

Education Services Policy and Procedure Manual

Table of Contents

DBVI Mission, Vision, and Code of Ethics

Chapter 1: [Education Services – Purpose and Overview](#)

Chapter 2: [Referral and Application](#)

Chapter 3: [Eligibility Determination](#)

Chapter 4: [Education Services - Plan Development and Services](#)

Chapter 5: [DBVI Programs and Services](#)

Chapter 6: [Closure from Education Services](#)

Chapter 7: [Appeals](#)

Chapter 8: [Confidentiality, Documentation, and File Requirements](#)

Chapter 9: [Virginia Teaching Licenses](#)

Appendix I: [Cooperative Agreements/ Education Services Forms](#)

Note: The term “child” or “children” will be used throughout this manual to refer to those served directly by Education Services, with the understanding that “Child” may mean an infant or toddler, a student, or a young adult who has reached the age of majority. Additionally, for the purposes of this manual, the term “parent(s)” means the individual(s) who have legal responsibility for the child. As such, references to parent may include a legal guardian, another family member, or any individual(s) authorized to legally represent the child’s interests, as appropriate to the child’s situation.

DBVI Mission and Vision Statements

Mission Statement: The mission of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) is to provide services and resources which empower individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind to achieve their desired levels of employment, education, and personal independence.

Vision Statement: DBVI envisions a world in which individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind can access all that society has to offer and can, in turn, contribute to the greater community. We believe this is achievable.

DBVI's Code of Ethics

Ethics and Ethical Values: Purpose and Vision

The purpose of this Code is to instill confidence in our performance and to define and standardize our duties. We believe that the credibility and reputation of the agency is shaped by the collective conduct of the individual staff members and those with whom we associate. We believe that we can advance our mission, both individually and collectively, by embracing this Code of Ethics. We also believe that this Code will assist us in making wise decisions, particularly when faced with difficult situations where the potential to compromise our integrity or values may exist.

As Commonwealth of Virginia employees, DBVI personnel are charged with improving the personal, vocational, and economic independence of individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind. In our service to these individuals, we are committed to doing what is right and honorable. We set high standards for ourselves and we aspire to meet these standards in all aspects of our professional lives, with our peers and associates, and with individuals we serve. This Code of Ethics describes the expectations we have of ourselves and others associated with DBVI services. It articulates the ideals to which we aspire as well as the behaviors that are mandatory in our personal and professional roles.

Values

Recognize the abilities of people who are blind - *We value the contributions of people who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind.*

- We will respect confidentiality and privacy – we will not share agency, medical, or personal information with anyone except those authorized to receive the specific information and as required by state and federal law and regulation.
- We will provide for Equal Opportunity Employment – we will ensure there are no discriminatory practices based on the following: an individual's race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, or genetic information.

- We will avoid imposing values on others or policies that are inconsistent with our mission.
- We will appreciate the contributions of people who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind.

Equal Access – We value equal access to all life activities including information, education, training, and employment.

- We will ensure that all individuals served by DBVI are empowered to exercise informed choice.
- We will ensure all individuals served by DBVI have access to needed vision rehabilitation and education services that will enable them to achieve their desired outcomes and are within our scope of services.
- We will act fairly in our decisions; we will act impartially and objectively. Our conduct shall be free from competing self-interest, prejudice, and favoritism.
- We will ensure the public interest is served by advocating for those we represent.

Exemplary Work Habits – We value integrity, honesty, teamwork, and dedication.

- We are committed to the highest ideals in the stewardship of public resources and avoid any misuse of resources due to illegality, conflict of interest, improper behavior, or personal gain.
- We will promote safety in the workplace.
- We will act with honesty, integrity, and fairness when working with individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deaf blind, all co-workers and associates so that everyone can optimally and equally benefit from agency business and services.
- We will continually seek to find and employ efficient and economical methods for accomplishing our responsibilities.
- We will abide by all applicable health, safety and environmental laws and regulations in the communities in which we operate.

Diversity – We value diversity, respect for the individual, and personal choice.

- We will ensure the public interest is served by advocating for those we represent.
- We will recognize the cultural diversities of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and other demographics of the agency customers and provide services in a fair and equitable manner.
- We will promote a culture of ethics and compliance to federal, Commonwealth, and Department policies and procedures.

Employees – We value our employees for their dedication and expertise.

- We will dedicate ourselves toward earning the respect, trust, and confidence of those with whom we work and the public.

- We will always act with integrity in all relationships.
- We will treat all persons in a fair, evenhanded, respectful, and courteous manner.
- We will make no private promises of any kind binding upon the agency or the Commonwealth.
- We will abide by Virginia's Standards of Conduct for Employees, related regulations, and this Code of Ethics in order to avoid any actions that create the appearance of violating these standards.
- We will strive for professional excellence by maintaining and enhancing professional knowledge, skills, and abilities for our colleagues and ourselves.

Professional Boundaries – *We value healthy appropriate relationships with the people we serve.*

- We will treat individuals we serve with respect and dignity.
- We will develop and maintain professional relationship boundaries with the individuals we serve.
- We will act as role models in our behavior around and social interactions with the individuals we serve.
- We will refrain from any behavior that may be perceived as a conflict of interest with the individuals we serve.
- We will refrain from becoming romantically and/or sexually involved with individuals being served by the agency.
- We will refrain from accepting personal gifts, lending money to, or borrowing money from individuals we serve.

Who Must Follow Our Code?

We expect all of our employees to know and follow this Code of Ethics. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment. Moreover, while the Code is specifically written for DBVI employees, we expect our contractors, consultants, and others who may be temporarily assigned to perform work or services for DBVI to follow the Code in connection with their work for us. Failure of a DBVI contractor, consultant, or other covered service provider to follow the Code can result in termination of their relationship with DBVI.

What If I Have a Code-Related Question or Concern?

If you have a question or concern regarding this policy, you can contact your manager or your Human Resources representative. You may also contact the Office of the Commissioner to make a report of a suspected violation of this Code or to seek guidance before initiating an action.

Chapter 1: Overview of Education Services

Overview of Education Services

Purpose

The purpose of the Education Services program is to assist infants, children, and students who are blind, vision impaired and deafblind in reaching developmental milestones, navigating the education system and achieving educational goals, and maximizing opportunities to live productive lives. Beginning at birth and through high school, DBVI's Educational Services program provides an array of services and resources to assist children and students in achieving these goals.

