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KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A Newsletter for Parents and Service Providers
of Colorado Children with Blindness, Low Vision CVI, or Deaf-Blindness
October 2024

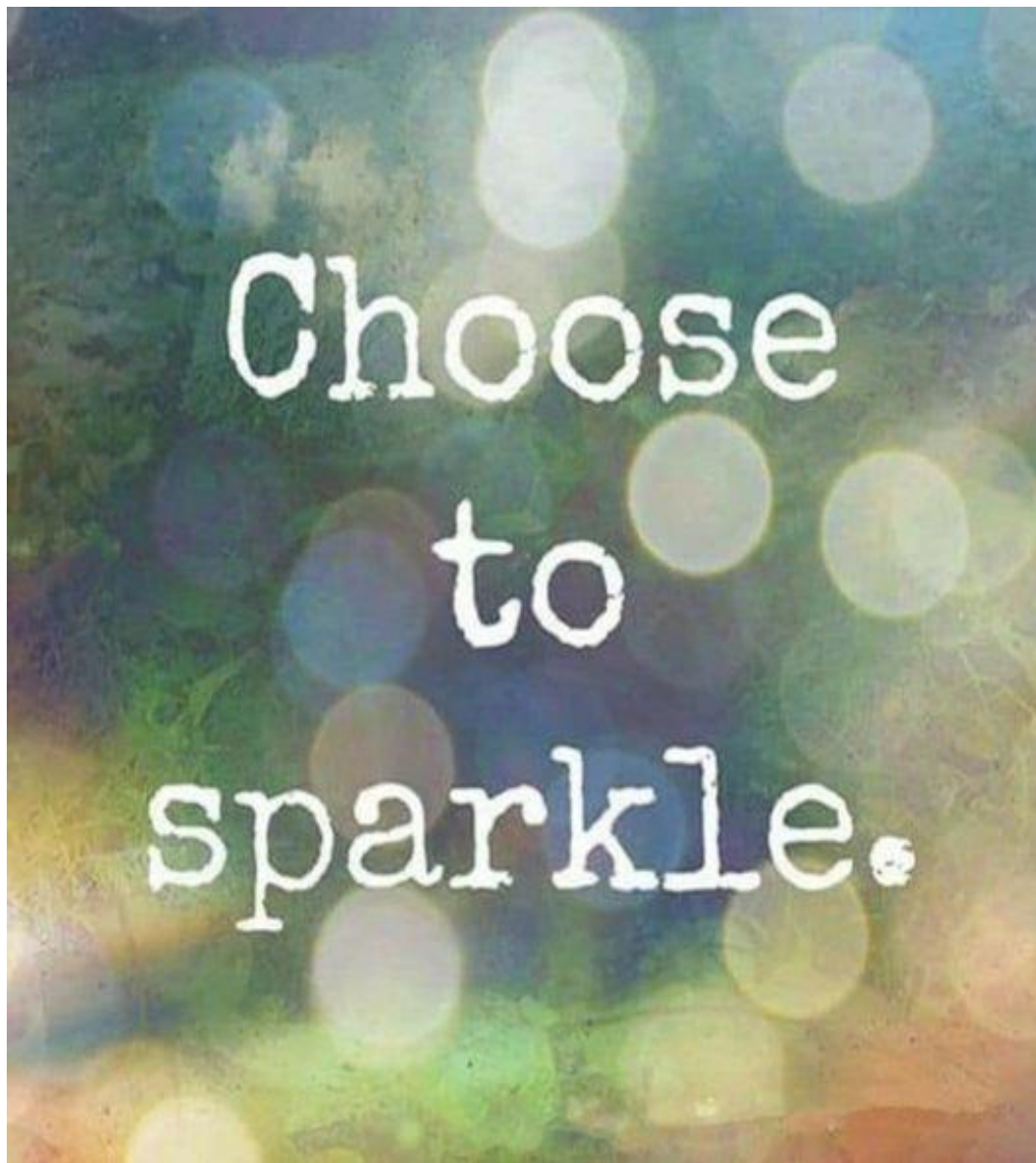


Table of Contents October 2024

Choose to Sparkle	1	EDI	17
Low Vision News	3	Calendar of Events	18
Colorado Deaf-Blind Project	4	CVI Updates	20
Check it Out	6	Just for Parents	22
Resources	10	Jobs	24
CDE Happenings	12	BLV Coalition	26
Connecting the Dots	15	Colorado Connections	36

Guest Commentary: A Campaign We Can Believe In



This commentary was published in the October 16, 2015 Denver Post and updated on April 12, 2016. The mother of the child involved shared the story at a past State Special Education Directors' meeting and gave us permission to share. The following article is writing by J. Chris Larson, Evie's dad and an attorney.

At Louisville elementary School, the polls just closed on an election that holds a deep significance for our family. Our 11-year-old daughter, Evelyn – we call her Evie – made her first foray into politics. When Evie announced recently that she wanted to run for student council both my wife and I were surprised. Evie is tragically shy. So much so, she won't order ice cream at our favorite ice cream parlor – even when the friendly clerks are being more than accommodating.

So, my wife and I doubted that Evie really would go through with running for student council. This seemed a bridge too far for a girl who doesn't often say good morning. Only when friends pass out of earshot will she often whisper to me: "Dad, that's _____, she's my best friend." Endearing, and isolating.

So, we thought the student council idea would leave as soon as Evie learned she would have to give a speech. Yet when she heard the news, she got quiet, paused, and then said in a small, determined voice, "I'll do it." And her campaign was born.

Eleven years ago, when she was born with an extra chromosome, we didn't know what the future might hold for Evie. Down syndrome was brand new to us then and back east, certain classroom doors were closed to kids with her disability. We moved to our small town here in Colorado, where life may be as good as it's ever going to get. Evie is included in a typical classroom where she is surrounded by peers who have known her since she was in kindergarten. In their eyes, she is Evie – a girl who won't say good morning, but who will give you a hug when you are feeling low (even if you didn't know you needed it.)

So, we watched in amazement as Evie practices her complaint speech for hours. In the living room in the dining room, in her room: "Good morning, I am Evie Larson, Student Council. I help my friends. I help my friends when they are sad. I help my friends when their feelings are hurt. Please vote for me. Thank you."

Remarkable.

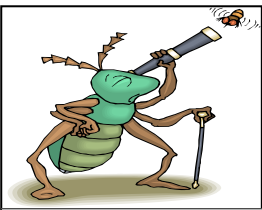
When it was time to stand in front of the class and deliver, she was nervous. Her teacher asked if she wanted help. She nodded, and pointed to one of her competitors, Bella. Together they stood before the class as Bella read Evie's speech, and Evie turned the pages. Then all the students voted.

Perhaps it's not a surprise that Evie didn't win the election. What might surprise you is just how close it was. 15 votes for Bella, 15 votes for Cooper, and 14 votes for Evie.

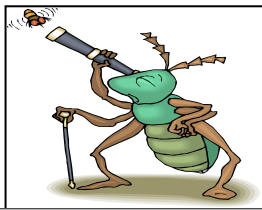
She lost by one vote. And it was, remarkable, hers. When voting, she was told she could put down two names on the paper to select for student council. She wrote Bella and Cooper. Her friends. When I asked why did that, she explained, "They are really nice."

And so is Evie. Who helps her friends.

Now that is a campaign, we can believe in.



LOW VISION NEWS



2024-2025 Low Vision Evaluation Clinic Schedule

Clinic	Clinic Date(s)	Due Date for Paperwork	Site Coordinator
Northern LVE Clinic	November 14-15, 2024	Thursday, October 31, 2024	Samantha Thuis
Metro LVE Clinic	February 19-21, 2025	Wednesday, February 5, 2025	Roberta Curtis

Western and Southern Regional Low Vision Clinics

By Roberta Curtis
Statewide LVE Clinic Coordinator

Welcome to the new school year!! The Colorado Low Vision Clinic team has been hard at work and has completed two clinics already. The **Western Slope Colorado Low Vision Evaluation Clinic** was held September 26th and 27th at Basil T. Knight Center in Grand Junction. Six students from four administrative units (Mesa 51, Montrose Re-1J, San Juan BOCES, and Delta 50J) received evaluations. Eight parents and five TVIs attended the evaluation with their students. The Clinic team would like to thank Basil T. Knight for hosting the event, and **Danielle Burden, Megan Crosby, Mike Plansker, Beth Myers, and Erin Schroeder** for bringing students.

The **Southern Low Vision Evaluation Clinic** was on Friday, October 11, 2024, at Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) in Colorado Springs. Six students from four administrative units (Fountain/Ft. Carson 8, Falcon 49, and CSDB) received low vision evaluations. The parents and TVIs (**Lori Mattick, Elizabeth Webb, and Cheryl Austin**) attended the evaluation with their students.

The LVE Clinic team would like to thank **Angela Sims** and **Erin Schroeder**, and **Jim Olson** for coordinating the clinics this year. We appreciate your amazing organizational skills. Thank you to Drs. David Simpson and Kara Hanson, low vision therapists Karin Olson and Jim Olson for their expertise. *(Tanni's edit)* Also to Roberta Curtis for her statewide clinic coordination work! And, of course, to the involved TVIs for their commitment to low vision care and devices for their students.

Low Vision Evaluation Clinic Reminders

It is a requirement of the clinic that eligible children and youth must have an active IEP and be served by a teacher of students with visual impairments. Both the TVI and a parent must attend the clinic with the child. There is no cost for the clinic evaluation. Device costs are the responsibility of the family and/or administrative unit. We ask that a fiscal plan be discussed ahead of the clinic in anticipation of prescribed devices. It is the TVI's responsibility to review the LVE report with the family and student, and to train the child on the ordered devices. The clinic reports will be sent to the TVI two to three weeks following the clinic through a secure portal. For logistical questions about the clinics, please contact Roberta Curtis at curtis_r@cde.state.co.us

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Project Purpose and Staff: The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (aka the Colorado Deaf-Blind Grant) is beginning its second year of its federally-funded five-year grant cycle. The purpose of the project, awarded to every state and U.S. territories is to identify children and youth with deaf-blindness and provide free technical assistance (TA) to the identified children, their families, and service providers. Key project activities are to maintain an annual Child Count process, host professional learning events that include an annual webinar series and the long-offered Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs, and to provide tiered and customized technical assistance to families and/or service providers. The project has four broad goals: (1) timely identification, (2) family networking, training, and TA support, and (3) professional training and TA support, and 4) intervener recruitment and training / support.



The project has an active website, lending library, and Deaf-Blind Advisory Task Force. We have four CDE employees (Tanni Anthony, Gina Herrera, Roberta Curtis, and Jessica Meisel) and a contracted Family Engagement Specialist Cindy Colwell is also on board. For training and support documents and resources, please [check out the Deaf-Blind website](#)

Child Find Count of Colorado Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness: As you identify new children in Colorado with deaf-blindness, please reach out to Tanni Anthony (anthony_t@cde.state.co.us) or Gina Herrera (herrera_g@cde.state.co.us) to complete the Child Count Form at any time of the calendar year. We will begin the December 1, 2024 Child Count process in November and will be reaching out to our agency and administrative unit contacts. Our thanks for all you do to ensure our learners with deaf-blindness are properly identified across Colorado!

