

Services for Students

Who Are Blind or
Visually Impaired

2025

Manitoba Education and
Early Childhood Learning



Services for students who are blind or visually impaired

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Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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This resource is available on the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning website at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/bvi_services/index.html.

Websites are subject to change without notice.

Disponible en français.

Available in alternate formats upon request.

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Introduction

All students benefit from a variety of teaching strategies and supports that are appropriate for their educational needs. Students who are blind or visually impaired require unique learning opportunities and adaptations to ensure their individual needs are met.

The information in this guide will help Manitoba families and schools support students who are blind or visually impaired from Kindergarten through high school graduation.



Appropriate Educational Programming

Appropriate educational programming refers to school communities that provide learning environments, resources, and services to meet the educational, social, and emotional needs of all students.

Parents/caregivers, teachers, administrators, specialist teachers, clinicians, and community members work collaboratively to ensure all students have the best education possible.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning is committed to fostering inclusion for all people.

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

To review the standards for appropriate educational programming in Manitoba, please visit https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/pdf/standards_for_student_services.pdf.

Registering for School

Prior to registering a child for school, the parent(s)/ caregiver(s) are encouraged to contact the student services administrator (SSA)* at their local school division office—a year in advance, if possible.

The SSA will work collaboratively with the school (i.e., principal, resource teacher, classroom teacher, etc.) to co-ordinate services and support required for each student.

Once a child is registered for school, the parent(s)/ caregiver(s) become members of their child's support team. Student support teams include people who contribute specific knowledge, skills, and perspectives to the planning process. The number of team members varies, depending on the student's needs.

A transition meeting for the incoming student will be arranged with the student support team to discuss services and supports in more detail.

Children with visual impairments often receive services from Vision Loss Rehabilitation (VLR) Manitoba in their pre-school years. It is beneficial to have VLR Manitoba attend the transition meeting along with the consultant for the blind/visually impaired from Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning.

* Student services administrators may have different titles in different school divisions. Examples include student services coordinator, student services consultant, director of student services, principal of student services, and assistant superintendent of student services.

Planning for Individual Students

Decisions made by the student support team are documented in a student-specific plan (SSP). An SSP is not a legal contract. It is a planning, record-keeping, and communication tool.

Student-specific planning is the process through which members of the student support team collaborate to meet the unique needs of individual students.

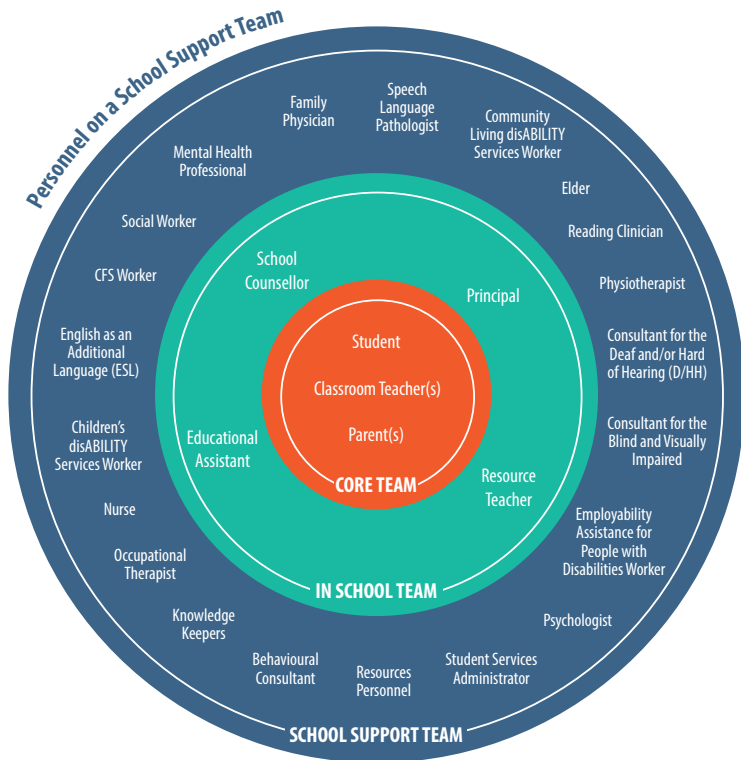
To learn more about student-specific planning, please visit <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/programming/iep.html>.



School Division Student Services Supports

In-school teams have access to school division-level supports such as school clinicians and consultants (see the “School Support Team” section of the following graphic, “Personnel on a School Support Team”).