The Education Coordinators in each region provide services to infants, children and students and training; coaching; consultation; and technical assistance to families, Early Intervention staff, Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, and other school and associated service professionals. Services and resources can include, but are not limited to:

- Assessment of infants, home schooled students, and private school students
- Collaboration with Early Intervention staff
- Support in achievement of developmental milestones
- Consultation on educational programming
- Provision of adaptive materials and equipment as appropriate
- Support for Low Vision exams and prescribed Low Vision aids
- Informing students on Pre-ETS/Transition and Vocational activities and programs and assisting them in accessing those services
- Supplying information on community activities and resources
- Promoting DBVI sponsored events including virtual activities, regional activities and events, and Super Summer Camp

Chapter 2: Referral and Application

Overview

The Education Services (ES) establishes and implements standards for the prompt and equitable handling of referrals of children for education services. The standards include timelines for making good faith efforts to inform these individuals of application requirements such that necessary information and documentation is gathered to determine eligibility for services.

Services Provided in Referral Status

Services provided to the child and parents in referral status are limited to those services necessary to facilitate the referral for Education Services. Services could include:

1. Providing information and responding to questions regarding Education Services and other DBVI programs and services;
2. Providing information regarding resources that may be available to the child or parents, including local and national consumer organizations and potential sources of acquiring an eye examination;
3. Providing information specific to vision loss/impairment, including resources for students who are deafblind;
4. Providing information regarding potential resources or options for children, students, and families for whom English is not their primary language.

Referral Policy and Procedure

The Education Coordinator in each of the DBVI Regional Offices serves as the primary point of contact for information and referral for Education Services. Primarily, referrals for DBVI Education Services comes from the Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TVI) and Early Intervention Specialists. However, DBVI accepts referrals for children and students seeking Education Services from the child or student themselves, family, friends, other school divisions staff, the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind, eye doctors, physicians, advocates, service providers, and other stakeholders. Referrals may also come through the Juvenile Justice System, foster care, residential programs, and for home-schooled or home-bound students.

Referrals for Education Services shall be made directly to the Education Coordinator, who are housed in each of the six DBVI Regional Offices. Referrals for services are initiated through use of the [Education Services Referral form](#). Inquiries or referrals regarding Education Services from families, teachers, eye doctors, etc. to DBVI staff other than the Education Coordinator shall be directed to contact the appropriate Education Coordinator. The Education Coordinator must initiate contact with the child, student and their family within 15 business days of the receipt of the [Education Services Referral form](#).

The Education Coordinators are responsible for contacting new referrals to provide information regarding DBVI services and referring them to appropriate agency programs for special services as well as other community agencies for supplemental services as well as other relevant resources. They are also responsible for providing the child, student, or family with any information, releases, forms, etc. as needed. Once the [Education Services Referral form](#) is received, the Education Coordinator will review the referral form to ensure the form has been fully completed and an updated eye examination report (dated within one year of request for services) has been received as well as any other relevant medical documentation. Documentation substantiating the vision loss may be accepted in lieu of a formal eye examination report.

The Education Coordinator is responsible for contacting the referral source if information is missing or unclear from the referral form or if the eye report or other documentation substantiating the vision loss is outdated or otherwise requires clarification. Incomplete referral forms, including outdated or non-existent eye examination reports, will be held by the Education Coordinator until they are complete and up to date. Once the Education Coordinator has determined the referral information is complete and up to date, they will provide the necessary information to the Intake Coordinator within three days in order to allow them to complete the AWARE Referral Data Page.

The Intake Coordinator will utilize the [Education Services Referral form](#), the eye examination report, and any other documentation received to complete the AWARE Referral Data Page. The Intake Coordinator will complete the required data fields in the Referral Data Page.

Eye Examination Report

The eye examination Report must be an up to date (within one year) report documenting the child's or student's vision loss. The examination will have been performed by a physician skilled in diseases of the eye or an optometrist, whichever the child, student, or family has chosen. Because it is sometimes difficult to obtain eye reports for infants aged birth through age two, a report from a pediatrician or a neurologist will be acceptable since it may be the only report that indicates a vision problem. Additionally, children or students older than 2 who have functional vision loss due to trauma or other causes of the impairment (e.g., Traumatic Brain Injury) may require documentation from a Neurologist or other medical practitioner in order to document the vision loss. However, every effort should be made to obtain an eye report from an eye care specialist where feasible as soon as possible.

The eye examination report will typically be whatever report format used by the specialist who conducted the examination. The DBVI eye examination form ([Eye Examination Form \(DBVI-70-20E\)](#)) may be accepted. However, in either case, the report must include:

- Acuity (near and distance) with/without correction;
- Primary/Secondary Impairment;
- Diagnosis;

- Prognosis;
- Peripheral visual field (when needed); and;
- Recommendations.

If no current (within one year) eye examination report is available, but other medical documentation substantiating the vision loss has been received, the Education Coordinator may use that medical documentation in the lieu of an updated eye examination report. Substantiating documentation could include:

- Documentation from a Pediatrician documenting vision loss;
- Documentation from a Neurologist documenting vision impairment (e.g., Cortical Vision Impairment – CVI; Traumatic Brain Injury - TBI);
- Documentation from any other medical practitioner credentialed in the area of vision impairment or loss.

Note: The Education Coordinator is strongly encouraged to consult with the Director of Services for Children and Youth in situations where it is unclear if the documentation that has been provided sufficiently documents the vision loss of the child or student. The Education Coordinator will use the following criteria for guidance in determining whether the eye examination report effectively documents the vision loss:

1. Visual acuity having not better than 20/200 central visual acuity in the better eye measured at 20 feet with correcting lenses (legally blind);
2. Visual acuity better than 20/200 but with the widest diameter of the visual field in the better eye subtending an angle of no greater than 20 degrees measured (at a distance of 33 centimeters using a three-millimeter white test object, a Goldman III-4e target, or other equivalent equipment) (legally blind);
3. Visual acuity between 20/100 and 20/200 vision in the better eye with best correction if the person has been unable to adjust satisfactorily to the loss of vision and if it is felt that the child needs the specialized services available through DBVI;
4. A field limitation to 30 degrees or less in the better eye combined with the inability of the person to adjust satisfactorily to the loss of vision and the need on the part of the child for specialized services available through the department (severely disabled);
5. In rapidly progressive eye conditions, which, in the opinion of a qualified ophthalmologist, will reduce distance vision to 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction; or
6. For children whose vision is better than 20/70, substantial documentation is necessary to identify a functional vision impairment. Examples of additional evidence that could be considered include a school division eligibility committee report that determines the child to be "a child with a vision impairment", documentation from an eye care specialist, Neurologist, or related practitioner, with an eye care specialist and/or a functional vision assessment.