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project Offers Intervener Training

The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (aka the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project) offers intervener training and coaching. A new cohort began in August and a 2nd cohort will begin in January 2025. There is no charge for the training, if candidate are working with a student who is registered on the CO Deaf-Blind Child Count. The program is designed to provide the background knowledge needed for working one on one with students who are deaf-blind and leads to National Intervener Certification.

Here is what is included in the intervener training program through the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project:

- An online course of study using the National Center on Deafblindness' (NCDB) Open Hands Open Access Intervener Learning modules. Candidates will complete each module using NCDB's Moodle web platform with supplemental information.
- Feedback on all assignments, individual or group office hours, consultation, and mentoring from CO DB Project specialists.

Do you have a new intervener who needs this training? Are you still looking for an intervener who will need this training? For more information, please contact Jessica Meisel at Meisel_j@cde.co.state.us

To register, please complete the [DB Intervener registration](#).

Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

Free Technical Assistance for Learners with Deaf-Blindness

Technical assistance is the term that field uses to mean “support” or “information” for individuals providing support to children and youth (ages 0-21) with deaf-blindness. TA recipients include Colorado families of children and youth who are deaf-blind, school personnel, and agencies providing services to such children and youth.

Technical assistance may also include:

- personalized on-site consultation with family members / early intervention agency staff / school staff
- in-service training customized to the team’s needs
- workshops sponsored by the project across the state
- family support service, such as Parent Retreats, coffee hours, family outings etc.

We are here to support you! **To request a school or home visit**, complete our e-Technical Assistance Request Form located [here: https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/techassistrqst](https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/techassistrqst) Return this form as an email attachment to Gina Herrera at Herrera_G@cde.state.co.us.

Please call Gina Herrera at 303-253-0451. Or [fill out our new Google Form for Technical Assistance](#).



Community Intervener Program

The Community Intervener Program is now up and running under the Colorado Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind (CCDHHDB). The program offers Colorado infants, children and young adults who are DeafBlind 14 hours per month of 1:1 services with a trained Community Intervener. Some DeafBlind adults are also eligible for the program under certain specifications and guidelines. Services can be utilized within the home or out in the community, and the DeafBlind individual can participate in ways they have not been able to before. For more information or to sign up, please contact Elli Streifer, the Program Manager, at elli.streifer@state.co.us



National Center on Deaf-Blindness

[The National Center on Deaf-Blindness \(NCDB\)](#) released a flyer to help spread the word about the importance of vision testing for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

[Get Their Vision Tested, Too!](#) explains how identifying combined hearing and vision loss can activate referral to important specialized services and supports. The flyer is available in both color and black and white PDFs, suitable for printing or electronic dissemination.

CHECK IT OUT!

Southwest Center for Assistive Technology Training (CATT) Program

CATT offers complimentary training in Assistive Technology for Teachers, parents, and students. CATT's emphasis is on the "train the trainer" approach, with a special focus on products tailored for individuals with visual impairments or blindness. For more information or to book a training, visit <https://seeitourway.org/services/catt/> or call 602-337-8243. Our regional CATT contact is Niraj Parikh.



Avoiding Unintended Consequences of Improved Accessibility of State Tests

In recent years, many states shifted from accommodations to the identification of levels of accessibility (e.g., universal features, designated features and accommodations).

NCEO published a brief titled "[Avoiding Unintended Consequences of Improved Accessibility of State Tests](#)" that highlights what states and individualized education program (IEP) teams can do to avoid possible unintended consequences where students with disabilities who previously were assigned accommodations now access many of them as universal or designated features.

New Online Module from The IRIS Center and Bookshare

[Bookshare: Providing Accessible Materials for Students with Print Disabilities](#) is a self-paced, online

module that can be embedded in educator preparation courses and school or district professional development activities. Learners can also earn a [free professional development certificate of completion](#).

The module explores:

- Print disabilities and how printed materials create learning barriers
- Accessible Educational Materials (AEM) and formats that can address a wide range of learner needs
- Bookshare benefits, formats, and membership options
- Bookshare in the classroom

The module also includes:

- Examples featuring three students with disabilities: Gema, a ninth grader with a visual impairment; Thomas, a fifth grader who has cerebral palsy; and Liza, a third grader who has difficulty decoding printed words
- Audio interviews with experts, practitioners, and a former student who used Bookshare
- Videos of students with different print disabilities sharing their experiences with Bookshare
- Step-by-step instructional videos on how to assign materials and request resources not currently available in Bookshare
- Interactive practice opportunities with feedback



Tuesday, November 12, 2024, 7:00 – 8:00 PM EST

What's up with the AT Book from APH?

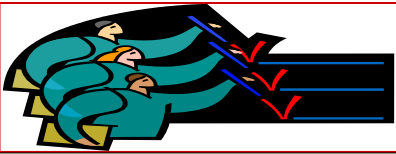
Feeling overwhelmed by AT assessments? In this webinar Dr. Ting Siu will walk you through the Access Tech Book from APH Press.

Overview the many forms and checklists to gain a better understanding of how they can be utilized when working with students.

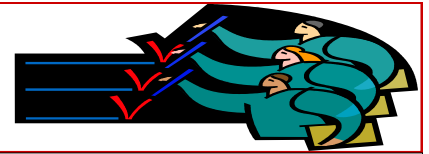
[Register Here for What's up with the AT Book from APH?](#)

APH WEBINARS





CHECK IT OUT!



Research Highlights from the National Center for Special Education Research: Attention graduate students: the National Center for Special Education Research (NCSEER) recently launched its first [Special Education Dissertation Research Fellowship Program](#) to support doctoral students conducting research on learners with or at risk for disabilities.

NCSEER's blog discusses the [thinking behind this new program](#). Another NCSEER blog has [resources for teachers and school leaders](#) to improve student outcomes in mathematic.



International Symposium on Physical Activity and Visual Impairment or Deafblindness

This conference will be held June 16-20th, 2025 in Tralee, Ireland in conjunction with the International Symposium on Adapted Physical Activity (ISAPA)! The call for proposals is open. There will be research and practical presentations and also presentations about programs. There will also be the possibility to have an exhibit. For more information go to <https://www.isapa2025.com/>

IDEA Topic Areas: OSEP, along with other Department offices, Federal agencies, and OSEP discretionary funded-grant recipients, provide numerous IDEA-topic area resources. For more specific resources on a variety of IDEA topics, visit the [Topic Areas](#) resource page. This resource page includes information and resources from the Department, other Federal agencies, and Federally-funded technical assistance centers.

Dear Colleague Letter on Early Hearing Detection and Intervention: The Department collaborated with the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) for a joint [Dear Colleague Letter](#) on collaboration between Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C programs. The ED-funded [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#) has additional resources to support collaboration between Part C and EHDI programs.

Snapshot of Assessment Participation, Performance, and Assigned Accommodations for Students Receiving Special Education Services: [The National Center on Educational Outcomes \(NCEO\)](#) recently published a new Annual Performance Report (APR) snapshot report titled, [Assessment Participation, Performance, and Assigned Accommodations for Students Receiving Special Education Services](#).

Using federally submitted data, this report provides an overview of the participation and performance of students receiving special education services on statewide reading/language arts and mathematics assessments for 2021-22. Data are provided for general and alternate assessments. This report also summarizes data on the percentage of students assigned accommodations for general assessments.

Colorado Educator Support: Need some emotional support? This is a platform dedicated to supporting Colorado's educational workforce. Explore their collection of FREE mental health resources designed to assist you in navigating the challenges of the school year. Proudly affiliated with the University of Colorado Anschutz Department of Psychiatry.

[Colorado Educator Support – Colorado Educator Support – We Can Help](#)

CHECK IT OUT!

Invitation to Participate in Research Studies Recruitment for Research Study

Protocol Title: Exploring the Influence of Self-Efficacy on TVIs

University of Utah IRB Approval #00179065

Are you a licensed Teacher of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired (TSVI)? We are conducting a study on the factors influencing the self-efficacy of TSVIs. We want to know what factors positively and negatively influence your confidence as a teacher. This mixed methods study consists of an online survey that takes about 10 minutes to complete and an optional 20-minute individual interview. Compensation will be provided to those selected to participate in an interview.



[To complete the Research Survey: TSVI Perspectives Needed](#)

STUDY TITLE: The Literacy Content Knowledge and Perceptions of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments

To be eligible for this study potential participants must be acting as teachers of students with visual impairments (TSVIs) in schools for the blind or an itinerant TSVI. Certification as a TSVI is not required as long as the individual is currently filling the role of a TSVI. If you fit these criteria, please use the QR code or web link below to access the survey.



Please forward this message and the following QR code and web link to the TSVIs with whom you have contact through listservs/ mailing lists.

[The Literacy Content Knowledge and Perceptions of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments Survey](#)

Positive Eye Resources

Back to school in the UK this week and if you are a TVI working across schools, or a class teacher in need of some top tips for working with children with Vision Impairment, check out [Positive Eye's](#) Facebook Page on the 35 Top Tips Sheets.



Also, check out the [Positive Eyes website for additional resources](#).

CHECK IT OUT!

A Few of the OSEP-Funded TA Centers

** Early Childhood

The [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center](#) is providing State Part C and Part B, Section 619 programs with the [latest information](#) on funding and guidance.



** NCSI

The [National Center for Systemic Improvement's](#) website has a wealth of information to support educators and outcomes for children with disabilities.



** Learners Who Are Deaf-Blind

The [National Center on Deaf-Blindness](#) has compiled and organized [Resources for Providing Technical Assistance During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). It covers OSEP guidance, distance TA, resources for families and service providers, and online learning for proficient communicators who are deaf-blind. The page is being regularly updated with input from state deaf-blind projects and national partners.



** Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

[TIES Center](#) has launched a distance-learning series that provides a framework for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities to get through these new transitions, engage fully in academics online, and interact with their teachers and peers, a critical component of well-being. TIES Center is regularly adding resources to the distance learning series that offer the following recommendations to support the inclusion and engagement of students with significant cognitive disabilities. Current resources include:



** Accessible Materials and Technologies

The [National AEM Center at CAST](#) has provides TA, coaching, and resources increase the availability and use of educational materials and technologies for learners with disabilities across the lifespan.



*** Professional Learning Modules

The IRIS Center is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions



*** Center for Parent Information & Resources (CPIR)

CPIR is the hub of valuable information and products specifically designed for the network of Parent Centers serving families of children with disabilities

Resources and Materials

New Resources from the U.S. Department of Education Will Help School Communities Address the Needs of Students with Mental Health Disabilities

The Office for Civil Rights has issued four new resources for schools, stakeholders, students with disabilities, and their families. These documents outline the rights of students with mental health disabilities and the responsibilities of elementary and secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities under [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#) and specifically address students with anxiety, depression, eating disorders, or bipolar disorder.

