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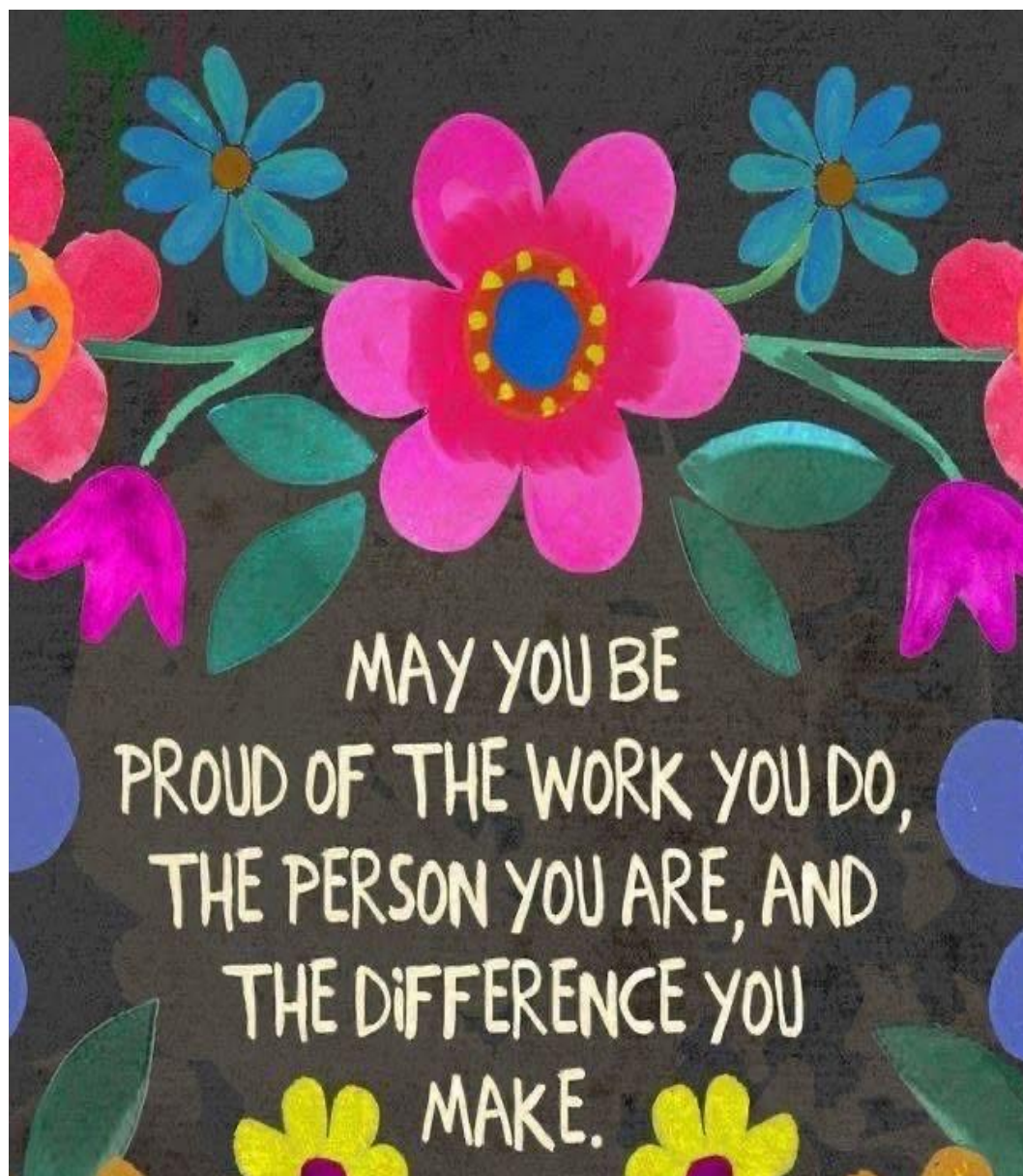
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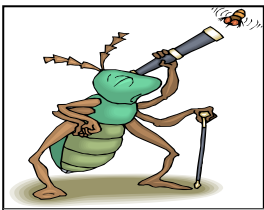
# KEEPING IN TOUCH!

A Newsletter for Parents and Service Providers  
of Colorado Children with Blindness, Low Vision CVI, or Deaf-Blindness—  
October 2025

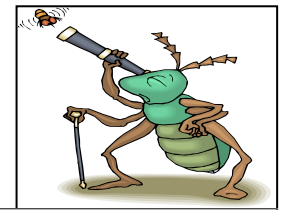


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# LOW VISION NEWS



## 2025-26 Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics

Clinic Region / Site	Clinic Date(s)	Paperwork Due Date	Site Coordinator(s)
Northern LVE Clinic Ensign Center	November 13-14, 2025	October 31, 2025	Samantha Thuis
Metro LVE Clinic Anchor Center	February 19-21, 2026	February 5, 2026	Krista Berkey

**Southern LVE Clinic:** Thank you to **Autumn Odette**, **Chloann Woolley**, and **Donna Keale** for bringing students to the Southern Region Low Vision Evaluation Clinic, which was held on September 5<sup>th</sup> on the campus of the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind. Clinic coordinator, **Debbie Haberkorn**, and LVE team members **Dr. Kara Hanson** and **Jim Olson** evaluated five students from four administrative units: CSDB, Pueblo County 60, Ute Pass BOCES, and Woodland Park School District. A big thank you to **Jim Olson** for his tireless work to make this clinic happen—so glad it did!

**Western LVE Clinic:** The Colorado Low Vision Clinic team has completed two clinics already. The Western Slope Colorado Low Vision Evaluation Clinic was held on Friday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, at the Basil T. Knight Special Services Center in Grand Junction. Five students from four administrative units/BOCES (Mesa 51, Montrose Re-1J, San Juan BOCES, and Eagle Re-50J) received evaluations. Eight parents and guardians attended the evaluation with their kids, and four TVIs joined us this year! The Clinic team would like to thank Basil T. Knight for hosting the event, and **Erin Schroeder**, **Meghan Crosby**, **Brittany Hodgson**, and **Mike Plansker** for bringing students. A big thank you to **Angela Sims** and **Erin Schroeder** for coordinating the clinic this year. We appreciate your amazing organizational skills and dedication to Colorado kids! And thanks to **Dr. David Simpson** and **Erika Andersen Ko** for their great attention to the kids. **Krista Berkey**, our new Statewide LVE Clinic Coordinator, and **Tanni Anthony** joined the fun too!

**Two More Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics are Coming Your Way!** We are so happy that our regional LVE Clinics are funded and full staff for this school year. Congrats to all of the participants of the Southern and Western Regional LVE Clinics. Two left with our Northern and Metro LVEs on the calendar. **TVIs**, your work is now to fill the clinics, which are reserved for school-age learners who have a good likelihood of benefiting from magnification tools during their school day, at home, and in the community. 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 three weeks following the clinic through a secure portal. For logistical questions about the clinics, please contact Tanni Anthony at [anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:anthony_t@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 Project) is beginning its third year of its federally-funded five-year grant cycle. The purpose of the project, awarded to every state and U.S. territory, 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 of children with deaf-blindness; (2) family networking, training, and TA support; (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. The project has four CDE employees (Project Co-Directors **Tanni Anthony** and **Gina Herrera**, TA Specialist **Jessica Meisel**, and Program Support Assistant **Krista Berkey** and a contracted Family Engagement Specialist **Cindy Colwell**. For training, support documents and resources, please `.

A big thank you to all of the people who assisted in updating and/or completing the Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count Forms for our December 1, 2024 Count. You, and others, have contributed to the identification of 167 infants, toddlers, and school-age, and transition program students with deaf-blindness in Colorado.



## Colorado Deaf-Blind Project Offers Intervener Training

The Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss (Colorado Deaf-Blind Project) is conducting intervener training program, free of charge, twice during the school year. Cohorts begin in August and January, with the next cohort began August 29, 2025. The program is designed to provide the background knowledge needed for working one-on-one with students who are deaf-blind and who are on the CO Deaf-Blind Child Count. This program provides a wonderful opportunity for schools or agencies with a staff member(s) who would like to receive intervener training.

The training will include:

- An online course of study—hosted by the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project —using modules developed by the National Center on Deaf-Blindness. This includes feedback on all assignments
- Coaching/mentoring and consultation from the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project personnel
- On online support network of other interveners in Colorado, including
- Ongoing professional development opportunities from the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project

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 and to register, please contact Jessica Meisel at [Meisel\\_j@cde.co.state.us](mailto:Meisel_j@cde.co.state.us)

# Colorado Deaf-Blind Project News

## Free Technical Assistance for Learners with Deaf-Blindness

Technical assistance (TA) is the mission of the CO Deaf-Blind Project. TA recipients include Colorado families of children and youth who are deaf-blind, early intervention and school personnel, and agencies providing services to identified 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](#). Return this form as an email attachment to Gina Herrera at [Herrera\\_G@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Herrera_G@cde.state.co.us) or call at 303-253-0451

## Deafblind International

DbI celebrated National Deafblind Awareness Month with their new awareness initiative, #CreateAndConnect. There were 26 registrants from around the world that showed off their creative expressions, including cooking, dancing, tactile art murals, and of course yarn bombing. These creative expressions sparked meaningful conversations and celebrated the beauty of awareness, inclusion, and joy. We can't wait to do it again next year! [Visit the Create and Connect page for more information.](#)

## Community Intervener Program

The Community Intervener Program is 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 Program Manager Elli Streifer at [elli.streifer@state.co.us](mailto:elli.streifer@state.co.us).

## Intervener Team Model Self-Paced Course

The new and improved Introduction to the Intervener Team Model self-paced course is live on the Texas School for the Visually Impaired website. This course introduces new team members to the intervener team model, providing essential skills to support students who are deafblind.