School clinicians provide consultative-collaborative services with school personnel and parents/ caregivers, and may become active members of a student’s support team through the school division referral process. The SSA plays a key role in supporting the efforts of school teams.



Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Consultants for the Blind and Visually Impaired

A team of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning consultants for the blind and visually impaired (BVI) works together with schools to provide support services to Manitoba students who are blind or visually impaired. The consultants for the BVI are teachers who have specialized educational training in programming for students who are visually impaired. Schools are responsible for educational programming, and the consultants for the BVI provide ongoing support in areas specific to the student's visual impairment.

Services provided by the consultants for the BVI are determined through observations, assessments, and in discussion with parents/caregivers and the student support team. They are based on the student's specific visual needs.

The consultants for the BVI

- work with the student support team
- participate in the SSP process
- conduct functional vision assessments
- recommend and support the use of assistive technology and adaptations for learning activities in the classroom, gymnasium, on the playground, at home, and in the community when appropriate

- provide workshops to school division staff, parents, and post-secondary institutions
- provide information and resources about additional supports in the education system and the community
- participate in pre-school and school-leaving transition planning

The consultants for the BVI also teach specialized skills in

- braille literacy
- orientation and mobility
- assistive technology
- keyboarding and handwriting skills
- concept development
- effective use of residual vision
- effective use of sensory skills
- daily living skills
- self-advocacy
- career education



Eligibility for Services

Students eligible for ongoing consultative services have one or more of the following:

- corrected visual acuity of 20/70 or less
- less than 20 degrees of field of vision
- deteriorating eye condition

Process to access BVI services:

- A member of the school team downloads and completes the referral form and an eye report form available from www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/viconsult/application.html. Parent/caregiver signatures are required on both forms.
- Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning receives the referral and submits a request for a recent eye report to the child's eye doctor.
- Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning contacts the school to arrange a school visit.

Eligible students will be assigned to a consultant for the BVI. The consultant will observe the student in the school environment and conduct an assessment of their functional vision. This information will help the student support team in planning for the student's individual learning needs.

When a student who is referred for services does not meet the criteria to receive ongoing consultative services, the consultant for the BVI will contact the school team to discuss their specific concerns and arrange for an in-person visit if necessary. Services and support will then be offered on an on-call basis. School teams are encouraged to contact the consultant if additional questions or concerns arise.