The new resources are:

Fact Sheet: [Section 504 Protections for Students with Anxiety Disorders](#)

Fact Sheet: [Section 504 Protections for Students with Depression](#)

Fact Sheet: [Section 504 Protections for Students with Eating Disorders](#)

Fact Sheet: [Section 504 Protections for Students with Bipolar Disorder](#)

The fact sheets remind schools of the obligation to treat a student with a mental health disability as they must treat any other student with a disability: free from discrimination, and the obligation to provide students with mental health disabilities with the adaptations, supports, and services the students need to have equal access to their education. These new resources are part of a larger series on specific medical conditions, which thus far includes fact sheets on [diabetes](#), [GER/GERD](#), [food allergies](#), [asthma](#), [cancer](#), [sickle cell disease](#), and [epilepsy](#).



Browse APH ConnectCenter's latest content:

- [Active Learning for Children with Visual Impairments](#)
- [Dynamic Learning Circle for Children Who Are Blind](#)
- [Blind or Low Vision Children: Learning Through Senses](#)
- [A Meaningful and Accessible Halloween for Children with Blindness or Low Vision](#)
- [Pumpkin Activities for Children Who Are Blind or Low Vision](#)

Empower your child's independent living skills!

Learn how to help your child practice independent living skills at home by watching the recorded APH Access Academy and APH FamilyConnect webinar. This two-part series is perfect for parents and professionals looking to assess and develop essential skills for children who are blind or have low vision. You'll receive practical checklists and personalized plans to support your child's growth in organization, household tasks, time management, cooking, and money management.

[Strategies for Empowering Independent Living Skills Part 1](#)

[Strategies for Empowering Independent Living Skills Part 2](#)

Resources and Materials

Tar Heel Reader has Moved and Has a Name Change!

What used to be Tar Heel Reader is now being hosted by Building Wings and is called [Monarch Reader](#). This is an impressive online library of free books for beginning readers of all ages and adapted books for special education. Please take a moment to bookmark this new site and watch Dr. Karen Erickson's video about why this change has occurred.

Resources on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

- FASD United is a great national resource for all things FASD. [FASDUnited.org](#)
- Illuminate Colorado is a great local resource for FASD.
- They also have a Toolbox with ideas for education and awareness. [Illuminate Colorado FASD](#)
- Another great resource for educators is the CDC FASD website. Please be sure to look for educator resources. [CDC FASD EDUCATOR RESOURCES](#)
- And finally, [CDE FASD](#)

Lift a Subject from the Photo Background on iPad

You can isolate the subject of a photo or video frame from its background and then copy or share it in other documents and apps. This feature is available on [supported models](#) and can also be used in Photos, Safari, Quick Look, and more. For more information, go to: <https://support.apple.com/guide/ipad/lift-a-subject-from-the-photo-background-ipad77a3269b/ipados>

Amplify Advocacy Stories for Youth by Youth

The Amplify Advocacy Stories for Youth by Youth is a chance for youth and young adults with disabilities to share their stories, challenges, and advice with other youth with disabilities.

[Watch the videos in the series here.](#)

Involving Teens and Young Adults in Selecting Assistive Technology

This 4-page resource helps families involve teens and young adults in learning about and selecting assistive technology (AT). An important goal for older students is to understand the areas in which technology can support them in their educational and employment goals. The tip sheet encourages students to advocate for themselves, and to take an active role in selecting assistive technology to address their needs.

The tip sheet is a product of the Center on Technology and Disability (CTD) and the PACER Center.

Access the tip sheet at:

<https://www.pacer.org/transition/video/player.asp?video=252>

See also the 7-page companion guide called *Getting Started: Exploring Assistive Technology (AT) with Your Teen or Young Adult*, at:

<http://www.autismresourcecentral.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Getting-Started-Exploring-Assistive-Technology-AT-With-Your-Teen-or-Young-Adult.pdf>



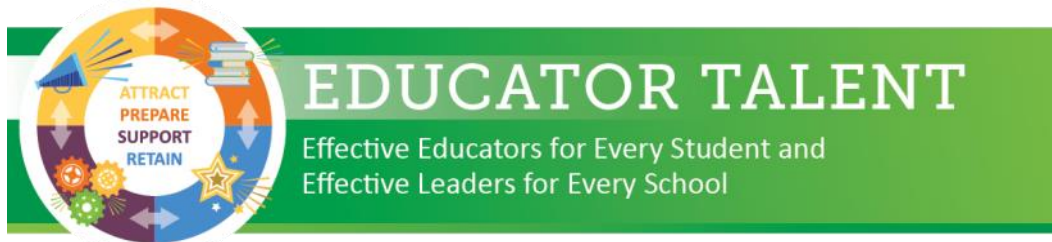
Initial Licensure and Endorsement Specific to Special Education Specialist: VI

For information about the endorsement requirements for the Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21, go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

<p>Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21: (9.02)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Must hold a master’s degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution in special education / visual impairment or its equivalent, as determined by the Colorado Department of Education. ✓ Must have completed a program from a regionally-accredited institution for Special Education Specialists: Visually Impaired that includes prescribed field experience requirements.
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For information about the endorsement requirements for the School Orientation and Mobility Specialist, go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

<p>School Orientation and Mobility Specialist Ages 0-21: (11.03)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bachelor’s degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution. ✓ Completion of a preparation program from a regionally-accredited institution for school orientation and mobility specialists. ✓ Completion of practicum or internship, which must be in a school setting and equivalent to a minimum of 350 hours, full-time, and under the supervision of an Academy of Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education (ACVREP) certified orientation and mobility specialist. ✓ Passing of the ACVREP exam. ✓ Hold a current and valid ACVREP Certified O&M Specialist certificate (for initial and renewal licenses). ✓ <u>Do not let your ACVREP O&M Certification expire.</u>
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Check out the **Educator Talent website!** Their mission is to develop, deploy, and support talent management and human capital development strategies for districts and schools so that the most effective educators are in every school and classroom and all students are prepared for college, career, and life.



Educators May Add Licenses and Certifications to myColorado App

CDE has partnered with the [myColorado app](#) to provide certified educators access to digital versions of their credentials. Download the myColorado app, create an account and download certificates into the myColorado wallet. [To learn more about myColorado and the Educator Certificates, visit the myColorado FAQ page.](#)

CDE Model Procedural Safeguards Notice

Linked [here](#) is the updated CDE Model Procedural Safeguards Notice. This updated document provides the same information about the rights of children and their parents as the 2011 version in a more user-friendly way. The rights of children and their parents have not changed

It is currently available in English and in Spanish. Both documents can be found at [Dispute Resolution | CDE](#), [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) | CDE](#), and [Colorado IEP Forms | CDE](#). The ESSU is in the process of translating into additional languages. They will be posted to [Individualized Education Program \(IEP\) | CDE](#) and [Colorado IEP Forms | CDE](#) as they become available.

For more information or questions, please contact Katherine Rains, rains_k@cde.state.co.us.

English Learner Professional Development Requirement for License Renewal

All educators holding an elementary, English language arts, math, science or social studies (or any middle-level) endorsement on a professional teacher license that expires on or after September 1, 2025 must complete English Learner Professional Development (ELPD) prior to renewing their license or they will be unable to renew until they have done so. The ELPD training requirement for these endorsement areas was adopted by the State Board of Education in 2018, allowing teachers time to complete the training until their next full renewal period.

Anyone who holds an ELPD designation on their credential already meets this requirement.

Important note: This requirement is based solely on the endorsement(s) held; it is not based on the content area the educator is presently teaching or if they are teaching at all. For example, a teacher who also holds both a science and a music endorsement will be required to complete ELPD even if only teaching music. Individuals who are serving in other positions (as a principal, for example) or not presently employed in education and who still wish to renew their teacher license with one of the identified endorsements must meet this requirement.

The ELPD designation requires 45 hours of training focused on the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Educators may fulfill the requirement via a [pre-approved program](#) or [individual learning that aligns with the ELPD standards](#). District leaders with [COOL access](#) can download a report of their educators who have attained the designation.

More details for educators needing to complete the ELPD requirement can be found on the [ELPD for Educators webpage](#). Email educator_development@cde.state.co.us with questions.

CDE Resources

[Colorado IEP Forms](#)

[A Guide to Parent Rights in Special Education](#)

[A Guide to Parent Rights in Special Education Special Education Procedural Safeguards Notice \(Spanish\)](#)

[Multilingual Learner Processing Guide](#)

[Multilingual Learner Family Interview Questions](#)

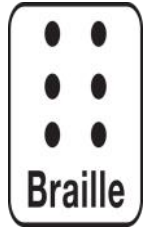
[The Guide to School-Based Mental Health Services and Professionals in Colorado](#)

Employment of School Mental Health Professionals in School Guidance Document (SB23-004) - [CDE SB23-004 Guidance Document](#)

[The Landscape of Wellbeing and Belonging within Colorado's Multi-Tiered System of Supports.](#)



Licensure Requirements for TVIs and Orientation and Mobility Specialists Colorado Initial Licensure in the Endorsement Area of Visual Impairment



For information about Colorado licensing requirements in the area of Special Education Specialist: Visual Impairment and/or School O&M Specialist, please refer to the information contained within Educator Licensing's Endorsement Requirements page at: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/endorsementrequirements>.

Initial CDE Braille Competency Testing Requirements

Initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate: All licensed teachers endorsed in the area of visual impairment, including those individuals employed on a temporary (Temporary Educator Eligibility-TEE) or emergency credential who are completing their university program in visual impairment, must have a valid CDE Certificate of Braille Competency or a CDE Renewal Certificate of Braille Competency on file with their current administrative unit of employment. The initial certificate expires five years from its initial issue from CDE.

The CDE Certificate of Braille Competency must be earned no later than May 31st of the first instructional year of teacher of students with visual impairments in a Colorado administrative unit. If a TVI moves from one Colorado administrative unit to another, the expectation of first-year braille competency demonstration does not “reactivate” from year-to-year. The testing clock begins with the first day of Colorado employment as a TVI. TVIs must have taken a university-level braille course or have sufficient documentation of UEB training before they can take the initial CDE Braille Competency Test. The initial CDE Braille Competency Certificate expires 5 years from its date of issue.

Renewal CDE Braille Competency Certificate

There is a one time expectation to renew the initial CDE certificate five years after its initial issue. This is accomplished by completing 15 renewal modules across the five year renewal period. These modules must be taken with one of the CDE Braille Proctors. Candidates who are in the renewal process should plan on completing three braille renewal modules during each of the five year renewal requirement.

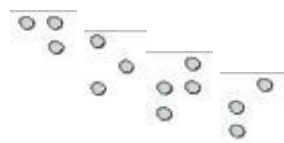
For more information about Colorado’s braille competency requirements, please go to:
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs



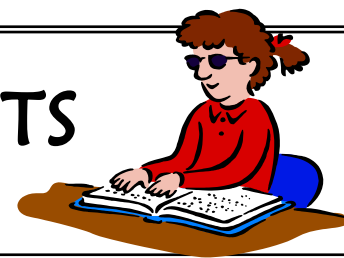
It is Our Profession!