Learners will gain a clear understanding of the intervener's role, key responsibilities, and practical strategies to foster communication, safety, trust, and independence. Emphasizing the 'Do with, not for' philosophy, the course builds confidence and purpose for meaningful student support. [Visit the TSBVI online learning page to learn more.](#)

## Access Technology for Learners with Deaf-Blindness Newsletter

Lacy Long and Abby Zurliene from the North Dakota and Illinois Deaf-Blind Projects has created resources for access technology (AT) for students who are deaf-blind.. Check out their first newsletter and feel free to subscribe: [On Deck: A Newsletter for Access Technology \(AT\) for Students who are DeafBlind](#)



# Resources and Materials

**Video Clips on Blindness:** [There are many great video clips on Blindness Tips specific to cooking, dressing, folding money, making a bed, etc.](#) Take some time to check them out and share with others, especially families.

**Paths to Literacy on Facebook:** If you are on Facebook, consider following [Paths to Literacy for Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired](#). The account has frequent posts that link to easy-to-read articles describing practical teaching strategies and activities for children with visual impairments, including cerebral visual impairment.

**Accessibility Resources:** Looking for resources to help educators make their digital materials accessible to all students? Discover [nine essential skills for creating accessible instructional content](#) that remove barriers for students with disabilities. These practical techniques from [NCADEMI](#) work across your favorite authoring tools from document editors to learning management systems and multimedia authoring platforms.

**New Video from Louisiana DeafBlind Project:** The Louisiana DeafBlind Project recently released a [video](#) explaining the important role that interveners have in the success of students who are deafblind. Learn more about the project [here](#).

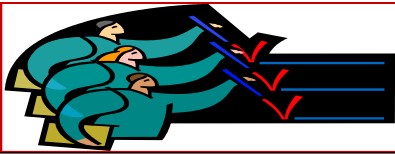
**Bresnahan-Halstead Center Teacher Grant:** The Bresnahan-Halstead Center is excited to provide up to \$500 in financial support for educators (who serve birth-21) to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. Examples can include, but are not limited to, professional development/training, conference registration, and classroom materials.

Contact Dr. Tracy Gershwin at [Tracy.gershwin@unco.edu](mailto:Tracy.gershwin@unco.edu) for more details

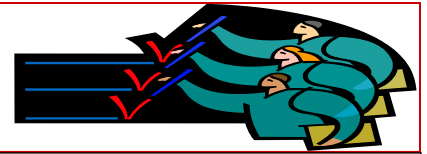
## Browse APH ConnectCenter's Latest Content

- [AI in the Workplace: Assisting Blind and Low Vision Professionals](#)
- [Fall Sensory Play for Your Blind or Low Vision Child](#)
- [Medication Management for Blind & Low Vision: Tips, Tools, and Safety](#)
- [Nature at Your Fingertips: A Foraged Art Project for People Who Are Blind or Low Vision](#)
- [Pre-Employment Transition Services \(Pre-ETS\): A Link to Career Success](#)





# 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

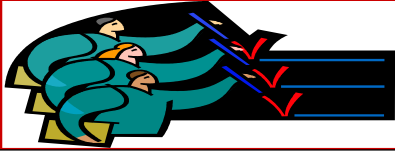
The [IRIS Center](#) is a national center dedicated to improving education outcomes for all children, especially those with disabilities birth through age twenty-one, through the use of effective evidence-based practices and interventions



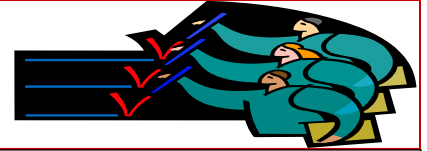
### \*\*\* Center for Parent Information & Resources (CPIR)

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





# CHECK IT OUT!



## **New Report Release: State of Mental Health in America 2025 – Colorado Youth Data Highlights**

Mental Health America recently released the **State of Mental Health in America 2025** report, which provides the latest national and state-level data on mental health and well-being. This comprehensive report spans all ages and is not specifically focused on school settings. However, it offers important context for our work as school-based mental health professionals to better understand broader trends and challenges impacting the children, youth, and families we serve.

[The State of Mental Health in America 2025 Website & Full Report](#)

### **National Youth Trends (2023–2024 data)**

The 2025 report shows encouraging improvements in youth mental health nationally:

- The percentage of youth (ages 12–17) experiencing a major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year dropped from 18.1% in 2023 to 15.4% in 2024.
- The percentage of youth reporting serious thoughts of suicide decreased from 12.3% in 2023 to 10.1% in 2024.

### **Colorado Youth Mental Health Highlights (2022–2023 data)**

- **Major Depressive Episode (MDE):** 21.91% of Colorado youth ages 12–17 reported at least one MDE in the past year (above the national average of 18.82%).
- **Serious Thoughts of Suicide:** 13.45% of Colorado youth reported experiencing serious thoughts of suicide (slightly above the national average of 12.87%).
- **Substance Use Disorder (SUD):** 9.88% of Colorado youth reported a substance use disorder in the past year (higher than the national average of 8.56%).
- **Flourishing:** 59.6% of Colorado youth were rated as “flourishing” (curiosity, resilience, self-regulation) – just below the national average of 60.4%.

**Preventive Care Strength:** Colorado performs relatively well in ensuring youth receive preventive doctor’s visits and mental health services, reflecting strong upstream screening and service connection.

### **What This Means for Colorado**

While national youth mental health data show important improvements, Colorado continues to experience higher-than-average rates of youth depression, suicidal ideation, and substance use. At the same time, Colorado demonstrates strength in preventive care and service access, an important foundation we can continue to build on.

Krista Klabo, our CDE School Psychology Specialist shares, “Thank you for the critical work you do every day to support the well-being of Colorado’s students and families. Reports like this remind us both of the challenges we face and the meaningful difference that school-based mental health professionals can make. Together, we can continue to build hope, resilience, and stronger systems of care for the young people in our communities.”



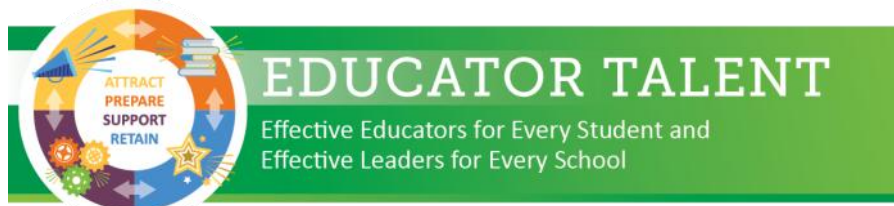
## Initial Licensure and Endorsement Specific to Special Education Specialist: VI

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><b>Special Education Specialist: Visually Impaired Ages Birth-21: (9.02)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 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.</li> <li>✓ Must have completed a program from a regionally-accredited institution for Special Education Specialists: Visually Impaired that includes prescribed field experience requirements.</li> </ul>
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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><b>School Orientation and Mobility Specialist Ages 0-21: (11.03)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally-accredited institution.</li> <li>✓ Completion of a preparation program from a regionally-accredited institution for school orientation and mobility specialists.</li> <li>✓ 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.</li> <li>✓ Passing of the ACVREP exam.</li> <li>✓ <b>Hold a current and valid ACVREP Certified O&amp;M Specialist certificate (for initial and renewal licenses).</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Please do not let your ACVREP O&amp;M Certification expire. If you are providing O&amp;M services 0-21, please be sure you have a license to do so.</b></li> </ul>
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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. Check it out [Educator Talent webpage](#) for resources and tools.





## Licensure Renewal Requirements

Educators and paraprofessionals play such an important role in supporting students with disabilities. Recent legislation in Colorado created new professional development requirements for both groups:

- Licensed educators must complete **a minimum of 10 contact hours in special education and behavioral health** for each license renewal cycle.
- Paraprofessionals must receive role-specific training, with refresher training provided annually.

To support you, please be aware that Tanni offers all of the CDE virtual and in-person trainings with certificates that qualify for special education / behavioral health. This is in addition to ACVREP clock hours.

In addition, check out [Online Free Professional Development Options for Colorado Educators](#) resource. It highlights a wide range of free, on-demand learning opportunities that may help meet these requirements. While not comprehensive or an official endorsement of any single program, it offers many great starting points for professional learning in special education, behavioral health, and mental health.

Check it out and take a look to explore the trainings, and please share widely with colleagues—especially general education teachers and staff who may not know about these free opportunities.

This resource is also posted on the [CDE Special Education website](#) and will be added soon to the CDE Educator Talent Re-licensure page so that it will be easily accessed.

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## READ Act: Differentiated Pathway for K-3rd Grade Braille Readers

<https://ed.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/resources/literacy-and-students-with-disabilities>

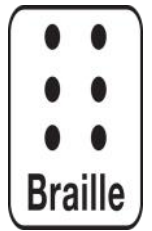
We have a long established differentiated pathway for our braille readers that highlights the critical role of the TVI. The current approved differentiated pathway procedures are as follows:

- The administrative unit's teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) should be consulted for all students requiring a braille format assessment. This may include students just learning braille or those proficient in the Unified English Braille Code.
- If the district is using a paper-based approved interim assessment, it can be transcribed into braille for the student by appropriate school personnel (the TVI and/or a brailist). Transcription can be customized to the student's present level of understanding uncontracted or contracted braille.
- A TVI should be present for test administration and, in fact, may be the best person to administer the assessment. The TVI should also work with general education team, including literacy specialists, to interpret the findings for whether the child does or does not have a significant reading deficiency.

For any questions about this pathway or how best to support accurate READ Act procedures for our learners who are braille readers, please be in touch with Tanni at [Anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)



## 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 this link](#).

### 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](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/sd-vision_guidedocs)

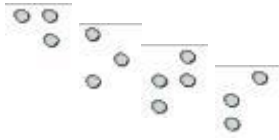


## It is Our Profession! CEC Specialty Set Competency Standards

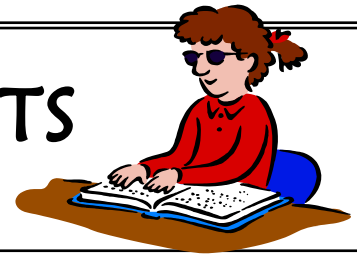
- [Initial Specialty Set: Blind and Visual Impairments](#)
- [Initial Specialty Set: Deafblindness](#)
- [Initial Specialty Set: Intervener](#)

### 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.](#)



# 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:

<b>Tanni Anthony</b>	(303) 503-4647	<a href="mailto:Anthony_T@cde.state.co.us">Anthony_T@cde.state.co.us</a>
<b>Nancy Cozart</b>	(303) 905-4074	<a href="mailto:Cozart_N@cde.state.co.us">Cozart_N@cde.state.co.us</a>
<b>Christine Maynard</b>	(719) 229-4981	<a href="mailto:Maynard_C@cde.state.co.us">Maynard_C@cde.state.co.us</a>
<b>Brenda Shepard</b>	(303) 995-7913	<a href="mailto:Shepard_B@cde.state.co.us">Shepard_B@cde.state.co.us</a>
<b>Julie Wetzstein</b>	(303) 819-7887	<a href="mailto:Wetzstein_J@cde.state.co.us">Wetzstein_J@cde.state.co.us</a>

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 this link](#).