Education Coordinator Access to Referral Module

The Referral module is available to the Education Coordinator to both review the AWARE referral information and to read or create Referral Notes. Referral Notes are used to document relevant information involving the child while still in the Referral Module. In general, the Intake Coordinator will be documenting via Referral Notes though there may be situations where the Education Coordinator would need to document a Referral Note. For example, a child is referred and the Education Coordinator provides the necessary information to the Intake Coordinator in order to complete and close the Referral Module. However, prior to the Referral Module being closed, the child or parents contacts the Education Coordinator with relevant information regarding the child (e.g., updated information from an eye examination). The Education Coordinator would then add this new information as a Referral Note in the Referral Module.

Access to the Referral Module for the Education Coordinator is *primarily* intended to be used to review referral information or Referral Notes, or to create a new Referral Note. At no point shall the Education Coordinator add to or revise any Referral Information that the Intake Coordinator has entered. Because the Referral Information is “LIVE” data, the Education Coordinator must select Cancel when leaving the Referral Information data page to avoid saving potential changes.

Moving the Child from Referral Module to Participant Module

Once the Intake Coordinator has completed all required information in the Referral Module, all Referral Notes have been entered into the module, and the required information has been added to the Intake data page in the Participant Module, the Referral Module can be closed. Until this information has been completed, the Intake Coordinator will maintain the Referral as Open and/or Pending. The Intake Coordinator will enter the required information into the AWARE Intake data page (other than financial information) and will then close the Referral with the appropriate Referral Outcome. The Intake Coordinator will note in the closure outcome field, “Closed – Referred to ES” and will either include the assigned Education Coordinator (based on the child’s county of residence) in the text box below the closure outcome field entitled, “If Other, Specify”, or will include the assigned Education Coordinator in a Referral Note.

Closing a Child from Referral or Application Status

Should the parents or child either not respond to attempts by the Education Coordinator to schedule the initial interview, cancel the interview and not re-schedule, or fail to show for the initial interview, the Education Coordinator should consult with the Regional Manager, and if the decision is to close the case (either from the referral module or participant module) the Education Coordinator will document this as a Referral Note or as a Case Note in AWARE. If the child is in Referral status, the Education Coordinator

will email the Intake Coordinator who will close the child from referral status. Otherwise the Education Coordinator shall close the case per Education Services policy and procedure.

Referrals of Children who are Deafblind

The Education Coordinator is encouraged to consult with the DBVI Program Director for Deafblind Services for children who are referred who are Deafblind to ensure appropriate and necessary resources are made available to the child and their parents. The Education Coordinator will provide the child and parents with the DBVI **“Consumer Organizations and Support”** information sheet or they may incorporate the resources from that information sheet and include region specific resources for the child, student, and families regarding DeafBlindness. The Education Coordinator is strongly encouraged to provide information and referral assistance regarding the “Virginia Project for Children and Youth with DeafBlindness”, a project in partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University. This project is a statewide program designed to provide technical assistance, training, distance education, and networking information to families, teachers, and service providers of children and students birth through 21 who have both a hearing loss and a vision loss.

The Education Coordinator will communicate to the child and their parents that interpreter services will be made available at no cost for the referred child as needed to ensure full access to the referral and application process.

Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind

The Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB) in Staunton, Virginia is a state agency that serves students whose primary disability involves vision or hearing loss including those students who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind/vision impaired, deafblind, and/or sensory impaired with other disabilities. DBVI works in collaboration with VSDB’s programming, primarily through the Education Coordinator responsible for that region or the DBVI Director Services for Children and Youth. The families of children and students for whom VSDB may be an appropriate resource will be provided information regarding VSDB and any necessary referral support through Education Services.

Referrals of Children and Students who are English Language Learners

The Education Coordinator will ensure that children and parents for whom English is not their primary language will have full access to the referral and application process for Education Services, including both interpreter services and forms translation as required. The Education Coordinator will communicate to the child and their parents that these services will be provided at no cost to them.

The Education Coordinator shall attempt to find a qualified interpreter, however timely access to a qualified interpreter is not always possible. In order to move the case

forward and provide services, the Education Coordinator may have to rely on family members or friends of the family for interpreting.

The Education Coordinator shall consult with the DBVI Director of Services for Children and Youth in situations where no resources are available and interpreter or translation services are required to ensure full access.

Documentation Requirements

1. Referral information (AWARE Referral Data Page) and Referral Notes completed as needed
2. Referral Notes cut and pasted into Case Notes in Participant module

Participant Module (Application) - Policy and Procedure

The Intake Coordinator, as previously noted in this chapter, will initiate data entry on the AWARE Intake Data Page prior to closing the Referral Module. Generally, children served through Education Services will be entered as a Participant (Application) on the same date as the Referral date. The Intake Coordinator will notify the appropriate Education Coordinator via email that the child's case has been opened as an applicant in the Participant Module. The email must include the date the child was placed into the Participant Module case (Application Date, which will typically be the same as the referral date).

NOTE: The Application Date in this case does not refer to the date the [DBVI General Application for Services](#) was signed by the child or parents. Rather, the date refers to the date that the child was placed into the Participant Module, which is often referred to as Application status. The Education Coordinators are required to document Eligibility within 20 days of the initial visit for all referrals in AWARE.

Services Provided in Application Status

Services provided for and/or arranged for in Application Status are for the sole purpose of determining whether the child meets the criteria of eligibility for Education Services. The following is a list of the services the Education Coordinator can provide in Application status:

1. Guidance and counseling;
2. Information and Referral;
3. Interpreter services that are required for children who are Deafblind to ensure access to diagnostic/evaluative procedures, for the initial interview, and for any additional required communication necessary for the determination of eligibility;
4. Interpreter and/or translation services for children and parents for whom English is not their primary language to ensure access to diagnostic/evaluative procedures, for the initial interview, and for any additional required communication necessary for the determination of eligibility;
5. Any other services deemed necessary for purposes of determining eligibility for Education Services.

Initial Interview Policy and Procedure

Initial Interview with the Child and Parent/Guardians

In addition to the documentation received as part of the referral process, the initial interview is to be used to assist in the determination of eligibility for Education Services and to begin the planning process if the child is determined to be eligible for services. More specifically, the purpose of the interview is:

1. To provide information regarding DBVI Education Services to the child and parents, as well as information regarding other DBVI programs and services;
2. To provide information regarding potential organizations (both national and local) and community resources to the child and parents;
3. To observe and interact with the child;
4. To collect any additional relevant information/documentation required for eligibility and planning purposes;
5. Through the informed choice process, to review the [DBVI General Application for Services](#) and other DBVI forms, including any necessary release of information forms, and to inform the child and parents of their rights and responsibilities, including appeal rights;
6. To obtain necessary signatures as required;
7. To address any questions/concerns from the child and/or parents; and;
8. To assess the educational needs of the child and parents, and to gather information necessary for eligibility determination and the initial development of an Education Services plan.