CEC Specialty Set Competency Standards

- Initial Specialty Set: Blind and Visual Impairments- <https://dvidb.exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-specialty-set-blind-and-visual-impairments>
- Initial Specialty Set: Deafblindness: <https://dvidb.exceptionalchildren.org/standards/initial-specialty-set-deafblindness>
- Initial Specialty Set: Intervener: <https://dvidb.exceptionalchildren.org/standards/specialty-set-special-education-paraeducator-intervener-individuals-deafblindness-pdbi>



CONNECTING THE DOTS



Colorado Braille Competency Committee

Please keep this information handy if you are in the process of earning your initial Colorado Braille Competency Certificate or working on your renewal modules. The CDE Braille Competency Committee members serve as part-time employees of the Colorado Department of Education's Exceptional Student Services Unit for their important role in: (a) developing, refining, and reviewing braille competency testing and support materials, (b) proctoring test sessions for initial braille competency and renewal modules, (c) providing approved mentoring to test candidates, and (d) other duties, as needed, to support our UEB competency process across the state.

The committee consists currently of the following individuals:

Tanni Anthony	(303) 503-4647	Anthony_T@cde.state.co.us
Nancy Cozart	(303) 905-4074	Cozart_N@cde.state.co.us
Christine Maynard	(719) 229-4981	Maynard_C@cde.state.co.us
Brenda Shepard	(303) 995-7913	Shepard_B@cde.state.co.us
Julie Wetzstein	(303) 819-7887	Wetzstein_J@cde.state.co.us

Christine Maynard is our southern region proctor/mentor for initial testing and renewal modules. Nancy Cozart, Brenda Shepard, and Julie Wetzstein are metro proctors for the renewal modules. Brenda Shepard is our northern proctor for initial testing and renewal modules. Tanni Anthony is the proctor for initial braille competency testing for the greater metro area. If there is a testing need on the western slope, please contact Tanni.

The Practice Test items have been posted on the braille competency webpage—that information and other resources can be found at: http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs.

Thanks for being a steward of braille competency—our students are counting on your expertise for their specially designed instruction and instructional materials.

UEB Technical Versus Nemeth Braille Codes

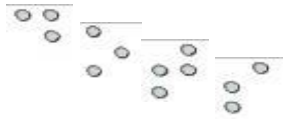
The Colorado Department of Education does not dictate a math code for students with visual impairment, including blindness. Two math codes are approved by the Braille Authority of North America. The decision about the math code is an individual student-by-student or an IEP decision. Both codes are viable for instruction and state testing.

For more information, contact Tanni Anthony at (303) 503-4647 or anthony_t@cde.state.co.us.

Braillewriter Repair

- Kirk McCall (303) 875-4527 (phone) and email km2320@msn.com
- Mark Carpenter (719) 634-8720 (phone) and email carpdiane@yahoo.com





CONNECTING THE DOTS



Bringing Braille Basics Home Videos

This short series of videos will help someone to begin to learn braille. These videos introduce the foundations of literary braille code: using the braille embosser and making braille including – letters, basic punctuation, and numbers. These resources also feature practice sheets, which serve as a valuable tool for reinforcement. After watching the videos, you can utilize these sheets to practice the skills presented in each lesson. This approach allows for ongoing development, enabling you to continually work on and improve the skills covered in each lesson

The video instructor uses [Perky Duck](#), a complimentary software available for both Windows and Mac operating systems. This tool transforms your keyboard into a virtual braille writer, facilitating the learning of braille typing.

Additionally, another viable option is BrailleBlaster by APH, compatible with Windows, Mac, and Linux platforms. Distinguished by its focus on braille transcription, [BrailleBlaster](#) is particularly adept at converting textbooks and extensive documents into braille.



[Check it out the Bringing Braille Basics Home Videos](#)



The Colorado Chapter for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired

IMPORTANT RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITY

AER's Professional Personnel Recruitment Committee (PPRC) is proud to announce the release of the long-awaited recruitment video: "Visual Impairment Professions."

The 5-minute PBS Spotlight On video started airing nationwide between regular programming on September 30, 2024. It is expected to reach 3 million viewers in just the first 3 months. It will continue to air for a minimum of one year.

The links to access this video with and without audio description are:

- 1) Without audio description <https://youtu.be/I90UJSQNGU8>
- 2) With audio description <https://youtu.be/mGscr-DO0Eg>

Please use the video and spread the word. Everyone needs to help bring new people into our field!



Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)



Single-Stories

Check out this video to detail what can happen when we have “single stories” of others. This might be a specific to a colleague, a family, or a student. What can happen with we create information and expectations about someone based on a single-story perspective? This video or sections of this video can be a wonderful tool for the child’s educational team to view and discuss to expand thinking about a child’s strengths, needs, and how to be contributory to the success within their home, school, and community environments.

Video at : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9lhs241zeg>



ECOC

Educating Children of Color
equity · empowerment · education

[Educating Children of Color \(ECOC\)](#) is a registered 501(c)3 organization that is on a mission to dismantle the cradle-to-prison pipeline for children of color and children in poverty through education.

Equity Centers

The Department of Education funds Equity Assistance Centers (EAC) under Title IV of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. These centers provide assistance in the areas of race, gender, national origin and religion to public school districts to promote equal educational opportunities. Visit each center’s site to find more information about EAC services and to request support:

Region IV: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, **Colorado**, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

SOMETIMES
YOU FORGET
THAT YOU'RE
AMAZING
SO THIS IS
YOUR
REMINDER.

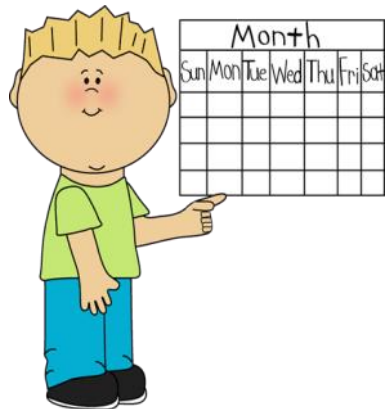
©LINDSEYS LETTERING




Calendar of Events

2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024 2024

- November 1** **CIMC First Friday Meetings**—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- November 8** **Northern TVI/O&M Specialist meeting**—hybrid from 2—3:30 pm
Google Meet Link: meet.google.com/mtr-oksq-yvz
- November 14-17** **ICEVI World Conference**—Ahmedabad, India
- November 14-15** **Northern Low Vision Evaluation Clinic**—Fort Collins
Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
- November 11-13** **Dare to be Remarkable Conference**—Baltimore, MD
Contact: Edward Bell at ebell@latech.edu
- November 13** **Sound Bites: Self-Advocacy to Children with BLV**—virtual
Register by 10/30/24—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- November 15** **CAER Mini Grants are Due!**
- November 30** **See the Future Fund Tools for Life Applications Due**
[Check out See the Future for application and details](#)
- December 6** **CIMC First Friday Meetings**—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- December 11** **Sound Bites: IEP Goals for Students with BLV** —virtual
Register by 11/27/24—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- December 12** **Blindness/Low Vision Coalition**—virtual meeting
Contact: Tanni Anthony at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us
- December 14** **CAER Wreaths Across America** – Fairmount Cemetery, Denver



2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025

- January 4** **Louis Braille Birthday**—Happy #216!
- January 10** **CIMC Second Friday Meetings**—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@cldb.org
- January 28** **Sound Bites: Science Engagement**—virtual
Register by 1/14/25—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- February 7** **Braille Challenge**—Colorado Center for the Blind
Contact: CIMC staff at (719) 578-2196





Calendar of Events

2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025

- February 14** CIMC Second Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- February 19** Sound Bites: APE for Students with Blindness/Low Vision—virtual
Register by 2/1/25—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- February 27** Braille Challenge at CSDB from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
- March 1** See the Future Fund Tools for Life Applications Due
[Check out See the Future for application and details](#)
- March 7** CIMC First Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- March 19** Sound Bites: Optical Strategies to Enhance Mobility —virtual
Register by 3/1/25—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- April 4** CIMC First Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- April 16** Sound Bites: Understanding Visual Field Loss in Children —virtual
Register by 4/2/25—[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- April TBD** Beeping Easter Egg Hunt at CSDB from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Contact: Jamie Lugo at jlugo@csdb.org
- May 2** CIMC First Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- June 6** CIMC First Friday Meetings—virtual
Contact: Jim Olson at jolson@csdb.org
- June 22-28** Deaf-Blind Awareness Week
- July 8-13** National Federation of the Blind – New Orleans, LA
For more information, check out the [NFB Convention site](#)
- Sept 23-24** Western Regional Early Intervention Conference (WREIC) – Albuquerque, NM
For more information: <http://www.wreic.org/>
- October 15-17** APH Annual Meeting – Louisville, KY
Contact: www.APH.org
- November 5-8** Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference—Huntsville, AL





Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment News

Assessment information for Learners with CVI

Assessment information specific to learners with cortical/cerebral visual impairment is nicely explained by the Perkins CVI Now. The information below can be found at: <https://www.perkins.org/getting-started-with-cvi-assessments/>

[The Perkins CVI ProtocolSM](#) is a comprehensive and inclusive educational assessment tool for students with Cerebral/Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI), created by The CVI Center at Perkins. The CVI Protocol is built on the current research and understanding of CVI, and is a methodical assessment of a student's [CVI visual behaviors](#) and compensatory skill use. This evaluation tool is designed to help teachers of the visually impaired create a robust, individualized CVI evaluation report with recommendations for students with CVI. The Protocol is free, downloadable, customizable, and grounded in science.

[Dr. Gordon Dutton's Visual Skills Inventory](#): Provides a framework for parent interview questions around your child's visual attention, visual field function, attention to light, distance attention, visually based interactions with people, perception of movement, difficulties with visual complexity that might cause behaviors in complex environments, difficulties handling additional sensory information, difficulties with visually guided movement (of reaching and stepping) and difficulties with visual recognition.

[Teach CVI Screening Tools](#): Using the TEACH CVI Screening provides questioning for the CVI indicators of visual attention, visual field function, attention to light, distance attention, visually-based interactions with people, perception of movement, difficulties with visual complexity that might cause behaviors in complex environments, difficulties handling additional sensory information, difficulties with visually guided movement (of reaching and stepping) and difficulties with visual recognition.

[The Visual Assessment Scale \(VAS CVI-PIMD\)](#) by Marjolein Wallroth and Marieke Steendam is a tool that evaluates the visual functioning of children with multiple disabilities and includes an inventory and caregiver questionnaire. The brain-based visual behaviors identified for assessment are visual attention, reaction to light, visual curiosity, visually-based social interactions, handling multisensory information, difficulties in visual motor skills (upper limbs), visual fatigue, orientation and mobility, speed of visual processing, variable vision use, and difficulties with visual recognition.

[Considerations for Educating Students With CVI: The Learning Environment](#) by Amy Campbell, Deborah Chen, and Marieke Steendam. "This tool facilitates team discussion and problem-solving, and offers practical ideas to implement throughout the school day, with the intent to promote a student's access to instruction in a positive learning environment." The tool covers five areas: Student Preferences, Communication, Peer Interaction, Task Complexity, and Environmental Complexity. Within each area, there are a list of questions and some suggestion to consider to help the school team gather information about the student, think deeply about accessibility throughout the school day, support the transition to a new educational setting, facilitate changes to the learning environment based on student needs, and determine the possible need for additional assessment. Download the PDF in [English](#), [Spanish](#), or [Portuguese](#).