**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](mailto:anthony_t@cde.state.co.us).

## Braillewriter Repair

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





You can do it !

## Project INSPIRE Resources Update

The University of South Carolina Upstate's braille training grant (H235E240003) has been discontinued. Project INSPIRE 2 will end on September 30, 2025.

Project INSPIRE resources will continue to be available on the [Paths to Literacy website!](#)

The original Project INSPIRE funding was used to develop seven courses for teachers of students with visual impairments, paraprofessionals, braille transcribers, and others who support PK-12th grade STEM learning. These professional development courses contain lessons on math braille codes as well as resources, instructional materials, and teaching tips. The courses are available at no cost and will continue to be available [at the Project INSPIRE Professional Development webpage](#).

In addition, three student programs (Nemeth in a Box, Mission INSPIRE, and Mathlete Competition) were developed with Project INSPIRE funding. Additional materials for the Mathlete Competition were developed as part of the first year of Project INSPIRE 2. We invite educators and families to continue using these materials available [at the Project INSPIRE Student Programs webpage](#).

## What is New with the Nemeth Code

*The Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics and Science Notation 2022* was published in 2024 on the BANA website. [You can find it at the Braille Authority website](#). Further, There is an article in the Fall 2025 Issue of TX Sense/Abilities. Check it out at [What's New in the Nemeth Code](#).

## New Braille Accessibility Document

[Braille Accessibility in State Assessments: Roles, Responsibilities, and Strategies](#) is a comprehensive guide is designed to help states, school districts, and assessment vendors improve both internal and cross-collaborative procedures to ensure equitable access to state assessment for braille users. It was created in partnership by NCADEMI and the AT&AEM Center team. This information has been shared with the CDE Assessment Office.

## Learning Braille Just Got Easier!

Whether you're an adult adjusting to vision loss or a parent helping your child learn braille, APH's Braille Brain offers free, step-by-step lessons in Unified English Braille—now with advanced topics and progress checks. [Build Your Braille Skills with New Advanced Lessons on Braille Brain](#)







## Multilingual Learners

Identified or Suspected of  
Having Educational Disabilities



### Literacy Instruction for Multilingual Learners Professional Development Series

This brief professional learning series was created by the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce in collaboration with Dr. Claude Goldenberg. The series focuses on the literacy instruction for Multilingual Learners. If you choose to take the quiz at the end of the series, you will be eligible for one hour of professional development. The quiz includes five questions from the videos and WIDA reading.

Directions:

Go to: <https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/readandel>

1. Watch each video in order, beginning with Video 1 and ending with Video 4.
2. Navigate to WIDA's website using the hyperlink above. Download and read the WIDA Guideposts document.

Click on the End of Course Survey and Quiz button to take the quiz and answer feedback questions. An automated email will send a certificate of completion for all passing scores. Those who do not pass will receive an email and have an opportunity to retake the quiz.

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### READ Act Significant Reading Deficiency (SRD) Guidance for Multilingual Learners

Recognizing the unique opportunities and needs of English Learners to become proficient readers in English, the Colorado Department of Education has created guidance for implementing the READ Act with English Learners. This guidance is designed to provide parameters for districts to use when developing local policies and practices to support the literacy development of English Learners. This includes READ Act and English Learners guidance for assessing and determining a significant reading deficiency in grades K-3. Find READ Act requirements for assessing English Learners, considerations for selecting the language of assessment, determining a significant reading deficiency, and program considerations.

For questions about READ Act and English Learners Guidance for Assessment and Determination of a Significant Reading Deficiency in Grades K-3 contact [johnson\\_b@cde.state.co.us](mailto:johnson_b@cde.state.co.us)

### Documents and Resources

[READ Plan Template for Multilingual Learners](https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/mlreadplantemplate) ([chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/mlreadplantemplate](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/))

If an English Learner is determined to have a significant reading deficiency (SRD), a READ plan must be developed. Given the unique opportunities and needs of English Learners, the department has created a sample READ plan specific to English Learners. The READ plan template for Multilingual Learners contains the required components of a READ plan, including components for an individual student English Language Development (ELD) Plan.

- The READ plan template for English Learners is an example, not a required template.
- Plans must align with READ Act requirements; however, districts can determine the format of the plan
- The sample intends to illustrate the areas of English language and literacy development that a teacher should consider when planning instruction and/or intervention for English Learners



## Multilingual Learners

Identified or Suspected of  
Having Educational Disabilities



### Resources

- [The CDE's Linguistically Responsive Data-Based Instructional Decision-Making for K-12 Multilingual Learners](#)
- [NEW PDF Version Now Available for Download!!](#)

Opportunities that offer Special Education Recertification Credit:

- [The CDE's Culturally Responsive School-Based Family Interviewing: Engaging in Empathic Family Partnerships](#)
- [The CDE's Indigenous Students with Exceptionalities Modules](#)

### 2025-26 Webinar Series on Multilingual Learners

The [Multilingual Learners with Educational Disabilities: Voices from the Intersection of Language, Literacy, Culture, & Opportunity](#) engaging series brings together a star-studded lineup of national and Colorado-based researchers and practitioners who are leading the field with practical, student-centered approaches.

Mark your calendars! Remaining sessions run from 8:30–9:30 on a.m. on October 30, November 20, and December 11 (2025), and February 19 and March 5 (2026).

[Webinar Series Informational Booklet](#)

[Registration Link](#)

For each webinar, **attendees will receive 1 hour of Special Education recertification credit**, Registration will close two weeks prior to each webinar to ensure accessibility for all.

### FREE Webinar Series for K-12 Educators on Title VI and Inclusive Classrooms

**UVA** SCHOOL of LAW  
Education Rights Institute

## TITLE VI WEBINAR

This webinar presented by the Education Rights Institute will help teachers expand their understanding of their role in implementing Title VI in the classroom. Three educators in attendance will win \$100!

**DATE**  
October 28, 2025

**TIME**  
4:00 PM

**SCAN TO REGISTER**  
[bit.ly/46sdBHI](https://bit.ly/46sdBHI)

The [Education Rights Institute](#) (ERI) at the University of Virginia's School of Law will be launching a free webinar series designed for K-12 educators this fall. The series supports educators in understanding their obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and will focus on how teachers can implement Title VI's protections from race, color, and national origin discrimination in the classroom.

The first webinar will take place on October 28, 2025, at 4pm. ERI's aim is to increase access to strategies that foster learning environments where every student can thrive. Anyone who is interested can register using this [registration link](#).



# Calendar of Events

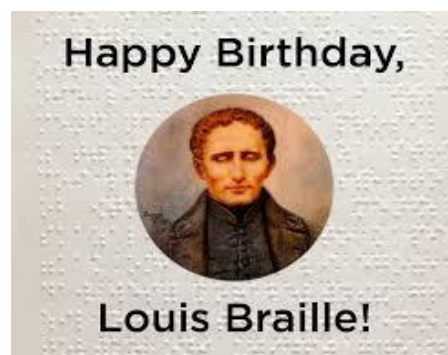
2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025 2025

- November 5-8** **Getting in Touch with Literacy Conference**—Huntsville, AL  
Registration: <https://www.gitwl.org/register>
- November 6-8** **Southwest O&M Conference**—virtual  
Register: [Conference](#)
- November 7** **First Friday CIMC Virtual Call** from 2:30—3:30 p.m.  
Contact: Jim Olson at [Jolson@csdb.org](mailto:Jolson@csdb.org)
- November 13** **Sound Bites**—Diving into Math Checklists with Dr. Tina Herzberg and Sara Larkin  
[Sound Bites Registration](#)
- November 13-14** **Northern Low Vision Evaluation Clinic**—Fort Collins  
Contact: Sam Thuis at [thuis\\_samantha@svvsd.org](mailto:thuis_samantha@svvsd.org)
- November 15** **CCB Youth Program Gathering**—Pies and Thanksgiving Fun  
Contact: Tiffany Moon at [tmoon@cocenter.org](mailto:tmoon@cocenter.org)
- Nov 18-21** **CMAS Braille Review**  
Contact: Tanni Anthony at [Anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)
- December 3** **Sound Bites**—Low Hanging Fruit of Access Technology with Dr. Ting Sui  
[\(Sound Bites Registration\)](#)
- December 5** **First Friday CIMC Virtual Call** from 2:30—3:30 p.m.  
Contact: Jim Olson at [Jolson@csdb.org](mailto:Jolson@csdb.org)
- November 30** [Tools for Life Applications Due](#)
- December 13** **CCB Youth Program Gathering**—Holiday Celebration, Time with Santa  
Contact: Tiffany Moon at [tmoon@cocenter.org](mailto:tmoon@cocenter.org)



2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026 2026

- January 4** **Happy Birthday to Louis Braille!**
- January 7** **Blindness/ Low Vision Coalition**—virtual  
Contact: Tanni Anthony at [Anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)
- January 9** **First Friday CIMC Virtual Call** from 2:30—3:30 p.m.  
Contact: Jim Olson at [Jolson@csdb.org](mailto:Jolson@csdb.org)