The initial visit/interview must be a face-to-face interview conducted by the Education Coordinator with the child and the parents. The interview is typically conducted in the child's home or in their natural environment (e.g., daycare setting, school) but may be conducted elsewhere as appropriate (i.e., confidential/private setting).

Note: In some situations, an initial interview may not be able to be conducted in person. The Education Coordinator may request an exception to this policy through approval from the Director of Services for Children and Youth. Justification and subsequent approval of this request must be documented in AWARE in Case Notes. In circumstances where the Education Coordinator is unable to conduct the initial interview in person, they shall plan to meet in person with the child and parents once eligibility is determined as soon as possible.

Note: Where the child is under the Age of Majority (less than 18 years old), the parent must sign all DBVI required forms, including the "**DBVI General Application for Services**" and any release of information forms. However, if the child is 18 or older, they must sign any required forms. Additionally, the Education Coordinator must have a signed consent form from the child in order to share any confidential information with the parent and other family members. However, the child may provide their verbal

consent to have the parent or other family members participate in meetings with the Education Coordinator.

Note: Children who are 18 years old or older and have been determined through a court proceeding to be incapacitated or incompetent due to their disability must have DBVI required forms or releases of information signed by either the parent, Guardian, or authorized representative.

Guidance: *In circumstances where the initial interview is not conducted in person, conducting the interview through other virtual means (e.g., Zoom, FaceTime, etc.) that allows the Education Coordinator to observe the child would be a best practice. Requesting families to videotape the child would be another acceptable practice to ensure the appropriate observation of the child.*

Scheduling the Initial Interview

The Education Coordinator must initiate contact with the child and parents within 15 business days of the receipt of the Education Services Referral form, and the initial interview must be scheduled within 30 business days of receipt of the Education Services Referral form. The Education Coordinator will schedule the interview through the preferred communication mode of the child and/or parents. That is, through the telephone, email, text, or letter in order to schedule the interview. The Education Coordinator shall ensure the setting for the interview is appropriate and will allow adequate time for the interview.

The Education Coordinator may bring to the interview all required forms and documents for review and signature by the child and/or parents. Alternatively, prior to scheduling the initial interview, the Education Coordinator may send a packet of DBVI, Education Services, and vision related information to the child and parents along with a request that the parents send to them either an up to date report of an eye exam (within the past 12 months) or other appropriate documentation substantiating the vision loss, and a signed copy of the [DBVI General Application for Services](#). Using this method does not negate the requirement for the Education Coordinator to schedule an initial interview with the child and their parents.

In lieu of sending information directly to the child and parents, the Education Coordinator may also choose to send the same packet of information to the Teacher for the Vision Impaired (TVI), along with a request that the TVI provides them with an up to date eye examination report (within 12 months) or other appropriate documentation substantiating the vision loss, and a signed copy of the [DBVI General Application for Services](#). However, prior to making this request of the TVI, the Education Coordinator must speak with the child and parents to discuss Education Services and alert them to the information that will be forthcoming from the TVI. Using this method does not negate the requirement for the Education Coordinator to schedule an initial interview with the child and their parents.

During the initial visit, the Education Coordinator is responsible for the following:

1. Ensuring that the parent, or child, as appropriate signs the [DBVI General Application for Services](#) (if the application has not already been signed);
2. Ensuring that the parent, or child, as appropriate, signs the [Authorization for Disclosure of Protected Health Information](#) and the [Authorization for the Release of Personal Information](#);
3. Providing information regarding Education Services and responding to any questions, including the role and responsibility of the Education Coordinator;
4. Reviewing the DBVI [Consumer Organizations and Support form](#) (or a similar resource list that incorporates the resources from the DBVI form but includes local or regional resources) with the child and parent and providing a copy of the form to them;
5. Collecting any additional information needed to complete the Intake Data Page in AWARE, including the “Primary Source of Support”;
6. Completing the [Voter Registration form](#);
7. A determination of any additional assessments or information the Education Coordinator may require for eligibility determination and initial planning;
8. Collecting any additional relevant information not required in the AWARE Intake Data Page that should be included in a summary of the initial interview, including behavioral observations.

Behavioral Observation of the Child and Family

Behavioral observation of the child and family is an integral piece of the initial interview in order to ensure an appropriate assessment of the child’s needs for planning purposes. Observations could include the following, dependent on the child’s age:

- Functional limitations related to the vision loss;
- Secondary disability or other medical/psychological issues/needs;
- The child’s interaction with parents or other siblings;
- Behavioral observations (anxious, angry/upset, placid, depressed, etc.);
- Interpersonal and communication skills.

The Education Coordinator may determine through the interview and their observations that additional assessments may be necessary to provide necessary information regarding functional visual concerns, developmental delays, and motor problems. Behavioral observations also provides information about the child’s level of functioning and the interactions between the child and the parents. For infants and toddlers, if an Infant and Toddler Specialist is available they may conduct functional vision assessments as necessary. If no specialist is available, the Education Coordinator may conduct a Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) and/or a Learning Media Assessment (LMA) during the initial interview or these may be conducted at a different time.

Voter Registration Material for Applicants

As required by State law, the Virginia Voter Registration Application form and the [Commonwealth of Virginia Voter Registration Agency Certification](#) form must be completed. With a few exceptions, any child who is 18 years old or who is 17 years old and will be eighteen years of age at the next general election shall be permitted to register in advance and also vote in any intervening primary or special election. Education Coordinators should ensure that both they and the child completes and signs the appropriate section of this form.

If the child is younger than 18 years of age and will not be eligible to vote in the next general election, place the certification form in the child's paper file with the notation "not eligible/old enough to vote". This Voter Registration requirement is for new cases; there is no need to acquire the child's or parent's signature; only the Education Coordinator's signature is required.

Regardless of the response, the Education Coordinator shall complete the Voter Registration Agency Certification form and place it in the case file.

Consumer Organizations

The Education Coordinator is responsible for providing to the child and their parents a copy of the [Consumer Organizations and Support form](#) to ensure they have access to important information regarding consumer organizations for the blind, vision impaired, and Deafblind. In lieu of the DBVI Consumer Organizations and Support form, the Education Coordinator may provide the child and parents with an information sheet that incorporates the resources included on the DBVI form along with additional local or regional resources.