Cortical/Cerebral Visual Impairment News

CVI Assessment Tools continued

[Christine Roman-Lantzy's CVI Range](#): Evaluates functional vision in relation to 10 visual and behavioral characteristics: color preference, visual latency, need for movement, difficulty with novelty, visual field preferences, complexity (array, objects, faces, environment), difficulty with distance viewing, need for light, atypical visual reflexes, and difficulty with visually guided reach. Roman-Lantzy's CVI Range uses a scale of 0-10 to score and measure functional vision of an individual with CVI, with 0 indicating no visual response and 10 being almost typical vision.

[Matt Tietjen's 2D Image Assessment](#): Evaluates what your child's most accessible two-dimensional images are for learning. The assessment helps to determine whether photographs, drawings, colored forms, iconic or symbolic pictures are the best recognized.

[Matt Tietjen's "What's the Complexity?" Framework](#): An assessment that looks at the complexity of the learning materials and at the complexity of the environment that are the most accessible for learning. It helps balance the learning material accessibility with the environmental accessibility. The TVI, with an orientation and mobility (O&M) specialist, must also complete environmental assessments to evaluate the environment's impact on your child's learning and to determine which supports will help your child to move through her world safely. Information from the FVA and LMA will inform the environmental assessment and should be shared with your child's educational team, along with other assessment results. This assessment determines possible environmental modifications to your child's surroundings and learning materials as well as those for O&M. For example, the environmental assessment must take into consideration your child's experience related to sound, sight and safety.

A Few Important Resources

[CVI Scotland](#): This comprehensive site offers information about understanding, assessing, and supporting people with CVI. It's packed with medical information, educational resources, blogs and videos from people living with CVI, research news, and plenty more.

[CVI Now Parents](#): Visit this active Perkins Facebook group for support and real-time discussions.

Pediatric Cortical Visual Impairment Society— <https://www.facebook.com/PCVIS.vision/>

CVI Perspective Blog: This blog is a space for those with CVI to share about their direct lived experiences with CVI. To learn more or to subscribe to: <https://thecviperspective.wordpress.com/home/>

As you find good CVI tools and resources, please send this information to Tanni so we can maintain this page in future *Keeping in Touch* Newsletter editions.

Visual Impairment, including Blindness

Effective as of June 2023.

The updated eligibility criteria can be found in the [Rules for Administration of the Exceptional Children Education Act](#).

2.08(11) A child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness has an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects the child's educational performance and that requires specialized instruction. The term includes low vision, blindness and/or progressive vision loss.

2.08(11)(a) A determination that a child is an eligible child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness may include but not be limited to:

2.08(11)(a)(i) Visual acuity of no better than 20/70 in the better eye after correction;

2.08(11)(a)(ii) Visual field restriction to 20 degrees or less; and/or

2.08(11)(a)(iii) A physical condition of visual system which cannot be medically corrected and, as such, affects visual functioning to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed.

These criteria are reserved for special situations such as, but not restricted to cortical visual impairment and/or a progressive visual loss where field and/or acuity deficits alone may not meet the aforementioned criteria.



just for PARENTS

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB)

NFADB is the largest nonprofit organization serving families of individuals who are deaf-blind (combined vision and hearing loss). [Check out the NFADB website.](#)

The organization provides information on deaf-blindness, hosts webinars on a variety of topics, and is very involved in national conferences to support families of children with deaf-blindness.



National Organization of Parents of Blind Children

Founded in 1983, the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children (NOPBC) is a membership organization of parents, educators, and friends of blind children reaching out to give each other vital support, encouragement, and information. They have thousands of members in all fifty states plus Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.

The NOPBC offers hope, encouragement, information, and resources for parents of blind or low-vision children. NOPBC provides emotional support and a network for families. They also provide information, training, and resources to empower families to take an active role in guiding their child's development and education.

Their status as a division of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), an important organization of blind people in the world, provides many benefits. NFB provides its members information about the societal, legislative, and technological issues that affect blind people. One of their most exciting activities is their annual conference. Every year since it was established, the NOPBC has conducted an annual conference for parents and teachers of blind children as part of the national convention of the NFB.

The program has grown to include five exciting days of workshops, training sessions, activities for all family members, including sighted siblings, and countless opportunities to meet blind adults and other families and children from around the country. Most states have an NOPBC affiliate chapter. Colorado has one! For more information, call the Colorado Center for the Blind at (303) 778-1130.

Exceptional Parent Magazine

Did you know subscriptions to [Exceptional Parent Magazine](#) are free? This award-winning publication focuses on serving the special needs community.

[Sign up here](#) to receive a free monthly subscription.

Have a child with a Recent Eye Condition Diagnosis?

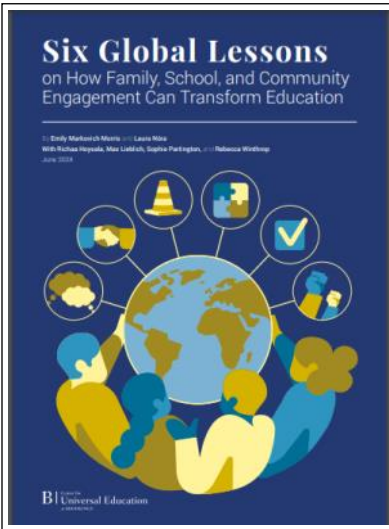
APH FamilyConnect's Getting Started Guides provide information about vision development, navigating IFSP and IEPs, braille literacy, and technology. They offer transition support, tips and ideas to support your child at home, as well as a wealth of additional resources to help you raise your child. [Access the Getting Started Guides here.](#)

Frequently Asked Questions: Social Security Administration, Supplemental Security Income, and Social Security Disability Insurance - Can I work if I receive social security benefits?

This FAQ provides people with disabilities and their families an overview on social security benefits and answers common questions about these benefits and employment.

Check out the [Financial Toolkit: Frequently Asked Questions](#) resource.

just for PARENTS



Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education

Stronger family, school, and community partnerships help ensure that relational trust is at the foundation of schools, and that all the actors can work together toward a shared vision of education in their communities. This shared vision of education is critical to education systems transformation.

This report is the result of the participation of hundreds of students, families, school educators, and researchers who dedicated their time and energy to investigating the critical role that families and communities play in ensuring students and schools can flourish.

[Read the report here.](#)





IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

We are facing our first real shortage for Colorado TVIs (teachers of students with visual impairments) and Orientation and Mobility Specialists = orientation and mobility specialists. Please keep in touch with Tanni about our job openings. If you know of an anticipated opening in your part of the state, please begin working to recruit someone into our field by ensuring they have an opportunity to learn about being a TVI and/or an O&M Specialist. This may be a paraeducator, a brailist, and/or a colleague already in the teaching profession.

Please work with Dr. Paula Conroy to learn more about the UNC distance education / graduate program to prepare TVIs and O&M Specialists in Colorado!. If you are looking for a job, please check out the listings below and also reach out to Tanni, who will have a current list of work across the state, including TVI and O&M Specialist contract work. Together, we can fill in the needed gaps to serve all of our students.

Metro Region

- ◆ **1 FTE TVI (or part time)** TVI at the Anchor Center for Blind Children. For more information, please reach out to Tammy Miller at tmiller@anchorcenter.org
- ◆ **1 FTE for TVI/O&M Specialist** in Cherry Creek School District. Please contact Amy Barr at abarr2@cherrycreekschools.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist Position** in Littleton School District. Please contact Jennifer Templeton at jtempleton@lps.k12.co.us
- ◆ **.9 and a .4 FTE TVI Position** in Denver Public Schools. For more information go to: [Teacher of the Blind / Visually Impaired - Part time](#)

Northern Region

- ◆ **.5 FTE or part-time TVI / O&M Specialist**—Windsor School District. For more information, please contact Jennifer Sedaghat at Jennifer.sedaghat@weldre4.org
- ◆ **.2 FTE for TVI / O&M Specialist** in Poudre School District. For more information, please contact Amy Villard at avillard@psdschools.org

Southern Region

- ◆ **.4 FTE TVI Position**—Colorado Springs District 11. For more information, please contact Nancy Melo Maresh at nancy.mereshmelo@d11.org or (719) 520-2158.
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI Position** at CSDB. Please contact Jamie Lugo for more information at jlugo@csdb.org
- ◆ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist** for CSDB Outreach. Please contact Jac Tyrcha at jtyrcha@csdb.org



Jobs

IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

Across Metro, Northern, and Western Regions

- ◆ **Contract Work with Flexible Hours—A Shared Vision.** For more information about working in many areas of the state with the 0-2 population, please contact Steve Lindauer at slindauer@asharedvision.org.

TVIs and O&M Specialists—If you are getting ready to retire, please do not let your CDE TVI and/or O&M licenses expire, as you are in a great position to keep contributing with part-time or substitute work. This includes maintaining your ACVREP O&M certification.

Please keep in touch with Tanni, if you are interested in this type of work after your retirement! We are seeing many retired TVIs and O&M Specialists come back to contribute as subs for maternity leave, do contract work, and/or work at A Shared Vision.



If you want to be on the CDE's TVI and/or O&M Specialist contractor list, please be in touch with Tanni at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us



Blindness/ Low Vision Coalition: Virtual Meeting – September 5, 2024

Persons in Attendance: Tanni Anthony, Nancy Cozart, Chaz Davis, Abby Horner, Donna Keale, Paula Landry, Tammy Miller, Erin Schroeder, Jim Olson, Michele Reed, and Chloann Woolley

Persons Absent: Paula Conroy and Jamie Lugo

MISSION OF THE BLINDNESS/LOW VISION COALITION: The purpose of the Blindness/ Low Vision Coalition is to bring the collective resources of the group together to address state priorities improving services to students who are blind/visually impaired. (April 1998) (with change of the name of the coalition as of September 2024).