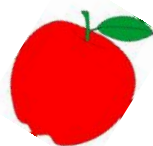




# Calendar of Events

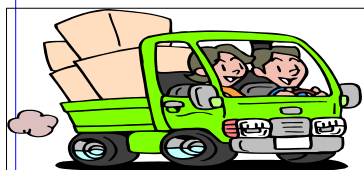
2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026
Jan 12- Feb 13	Administration Window for ACCESS Testing											
January 14	<b>Sound Bites</b> — Making Math Accessible with Morf with Anitha Muthukumaran and Dr. Hari Palani <a href="#">(Sound Bites Registration)</a>											
January 15—19	<b>Crested Butte Ski Trip for High Schoolers</b> Contact: Sally Burch at <a href="mailto:sally.burch@bvsd.org">sally.burch@bvsd.org</a>											
Jan. 26—Mar 20	Administration Window for NAEP Testing for selected 4 <sup>th</sup> / 8 <sup>th</sup> Grade Students in ELA and Math											
February 6	<b>First Friday CIMC Virtual Call</b> from 2:30—3:30 p.m. Contact: Jim Olson at <a href="mailto:Jolson@csdb.org">Jolson@csdb.org</a>											
February 11	<b>Sound Bites</b> —Dispelling Myths When Choosing Braille Code Options for Math and Science With Dr. FM D’Andrea <a href="#">(Sound Bites Registration)</a>											
February 19-21	<b>Metro Low Vision Evaluation Clinic</b> —Anchor Center for Blind Children Contact: Krista Berkey at <a href="mailto:Berkey_k@cde.state.co.us">Berkey_k@cde.state.co.us</a>											
February 19	<b>CSDB Braille Challenge</b> Contact: Jonathan Karli at <a href="mailto:jkarli@csdb.org">jkarli@csdb.org</a>											
February 23	<b>Makeup Day for CSDB Braille Challenge</b> Contact: Jonathan Karli at <a href="mailto:jkarli@csdb.org">jkarli@csdb.org</a>											
February 27	<b>Metro Braille Challenge</b> —Colorado Center for the Blind in Littleton Contact: Jim Olson at <a href="mailto:Jolson@csdb.org">Jolson@csdb.org</a>											
March 1	<b>Education Life Scholarships Due</b> For more EFL information, <a href="#">Click Here</a>											
March 6	<b>First Friday CIMC Virtual Call</b> from 2:30—3:30 p.m. Contact: Jim Olson at <a href="mailto:Jolson@csdb.org">Jolson@csdb.org</a>											
March 11`	<b>Sound Bites</b> — Helping Students Manage Vision-specific Stress So They Can Learn Better with Erika Andersen Ko <a href="#">(Sound Bites Registration)</a>											
April 3	<b>First Friday CIMC Virtual Call</b> from 2:30—3:30 p.m. Contact: Jim Olson at <a href="mailto:Jolson@csdb.org">Jolson@csdb.org</a>											
April 6-24	Administration Window for CMAS Testing											





# Calendar of Events

2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026	2026
April 13 -24	Administration Window for SAT college entrance exam to all 11th grade students and PSAT to 9th and 10th grade students.											
April 13-24	Administration Window for CoAlt Assessments											
April 15	<a href="#">Tools for Life Applications Due</a>											
April 22	Sound Bites—Low Vision Tests and Their Role with Dr. Kara Hanson ( <a href="#">Sound Bites Registration</a> )											
May 1	First Friday CIMC Virtual Call from 2:30—3:30 p.m. Contact: Jim Olson at <a href="mailto:Jolson@cldb.org">Jolson@cldb.org</a>											
May 6	Sound Bites—What Can You Learn from a Little Information? with Dr. David Simpson ( <a href="#">Sound Bites Registration</a> )											
June 4-5	Conference on Assistive Technology in Education (Virtual) Contact: <a href="mailto:SWAAAC@ucdenver.edu">SWAAAC@ucdenver.edu</a>											
June 5	First Friday CIMC Virtual Call from 2:30—3:30 p.m. Contact: Jim Olson at <a href="mailto:Jolson@cldb.org">Jolson@cldb.org</a>											
July 29-Aug 2	AER International Conference—Louisville, KY For more information: <a href="https://www.aerbvi.org/aer-international-conference">https://www.aerbvi.org/aer-international-conference</a>											



## TRANSITION INFORMATION

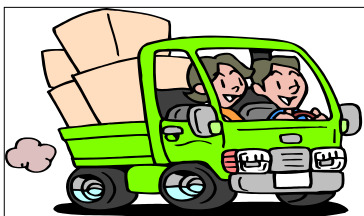
### Job Exploration: Learning about Blind Scientists, Their Work, and Accessibility Tools

[OceanInsight](#) - a webpage run by Dr. Amy Bower at Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute showcasing the work of a blind oceanographer

[Accessible Oceans](#) - a project lead by Dr. Bower. The “Accessible Oceans” AISL Pilots and Feasibility study aims to inclusively design auditory displays that support perception and understanding of ocean data in informal learning environments (ILEs).

[Center for Inclusive Climate Communications](#) - Run by Dr. Bruce Walker, professor of psychology at Georgia Tech. Started bio sonification and audio visualization of biological data using acoustics and sound.

[Mona Minkara](#) - professor of bioengineering at Northeastern University who is legally blind .



## TRANSITION INFORMATION ABOUT MOVING ON!

### Catch up on Employment Connections

Whether you're exploring career options or looking to advance your career, *Employment Connections* has something for you. This free quarterly series features honest conversations with professionals and employers about navigating work with vision loss. You can watch previously recorded sessions here: [Employment Connections - YouTube](#)

### Transition Resources

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness recently updated two Info Topics that provide information and resources on the transition from school to adult life. They are [Transition to Adult Life Planning](#) and [Post-Secondary Education](#). Like their other Info Topics, they include NCDB resources as well as links to materials shared by other agencies and organizations in the field.

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### CCB Offers Scholarships to Attend the Annual Washington Seminar

The Colorado Center for the Blind is pleased to offer two high school students, age 16 and older, a fully paid scholarship to attend the annual [Washington Seminar](#) held by The National Federation of the Blind.

For the 2026 Washington Seminar, January 26–28, the Colorado Center for the Blind will sponsor two blind or low vision Colorado high school students to attend with CCB staff as part of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado delegation. Each student will receive support and mentorship from blind adults for the entirety of the trip.

The scholarship includes:

- Round-trip airfare
- Lodging at the Holiday Inn Capitol
- A food allowance

We will depart for Washington on Sunday, January 25, and return Wednesday, January 28. While in our nation's Capital, students will:

- Attend the National Association of Blind Students (NABS) meeting
- Learn about current legislative priorities
- Meet with members of Colorado's Congressional Delegation on Capitol Hill
- Explore some of our nation's historic sites

**How to Apply:** Applicants must submit a 350-word minimum essay describing how their experiences have shaped their goals as a blind or low vision student and how attending the Washington Seminar will support their transition into young adulthood, including finding employment or going to college.

### Deadline to Apply: December 1, 2025

Send an email indicating your interest in attending the Washington Seminar, with your essay attached to: Tiffany Moon, Director of Youth Programs at [tmoon@cocenter.org](mailto:tmoon@cocenter.org)

For more information, contact Tiffany at 303-778-1130, ext. 256, or by email at [tmoon@cocenter.org](mailto:tmoon@cocenter.org)

# SAVE THE DATE AER INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2026

## JULY 29 - AUGUST 2, 2026

LOUISVILLE MARRIOTT DOWNTOWN  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY



### Call for Presenters is Now Open for the AER International Conference 2026!

Share your expertise at the **AER International Conference 2026**, July 29–August 2 in Louisville, Kentucky! Submit your proposal by December 2, 2025, and join us in Sharing Our Stories. Impacting the Future. Present your ideas, connect with leaders, and help shape the future of our field.

AER is pleased to announce that the **Call for Presenters** for the AER International Conference 2026 is now open. The 2026 conference offers an exceptional opportunity to present your ideas, highlight innovative practices, and share emerging research with a global community dedicated to advancing excellence in education and rehabilitation.

Whether you're a seasoned presenter or submitting for the first time, we invite you to inspire your peers, exchange knowledge, and help shape the future of our field. We're accepting proposals for:

- **60-minute sessions:** Ideal for focused discussions, practice-based insights, and program overviews.
- **90-minute sessions:** Designed for in-depth exploration, interactive workshops, or collaborative panels.
- **Poster sessions:** A showcase opportunity for emerging research, student projects, and innovative practices.

Submissions are welcome across all areas of practice and research related to blindness and low vision. Proposals must be submitted by **December 2, 2025, at 11:59 PM (Eastern Time)**. Each proposal should include:

- Presenter biography
- Session title, description, and knowledge level
- Topic and presentation type
- Session summary
- Three learning objectives

[Proposal submission portal and submission guidelines can be found here.](#)



# Orientation & Mobility

## SEE YOU IN NEW ORLEANS, DECEMBER 2026!

The excitement is already building up for the Orientation and Mobility Opus to end all Opus' - this will be one for the O&M history books! Lynn Gautreaux, the conference chair for 2026, is already hard at work planning for it. He says, "We will have an O&M program that will be remembered for years to come, with a wide variety of O&M sessions and various tracks, lots of exhibitors, and a location venue extraordinaire in New Orleans, LA!" Specific dates in December 2026, conference hotel, and other details will be forthcoming, so, mark your calendars and start planning to attend this national 2026 O&M conference!

## 2025 Southwest Orientation & Mobility Conference Hosted via Zoom on November 6-8, 2025

The Southwest Orientation & Mobility Conference will be in a virtual format via Zoom. . This year's theme is *"Transitions: How We Support the Various Stages of Life."* Over **13 hours** of CEU's (ACVREP and SBEC) are available.

### Conference Dates:

November 6th: Pre-Conference (Optional)

November 7th - 8th: Main Conference

### Registration Fees:

Professionals - \$100 (Early) & \$125 (Late)

Family Members, University students, & Paras - \$25 (Early) & \$50 (Late)

Late registration begins **October 1, 2025 @ 5:00 PM Central!**

Registration closes on **October 25, 2025 @ 5:00 PM Central!**

**Register:** [https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/catalog/conference.aspx?conference\\_id=42278](https://txtsbvi.escworks.net/catalog/conference.aspx?conference_id=42278)

**Notice:** A late cancellation/no-show fee of \$25 may be applied to registrations that are not cancelled by October 25, 2025 @ 5:00 PM Central Time. This includes "no-calls and no-shows." If you suspect that you are unable to attend, please log into your account to cancel your registration or contact the hosts ASAP to avoid this charge.