Documentation Requirements

1. Enter documentation in the two required text boxes in the AWARE Application Documentation Data Page, responding to the two questions, "Reasons for Seeking Services" and "Describe the Needs". Include any additional comments in the third text box.
2. Complete a summary of the initial interview using the "Education Services Initial Narrative", found in the AWARE Letters Catalog or the DBVI Document Repository (AWARE section) – see below for more detail.

Education Services Initial Narrative

Following the initial interview, the Education Coordinator must document a summary of the interview, to include:

- A statement that ES services were explained to the child and their parents;
- A statement that the child and parents have been informed of their rights and responsibilities, including their right to confidentiality of personal information and information regarding the Disability Law Center;

- Description of how the referral came to Education Services, including a brief Description of the child's needs;
- Description of the cause of blindness or vision loss and any relevant medical issues;
- Description the child's or parent's reported level of independent functioning in relation to age-appropriate behavior;
- Description of the child's apparent or self-reported limitations imposed by the visual disability;
- Description of the child's family situation;
- Description of any additional diagnostic studies/reports needed to establish eligibility, and what is being done to obtain this information;
- Indication of the actions planned/next steps as a result of initial interview.

Chapter 3: Eligibility Determination

DBVI is responsible for providing the necessary disability specific supports to education services for students who are blind, vision impaired or deaf-blind who have been determined eligible for education services. DBVI shall ensure that eligibility requirements are applied without regard to age, gender, race, color, or national origin of the applicant, source of referral for education services, and the income level of an applicant or applicant's family.

Education Services Eligibility Criteria

Children seeking services from DBVI's Education Services are determined to be eligible if there is documented evidence consistent with the following criteria:

The definition of "visual impairment including blindness" is met in accordance with [8 VAC 20-81-10](#) and with [\(34 CFR 300.8\(c\) \(13\)\)](#):

1. There is an adverse effect on the child's development and/or educational performance due to one or more documented characteristics of visual impairment; and;
2. The child;
 - a. Demonstrates the characteristics of blindness or visual impairment, as outlined below; or;
 - b. Has any of the conditions, including, but not limited to, oculomotor apraxia, cerebral/cortical visual impairment, and/or a progressive loss of vision, which may in the future, have an adverse effect on educational performance, or a functional vision loss where field and acuity deficits alone may not meet the aforementioned criteria.
3. A child with blindness demonstrates the following:
 - a. Visual acuity in the better eye with best possible correction of 20/200 or less at distance or near; or;
 - b. Visual field restriction in the better eye of remaining visual field of 20 degrees or less.
4. A child with a visual impairment demonstrates the following:
 - a. Visual acuity better than 20/200 but worse than 20/70 at distance and/or near; or;

- b. Visual field restriction in the better eye of remaining visual field of 70 degrees or less but better than 20 degrees. 8 VAC 20- 81-80.W.3.
5. Deaf-blindness' means simultaneous hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness. [34 CFR §300.8 \(c\)\(2\); 8 VAC 20-81-10.](#)

Guidance: *Eligibility for students to receive free textbooks or other hands-on instructional materials through the [American Printing House for the Blind \(APH\)](#) states, among other things, that the student must “**Function at the Definition of Blindness (FDB), which is visual performance reduced by brain injury or dysfunction when visual function meets the definition of blindness as determined by an eye care specialist or neurologist**”. For purposes of eligibility determination, a more generic definition is used in order to be more inclusive. For example, documentation from an infant’s pediatrician that there is functional vision loss, potentially due to Cerebral/ Cortical Vision Impairment (CVI), is sufficient to demonstrate that the child is eligible for Education Services. However, that child will not be eligible for materials through APH when they are a student unless there is medical documentation from an eye care specialist or neurologist indicating the child is blind or functions within the definition of blindness as previously defined in this chapter. The Education Coordinator is strongly encouraged to communicate to the family that they should pursue a more definitive diagnosis, either through an eye exam or perhaps a pediatric neurologist, prior to the child beginning school.*

Note: For purposes of determining eligibility for services for children aged 0-3, the Education Coordinator must conduct the necessary functional assessment resulting from the child’s vision impairment if an infant and toddler specialist is not available. Where one is available they will ensure the necessary functional assessment is completed.

Eligibility Determination Policy and Procedure

An eligibility determination for Education Services must be made once the Education Coordinator has completed the initial interview, all required documentation has been received (including an up to date eye examination report or other appropriate reports documenting the vision loss), and the [“DBVI General Application for Services”](#) has been signed. The Education Coordinator must determine whether the child is eligible for the Education Services program within 20 business days of the initial interview as documented on the Eligibility Determination Data Page in AWARE. The Education Coordinator must request approval from the Regional Manager if due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances there is a need for a time extension beyond the 20 business days. A request and approval for an eligibility determination time extension must be documented in Case Notes in AWARE.

There is no minimum age requirement to be eligible for DBVI's education services as long as the child meets all other eligibility criteria. However, DBVI will not provide education services to child once they have graduated from high school or once they turn 23 years old, whichever comes first. Children are not required to be a resident of Virginia at the time of eligibility determination in order to be eligible for education services. However, the child must have (or intend to have) a residence in Virginia for the purposes of participating in education services through an Education Services Plan.

Determination of Ineligibility

A determination of ineligibility for Education Services is made when:

- The child does not have a documented vision impairment;
- The child or family requests that their DBVI case be closed and/or the child or family refuses services

If the child has been determined to be ineligible for services, the Education Coordinator will close the child in AWARE as "Closed-Other", choosing the appropriate closure reason, and will document the closure in Case Notes.

Eligibility Determination Documentation

The Education Coordinator will document the eligibility determination in the Eligibility Determination page in AWARE and in AWARE Case Notes using the Education Services "[Initial Narrative](#)" report, which is in the AWARE Letters Catalog or the DBVI Document Repository. The Education Coordinator will note in the text box in the AWARE Eligibility Determination Data Page a short description of services it is anticipated the child will be receiving.

Chapter 4: Education Services Plan Development and Services

Education Services Plan Development

The Education Coordinator is responsible for the development of a written plan for services for children who have been determined eligible for services. The Education Plan is developed based on service needs determined from the initial interview, as documented in the ***Education Services Initial Narrative***.

Education Services plans will be documented in AWARE. The date of plan implementation will be the date the plan is written, which generally will be consistent with the date of the ***ES Initial Narrative***. Education Services plan shall be Guidance and Counseling plans. The End date of the plan will be determined based on the date the child will complete Education Services, which generally would be consistent with when it is anticipated they would complete their secondary education. ES plan goals are generally generic goals based on the service needs of the child, and will include goals such as “Age Appropriate Development” or “Continue as a Student in my School”. Children who are referred for Education Services prior to entering school would typically have a goal of “Age Appropriate Development”. Children who are referred while already in school will have a plan goal of “Continue as a Student in my School”.