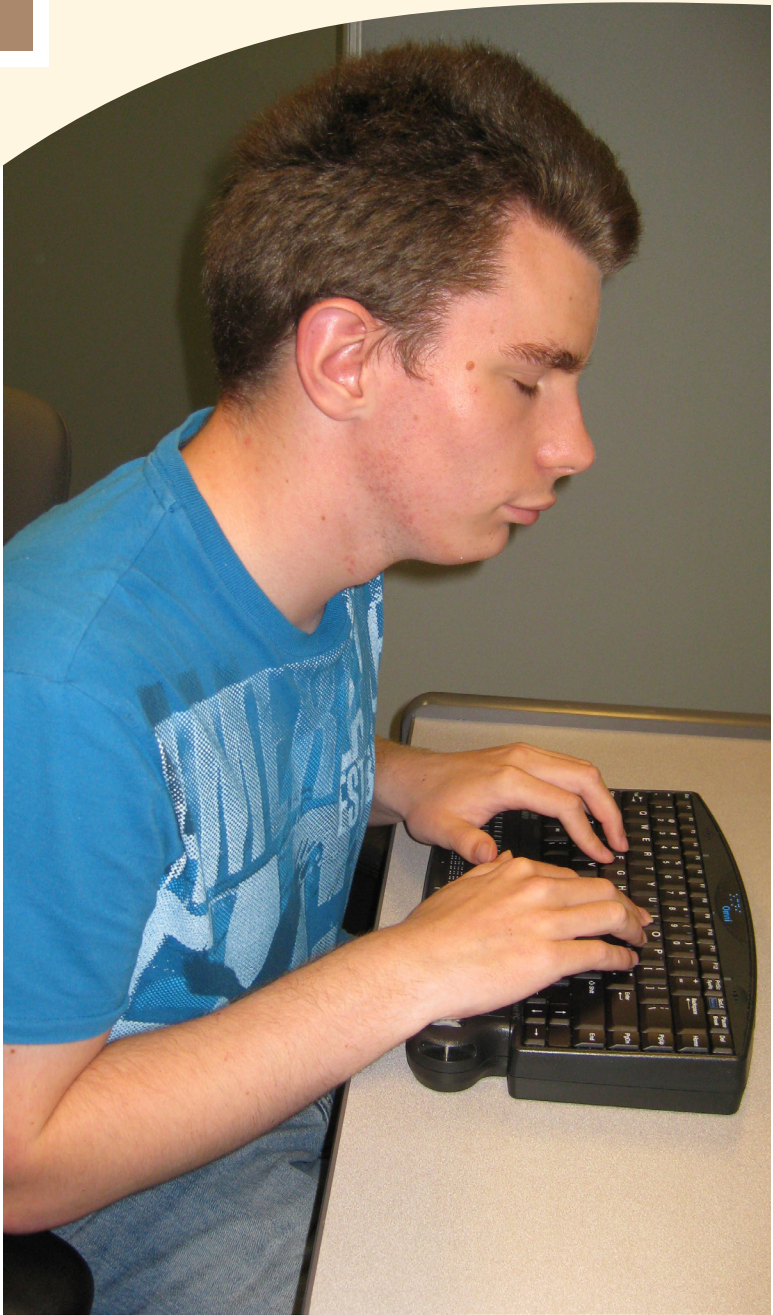


Assistive Technology

Assistive technology may be needed to support a student's learning. Equipment needs are determined by the consultant for the BVI, with input from the student support team. The school team will determine the best option for obtaining and implementing the necessary equipment.

Schools can borrow specialized assistive technology from Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning to support learning for students who are blind or visually impaired, based on the recommendation of the consultant for the BVI.

These items (e.g., braille writer, digital braille display, near and distance magnification systems) are assistive devices not normally available in the classroom. Direct teaching is available for students who use these devices.



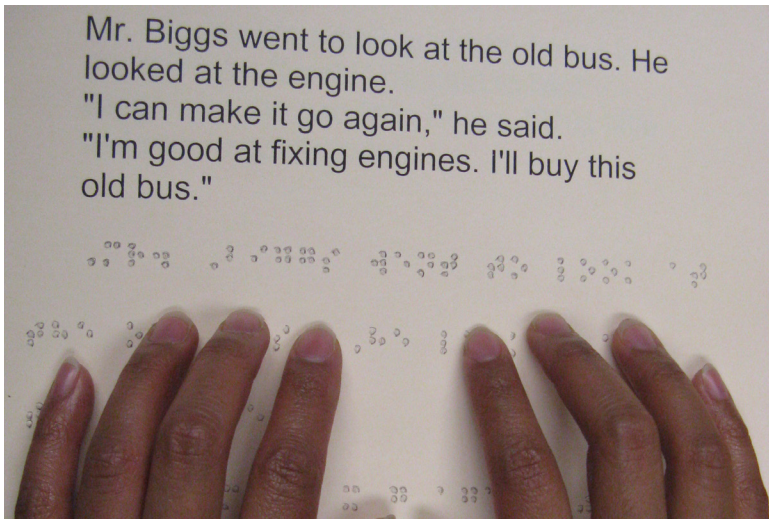
Alternate Formats Collection

Schools can access reading materials from the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Alternate Formats Collection (AFC) in audio, braille, large print, and electronic text.

Required materials that are not available in the on-site collection or from other collections may be considered for production by Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning.

Production timelines will vary depending on the type of material and format requested.

Teachers can access these alternate format materials through a consultant for the BVI or directly from the AFC. For more information, please visit www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/afs/index.html.



For More Information

If you have questions about Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning services for students who are blind or visually impaired, please contact:

Coordinator, Blind/Visually Impaired Unit

204-1181 Portage Ave. Winnipeg, MB R3G 0T3

Phone: 204-945-7912 in Winnipeg

Toll-free: 1-866-626-4862, ext. 7912

Fax: 204-948-3229

Website: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/index.html

For more information about alternate formats, please contact:

Alternate Formats Collection

204-1181 Portage Avenue Winnipeg, MB R3G 0T3

Phone: 204-945-7722

Toll-free in Manitoba: 1-800-282-8069, ext. 7722

Fax: 204-948-3229

Website: www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/afs/index.html

Email: isbafc@gov.mb.ca

Web Resources

Appropriate Educational Programming

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/index.html

Student Services

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/index.html

Services for the Blind/Visually Impaired and for Students with Print Disabilities

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/index.html

Alternate Formats Collection

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/afs/index.html

Protocol for Early Childhood Transition to School for Children with Additional Support Needs

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/programming/transition_childhood.html

A Protocol for Transitioning Students with Exceptional Needs from School to Community

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/policy/transition/index.html

Preschool, Post-secondary, and Community Supports

www.visionlossrehab.ca



