

Basic Program Description- Part I

Attachment A

Include an overview of the proposed services which will allow the district to determine the quality of services to be provided based on the Criteria for Evaluation of Proposals. Additional space and/or attachments may be used to describe your Basic Program Description. Be sure to answer each area thoroughly.

A. Describe best practice regarding Visually Impaired instruction and Orientation and Mobility instruction in a school setting to include processes, intervention/therapy and promoting access to general curriculum for all students ages 3-21 recommended by the IEP committee.

What is a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) and an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M)?

A Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments is a licensed special education teacher who has received certification and specialized training in meeting the educational needs of students who are blind or have visual impairments ages birth through 21.

An Orientation and Mobility specialist teach students with blindness or have visual impairments critical skills to remain oriented in their environment as well as specific mobility skills in order to travel safely, efficiently, and as independently as possible within the home, at school, at work and in the community.

Role of Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and an Orientation and Mobility Specialist?

The role of the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TVI) and an Orientation and Mobility Specialist (O&M) is to provide direct and/or consultative special education services specific to vision loss. The TVI and O&M provides support to students, teachers, and parents and acts as a liaison with community services. The TVI and O&M collaborates with the educational team by advising the team about ways of enhancing the student's learning by adapting activities and materials to the student's abilities.

The TVI and O&M may help choose appropriate educational materials and may brainstorm with teachers and therapists about effective adaptations. By working together, classroom teachers, therapists, and the TVI can create a classroom environment that encourages independence, academic success, and prepares the student to be the most productive member of society they can be.

Interpret Reports

As part of determining a student's eligibility and the impact of the visual impairment, the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and Orientation and Mobility Specialist will need to have the skills and training to read and interpret medical eye reports. The TVI and O&M will determine the implications thereof for educational and home environments.

Ongoing Observations

As the TVI and O&M, I will conduct ongoing observations of the student(s) in a variety of familiar situations performing routine tasks or activities to assess how the student is using their vision. In doing this, I can find out what motivates the student to look. I will then use objects and activities similar to those that have been motivating in the past. It is also beneficial to get an understanding of how the student spends their time. What does the student do? How does the student play and with what? Where do they go? Who do they play or interact with? This is a process to identify the student's existing (and desired) activity setting. These observations will assist me in ensuring the goals and accommodations as well as level of service continued to be appropriate.

Conduct Specialized Assessments and Make Recommendations

I will conduct Functional Vision, Learning Media, and Expanded Core Curriculum Assessments. This is to determine how much usable vision a student has to perform visual tasks, to determine the best learning medium for the student and to define concepts and skills that often require specialized instruction with students who are blind or visually impaired in order to compensate for decreased opportunities to gain experience incidentally by observing others. These assessments are initially conducted to determine the need for services from a teacher of students with visual impairments and to determine appropriate goals and level of support needed. This evaluation is updated at a minimum every three years to determine ongoing eligibility and need for school-based vision services. I may also recommend appropriate specialized evaluations as needed, particularly in low vision, orientation and mobility, and adaptive physical education. This evaluation is conducted even if the student has no usable vision.

Use of Natural Environments to Address Goals

Teaching techniques to enhance vision should not be taught in isolation. It is important to look at what the needs and activities of the student(s) are in school and in their everyday life that are affected by their visual performance and teach to those tasks. If the family/teachers are interested in obtaining other objects for the student to play with, then I can assist the family and/or teacher in obtaining such items.

The responsibility of the TVI and O&M is to support the student with what he/she has everyday access to, where he/she is, and sharing information that matches the student's/families/classroom priorities (watching television, playing on the computer, playing with toys or games). These activities provide multiple learning opportunities in the students' natural environment.

Promote Student Access and Independent Participation

It is important to promote student access to the general curriculum and this is done by giving the student with visual impairments the same opportunities and experiences their sighted peers receive. This could be teaching with their low vision devices, assistive technology devices, braille, enlarged print...etc. Giving the student access to their general education curriculum is an essential role of the TVI.

Students with visual impairments often develop 'learned helplessness.' Learned helplessness is the result of giving too much support to a student, and in return they learn they do not have to do anything and that someone will do it for them if they just wait long enough. As a TVI and O&M, we try to break this mold and promote independence in education and daily living skills. Introducing learning aids (e.g., reading stands, signature guides, and digital recorders) and low vision devices (CCTVs, magnifiers, telescopes) allows students to participate independently in regular classroom activities. Promoting and instilling self-advocacy skills in students with visual impairments will help them to participate more independently in their general education environment.