The child will be placed in Service status within AWARE as of the date of the Education Services plan. The plan does not require the signature of the Education Coordinator and shall be maintained in the child’s AWARE file. The plan does not require a signature of the child, parent, or guardian. Implementation of the Education Services plan begins as of the date of the ES plan in AWARE.

Education Services

DBVI’s Education Services provides primarily consultation, family and school support, education, and information and referral. As members of the “Infants and Toddlers Connection of Virginia” early intervention coordinating councils, the Education Coordinators offer support and technical assistance to infants, their families, and infant development program staff. Specifically, the education services program can offer:

- Resources that will increase parents’ awareness of the needs of infants who are blind or visually impaired, including referral for early intervention services.
- Information about independent living skills, communication skills, orientation and mobility, and visual development as they relate to infants with visual impairment, blindness, and deafblindness.
- Suggestions and guidance for parenting a child who is blind or visual impaired.

In situations where an Infant and Toddler specialist is not available, the Education Coordinator may conduct functional vision assessments and limited Orientation and Mobility support/services.

For children who are in school, the Education Coordinators provide consultation, technical assistance, and training for families, early intervention staff, and public school staff who teach blind infants and children who are blind or visually impaired. Information includes, but is not limited to:

- Educational programs
- Adaptive materials
- Vocational planning
- Transition related programs
- Community resources
- Independent living
- Recreational planning

More specifically, the Education Coordinator will:

1. Respond to requests for technical assistance or consultation from the family, the student, the school or other stakeholders in the community;
2. Assist in the dissemination of materials that may be available to the school, the family, and/or the child, including adaptive material through APH;
3. Provide adaptive aids and equipment; provide for necessary assessments (including funding if necessary);
4. Participate if requested for planning and/or attend the student's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) meetings.
5. Provide necessary technical assistance, support, and consultation to teachers, family, and the child who is served in a private school or is home-schooled.

NOTE: A school may request the Education Coordinators participation in a student's IEP meeting, but the family or guardian of the student must agree to DBVI's involvement.

NOTE: The Education Coordinator may purchase low vision examinations and aids and/or adaptive equipment for children where these services are deemed to be necessary to support the child's ES plan goal. No comparable benefit search is required for this service. However, if the Education Coordinator is aware of other sources of funding for these services (e.g., family's insurance) those funds should be used. DBVI is not responsible for the purchase of electronic adaptive aids (e.g., assistive technology).

The Education Coordinator can provide information and support for students and families in order to receive adaptive material and Braille textbooks (instructional materials) through the American Publishing House (APH). Resources through APH are available for eligible students.

In order to meet the APH eligibility criteria, the student must:

- Meet the Definition of Blindness (MDB): A central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with correcting glasses or a peripheral field so contracted that the widest diameter of such field subtends an angular distance no greater than 20 degrees, or;
- Function at the Definition of Blindness (FDB), which is visual performance reduced by brain injury or dysfunction when visual function meets the definition of blindness as determined by an eye care specialist or neurologist, and;
- Be enrolled in a formally organized educational program of less than college level. School-aged students must be enrolled with the registering school or agency on the first Monday in January. Students 18 and older must be registered for at least three months of instruction during the preceding calendar year (an accumulation of 12 weeks).

Prohibited Services: The Education Coordinator shall not provide legal advice, vision therapy, advocacy services, or any other service outside of the scope of DBVI's Education Services. Consultation with the Director of Services for Children and Youth is strongly encouraged as needed.

Documentation Requirements

The Education Coordinator will review and update the Education Services plan at least annually with the child and parents, with documentation in AWARE Case Notes. Where the Education Coordinator has received a year-end report from the child's Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TVI), they will summarize the report in AWARE Case Notes as a "Year End" report, analyzing progress and any notable achievements during the year. In person meetings are not required except where there is a clear need based on the determination of the Education Coordinator or the request of the family and/or school.

The Education Coordinator will document in Case Notes in AWARE each direct contact they have with the child and/or parent receiving services, including face-to-face meetings and significant phone and e-mail communication. Case Notes must be entered within 5 business days of the contact.

Chapter 5: DBVI Programs and Services

The Education Coordinator is responsible for referring children for additional DBVI services when it is determined these services are necessary in order for the child to achieve their Education Services goals. The Education Coordinator will determine the appropriateness of the referral based on the program specific criteria for services, and will adhere to the program or service's "application for services" process and forms. Prior to initiating a referral, the Education Coordinator will ensure the proposed service has been reviewed with the child and their parent and, through the informed choice process that they are in agreement with the referral.

Prior to or concurrent with a referral to a DBVI program or service, the Education Coordinator will communicate via email with the appropriate DBVI program point of contact to let them know of the referral. The email must provide the program staff with the following information:

- The child's name;
- The child's AWARE participant number;
- Up to date contact information for the child and parents;
- If currently in school, the name of the school the child is attending and the school point of contact;
- Reason for the referral;
- Other pertinent information that is deemed appropriate by the education coordinator.

The Education Coordinator will document all relevant information related to the referral in AWARE Case Notes.

Low Vision Services

As noted previously, the Education Coordinator may purchase low vision examinations and aids and/or adaptive equipment for children where these services are deemed to be necessary to support the child's ES plan goal. No comparable benefit search is required for this service. However, if the Education Coordinator is aware of other sources of funding for these services (e.g., family's insurance) those funds should be used. DBVI is not responsible for the purchase of electronic adaptive aids (e.g., assistive technology) or bioptics.

The Education Coordinator in each of the DBVI Regional Offices is responsible for processing requests for Low Vision Exams and Aids. For any child for whom a Low Vision Exam is needed who is being served in a public school, the child's Teacher of the Blind and Vision Impaired (TVI) is responsible for completing the Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) and attending the Low Vision Exam. If the child is not served by a TVI, then the Education Coordinator will perform the FVA. If the child is not being served by a TVI or if the TVI is not available, then the Education Coordinator can attend the Low Vision Exam with the child and their family. The individual attending the Low Vision Exam is responsible for:

- Identifying the DBVI contracted Low Vision Exam specialist the child will be seeing and scheduling the appointment prior to submitting information to the Education Coordinator.
- The request for a Low Vision Exam to the Education Coordinator must include the Student's Name (first initial/last name), Date and Time of the Exam, name of the LV Specialist, and address of appointment along with the Comprehensive Eye Report Within the past 12 months and the Functional Vision Assessment (FVA).
- Once the Education Coordinator has received the request, they are responsible for completing a Low Vision Exam Packet that will contain the following information and sending it to the TVI:
 - Authorization for payment
 - DBVI Low Vision Exam Form
 - DBVI Low Vision Aids Order Form
- At the completion of the low vision examination, the TVI must deliver or mail the Invoice for the exam, the DBVI Low Vision Exam Form, and the DBVI Low Vision Aids Order Form (if aids are recommended) to the Education Coordinator.
- The DBVI Regional Office Administrative Assistant will then process the invoice and as per policy, order the recommended aids or similar aids.
- The low vision aids will be delivered or mailed to the TVI to be delivered to the student. The TVI is responsible for communicating to the Education Coordinator the preferred method of receiving the Low Vision aids. The Low Vision aids may also be picked up at the DBVI Regional Office by the TVI if that is preferable. Aids may be mailed directly to the child's home if necessary.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

The Vocational Rehabilitation program provides vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals who are blind, deafblind or vision impaired to assist them to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain competitive integrated employment that considers their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) incorporated the principle that individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are capable of achieving high quality competitive integrated employment when provided the necessary services and support. Individuals who are interested in vocational rehabilitation services must be determined eligible for services, which may include eye, hearing and general medical evaluations, as well as special aptitude and ability tests, psychological tests, vocational exploration and other necessary evaluations.

Once an individual has been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services, an individualized plan for employment is developed with services that may include but are not limited to; training to assist individuals in adjusting to the loss of vision vocational and adjustment counseling; post-secondary school or vocational training; eye surgery and/or eye treatment for a limited number of individuals; adaptive equipment for training and/or employment; rehabilitation engineering services to modify training and/or job sites; customized and supported employment services. Job placement and follow-up services are also provided and are given major emphasis. Vocational Rehabilitation services help persons with visual disabilities to successfully work in the community.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Pre-employment transition services are a sub-set of Vocational Rehabilitation Services and are designed to help students with disabilities begin to identify career interests that will be further explored through additional vocational rehabilitation services, such as transition services. Pre-employment transition services are available only to students with disabilities, whereas transition services may be provided to a broader population including both students and youth with disabilities. ([Per 34 CFR 361.48\(a\)](#))

Pre-Employment Services (Required Services)

The following information is a list of required pre-employment transition services available to students with disabilities, including those who have been determined eligible for VR services as well as those who are potentially eligible.

1. Job exploration counseling;
2. Work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities or experience outside the traditional school setting (including paid work experiences) that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
5. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

Definitions of student and youth with disability

Student with a Disability means an individual with a disability who:

- Is still enrolled in secondary or enrolled in educational programs outside secondary school, including post-secondary education programs and has not exited, graduated or withdrawn;
- Is at least 14 years old but less than 22; or is still receiving services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and is not older than the maximum age established by the Virginia Department of Education; and

- And has a disability (i.e. receives services under an IEP or 504 Plan; or has a disability for purposes of section 504, or is otherwise determined to be an individual with a disability)

Guidance: *The definition of a student with a disability is inclusive of secondary students who are homeschooled, as well as students in other non-traditional secondary educational programs. However, once the student reaches age 22, unless they are still receiving services under IDEA and not older than the maximum age established by the Virginia Department of Education, they no longer meet the definition of a student with a disability. For example, a student with an IEP becomes 22 years old during their senior year of high school; Virginia allows that student to continue to complete their final year of high school under the IPE even though they are older than 21. The definition of a student with a disability is critical because it defines the population who can receive Pre-employment Transition Services.*

A Youth with a Disability means individual with a disability who:

- is not younger than 14 years of age; and
- is not older than 24 years of age.

Guidance: *To be clear, a youth with a disability includes anyone who is also a student with a disability, because anyone who meets the definition of a student will also meet the definition of a youth (younger than 24). However, once a student leaves school, they are no longer a student but are still considered a youth with a disability until they reach the age of 25. A student with a disability is eligible for Pre-employment Transition Services; a youth with a disability, who is not a student, is not eligible for Pre-employment Transition Services.*

Potentially eligible means: For purposes of pre-employment transition services, all students with disabilities, regardless of whether they have applied for or been determined eligible for the VR program.

Role of Education Coordinator

DBVI Education Coordinators may assist the VR counselor by:

1. Serving as the transition referral point of contact
2. Disseminating information regarding VR services, including Pre-Employment Transition services.
3. Make referrals to the VR counselor of potentially eligible students and youth with disabilities for the purposes of accessing Pre-Employment Transition services
4. Meeting with students and youth with disabilities, parents, and school personnel to facilitate the involvement of the transition aged student in career development, vocational evaluation, and vocational preparation activities and curricula.
5. Working with VR counselors to develop and implement of regionally conducted Career related activities.

6. Encouraging students and youth to participate in DBVI/VRCBVI sponsored summer, academic, career, and work related programs.

Orientation and Mobility Services

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training helps individuals who are blind or who have impaired vision to know where they are, where they want to go (orientation), and how to get there safely and independently by walking or using transportation (mobility). Specifically, DBVI O&M specialists teach adults who are blind or who have impaired vision the skills and concepts they need in order to travel independently and safely in the home, college, community, and city.

Priority for Services

Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialists serve all eligible individuals receiving services within their assigned territory. Individuals who need O&M service are prioritized as follows:

- Individuals who are receiving vocational rehabilitation (VR) services including transition aged students.
- Non vocational - Individuals who are in Service status on a Rehabilitation Teaching /Independent Living (RT/IL) caseload

Process for referring Individuals for O&M Services

The Education Coordinator may request O&M services for children/ students who are home schooled or in private school in situations where safety is an issue (e.g., navigating stairs and other barriers) and the local school division does not provide such services. O&M may also be provided for students who are age 14 and above who are receiving Pre-ETS services, but generally those services would be referred through the VR counselor. The referral for O&M services by the Education Coordinator must include the reason for the request and will be staffed with the Director of Services for Children and Youth and then with the Director of Instruction. It will then be determined whether a referral for O&M services is appropriate and whether DBVI has the capacity to provide the service within the region the child/student resides. If a determination on the provision of O&M services cannot be made, the request will then be sent to the Deputy Commissioner of Services. Education Coordinators will confirm and then document in AWARE that the local school division does not provide O&M services where parents have chosen to home school or when the child/student is attending a private school.