Acronym Explanation

ASV	A Shared Vision
BLV	Blindness / Low Vision
CAER	CO Chapter - Association of the Education/Rehabilitation of the Blind/Visually Impaired
CCB	Colorado Center for the Blind
CDE	Colorado Department of Education
CIMC	Colorado Instructional Materials Center
COMS	Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialist
CSDB	Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind
DVR	Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
ESSU	Exceptional Student Services Unit
O&M	Orientation and Mobility
TVI/TSVI	Teacher of students with blindness/visual impairments



BLV Coalition Members for the 2024-25 School Year

- A Shared Vision – Paula Landry
- Anchor Center for Blind Children – Tammy Miller
- Colorado AER Chapter – Paula Conroy
- Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program – Chaz Davis
- Colorado Department of Education – Tanni Anthony
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Michele Reed
- Colorado Instructional Materials Center – Jim Olson
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind – Jamie Lugo
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Outreach – Donna Keale
- Metro TVI / COMS– Nancy Cozart
- Northern TVI / COMS – Abby Horner
- Southern TVI / COMS – Chloann Woolley
- University of Northern Colorado – Paula Conroy
- Western TVI / COMS – Erin Schroeder

Norms of the Blindness/Low Vision Coalition: Stay present. Verbally identify yourself before you speak. If we get into a serious discussion, please wait for your turn (we will assign someone to take stock of who is next in the discussion). Blindness/Low Vision Coalition meetings are a confidential environment. We are here for the common good of students, families, and our profession. In the spirit of improvement, we will bring critical issues to the table.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Metro Region (Nancy Cozart)

Our first meeting of the school year will be a hybrid Thursday September 26, 2024 from 3:30-5:00 pm. Cherry Creek Schools is hosting an IN PERSON event with Kevin Hughes to demonstrate the new Humanware Technology, including the Monarch. This is a hands-on opportunity. Rachel from Humanware in CA will also be online for a more advanced demonstration. If you want to join online, that will be an option. Additional meeting dates for the year will be determined as well as future topics. New staff in the metro area school districts include Jennifer Campbell in Littleton, Aleah Green in Jefferson County, and Margi Moldane in Denver. Teresa Vu-Fountain is on board with the Anchor Center for Blind Children. Stay tuned for Nancy's plan to create a braille course to assist with training paraeducators as potential braillists in Summer 2025.

Northern Region (Abby Horner)

Weld County School District 6 hired a new TVI Laura Ruben. Laura is also starting at UNC this semester. Amber Koran is the new TVI with Thompson School District. She is also starting at UNC this semester. There is an opening in Poudre School District for a long term sub and a part time O&M Specialist. They have not had a meeting yet this year, but one is in the planning stages.

Western Region (Erin Schroeder)

The Western Slope TVI/COMS plan to meet virtually this school year. We typically discuss a variety of topics in order to brainstorm ideas and support one another. Our first meeting is scheduled for October 21st, 2024.

Mesa Valley School District is hosting the Low Vision Evaluation Clinic for the Western Region on September 26th, 2024. We are looking forward to meeting and working with the new "clinic team". Students will be attending the clinic from different parts of the Western Slope. In staffing news, we welcome Julie Marston to Ridgway School District, Danielle Burden is serving Roaring Fork School District and Colorado River BOCES, and Jessica Hank to the Northwest BOCES. Elizabeth Webb is providing hybrid services to Mountain BOCES and Summit School District.

Southern Region (Chloann Woolley)

The Southern Region TVI-DVR group met on May 14, 2024 and voted to keep the 2024-25 meeting schedule the same with five meetings for the year (September, October, January, February, May). We will be meeting at various locations. Our first meeting will be hosted by Ute Pass BOCES on September 24th from 2:30-4:00 pm. Watch for additional meeting dates, locations and topics in the next newsletter. New personnel in the southern region includes Michelle Boyer at CSDB (in their Outreach Project) and Natalie Hale in D49 School District. There are two staff at CSDB enrolled in a TVI personnel prep program (Chris Bates and Jon Fischer). UTE Pass is planning to become two separate administrative units (Woodland Park and Manitou Springs) by the end of this year. Stay tuned for how this impacts services to students with blindness, low vision, and CVI.

A Shared Vision (Paula Landry)

Colorado's leading provider of early intervention vision services for children who are blind or visually impaired, continues to make significant strides in empowering families and children across the state. In 2023, our dedicated team of 15 teachers delivered nearly 70% of all early intervention vision services across 55 counties in Colorado, reflecting our commitment to supporting the visually impaired community.

We invite you to explore our 2023 Impact Report (www.asharedvision.org/2023-annual-repor), which details the meaningful impact our services have had on families through education and support. One standout metric from our 2024 Caregiver Questionnaire: 100% of the families we supported would recommend our services to others. This is a testament to the quality and effectiveness of our programs.

Beyond our home-based services, our enhanced website has become a vital resource for families and other providers supporting very young children. It now features 24 sensory recipes, 35 craft and play activities, 20 Learning Experiences based on the Expanded Core Curriculum, and a comprehensive digital library of resources, many available in Spanish. These tools are designed to empower families and make learning both accessible and engaging.

Summer provided a wonderful opportunity for our teachers to collaborate on innovative projects for the families we serve, such as tactile books and the Sit 'n' Play Sensory Table created by Paula Landry (www.asharedvision.org/sit-n-play-sensory-table). These hands-on projects are central to our mission of providing sensory-rich learning experiences.

A Shared Vision staff are excited to announce the publication of our first original children's book, *Esmeralda's Day*, now available on our website (www.asharedvision.org/esmeraldas-day). This book, featuring a family supported by our own Janet Anderson, is filled with developmentally appropriate activities for parents and caregivers. It beautifully illustrates how multi-sensory experiences can open up the visual world for children with visual impairments.

As part of our ongoing commitment to education, we continue to lead efforts to promote the adoption of vision screening protocols and train early intervention professionals to identify children with visual impairments. The pilot of our new multiplatform tool, designed to simplify access to the questionnaire, is showing promising results, especially with our rural partners, who have praised its user-friendliness and practicality.

Looking ahead, we are preparing to release an updated vision screening protocol by late summer. We are incredibly grateful to our ophthalmology and optometry advisors—Drs. Arnold, Berry, Hanson, Majors, Sands-Braverman, and Steele—for their invaluable contributions and ongoing support.

Paula shared that ASV just several children/ families just left their program to head to preschool! Many of these learners were able to receive birth-three services through the summer (extended Part C) and were ready for preschool this fall.

Finally, in July, our Executive Director, Steve Lindauer, transitioned from his role to focus on operational support for our teachers, expand our Education program, and grow our board of directors. For any questions about our programs or inquiries about joining our team, please reach out to Paula Landry at plandry@asharedvision.org.

Anchor Center for Blind Children (Tammy Miller)

Program Updates: We have had a fantastic start to the school year! We loved our new addition of a third preschool day last year, so we are continuing it for this year. We are also continuing with our Inclusion Program, and this year we have two sighted-peers enrolled within our classrooms. Preschool is on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and our Infant Toddler Program is on Mondays and two Fridays per month. Our Home Visit EI Program is continuing to be strong with a great team, and thankfully, the wait list for families waiting for EI vision services continues to go down. Preschoolers can enroll at Anchor Center, enroll in their district's preschool, or do both! The new UPK funds go to the district if the child is dually enrolled, but tuition assistance is available to all families based on need. In order to access the UPK funding, 3-year-old students need to have a Child Find evaluation, and if the family decides to enroll only in Anchor Center's preschool, the family forgoes the IEP established by the school district for that year. If a child is 4 years old, they automatically receive UPK funds. We work closely with each family and District Child Find teams to give each family the info they need to make the best decision for their child, and we support them in any decision they make. We continue to work closely with District teams upon the transition to kindergarten once students "graduate" from Anchor Center's Preschool program. Additionally, most CCBs are now funding the tuition for our Toddler program for those children receiving EI services.

Anchor Center's Pediatric Eye Clinic program's expansion has been wonderful over the past couple of years. Our partnerships with Children's Eye Physicians and Children's Hospital of Colorado Ophthalmology has been incredibly beneficial on both sides, and most especially for our families.

Our Research Team continues to make strides with new projects on the horizon for this year. Our NAVEG research project (newborn screenings for brain-based visual impairments), now in its second phase and showing promising results for the future of newborn vision screenings, is underway at Children's Hospital of Colorado. The NAVEG team continues to have requests for trainings on the screening from TSVIs and early interventionists across the country. They have trained EI professionals, vision professionals, and hospital personnel from 24 states, including presenting a full-day training pre-conference day at the 2024 International AER Conference in Charlotte, NC this past July. Additionally, this fall we are doing some work to assist with research being done in the Netherlands using the Tobii Eye Tracker. We are excited to be able to add data from our students ages 18 mo-5 yrs to their research project. Stay tuned for more info on this exciting new tool!

Staffing: We have welcomed two new TSVIs over the past few months. Teresa Vu-Fountain is part of our Preschool and Home Visit teams and Allison Alterman is on our Preschool team. We are thrilled to have them aboard! Cathy Smyth is no longer working as the Director of Research but a research consultant with Anchor Center for Blind Children.

Events: We have Community Days planned for each month of the school year for all our students and their families, including swimming, playground visits, adaptive horseback riding, etc. Our Family Services team holds Night Watch respite events one night per month during the school year. Our Annual Gala, Sunset in the City, will be on September 21. Given that the Anchor Center is funded nearly in full by charitable gifts, we are extremely grateful for the support of our sponsors and guests.

Headquartered in Denver for 40 years, Anchor Center for Blind Children specializes in serving children with visual impairments or combined vision and hearing loss during their most formative years of development, ages birth to five years. Staffed by a transdisciplinary team of highly trained teachers of students with visual impairments, early childhood special educators, therapists, and a pediatric ophthalmologist, Anchor Center's vision services are customized to meet each child's unique needs and strengths. Families also receive support, guidance, practical knowledge, and connections to other important resources. Anchor Center's primary programming includes: vision assessments and pediatric ophthalmology exams; early intervention home-based services (for children, ages birth to 3 years); center-based programming for infants (newborn – 18 months), toddlers (18 months – 3 years), and preschoolers (3 – 5 years); occupational, physical, and speech/language therapies; recreational, music, and horticultural therapies; summer camps and family respite care; and family support, including programs for caregivers and siblings. The Anchor Center charges a nominal tuition fee for toddler and preschool programs but does not charge for infant services. No child is ever denied access to services based on the family's inability to pay.

Colorado AER Chapter (Chloann Woolley)

Join your local Chapter of The Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AERBVI). AE is a professional organization that supports professionals who provide services to persons with vision loss. Our state chapter supports local professionals working with individuals with blindness, low vision, and/or CVI by offering the opportunity for mini-grants to members to enhance their practice and training. Watch for opportunities to participate in fundraising events, volunteering and professional development. For questions contact: Chloann Woolley, cwoolley@upboces.org or caerboard@gmail.com

Colorado Center for The Blind Youth Programs (Chaz Davis)

The Colorado Center for the Blind has brought high-quality, welcoming, and yet challenging programs and training for youth ages 4 to college since 1990. Whether it's CCB's year-round Fun Activities and Skills Training (FAST) program, mentoring for students attending the CSDB, Career fairs for high school/college students, residential summer programs for teens, or partnering with organizations like the National Science Foundation for an astronomy camp experience, CCB is committed to creating opportunities that raise expectations for blind students and help them build the confidence to pursue their dreams as successful adults.

The Summer programs had great success including hosting in partnership with the National Science Foundation, hosted a one-week residential and day astronomy camp for Colorado high school aged students. Eight students collaborated to build several 3D printers used to produce three dimensional renderings of concepts found within our solar system and beyond. Also in June, CCB welcomed seven students for a seven-week Summer for Success residential

program for blind teens. Program participants received instruction in the areas of Braille, assistive technology, cane travel, and home management with the overarching goal of increased independence. These seven students attended the National Federation of the Blind Convention in Orlando, FL. In July, CCB hosted an additional 10 teenagers from across the country and abroad in the four-week No Limits to Learning program. In both programs, eight outstanding blind role models served as residential counselors and instructors for our students.