B. Describe your process to maintain student data for the purpose of reporting progress (Results Driven Accountability) for educational benefit as outlined on students' Individual Education Program (IEP).

How I currently maintain student data for the purpose of reporting progress is through a specific, individual notebook I have for each student and a service summary report. In this notebook are their IEP's, along with their goals, medical information, records, visual impairment information and note sheets. I write down everything we do for the day/lesson and type it up in a service summary report on a Word Document. The basis of our lessons being conducted will come from the students' IEP goals and tailor off to more instruction as needed. The service summary reports will be sent out at the end of every month to the Special Education Director, parents, paraprofessionals working with the students and classroom teachers. The data taken every lesson will be crucial when updating present levels and goal progress. We, as a team, can use the data collected for the educational benefit of the student.

C. Describe how you will provide specialized training and support for administration, teachers, and parents aligned with the individual student's disability and their IEP to promote progress in the educational environment; if requested to do so.

Actively Participate in the Individualized Education Program/Plan (IEP)

I will communicate with the team members on how the student's performance may affect their school performance by providing information on the student's learning style, utilization of visual information, and other strengths unique to individual students who are visually impaired. I will identify any goals and objectives in specialized areas related to the visual needs of the student. I will also identify instructional methods and materials for meeting goals and objectives. Finally, I will recommend appropriate service delivery options, including class placement, physical education, related services, specialized equipment, adaptations in testing procedures,

and time frames for implementation. Consideration will be taken as to the current and future reading and writing media for the student with a visual impairment based on reading distance, reading rates and accuracy, portability of reading skills, visual fatigue, and tactual sensitivity.

Recommend Educational & Instructional Strategies

I will assist in determining and procuring classroom equipment and materials necessary for the student with visual impairments to learn (braille writer, low vision devices, assistive technology, computer...etc.) including ensuring necessary room modifications and lighting changes. I will provide the classroom teacher with information regarding the specialized strategies needed to teach a student who is blind or visually impaired. I will also assist in obtaining specialized materials, including procuring materials from the American Printing House for the Blind (APH), providing braille instruction and materials, recorded/enlarged materials, and other needed materials.

Communication with Caregivers, Classroom Teachers, Parents, and Administration

I will have ongoing communication with the caregivers and classroom teachers in order to try to develop a better understanding of the student. An itinerant teacher will not have the same rapport with the student as they do not spend as much time with them. For that reason, it is helpful to talk with parents and classroom teachers who do have this rapport about how they feel the student is doing, if they are addressing the goals and how the student is functioning. I may ask to observe the teacher working with the student to observe how the student is functioning within the normal routine and with familiar adults. If specialized training and support is needed, I can set-up training opportunities specific to the students' visual impairment and give recommendations and strategies on how to best teach this student.

D. Describe your evaluation process.

My evaluation process starts with a referral then follows to requesting an eye medical report from the eye specialist. In most cases, the school district will already have the eye report on hand. A thorough records review is conducted of the students' files. Next, a Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) is conducted on the student. This includes but is not limited to: environmental factors, relationships, positioning, materials, procedures, observations, environmental analysis and evaluation of the students' eyes and what they can functionally see. A Learning Media Assessment (LMA) is then conducted to determine the students' best learning medium. A student may be a print, large print, braille, digital, or auditory access learner. Once the assessments and evaluations are completed a report of the findings and data is written and presented to the IEP team to determine type and amount of service.

E. Describe how you will ensure compliance with the requirements of the MDE State Board Policy 74.19 and IDEA in regards to the services outlined in the RFP.

I will maintain compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by providing free and appropriate education needs to my students who are blind and visually impaired. Just because a student has a disability, does not mean they cannot be an active, contributing member of their society. Teaching and maintaining compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will ensure equality of opportunity, participation, independent skills, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities.

A prior written notice and parental consent for evaluation to determine eligibility, following initial eligibility, will be gathered to maintain compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and Mississippi Policies and Procedures State Board 74.19 for Children with Disabilities in regard to Related Service Eligibility for students eligible under IDEA. I will conduct reevaluations for eligibility on or before three years to keep eligibility requirements up to date.

F. Describe how you will ensure compliance with the Ocean Springs School District Board of Trustees policies.

I will become familiar with and comply with Ocean Springs School District Board of Trustees Policies by going online to the 'School Board and Policies' Page on the OSSD website. The clicking on 'School Board Policies' and reading and familiarizing myself with these links and policies.