Information about this conference can also be found on the [SWOMA Conference Page](#). Please contact [Scott Turner](#), Statewide Orientation & Mobility Consultant for Outreach Programs or [Morgan Fayard](#), Administrative Assistant if you have any questions.



# 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



## A Guide for Parents and Family Members of Students on IEPs

The CDE website has great information for parents. Go to this link for frequently asked questions. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/parent-faq>



### Parents Encouraging Parents (PEP)

PEP is a conference for families and parents who have children with disabilities, ages birth to 21. Parents include parents as couples, single parents, legal guardians, adoptive, and foster parents.

A support person may attend and accompany a single parent. A support person is one who is helping a parent to raise a child (ren) with a disability or who is a caretaker of the child(ren) with a disability in the family (can include grandparent(s) or other relatives). PEP is a non-specific disability conference that focuses on commonalities, not diagnoses.

**PEP In-person Conferences at Hotels:** PEP in-person conferences are arranged at various hotels throughout regions in Colorado, and offers free registration, food, and lodging (if applicable). Special accommodations, language interpretation, and document translation are available. Transportation is not provided; consider carpooling if applicable; parking and sometimes valet service is available at the hotel venue.

**Cost, Food, Lodging:** PEP conferences are free to attend. Funded by both federal and state grants, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) Exceptional Student Services Unit (ESSU) offers these conferences free of charge to eligible Colorado parents of children with disabilities and to Colorado professionals who work with children and youth with disabilities and their families. Parents are responsible for their own transportation to and from the hotel venue.

For more Information about PEP check out the [CDE PEP website](#).

For questions, reach out to Pahmela Mendoza, Family School Program Specialist at [mendoza\\_p@cde.state.co.us](mailto:mendoza_p@cde.state.co.us)

**Interested in attending the next PEP in the 2025-26 School Year?**

Join the PEP Mailing List

[Add me to the PEP Mailing List](#)



## IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

We are at risk for some serious vacancies for Colorado TVIs (teachers of students with visual impairments) and 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](mailto:tmiller@anchorcenter.org)
- ♦ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist Position** in Aurora School District. For more information, contact Wendy Schlageter at [wschlageter@aurorak12.org](mailto:wschlageter@aurorak12.org)

### Northern Region

- ♦ **1 FTE TVI and O&M Specialist** in Greeley Schools. For more information, please contact please contact Tabitha Miller at [tmiller7@greeleyschools.org](mailto:tmiller7@greeleyschools.org)

### Southern Region

- ♦ **Possibly for SY 26-27 1 FTE TVI and O&M Specialist** for Colorado Springs D11 School District. For more information, please contact Nancy Maresh-Melo at [NANCY.MARESHMELO@d11.org](mailto:NANCY.MARESHMELO@d11.org) or 719-520-2153.
- ♦ **1 FTE Teacher of the Visually Impaired: Secondary English Language Arts** position at CSDB. Please contact Jonathon Karlia for more information at [jkarli@csdb.org](mailto:jkarli@csdb.org)

### Statewide

- ♦ **1 FTE TVI / O&M Specialist** for CSDB Outreach. Please contact Jac Tyrcha at [jtyrcha@csdb.org](mailto:jtyrcha@csdb.org)

### 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](mailto:slindauer@asharedvision.org)







## IMPORTANT! We have JOB OPENINGS!!

**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](mailto:anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)



### 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:

Without audio description:

<https://youtu.be/I90UJSQNGU8>

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!

"Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle. As with all matters of the heart, you'll know when you find it."

- Steve Jobs

# **Blindness/ Low Vision Coalition**

## **Virtual Meeting – September 17, 2025**

**Persons in Attendance:** Tanni Anthony, Michelle Chacon, Abby Horner, Jonathon Karli, Donna Keale, Paula Landry, Tammy Miller, Tiffany Moon, Jim Olson, Erin Schroeder, and Chloann Woolley

**Guests:** Jacq Tyrcha, CSDB Outreach Director ,and Julie Deden, Executive Director of Colorado Center for Blind Children

**Persons Absent:** Paula Conroy

**MISSION OF THE BLINDNESS/LOW VISION COALITION:** The purpose of the Vision Coalition is to bring the collective resources of the group together to address state priorities improving services to students who are blind/low vision (April 1998).

### **ACRONYM LEGEND**

ASV	A Shared Vision
BLV	Blind / Low Vision or 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

### **MEMBERS OF BLINDNESS/LOW VISION COALITION FOR THE 2025-26 SCHOOL YEAR**

- A Shared Vision – Paula Landry
- Anchor Center for Blind Children – Tammy Miller
- Colorado AER Chapter – Chloann Woolley
- Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program – Tiffany Moon
- Colorado Department of Education – Tanni Anthony
- Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – vacant
- Colorado Instructional Materials Center – Jim Olson
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind – Jonathon Karli
- Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind Outreach – Donna Keale
- Metro TVI / COMS– Michelle Chacon
- 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.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Welcome to new Metro Region representative Michelle Chacon. We thank Nancy Cozart for her past service as the Metro Region representative; Nancy retired in June. We thank Chaz Davis for his services as he moves onto a new position with DVR. Tiffany Moon is our new Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program representative. We have learned that Michele Reed is no longer with DVR. Tanni will reach out to DVR to see if there may be a new representative.

## **PROGRAM UPDATES**

### **Metro Region (Michelle Chacon)**

Adams 14 is currently being served by TVI / COMS Michelle Chacon. Katlin Lombaridi is supporting O&M services. Jennifer Spears is the Brailist who is contracting with Adams14.

Jennifer Spears is interested in providing Braille support for additional districts. If you need additional Braille support, please reach out to her at the following email address: [Jennifer.spears1@snhu.edu](mailto:Jennifer.spears1@snhu.edu)  
The Metro Region has not met yet, but the first meeting is in the works. Stay tuned!

### **Northern Region (Abby Horner)**

There are some new faces and some that moved: Joe Odekerken is new in Thompson School District, Eathan Holtz is new in Sterling and NE BOCES, Sherry Bainbridge is new in Windsor, Amber Korban, is now in Poudre, Ellen Wallis is now in Centennial BOCES, and Thompson School District. There is an opening in Greeley.

The first Northern TVI meeting will take place sometime in October; a date is working to be finalized. We are going to try to have three meetings this school year. Some possible topics might include; CATT training and a make and take. Tanni is in touch with two Poudre people about the possibility of funding the make and take!

### **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 September 18, 2025. They try to meet monthly. They will not be meeting in October due to the Western Region LVE Clinic and the CDE State BLV Conference. The focus of the meeting is often an opportunity for people to share and discuss key topics. There is usually about 5-6 people in attendance.

Mesa Valley School District is hosting the Low Vision Evaluation Clinic for the Western Region on October 3, 2025. We are looking forward to hosting another clinic! Students will be attending from different parts of the Western Slope.

Eunice Canoy left Eagle School District, she was their O&M Specialist.

## **Southern Region (Chloann Woolley)**

The Southern Region TVI-DVR meeting will meet on September 16th 2:30-4:00 for our first meeting of the year. It will be held on the CSDB Campus hosted by the CIMC staff for introductions and new information for the coming year. Our meeting dates are scheduled 5 times on the following dates from 2:30 - 4:00 p.m.

1. Tuesday, September 16, 2025 - Location CSDB ...Host CIMC
2. Tuesday, October 28, 2025 - DVR
3. Tuesday January 20, 2026 – D49 – Colorado Eye Institute
4. Tuesday, February 17, 2026 – CSDB
5. Tuesday, May 19, 2026 – Library 21, Maker Space

The Southern Region has new teachers and specialists. Jamie Lugo, D49 Falcon; Colleen Havey, Pikes Peak BOCES: Serving D2 Harrison, D3 Widefield, D8 Fountain/Fort Carson, and D49 Falcon; Mary Kate McLaughlin is contracting (virtual TVI with AIS)- Serving Southeastern BOCES; Elizabeth Webb (virtual) - D8, Fountain Fort Carson, Lewis Palmer D38 (Monument), Elizabeth School District, and Mountain BOCES. The new principal at CSDB is Jonathan Karli. He has several new staff on campus.

The Southern Low Vision Clinic was held on September 5th with 5 student evaluations. One comment sent from a parent after their Low Vision experience: "...thank you for ... a spot in the low vision clinic on Friday with Dr. Hanson. We really enjoyed our time with you all, and left with some great takeaways and things to consider regarding our approach ... We look forward to seeing the final report ..."

### Discussion:

*Training for paraeducators, what is available, and how do we support new paraeducators?* Tanni shared that this is a good question, as training paraeducators is a current priority for CDE. She suggested exploring the possibility of formalizing a paraeducator training program, similar to what exists with CDE for interveners. Julie mentioned that CCB could develop a three-day training course specifically for paraeducators. This training could incorporate the use of learning shades to help participants gain a firsthand perspective while learning blindness-specific techniques. While it may not be feasible to hold the training on three consecutive days, the format could be adapted into a series, offering one day of training at a time. There was also discussion around the possibility of utilizing a no-student-contact day for this purpose. Julie emphasized that CCB could be flexible with scheduling. The group acknowledged the importance of hands-on training and the need to extend the learning time to prevent participants from feeling overwhelmed, given the volume of information to be covered.

Tanni offered to review the previous paraeducator training modules to assess whether the content is still relevant and could be updated. She will share the old modules with the BLV Coalition to gather feedback. It was agreed that the training should include content that addresses blindness, low vision, and students with multiple disabilities. Assignment: Donna, Julie, Tiffany, and Tanni will meet to discuss next steps.

## **A Shared Vision (Paula Landry)**

A Shared Vision continues to deliver high-quality, family-centered services while expanding our reach through innovative programs. Our core work of direct vision services for infants and toddlers remains strong. At the same time, we are working on new initiatives, including family support resources, expanded screening protocols, and pilot projects.

Vision Screening Training has been the primary focus of our education program. This focus reflects both the statewide need for consistent screening practices and the demand from early intervention providers for

practical tools to use with families. With a third major update, it is now offered as an on-demand video with improved tools for families and providers. The *Parent Questionnaire®* and *Results & Next Steps®* forms are available through a secure online platform, with expanded, specialist-informed recommendations in both English and Spanish. Caregivers receive a PDF of their responses plus tailored guidance, strengthening our *Vision Screening Protocol®* and supporting early identification of vision concerns in young children.