On Saturday, September 14, young blind Coloradans will showcase their Braille literacy skill by reading a horse-themed children's story to horses from the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office Mounted Unit. All attendees will interact with the horses and be the first blind students to participate in this wonderful program. We will have many more exciting events to come for youth of all ages throughout the 2024-25 school year.

For more information on youth programs in Colorado or to stay up to date on our monthly youth activities, visit CCB's Youth Programs page at <https://cocenter.org/our-programs/summer-youth>, or contact Director of Youth Services, Chaz Davis at Cdavis@cocenter.org or by phone at (303) 778-1130.)

Colorado Instructional Materials Center (Jim Olson)

Student Registration: At the start of the new state fiscal year, July 1, 2024, the CIMC ran updated statewide registration database reports for each administrative unit (AU). We are in the process of emailing them as attachments to encrypted emails (using the Barracuda encryption service). Please make initial edits as soon as possible and return them to cimcregistrations@csdb.org. For example, grade levels do not automatically update so we rely on your edits to ensure accuracy of your data. The CIMC will email you an updated report quickly which will reflect your new edits. Remember, you should register every student receiving services from a TVI, so they are included in your statewide database report. You can register and withdraw students every day of the year. Please submit your signed Parent Consent Form first-before sending us a Registration Form. You may send them both together, but please do not send a Registration Form with any personally identifiable student information before submitting your signed Parent Consent Form.

If your administrative unit/agency has new staff members, please remember to notify CIMC so we can update our multiple email distribution lists accordingly.

Staff: The CIMC has one vacancy, their brailist position. They are hoping to post it shortly.

Federal Quota Census: The CIMC is winding down the end of the 2024 federal fiscal year and are preparing for the start of the new federal FY25 which begins October 1, 2024 and runs through September 30, 2025.

If you have any new students who meet all of the eligibility requirements to be included in the federal quota census program, the next opportunity to include them will be the January 6, 2025 federal quota census count day.

Working Together: The CIMC wants to meet with you! We have a Zoom subscription and can easily set up individual Zoom meetings with individuals or entire vision teams. Please reach out to any CIMC staff member (Danielle, Maddee, or Jim). Also, people are encouraged to attend the First Friday Meetings. They would like to do one meeting on this day and Jim is looking for feedback on the best time.

APH Products: Jim will be available for discussion on new products at the upcoming State Conference. As you find products, be aware of quota funds generated per student. Our goal is equitable distribution of big ticket items. Funds are finite and per-student quota funds have been reduced from the last school year. Also, Tanni is asking that high cost products that are geared for a specific student such as a braille reader be reserved for those registered students only. Be aware that the CIMC cannot fulfill all of the instructional materials / specialized equipment needs of students with blindness, low vision, and/or CVI or deaf-blindness.

Assignment: Tanni and Jim will author an article specific to the CIMC / APH Funds that highlights key information for school administrators.

Discussion: The CIMC has recently lost books in the mail. They do not have a shipping budget, so things are mailed Free Matter for the Blind. It was suggested to get neon labels that can go on both sides of the box. Also to use the Outreach folks as possible couriers if that can be arranged.

CSDB School for The Blind (Jamie Lugo)

School started on August 12th. Students and staff were excited to return. We welcomed 6 new students to the School for the Blind, so far this semester. We have 64 students enrolled in the K-12th grade blind program this year. 10 of these students are staying in the dorms. This is an increase from last school year.

Secondary students participated in two days of school orientation which included revising their schedules, PRIDE Expectations, Emergency Procedures, All About Me Activities, Get to Know You Games, Team Building, and a CSDB campus Scavenger Hunt. The testing window opens for district assessments on September 3rd and ends on September 20th. All students are enjoying playing on and exploring the new accessible playground. The official ribbon cutting ceremony took place on August 28th. Josh and Johns treated the staff, students, and community to ice cream.

We will have a parent event/open house on September 5th.

Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB) Outreach Services (Donna Keale)

The new CSDB Outreach Director, Jaclynee (Jac) Tyrcha will begin her official role on 9/3/2024. We are excited for our future and all the things that Jac will bring to our department. We will give her an opportunity to meet Blindness/Low Vision Coalition members at the next meeting and present a short bio to the VC team. Outreach still has two vacant positions, one is a TVI itinerant position. The last interviews will happen during the month of September. If these positions are still vacant by the end of the month, the job announcements will come down and be revised before posting again at the end of the semester.

The EEC is thrilled to join the Outreach team this year and focus on collaboration and transition. We are excited to welcome Michelle Boyer as our BVI preschool teacher. She moved here to join our CSDB team.

As with all returning TVIs & COMS, we are busy and trying to create schedules that fit our students' and school district's needs. We are serving 5 districts as TVIs &/or COMSs. We are also still supporting two Local Early Intervention Programs, Colorado BlueSky covering Pueblo county and The Resource Exchange in El Paso, Teller and Park counties. Currently, we are providing service to 34 Early Intervention Children. We are excited for the new school year and opportunities to learn and grow in our capacity as the CSDB Outreach team.

If you are interested in building CSDB's future and want to be on the Statewide Task Force, please be in touch with Tera Spangler at tspangler@csdb.org.

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) (Michele Reed)

Staff Updates: Our current vacancies include a Field Instructor O&M/VRT for the Denver Metro area, and Field Instructor O&M/VRT for the western slope. All our vocational rehabilitation counselor positions are filled. Liz Robertson has left her position as the Assistive Technology Supervisor. Showe Trela is the interim supervisor of the unit. We have three new employees in the Business Enterprise Program – Elijah Smith is our Training Specialist IV, James Scott is our Food Service and Quality Assurance Specialist, and Carter Jarrett is our Business Consultant. We also have a new Administrative Assistant Megan Johansson. And finally, a new Assistive Technology Specialist, Cala Campfield.

Current vacancies include AT Supervisor, western slope and ... DVR is also looking for more vendors.

The Personal Adjustment Training Unit continues to provide training in the community. We continue to discuss and examine ways to provide comprehensive services to the people we serve that include remote training, in-person training, and Zoom virtual group sessions (Reflections, Enrichment Hour, Women's Group, and two Braille Groups and a Men's Group).

BLVS and DVR are looking at pre-employment transition services including training/job development support, collaborating with other youth with disabilities, collaborating with other states, and increasing vendors to provide more options and opportunities. Michele Reed and a counselor from the Deaf & Hard-of-Hearing unit will be meeting with Aurora Public School TVIs and O&M Specialists to start the year with DVR present to assist students as they approach the end of their senior year. DVR can accept referrals for our youth program at the age of 15 and provide Pre-Employment Transition Services during the summer and school breaks.

Colorado Department of Education (Tanni Anthony)

Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project: We are in the second year of our new five-year award. The project's mission is to provide free technical assistance to parents and service providers of children and youth, ages birth through 21, who are deaf-blind or who have both a vision and a hearing loss. The project has a lending library and a website with a multitude of electronic resources that are available to families and educational personnel.

Project Staff: Tanni Anthony and Gina Herrera are Co-Directors on the grant project. Jessica Meisel is our Technical Assistance (TA) Specialists. Jessica provides onsite consultation and customized training to the educational teams of the children with deaf-blindness. She is also leading our training and support to school-based interveners. Cindy Colwell is the Family Specialist. Roberta Curtis is our program administrator.

To request FREE technical assistance, please contact Gina Herrera at Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us

Annual Deaf-Blind Count: The December 1, 2024 Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count forms will be disseminated to the field in November 2024 and should be returned to CDE through a secure online portal. The forms for each Colorado administrative unit, Anchor Center for Blind Children, and A Shared Vision will be sent to a designated contact who is a TVI. Please note that a child can be registered at any time in the calendar year. If you work with a learner with both vision and hearing loss, please be sure to work with Tanni to register the child. All learners identified as having combined vision and hearing loss are eligible for free technical assistance. This can be child-specific consultation and customized staff training.

Project Webpage: The CDE DeafBlind webpage URL is <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/SD-DB.asp>

Project Trainings: The DB Webinar Series is being planned as is the 2025 Summer Institute.

Blindness/ Low Vision State Funded Activities: The CDE has a strong commitment to services and supports to our students and the staff who serve them. We are pleased to offer professional learning and technical assistance to personnel serving children who are blind/low vision or have CVI.

Braille Competency: All TVIs who are new to the field are expected to demonstrate braille competency in their first year of employment in this role. If a TVI extends this date, the administrative unit of employment is at risk for a citation of noncompliance. A Practice Test is posted on the Visual Impairment, Including Blindness website. It includes practice multiple choice items and braille samples. One recent change is a requirement that a TVI must have taken their university-level braille course or have evidence of another form of significant self-study before taking the CDE Braille Competency Test the first time. Please be aware that all TVIs in Colorado public schools must renew their braille certificate one time after the first five years of initial certification.

CDE State Conference on Blindness/Low Vision / CVI: This year's conference will be held at the Lowy Conference Center on September 20-21. The topic is *Academic Excellence for Learners with CVI* and our speaker is Matt Tietjen.

CDE/CSDB Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics: We have a full return team with Dr. David Simpson and Dr. Kara Hanson as our optometrists, Jim Olson and Karin Hensel as our Low Vision Therapists, and Roberta Curtis as our State LVE Coordinator. The site coordinators include Angela Sims for the Western Region, Jim Olson for the Southern Region, Samantha Thuis for the Northern Region, and Roberta Curtis for the Metro Region.

The target participant for the LVEs are public school learners with an IEP who would benefit from low vision devices. We ask that TVIs work with families to (a) identify eligible students, (b) work families to complete the required paperwork in a timely manner to submit to the site coordinator, (c) prepare families and district personnel to identify fiscal resources to purchase prescribed devices, (d) attend the clinic with the student and a parent(s), (e) review the report with the family, and (f) train the student on the purchased device.

CDE O&M Seminar: The Spring 2025 seminar is in the planning stages. Recommendations for topics / speakers should be shared with Tanni. Heads up, ACVREP certification is required for all O&M Specialists working in Colorado School Districts. This is for employed staff and contractors.

Listsers: The CDE ESSU maintains two separate listsers specific to personnel working in BVI programs in Colorado school districts. One is specific to Colorado TVIs and COMSs. The second one is specific to Colorado braillists. It is important to remind all users of these listsers that personally identifiable information (PII) on students and parents

should never be posted in any listserv messages. If anyone has questions about the listservs, please be in touch with Tanni.

Parent Database: We currently have about 250 parents registered on the CDE Parent Database. This is out of over 1,200 families across the state. The database is used to email out the *Keeping in Touch* newsletter link and, on rare occasion, mailing to families. It is important to keep it maintained with accurate names and addresses of families of children with visual impairment, including blindness who are currently enrolled in our Colorado early intervention or public-school programs. As children graduate or families move out of state, we need to ensure that we remove those families. As new families come into the system, please help Tanni to be proactive with getting families registered on the database. This is a voluntary process – so families need to complete and sign their registration forms.

