade I Braille is used very little nationwide. Most blind people who use Braille, and that includes the Braille reading students here, use what is known as Grade II Braille. Grade II Braille, in order to save space, utilizes approximately 190 short forms and contractions. There is also a Grade III Braille, which has about 500 contractions, but this is used primarily by college students for taking notes. Nemeth Code utilizes the same 6 dots but uses them to convey mathematical signs, symbols, and numbers. The designs formed by the same 6 dots are also used to express musical notation.

## WHAT SPECIAL DEVICES WILL THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILD USE?

Some children may need only a few adaptive materials while others require a combination of several devices. These devices are generally categorized as optical or nonoptical and should only be provided by a special teacher of the visually handicapped or an eye specialist. A partial list follows.

**NONOPTICAL AIDS** - These are devices that are not individually prescribed and may or may not be designed specifically for the visually handicapped.

### A. Visual Aids

1. Bookstands - These help to reduce postural fatigue by bringing the work closer to the reader's eyes. When a bookstand is not available, one may be improvised by placing other books beneath the book that is to be read.
2. Felt Tip Pens - Usually preferred in black, and available in varying widths, these produce a bold letter or diagram. Using different colored markers will often help a student to emphasize sections of his notes when scanning would otherwise be quite difficult.
3. Acetate - Usually preferred in yellow, though available in various colors, acetate placed over the printed page will tend to darken the print itself as well as heighten the contrast of the background paper.
4. Lamps with Rheostats - With variable intensities and positioning, lamps can provide the additional or dimmed illumination that a visually handicapped child may require.
5. Large-Type Books - For comfort or for those children who cannot read regular print at close distance even with an optical aid, large-type is helpful. Its quality or typeface is as important to legibility as its size. Spacing between letters and lines is also important.
6. Bold-Line Paper - For children who find it difficult to see the lines on regular writing paper, bold lines are available in various formats, e.g., graph paper, large print slaves for music notation.
7. Page Markers and Reading Windows - These may be especially helpful to a child who finds it difficult to focus on a word or line of print.
8. Sun Visors and other Shields - Children with light sensitivity (photophobia) may need to block out some of the light and glare in the environment.

### B. Tactual Aids

1. Braillewriter, Slate and Stylus - A braillewriter is a manually operated, six-key machine which, as its name indicates, types Braille. The slate and stylus, used to take notes, is easily carried in a pocket or on a clipboard. The slate is a metal frame with openings through which Braille dots are embossed with the aid of a pointed stylus.



2. Raised Line Drawing Board - A rubber covered board on which the blind child can draw or write on acetate with a pen or similarly pointed object, and feel the lines “raise up” as they are made. The geometric shapes, script letters or other line diagrams thus reproduced are generally simple inform for tactual understanding.
3. Cubarithm Slate - This aid enables the blind child to do mathematics using standard Braille characters. Cubes with raised Braille notation fit into square recesses in a waffle-like frame.
4. Abacus - Teachers are now instructing students in the use of the Cranmer Abacus, especially adapted for the blind.
5. Raised Line Paper - (writing paper, graph paper, etc.) - Raised line paper allows a student to write script “on the line” or to maneuver a graph either by placing markers onto the graph paper or by punching holes to indicate specific points.
6. Templates and Writing Guides - Made out of cardboard, plastic, or metal, these open rectangular forms allows signatures of other information to be written within their boundaries. Many blind people use these guides to sign their names.

#### C. Auditory Aids

1. Cassette Tape Recorders - Children use the recorder to take notes, listen to recorded texts, or formulate compositions or writing assignments.
2. Talking Book and Other Recording Programs - The Library of Congress (Talking Book Program) and other organizations provide free library services to visually handicapped persons, offering a wide variety of texts and leisure reading on discs and cassettes. Because the speeds at which these discs and cassettes are played differ from the speeds of commercially manufactured recordings, the Library of Congress lends special Talking Books and cassette machines to eligible persons.
3. Variable Speed Attachments - Attached to a tape recorder or Talking Book machine (some are built into the machine itself), these can be used to vary the speed at which the student listens to the tape, thereby speeding up or slowing down the rate of listening. (Speeding up the tape increases pitch.)
4. Speech Compressors - These devices speed up recorded materials without changing the pitch.

D. Technological Advances in Electronic Aids - The following aids, while are available at the present time, are often too expensive for schools or individuals to purchase. It is hoped that sometime in the near future they will be available to all who can benefit from them.

1. Talking Calculator - This hand-held calculator speaks each entry and result. It is capable of performing all the computations of a nonadapted electronic calculator. (Earphones are available.)
2. Optacon - This “Optical to Tactual Converter” (produced by Telesensory Systems, Inc.) transforms print into letter configurations of vibrating reeds that are read tactually.

3. Closed Circuit Television - The closed circuit television electronically enlarges printed material onto a television screen and can also change polarity; black print on a white background can be viewed as white print on a black background. Contrast and illumination can also be altered.

### HOW WILL THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED CHILD GET AROUND THE CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL BUILDING?

Sometimes a visually handicapped child may choose to (or need to) utilize a sighted guide. For ease and safety of movement the child should grasp the guide's upper arm, just above the elbow (a younger child walking with an adult may hold the adult's wrist) so that the thumb is on the outside and the fingers are on the inside of the guide's arm. Both the visually handicapped child and the guide hold their upper arms close to their own bodies. This should automatically position the child one-half step behind his guide.

### WHO ARE THE PROFESSIONALS WHO WORK WITH THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED?

Brailist or Braille Teacher - A paraprofessional who has completed the required coursework to assist a classroom teacher working with a student who is blind; may teach Braille.

Low Vision Specialist - A person trained to assess student's functional vision in everyday settings and recommend adaptations. Can assist educators in understanding medical eye reports.

Ophthalmologist - A physician (M.D.) who specializes in diagnosis and treatment of all defects and diseases of the eye by prescribing drugs and glasses, performing surgery and other types of treatment.

Optician - A maker of glasses: grinds lenses to prescription, fits them into frames, and adjusts frames to the wearer.

Optometrist - A licensed, nonmedical practitioner who measures refractive errors (irregularities in the size or shape of the eyeball or surface of the cornea) and eye muscle disturbances. The optometrist's treatment is limited to the prescribing and fitting of glasses.

Orientation and Mobility Specialist - Teaches students to familiarize themselves with new surroundings and to travel independently both in and out of doors; also works with younger children on concept development as it relates to body image and spatial awareness.

Teacher of Visually Impaired - A teacher who has a major or minor in teaching students who are visually impaired, and is certified by their own stated education agency.

Technology Specialist - A person who is knowledgeable in the various technologies used by people with disabilities to access computers.

Transition Specialist - A person who is knowledgeable about the laws, processes, and practices to aid students and their families in preparing for post high school experiences.