Well-Child Vision Screening for CVI Pilot: A Shared Vision is also launching a pilot to integrate screening for cortical/cerebral visual impairment (CVI)—the leading cause of pediatric blindness—into routine well-child visits. This effort, guided by the 2024 *Pediatrics* Clinical Report and aligned with national priorities, aims to increase early identification of CVI. Outreach to pediatricians, clinics, and community organizations is currently underway.

Changes in Early Intervention: Beginning in January 2026, Colorado's Early Intervention (EI) system will begin implementing TEAM EI (Transdisciplinary Equitable Accessible Model), which uses the Primary Service Provider approach. The state has been divided into four cohorts, with Cohorts 1 and 2 starting in January 2026 and Cohorts 3 and 4 following in January 2027. In this model, one provider serves as the main contact for a family, while other specialists participate through consultation. While designed to streamline services and manage costs, this shift may also reduce direct visits from TVIs, place less emphasis on specialized expertise, and affect teacher compensation. These changes could influence how A Shared Vision delivers services, and we are exploring additional alternatives and partnerships beyond EI to ensure families continue to have access to direct vision services.

Stephanie Crosen will be joining ASV again as a virtual provider. So happy to have her back!

#### **Anchor Center for Blind Children** (Tammy Miller)

We are enjoying the beginning of a fantastic school year in our three children's programs! Preschool is on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and our Infant & Toddler Program has recently expanded and is now every Monday and Friday. Our Home Visit EI Program is continuing strong with a great team!

Over the coming months, Colorado's Early Intervention (EI) services will undergo several significant changes. These include cost containment measures that may impact agencies providing vision services, as well as a transition to a new service delivery model known as TEAM EI. Under this model, each family will be assigned a Primary Provider who will serve as their main point of contact and service provider, with other specialists collaborating in a consultative role. We feel a mix of anticipation and concern—particularly regarding how they may affect families currently receiving vision services. We are closely monitoring the rollout and remain committed to supporting families through this transition.

Our Research Team continues to make strides with new projects on the horizon for this year. Our NAVEG research (newborn vision screening for CVI) has pivoted out of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and now we are developing a project with Children's Hospital's BLOSSOM program, a NICU follow-up clinic. Our Neonatal Assessment Visual European Grid (NAVEG) trainings continue to reach people both nationally and internationally. We are now offering trainings at Anchor Center twice a year and are currently developing an online training option as well. Other new research projects include using the Tobii eye tracker to measure students' visual attention or visual behavior changes over the school year and using the DRDP to track developmental progress of preschool students with visual impairments.

We have developed Functional Vision Assessment Training videos showing live examples of performing FVAs on kids 0-3 with typical vision, CVI, and ocular impairments. We plan to have them available for university TSVI-prep programs and others soon.

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



Headquartered in Denver for more than 40 years, Anchor Center for Blind Children specializes in serving children with blindness, 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 pediatric ophthalmologists, 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 general family support, including programs for caregivers and siblings.

Anchor Center charges a nominal tuition fee for our center-based programs and financial assistance is available—no child is ever denied access to services based on the family's inability to pay. In the 2024-25 school year, Anchor Center served 400 children, caregivers, and siblings in home and community-based settings, and at their state-of-the-art facility in the Central Park neighborhood, located at: 2550 Roslyn Street, Denver, CO 80238. For more information, please visit the Anchor Center website at [www.anchorcenter.org](http://www.anchorcenter.org) or call (303) 377-9732.

#### **Colorado AER Chapter** (Chloann Woolley)

[CAER](#), Colorado Association of Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind & Visually Impaired, is a professional organization for all who serve individuals with limited vision or blindness. The Colorado Chapter board meets through a virtual link once a month. Our focus is to serve the Colorado professionals in our field by offering information, mini-grants, and support through like-minded professionals. We are in the works of two fundraisers, one for our mini-grant fund ready for White Cane Day, October 15th. The other, a fun money-making tournament to support adventurous O&M excursions in the state as headed up by Kaitlin Lombardi and crew. Watch for more information to come.

One of the roles of [AERBVI](#) is to give voice to issues of critical importance. It was recently brought to our attention that some of our national support for the federally-funded Deaf-Blind Grants (Washington, Oregon, Wisconsin, and the New England Consortium) and Braille are in jeopardy. There were also federally funding grants specific to sign language that received non-continuation notices. Here is the information letter sent from Lee Sonnenberg, MA, Executive Director AER concerning the Braille crisis.

Dear AER members and allies,

We need your help. On September 5, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education issued non-continuation notices to all three national Braille Training Grants under the 235E Demonstration Program: Braille Training. This means that for the first time in decades, there will be no federal support for developing specialized braille training resources in the United States.

The three programs that have been eliminated are:

- California State University, Los Angeles – focused on braille and technology. training
- University of Massachusetts at Boston – focused on professional development across the lifespan
- University of South Carolina Upstate – focused on preparing new teachers and service providers

No new training resources for Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) to provide braille

literacy to their students. No additional training for Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (VRTs) to serve adults. No professional development or technology innovation to address the braille literacy crisis across the lifespan.

If you'd like to read the entire letter please follow the link for [Lee's plea for support](#) via phone calls to our state and federal agencies.

If you have any questions or would like to join the CAER chapter in their endeavors to support our profession in our state contact Chloann Woolley, MA SpEd, TVI at [cwoolley@wpsdk12.org](mailto:cwoolley@wpsdk12.org) or [caerboard@gmail.com](mailto:caerboard@gmail.com)

#### Discussion:

*How do we support CAER?* Chloann wondered if there is a need to work to join another state's AER Chapter. Also important for people to understand the benefits such as the Journal of Visual Impairments and Blindness and RE:view, as well lobbying efforts. The challenge for most people is time, how to find the time to join and contribute. People liked the idea of a simple survey.

#### **Colorado Center for The Blind Youth Programs (Tiffany Moon)**

Changes in our Staff: Chaz Davis, our former Director of Youth Programs, has left the Center. He is now working at the Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. We all wish him the best and thank him for his work with blind youth the past three years. Chaz provided his own flair to our program. As a Para-Olympian, he was passionate about recreation and sports. We know that Chaz will excel in his new position and will have a positive influence on so many people with disabilities.

We would like to welcome our new Director of Youth programs: Tiffany Moon. Tiffany was a student at the Center and came to us from Georgia. She is blind as a result of Stargardt disease. Tiffany worked as a chef for over 20 years, managing large kitchens and putting together events. After graduating from the Center, we hired Tiffany to work at the Center in our home management department. She has a daughter with a disability and has advocated for her countless times. Tiffany has a love and a passion for working with blind people. As a parent herself, she hopes to work closely with parents of blind kids to encourage them to have high expectations of themselves. She loves working with students of all ages. Tiffany is creative and will bring energy and new ideas to our program. We are excited to have her in this position.

No Limits to Learning Summer Program: This summer we held our intensive skills and confidence learning program for 17 teenagers. The program was a four-week session. They came to us from all over the country. Our students gained skills in areas of Orientation and Mobility, Home Management, Braille, and Technology. The highlight of our program each summer is seeing the relationships that are formed and the impact the program has on our students as they realize that so many of their peers also deal with similar issues in their lives and at school as blind kids.

Next summer we hope to have a seven-week program and also a four-week program. We also plan to hold two BELL/Confidence Camp programs for elementary aged kids. One will be in the Denver area, and the other will be in Colorado Springs.

CCB's Youth Program has been active with the students from CSDB. There was a recent opportunity to meet with students from the School for the Blind and Bridges to Life Program. This is a great opportunity for students to meet with blind role models.

#### Calendar of Events (editors' note—only those still ahead on the calendar have been retained)

- Thursday, October 30, through Sunday November 2: State Convention of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado. Highlights include Exploring Careers in the Performing Arts Thursday 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. The convention will be held at the Westminster Westin Hotel.

- Saturday, November 15: The proof is in the pie and other Thanksgiving delights.
- Saturday, December 13: Celebrate the holidays with us: meet Santa, create an ornament or a card, and enjoy lunch with us.

We will be putting together the 2026 calendar soon. We plan to offer a scholarship to high school students to attend Washington seminar with us at the end of January. Other events may include seminar for teachers where they can use learning shades in the kitchen, seminar for parents on IEP development and independent travel, metro-wide Braille challenge, science at Metro State University, retreat weekend for outdoor learning.

Tanni shared that Julie Deden received the Jacobus tenBroek Award from the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) on July 13 at its annual convention in New Orleans. The tenBroek Award is the highest honor the NFB gives to a member.

#### Discussion:

*What would be helpful for the Colorado Center to provide for teachers, parents, and youth? We do not want to reinvent the wheel; we would be happy to assist with other initiatives.* One area that is important to continue to reinforce is the Expanded Core Curriculum. This would be a target area for opportunities for students, families, and professionals. It has been appreciated to have activities in other regions so help people who have transportation needs when events are hosted in Denver. Jac shared that she would like to partner with CCB Youth Programs. Jac offered the CSDB campus as a central location for events. Tanni talked about how to give more information to the CCB Youth Program about where our students receive their education across the state and to problem solving meeting needs in all geographic areas of the state.

#### **Colorado Instructional Materials Center (Jim Olson)**

CDE/CSDB Low Vision Evaluation Clinic: Thank you to Autumn Odette, Chloann Woolley, and Donna Keale for bringing students to the Southern Region clinic held on September 5<sup>th</sup> on the campus of the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind. Clinic coordinator, Debbie Haberkorn and clinic team members Dr. Kara Hanson and Jim Olson evaluated five students from four administrative units: CSDB, Pueblo County 60, Ute Pass BOCES, and Woodland Park school district.

Book Orders filled for start of 2025-2026 school year: 245 total braille textbook orders were received from Colorado administrative units for the start of the 2025-2026 school year. 224 of those textbooks shipped complete to districts prior to the first day of school. 6 titles, still being transcribed into braille, were shipped partially complete. The remaining 15 titles are still in production. Twenty-four titles had never been transcribed into braille before and are new transcriptions.