Keeping in Touch Newsletter: The August-September edition has been posted. Remaining for the school year include editions for October, November - December 2024; January – February; March-April and May 2025. Please be sure to share the email messages with the link with parents and paras, as we are no longer mailing out the newsletter and do not have the email addresses of most parents who have signed up to receive the newsletter. Assignment: Tanni will send out a Parent Request Form to share their name, agency or administrative unit and email to receive notification of the newsletters.

Recruitment and Retention: The good news is that many of the openings were filled over the summer. We have new TVIs and O&M Specialists in Adams 12, Anchor Center for Blind Children, Centennial BOCES, Colorado River BOCES, CSDB, Denver, Falcon 49, Jefferson County, Littleton, Mountain BOCES, Ridgway, SC BOCES, Summit, Thompson, and Weld 6. We continue to have openings. Please share any expected vacancies with Tanni so we can be as proactive as possible with new recruits. Contract TVI and O&M staff are needed in several AUs. A Shared Vision and Anchor Center need more TVI / O&M Specialist support. Please keep Tanni in the loop on anticipated and real vacancies. If you want to be on the CDE list of contractors, please reach out to Tanni.

Sound Bites: Sound Bites are monthly virtual training / dialogue sessions based on identified topics of needs. The seven Sound Bites for the school year are being finalized. The first one will be on October 16th with Drs. Tina Herzberg and Penny Rosenblum. There is a great docket of topics and presenters so far with a few more to confirm. Tanni will be sending out registration information shortly. Please register promptly. Registration will close for each Sound Bites two weeks ahead of each event.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

CDE BVI Budget for 2024-25

The following activities have been funded:

- ⇒ Braille Competency Testing / Mentor Support
- ⇒ CDE O&M Seminar
- ⇒ CDE State Conference on BVI (topics: Brain Based VI: Assessment and Strategy)
- ⇒ CIMC Interagency Agreement
- ⇒ Blindness/Low Vision Coalition
- ⇒ Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics
- ⇒ Sound Bites (monthly virtual trainings) (ECC follow-up, low vision, SDI, trauma)
- ⇒ FVA Make and Take

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Terminology for Our State

Words matter. Consumer groups and others are challenging words such as “impaired” or “loss” when we describe a person’s blindness. How one’s blindness is self-described can be a personal choice. As a field, we have moved away

from terms such as cortically blind or partial sight. Blindness and low vision are terms accepted across consumer and professional groups. The recommendation was to amend our name to Blindness/Low Vision Coalition. For the time being, the perspective is that CVI is embedded within these two terms.

Working with Virtual Staff

We are seeing more virtual TVIs, and to some extent, O&M Specialists, working in Colorado. It would be great to have more information about this role and what is needed to optimally support the virtual TVI's work with students.

Assignment: Tanni will pursue a speaker for our next Blindness/Low Vision Coalition meeting.

State Assessment – Braille Review

There will be two opportunities for braille reviews this school year for the Spring 2025 CMAS assessments. Tanni is working with area TVIs and the Assessment Unit to select and confirm TVIs to participate in the reviews.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

Specially designed instruction should be implemented in addition to, not in place of, universal design for learning, differentiated instruction, and/or high yield instructional strategies. SDI specifically targets and addresses the unique communication, learning, social emotional, behavioral, mobility, and transition needs that exist because of a student's disability. It is based on the educational needs of the child to ensure accessibility to the general education curriculum and address learning gaps. SDI is designed by special education teacher and special service providers and can be implemented by the educational team, including general educators and paraeducators,

Specially designed instruction means adapting, as appropriate, to the needs of a child eligible for special education services and supports, content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the child that results from the child's disability, and to ensure access of the child to the general curriculum, so that the child can meet the educational standards adopted by the State. As such, SDI is individualized to each student receiving special education services.

The design and delivery of SDI is the core of special education. SDI is the vehicle to ensure students with disabilities receive accessible, high-quality instruction and services that will result in progress toward academic and functional standards, graduation, and meaningful postsecondary outcomes.

Content - substance of the knowledge, skills and dispositions that is taught that is specific to the student with a disability; directly links to curriculum standards, and may be an underlying, prerequisite needed to meet the standards; answers **what** the student will learn through specially designed instruction.

- ◇ ECC content that extends beyond the general education curriculum that is necessary for the student to access information.
 - ◇ Explicit instruction in braille codes
 - ◇ Explicit instruction in how to approach and decipher tactile graphics
 - ◇ Explicit instruction in the care and use of assistive technology (e.g., braille writer, braille note, screen readers, magnification tools)
 - ◇ Explicit instruction in organizational tools.
 - ◇ Explicit instruction in tactile symbols, sign language, or other communication symbols
 - ◇ Explicit instruction in orientation and mobility tools and strategies within the classroom, school campus, home neighborhood, and community

- ◇ ECC content that extends beyond the general education curriculum on functional content that is affected by reduced incidental learning
 - ◇ Explicit instruction on visual / nonverbal social communication norms and appropriate social skills
 - ◇ Explicit instruction on self-care / independent living techniques
 - ◇ Explicit instruction on understanding one's own visual impairment / other disabilities and self-determination and self-advocacy skills

- ◇ Explicit instruction on recreation and leisure activities / adapted physical education
- ◇ Explicit instruction on career exploration and job skills

Methodology: the instructional design of content using evidence-based practices matched to unique student needs resulting from the disability; answers **how** specially designed instruction is designed

- ◇ Preteaching of vocabulary associated with academic / functional content
- ◇ Preteaching concepts associated with academic/ functional content
- ◇ Preteaching prerequisites of use of equipment, procedures associated with lessons
- ◇ Explicit verbal description or audio description
- ◇ Repeated instruction across people, materials and settings to inform concept development and generalization of concepts and skills.
- ◇ Modeling how to use specialized materials or assistive technology
- ◇ Guided physical demonstration (working from behind student to feel needed actions)
- ◇ Hand under hand guidance for instructional / functioning learning

Delivery: the instructional context or conditions, specific to the student with a disability, which results in access to, participation in, and progress in the curriculum. Answers **who, where, and when** the specially designed instruction will occur.

- ◇ Classroom environment with a paraeducator, brailist, TVI, O&M Specialist, and/or an intervener
- ◇ Separate setting selected due to the nature of the SDI needs of the student with a paraeducator, brailist, TVI, O&M Specialist, or another professional trained in the SDI needs of the child
- ◇ Before or after school lessons
- ◇ Evening O&M lessons to address poor night vision.
- ◇ Community / off-school campus lessons to address O&M lesson needs.
- ◇ Instructional group size (individual, small group)
- ◇ Use of an educational interpreter

Next Virtual Meeting Dates:

- December 12, 2024 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- February 12, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

If you have an issue that you would like addressed by the Blindness / Low Vision Coalition, please be in touch with your representative or contact Tanni at Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us to come for a discussion item.

We are better together!





colorado connections



We are grateful to our CAER Board Officers and Members for their commitment to our professional organization and fields of practice: **Chloann Woolley** (President), **Ellie Carlson** (Vice President and President Elect), **Heather Solberg** (Immediate Past President), **Bryan Moles** (Secretary), **Jeannie Lei** and **Heather Solberg** (Treasurer), **Jamie Lugo**, **Michelle Robinson**, **Rebecca Gardom**, and **Wendy Unwin-Watson**.

Braille Competency News

- ◆ Congratulations to **Micah Scott**, a TVI in Douglas County School District for earning her initial CDE Braille Competency Renewal Certificate!
- ◆ Thanks to proctors **Brenda Shepard**, and **Nancy Cozart** for recent proctoring and mentor work.

Professional Development

- ◆ Wow, wow, and wow for **Matt Tietjen** for his two-day presentation of the CDE Blindness/Low Vision Conference, which was held on September 20-21. Matt's topic was *Designing an Accessible Academic Experience for Students with CVI*. Over 60 Colorado TVIs/ O&M Specialists attended, representing A Shared Vision and Colorado administrative units. Matt was amazingly generous with his materials and expertise. A great start for our new school year and so much solid information for supporting our learners with cortical / cerebral visual impairment.
- What a great first Sound Bites with Dr. Tina Herzberg and Dr. Penny Rosenblum sharing their topic of *Filling Your Transportation Toolbox: How We Engaged Teens in Exploring Their Future Travel*. We had over 40 participants and it was a great session for simple to more complex activities to assist students with using apps for information and travel guidance, costs of travel choices using buses and shared ride services, etc. There was talk about how to replicate this travel focused event for students here in Colorado. If you have an interest and/or ideas, please be in touch with Tanni.

Personnel

- ◆ **Allie Unker** has had the pleasure of teaching art at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind for the past four years. During her time with CSDB, she has enjoyed helping students explore art in creative, tactile ways that celebrate self-expression. Allie is currently in her final year of the master's program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, specializing in Teaching Students with Visual Impairments, with an additional endorsement in Orientation and Mobility. Allie shares that this program has greatly contributed to her knowledge and success at CSDB, allowing her to better support my students' independence both in and out of the art room. Personally, Allie enjoys creating art, rock climbing, skiing, and playing board games with friends. Living in Colorado allows her to embrace the outdoor adventures that she loves, making it the perfect place to call home
- ◆ **Allison Alterman** is a new TVI with the Anchor Center for Blind Children She went to the University of Arizona and when she had taken all the ASL the school offered (1-6), she decided to take Braille. The class was part of the master's level TVI program and was her introduction to the field. Allison enrolled in U of Arizona's TVI program the next year and finished in 2016. She simultaneously went through the O&M program at UNCO, though has not taken the COMS certification test. Allison worked as an itinerant teacher for a district for one year, then at Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) for three years teaching literacy and art for students K-12, both DHH and BLV. She spent the next three years at an elementary school in Hawaii. Allison shares that she is excited to be in Denver and working at Anchor Center in the preschool program!





colorado connections



Personnel continued

- ◆ **Teresa Vu-Fountain** is a new TVI with the Anchor Center for Blind Children. She completed her endorsement in Special Education – Early Childhood Visual Impairments from the University of Utah in 2024. Prior to that, She completed her MSE in Early Childhood Unified at the University of Kansas and worked as a Service Coordinator for 6 years. Teresa loves early intervention, and both of her kids have been through the program. She has lived in Northern Colorado since 2014 and is originally from Kansas. She began her journey as an EI-TV I when her daughter was diagnosed with oculocutaneous albinism type 4. Teresa found that she wanted to learn more, and she could use this knowledge to support other families. In her free time, Teresa loves to spend time with her husband and two young children, explore outside, cook, and bake with her kids, play all kinds of games, and experience music in any form.

- ◆ **Chuck Farnsworth** is employed by Northeast BOCES as a TVI. He worked in Colorado many years ago and left for university faculty work and other TVI opportunities.

Congratulations!

- ◆ Heartful congratulations to **Elise and Joe Darrow** on the birth of their little one, Carter, who was born on September 27th! Such joy!
- ◆ Happy congratulations to **Sarah Jane and Steve Sanderson** on the birth of their son. Lakai Mansa was born on September 18th. Sarah is a TVI and COMS in Poudre School District.



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