APH Quota Funds: The CIMC has spent down their funding for all three of their APH Quota Accounts. They are awaiting funding for this next year, which begins October 1. The CIMC cannot spend any new funds until October 1. The infant repository is fully ready to go for infants and toddlers who are currently registered with the CIMC. Items can be checked out until the child's third birthday. Once the child turns three, the materials should be returned to the CIMC.

The CIMC has APH products that CATT was training on – so reach out to the CIMC if you have items of interest that would benefit from training.

First Friday CIMC Zoom Meetings: The CIMC held its first of \_\_\_ “First Friday” Zooms on September 12, 2025 with 19 attendees. Topics included an introduction of staff new to Colorado districts. How the Fusion Suite licenses work. The new APH Wing It app. The new Paige Connect product The revision of The Littlest

Pumpkin book, now UEB compliant. The Memory Puzzle: Shapes product, and the newly released Memory Puzzle: Fruits and Vegetables. Cedric's Cartesian Quest. The U.S. Tactile Map Classroom Pack. The Neptune. The meeting culminated with a demonstration of the newly released Paige Connect product (catalog no. 1-08570-00, \$339.00) which adds digital input to the classic braille writer allowing for instant translation on your smart device.

Future "First Friday" CIMC Zoom meeting dates for 2025-2026: October 3, November 7, December 5, January 9, February 6, March 6, April 3, May 1, and June 5. Contact any CIMC staff member for the Zoom link.

One-on-One Zoom Meetings per AU: The CIMC wants to thank those administrative units (AUs) who have already scheduled a one-on-one Zoom to discuss their district's statewide registration database and address registration and federal quota census questions. To schedule your meeting, email [cimcregistrations@csdb.org](mailto:cimcregistrations@csdb.org)

Metro Braille Challenge: This great event is scheduled Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at the Colorado Center for the Blind. An alternate date if there is inclement weather will be Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup>. Stay tuned for more information.

First Monday is January (January 5, 2026): The date is the deadline for the APH Count. The child needs to have a current eye report. The child should be reported by their age on this date –

### **CSDB School for The Blind (Jonathan Karli)**

We kicked off the school year by welcoming students back with two days of orientation. The highlights of the orientation were an ice breaker activity during which all students and staff introduced themselves and shared their favorite music artist or movie. The two-day orientation concluded with a fun scavenger hunt that helped students explore and become familiar with the buildings and key locations across our campus. There are 57 students in the School for the Blind and 12 students with the Bridges to Life Program. There are currently 8 seniors who are out in the community for work-based experiences. They are working on transportation logistics for secondary students to come to the CCB Career Fair.

On August 28, CSDB opened their doors to families during our annual Open House. It was a great opportunity to share classroom highlights, student successes, and to continue building on the strong relationships CSDB has with its families.

Our students and staff are already hard at work preparing for White Cane Day, which we will celebrate together on Friday, October 17. The bands are busy rehearsing songs for the event, while all students are collectively working on White Cane Day-themed art projects that will be showcased during the celebration. We will celebrate White Cane Day on Friday, October 17 from 10:00-11:30 at Acacia Park, downtown Colorado Springs.

Beginning September 8th, 30 students in the School for the Blind will start with extra-curricular activities. 15 students will be participating in Special Olympics Bowling, while another 15 will begin practicing for goalball.

We are also proud to share that Jennifer Matthews, our Media Specialist, was selected as the recipient of the 2025 Colorado Association of Libraries President's Award. Jennifer was honored at the annual Colorado Association of Libraries Conference in Breckenridge on September 4.

We hired four full-time staff prior to the school year. New staff are:

Crystal Rattin – Elementary Special Education Teacher

Rochelle Taylor – Elementary TVI, Classroom Teacher

Erika Hovde – State Teacher Aide

Alex Zimmerman – State Teacher Aide

In addition to new staff, Emma Avery has transitioned into a new role this fall. Emma is now serving as the Literacy Specialist for the School for the Blind, supporting, and promoting literacy for all students in our school. She is also currently supporting the secondary ELA classroom.

We are actively recruiting for our only remaining full-time vacancy, which is our Secondary English Language Arts teacher position. Jonathon has moved forward with 25 minutes of reading each day for older students.

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

CSDB returned to school and contractual work early in August this year. The two TVIs are busy supporting 29 Early Intervention children for The Resource Exchange (TRE) serving El Paso, Teller and Park Counties and Blue Sky in Pueblo. The two TVIs are also serving 20 school age students for vision, orientation and mobility, and/or both TVI/O&M. Two of the CSDB Outreach O&M students attended the CDE/CSDB Colorado Low Vision Evaluation Clinic with their district TVI.

Outreach will be sending several staff to the Western Region Early Intervention Conference (WREIC) in Albuquerque, NM in late September. This conference is for Early Intervention serving Blind, Visually Impaired, Deafblind, and Deaf, Hard of Hearing little ones.

CSDB Outreach Early Intervention is proud to host the annual Pumpkin Fest once again at the Venetucci Farm, celebrating the life and legacy of Bambini “Bambi” Marcarantonio Venetucci. Born with a severe visual impairment, Bambi moved to Colorado Springs at the age of seven to attend the Colorado School for the Deaf and the Blind (CSDB). After graduating, she pursued higher education at the University of Colorado and later at a college in San Francisco, where she earned a degree in special education. In 1954, she returned to CSDB—not as a student, but as a dedicated teacher. Bambi was known for her innovative and compassionate teaching methods, including annual field trips to downtown Colorado Springs where she taught her students essential life skills such as riding the bus, navigating escalators and elevators, crossing streets safely, and ordering meals in restaurants. Her impact was widely recognized, and in 1983 she was honored as Colorado Teacher of the Year. In 1995, she published her autobiography, *Dammi La Mano-Give Me Your Hand*, sharing her inspiring journey. Pumpkin Fest serves as a heartfelt tribute to Bambi’s enduring spirit and her contributions to the community.

### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)** (vacant)

Michele Reed is no longer with Colorado DVR. DVR is going to an order of selection process as of January 2026. This means a wait list will occur. Julie reminded everyone to work to ensure that students with BLV who are eligible for DVR services are proactive with completing the needed paperwork now. Carol is the person who completes intakes and can help with information for people outside of the Denver Metro area. Her number is 720 582-6825. There is currently a vacancy in the Colorado Springs office.

### **UNC** (Paula Conroy)

Higher education has been under strain due to funding cuts, decreased enrollment, loss of faculty and staff, and discontinuation of federal grants in many different areas. The VI and O&M programs have been reaccredited for another 6 years by CDE. We are in the process of being reaccredited by AER. This is a lengthy peer review process. It will take six months for the panel’s review.



UNC is launching a new fully online master's in Inclusive Early Childhood / Early Childhood Special Education (EC and ECSE), plus an endorsement option. These are aimed at supporting teachers in both urban and rural settings.

UNC has achieved Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) status for the second year in a row. At least 25% of students are Hispanic, and the university had already met/exceeded that threshold.

UNC has been awarded grants through the Colorado Commission on Higher Education to support Open Educational Resources (OER) projects. These aim to reduce textbook and material costs for students.

UNC's "Tuition Promise" program is also in effect: for eligible Colorado-resident students (meeting income/family requirements, FAFSA/CASFA etc.), it covers standard tuition and mandatory fees (up to certain credit load) that began in Fall 2024. This helps reduce financial burden.

Though not strictly part of Education & Behavioral Sciences, there is a major development that will impact behavioral health training: UNC is developing a College of Osteopathic Medicine. The expansion includes health disciplines and behavioral health, which intersects with the Behavioral Sciences side. The inaugural class is planned for Fall 2026.

### **Colorado Department of Education (Tanni Anthony)**

Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project: We will be beginning our third year of our five-year award. We just received the Grant Award Notification at our same funding level for this new year. We are ready to go!

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 difference. 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) Specialist. 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 and community-based interveners. Cindy Colwell is the Family Specialist.

**Technical Assistance:** To request FREE technical assistance for students with deaf-blindness, please contact Gina Herrera at [Herrera\\_g@cde.state.co.us](mailto:Herrera_g@cde.state.co.us)

**Annual Deaf-Blind Child Count:** The December 1, 2025 Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count forms will be disseminated in early November. Our key contacts in most administrative school districts is a designated TVI. Children and youth with deaf-blindness can be added to the Child Count database anytime throughout the school year. The December 1 process is a confirmation of all identified students on this date, which corresponds to the state count of learners with IEPs that is required by the Office of Special Education Programs.

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

**Project Trainings:** We had a great June 9-10 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness and Significant Support Needs with a focus on *Beyond the Matrix: Assessment to Implementation for Students with Complex Communication Needs* to over 50 people representing 10 student-specific teams attended this facilitated work session on the Communication Matrix. We are working with Nancy Steele, our presenter and facilitator on from the Summer Institute, on follow-up opportunities with the involved teams.

We are gearing up for our 2025-26 Webinar Series. Stay tuned as the slate and registration will be disseminated shortly. We will also be able to announce the dates and topic of our 2025 Summer Institute on Deaf-Blindness within the next few weeks.

**BLV 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 families of professionals serving children who are blind/low vision, including 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 the Lowy Conference Center on October 23-24. The topic will be *Functional Low Vision Assessment and Strategies* with Erika Anderson Ko. There are already over 60 people registered. This training is only for Colorado TVIs and COMS as it will require requisite knowledge of the topic.

**CDE/CSDB Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics:** Our returning team has familiar and two new faces. We welcome back Dr. David Simpson and Dr. Kara Hanson as our optometrists and Jim Olson as our Low Vision Therapists. New to the team is Erika Anderson Ko as a low vision therapist, and Krista Berkey as our state LVE coordinator. We have already offered the Southern and Western LVE Clinics with Jim Olson and Debbie Haberkorn, and Angela Sims and Erin Schroeder as local site coordinators. We thank Debbie for jumping in to help at the last minute as CDE had a vacancy in the state site coordinator position. The regional site coordinators for remaining clinics are Samantha Thuis for the Northern Region and Krista Berkey / Tanni Anthony for the Metro Region.

#### Discussion:

*Have our LVE Clinics run their course?* Erin shared that the Western Region does value the LVE Clinics and they are making time for the paperwork. They also appreciate personnel coming to their region. Not all communities have access to pediatric eye care specialist and especially low vision trained practitioners. The clinics are beneficial for parents to hear more information about their child. The clinics do bring opportunity to learn more about kids and have a prescription process for low vision devices. Not sure if there is a less expensive way to offer this expertise in each region. A question was whether TVIs can access CIMC low vision tools without a student attending a LVE Clinic or from a private practice OD that has prescribed a device. This is a great question, and we can ask this question of the LVE team, specifically our eye doctors.

**Perkins CVI Protocol: An Interactive Training:** The training will be held on November 12<sup>th</sup>. This training is open to CO TVIs and O&M Specialists working at A Shared Vision, Anchor Center for Blind Children, and Colorado public school districts. Registration details were sent out in mid-September.

**Sound Bites:** Sound Bites are monthly virtual training / dialogue sessions based on identified topics of needs. There will be seven Sound Bites this school year.

- October 3—READ Act's Differentiated Pathway
- November 13<sup>th</sup>—Digital Math Checklists
- December 5<sup>th</sup>— Accessible Technology

- January 12th— Making Math Accessible with Morf
- February 11th— Dispelling Myths When Choosing Braille Code Options for Math and Science
- March 11<sup>th</sup>— Visual Stress
- April 22—Low Vision Tests and Their Role
- May 6—What Can You Learn From A Little Information?

**CDE O&M Seminar:** The Spring 2026 O&M Seminar is in the planning process. Any ideas for topics and presenters should be shared with Tanni.

**Listserve:** The CDE ESSU maintains two separate listservs specific to personnel working in BLV programs in Colorado school districts. One is specific to Colorado TVIs and COMSs. The second one is specific to Colorado braillists, which is being updated. It is important to remind all users of these listservs 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.

***Keeping in Touch Newsletter:*** The August—September 2024 has been posted on the CDE BLV website. Remaining issues for this school year will include the October 2025, November-December 2025, January – February 2026; March-April 2026, and the May 2026 editions. TVIs, be sure to share the email messages with the newsletter link with parents and district braillists and paraeducators.

**Recruitment and Retention:** The good news is that many of the openings were filled over the summer and we have had additional personnel since the school year began. We welcome Joe Odekerken to Thompson School District, Rochelle Taylor to CSDB, Patience Piesecki as a virtual teacher working with Elizabeth Webb, and Erin Rupe and Alissa ElTabib to the Anchor Center for Blind Children. Also, Alyssa Lurie is a new part-time O&M Specialist working in Littleton School District.

Please check the Job Page in the KIT for updates on new positions. We continue to have openings. Please share any expected vacancies with Tanni so we can be as proactive as possible with new recruits. Tanni would like to know about people coming up for retirement. Contract TVI and O&M staff are needed in several AUs. 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.

## **AGENDA ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

CDE Blindness/Low Vision Approved Budget for 2025-2026

The following activities have been funded:

- ◆ Braille Competency Testing / Mentor Support
- ◆ CDE O&M Seminar
- ◆ CDE State Conference on Blindness / Low Vision (focus on low vision)
- ◆ CDE Training on CVI
- ◆ CIMC Interagency Agreement
- ◆ Blindness/Low Vision Coalition (no costs but an approved activity)
- ◆ Regional Low Vision Evaluation Clinics
- ◆ Sound Bites (monthly virtual trainings) (ECC follow-up, low vision, SDI)

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

### Retention / Recruitment

Tanni reviewed the open positions that she knows about so far for next school year. Please continue to share vacancy needs with her. Funding: There is a Zink Scholarship established through the Denver Foundation – for ECSE or TVI Masters’s degree through UNC. The applicants must agree to work in Colorado. Priority is given to candidates who have an affiliation with Anchor Center for Blind Children; however, there are two scholarships given per year, so there is usually availability for others! Please reach out to Tammy Miller ([tmiller@anchorcenter.org](mailto:tmiller@anchorcenter.org)) for more information.

### CIMC BLV Registration / Child Count

Please check the box with the CIMC BLV box for those who are deaf-blind.

Please check the primary diagnoses of your students as you register learners with the CIMC Counts.

Please work to have current eye reports that supports the definitions of blindness, this would be helpful. Our goal is to register a child for the federal Quota with an eye report with Meets Definition of Blindness (MDB) or Functionals as Blind) (NDB) as eligible for quota funds. The eye reports are critical for CIMC / APH but are critical for eligibility and functional implications for day to day programming.

### EI Services for Infants and Toddlers with Blindness/Low Vision

The primary service provider model may restrict the frequency of services of a TVI / O&M in the early years. The state says that this model was adopted not as a cost-containment model. With this model, there is a focus on the primary area of concern of the family. There are opportunities to consult with other providers on areas of need of the child but, perhaps, not to directly work with the family and child. With that noted, there is a budget shortfall and there are efforts to reduce EI costs across the state.

One area of cost savings is to limit travel reimbursement of providers that may be restricted that is critical for providers who have to travel longer distances to see our kids and are inherent in the costs of our nonprofit agencies.

There are billing restrictions for teaming – that do not cover the actual costs of attending team meetings.

Currently Anchor Center for Blind Children and A Shared Vision have subsidized the costs of providing EI services to families of infants and toddler with blindness/low vision.

There may be a need to create information products that detail our numbers of identified children, those at risk, need for specialized supports, etc.

There is an important need for a statewide approach so that all involved agencies are involved in this advocacy.

Assignment: Michelle, Donna, Paula, Tammy, and Julie to work to get families connected to build out a support system.

### Next Virtual Meeting Dates:

January 4, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

April 29, 2026 from 8:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.



# colorado connections

## Braille Competency



- ♦ Hats off to **Caitlin Geoffrian, Julia Hutchinson, Brittany Hodgson, Autumn Odette, and Jared Walker** for completing braille renewal modules. Thanks to **Chris Maynard, Nancy Cozart, and Julie Wetzstein** for their proctoring work. Thanks also to **Jo Pinto** for braille proofreading work.
- ♦ If you are a new TVI to a Colorado administrative unit have not demonstrated braille competency yet this school year, please reach out to Tanni to learn more and secure an immediate testing date. Thank you to everyone for keeping our standards for braille competency high!

## Professional Development

- ♦ Thanks to **Dr. Tanni Anthony** and **Dr. Debbie Mendoza** for kicking off the first Sound Bites of the Year, sharing information about the CO READ Act: with a *Specific Focus on a Differentiated Pathway for Learners with Blindness / Low Vision*. We had over 30 participants and there was good energy for the proposed updates. [You can check out the details of our current pathway for braille readers here.](#)
- ♦ A big shout out to **Erika Andersen Ko** for her two-day training with us at the CDE State Conference on Blindness/Low Vision. The topic, *Functional Low Vision Assessment and Strategies*, was well received with over 80 attendees. Thanks to all of the attendees—CO TVIs and COMS rock!
- ♦ Thanks to **Jim Olson** for representing CO at the recent APH Annual Meeting.

## Personnel

- ♦ **Alyssa Lurie** graduated from Western Michigan University with a masters degree in Orientation and Mobility for children in 2018, and obtained her certification shortly after graduation. She moved to Charleston, SC where she was a COMS for three years in the school district. Then, she moved to Kansas City, MO where she had the opportunity to work with adults and be a contractor for the school districts for 3 1/2 years. She now calls Denver her new home, where she brings 6 1/2 years experience to Littleton Public Schools. When she's not helping students navigate their world, she's probably walking her 8 year old Wheaten Terrier, planning her next hike in the mountains, or cooking up a new creation in the kitchen. We welcome Alyssa to Colorado!
- ♦ Welcome to **Rochelle Taylor**, who is new TVI and classroom teacher at the School for the Blind at CSDB.
- ♦ We welcome new Blindness/Low Vision Coalition members for this school year: **Jonathon Karli** representing the CSDB School for the Blind, **Michelle Chacon** representing the Metro Region, and **Tiffany Moon** representing the Colorado Center for the Blind Youth Program. Tanni is working with DVR on their new representative.
- ♦ Congratulations, **Allie Unker**! Allie is the art teacher in the School for the Blind and was honored by the Colorado Art Education Association as The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), VSA Peter J. Geisser Special Needs Art Educator of the Year. She will receive her award in November at the 2025 CAEA "JUXTAPOSE" Fall Conference in Breckenridge, Colo. The award honors outstanding art educators who exhibit exemplary service and contributions to art education in the State of Colorado.



## Personnel Continued

**Editor's Notes:** We thank Chaz for all of his past work with the CDB Youth Program. He was a joy to work with and did so much for our students.

Dear Friends, Families, and Community Partners,

I am writing to share some personal news with you. After several wonderful years serving as the Director of Youth Services at the Colorado Center for the Blind, I have transitioned into a new role as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment.

This decision carries with it a mix of emotions. The Colorado Center for the Blind has been more than just a workplace for me—it has been the foundation of my own journey. When I first came to the Independence Training Program as a newly blind young man, I had no blindness skills and very little hope for the future. Through the Center's positive philosophy of blindness, I gained not only the skills I needed but also the confidence to live the life I want. Blindness, while a part of me, no longer feels like a barrier—and that transformation is directly due to the values and commitment that run through the very fabric of this Center.

Because of this, when the opportunity to serve as Youth Director became available, I didn't have to think twice. It has been one of the greatest honors of my life to work with blind youth across Colorado and beyond. From Saturday FAST activities, to family retreats in Estes Park, to the unforgettable summer residential programs, I have cherished every moment of learning, growing, and building community alongside our students, families, educators, and partners. Each of you has left a lasting impact on me, and I am deeply grateful.

Although my professional role is changing, my commitment to our community is not. I will remain actively involved in the National Federation of the Blind and will continue to support the Colorado Center for the Blind in every way I can.

Thank you for trusting me to walk alongside you in this important work. I look forward to seeing all the ways the Center and its youth programs will continue to thrive and transform lives.

With gratitude,

Chaz Davis, MSW  
Former Director of Youth Services  
Colorado Center for the Blind

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