Rehabilitation Teaching Services

The Rehabilitation Teaching program provides specially trained instructors who can assist an individual in learning to adjust to their vision loss by teaching them to function safely, comfortably, and confidently in their home and/or in the community. Areas of instruction include:

- **Orientation Training in the Home Environment** - Teaches basic techniques to orient without the use of a cane. Includes techniques for walking with a sighted guide, protective techniques, trailing and locating dropped objects, room familiarization and orientation to specific indoor areas.
- **Personal Management (Activities of Daily Living) Skills Training** – Teaches personal care and hygiene, eating techniques, money identification, medical and health management, social obligations, personal grooming, and personal record keeping.
- **Home Management Skills Training** - Teaches adaptive techniques in food selection and preparation; cooking; clothing selection, organization and care; use and care of home furnishing and appliances; child care.
- **Communication Skills Training** - Teaches reading and writing Braille, keyboarding, typing, handwriting, use of timepieces and the telephone, familiarity with and use of electronic communication devices, methods of verbal and non-verbal communication, listening skills and record keeping.
- **Crafts, Recreation, and Adaptive Skills Training** – Teaches how to develop self-confidence and adaptive skills including family, social and community activities; educational pursuits; and recreational and leisure-time activities.
- **Adjustment Counseling** – Teaches an individual how to express feelings and thoughts regarding visual disability and specific problems related to it, and to assists them in examining and working through these feelings and attitudes that impede learning skills and effectively coping with problems.

Process for referring Individuals for Rehabilitation Teaching Services

The Education Coordinator will consult with the Director of Services for Children and Youth and then with the Director of Instruction and provide specific reasons for the referral. It will then be determined whether a referral for Rehabilitation Teaching services is appropriate and whether DBVI has the capacity to provide the service within the region the child/student resides.

DeafBlind Services

DeafBlind Services staff provides training, consultation, assessment and technical assistance to each program of the agency to ensure that individuals who are deafblind can fully participate in the agency's programs and services.

*NOTE: The word deafblind refers to any individual who has a combined vision and hearing loss. People who are deafblind have all types and degrees of combined vision and hearing losses. The policy lists elsewhere the types and degrees of combined vision and hearing losses that individuals who are deafblind have.

Eligibility

DBVI individuals with combined loss of vision and hearing are eligible for DeafBlind Services regardless of age. DBVI Education Services provide services to deafblind children aged 14 and under. Most children aged 14 and under are primarily served by, the Virginia Deaf-Blind Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness (the Virginia Deaf-Blind Project).

Note: DBVI follows the lead of the Virginia Association of the DeafBlind, a statewide individual advocacy organization for people who are deafblind. VADB uses one word, "deafblind", to show that this is a unique disability (not deafness plus blindness or blindness plus deafness). The Virginia Deaf-Blind Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness uses "deaf-blind", a term commonly used by national organizations and federal government agencies.

Process for referring Individuals for Deafblind Services

The Education Coordinator will consult with the Director of Services for Children and Youth and then with the Director of DeafBlind Services and provide specific reasons for the referral. It will then be determined if a referral for DeafBlind Services is appropriate and if there is the capacity to provide such service within the region the child/student resides.

Rehabilitation Technology Services

The goals of Rehabilitation Technology Services are to optimize employment outcomes of individuals who are vision impaired, blind or deafblind and may have multiple disabilities as well; provide technical support to DBVI and VRCBVI staff; individuals; and current or prospective employers of individuals who are vision impaired, blind or deafblind and may have multiple disabilities as well. Rehabilitation Technology Services seeks to increase public awareness of the availability of assistive technology and its

proper implementation to enhance the employability of persons with vision impairments, who are blind or deafblind and may have multiple disabilities as well. Rehabilitation Technology Services creates individualized solutions by employing the most currently available and most appropriate assistive technology, professional techniques and practices. Rehabilitation Technology Services works cooperatively with other DBVI services and team members to empower those persons with vision impairments, who are blind or deafblind and who may have multiple disabilities to achieve their greatest possible level of independence.

Rehabilitation Technology Services comprise the following areas of responsibility:

- **Technical support** - Provided to those individuals being served, DBVI field staff, VRCBVI staff, college and university professionals, and current and prospective employers of individuals with vision impairments, who are blind or deaf blind and may have multiple disabilities.
- **Consultation** – Provided to current and prospective employers of individuals with vision impairments, who are blind or deafblind and who may have multiple disabilities as a technical resource where questions exist with regard to the modification of equipment on the work site.
- **Coordination of Services and Technology**- Assures that equipment and techniques employed are current and address the changing needs of the individual and that agency staff are trained in the effective use of the assistive technology as needed.
- **Technology Liaison** – Provided to various committees and groups as assigned; ensuring that these groups are fully aware of the latest implementation techniques and technology. See the Rehabilitation Technology Services Manual for more specific information regarding services.

Prioritization of Referrals for Rehabilitation Technology Services

Individuals who are open for VR services will be given first priority for Rehabilitation Technology Services. The Education Coordinator will consult with the Director of Services for Children and Youth and then with the Director of Rehabilitation Technology and provide specific reasons for the referral. It will then be determined if a referral for Rehabilitation Technology services is appropriate and if there is the capacity to provide such service within the region the child/student resides.

Business Relations Services

The goals of the Business Relations Services staff are to assist individuals who are blind, vision impaired and deafblind reach their career goal of sustainable employment. They can provide career related information; assist in the job application process; assist with resume development and assist in developing interviewing skills. The Business Relations Specialists also work with employers in recruiting a highly skilled, pre-screened pipeline of talent. The team is well versed in services for employers including, federal contractor hiring (503c), corporate initiatives, workforce diversity and inclusion, worksite consultations, job retention and the many incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities.

Process for referring Individuals for Business Relations Services

Business Relations Services may be provided for students who are receiving Pre-ETS services, but generally those services would be referred through the VR counselor.

Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)

The Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI) provides residential orientation and adjustment training to blind and vision impaired adults and to students age 14 and older during the summer program. Services are also provided to individuals who return to their homes in the evenings and on weekends. Individuals generally remain in training from six to nine months depending upon their needs; however, this can be modified according to individual goals and needs. The full training curriculum includes orientation and mobility, personal and home management, braille, keyboarding and access technology, academic instruction (GED) (if needed), conversations about blindness, vocational services, health education, wellness instruction and recreation, case management services, low vision services, and dormitory services.

All classes emphasize the development of self-confidence and promote a positive attitude about blindness. On average, the Center serves approximately 25-35 individuals in the general program. During training, most individuals live in the dormitory located on VRCBVI's campus. We have private dorm rooms with shared en suite bathrooms, and independent living apartments. The cafeteria on campus provides breakfast, lunch, and dinner seven days a week to individuals in training and living on campus. Upon request, special dietary and nutritional needs will be accommodated.

VRCBVI also provides Saturday Seminars and Virtual Trainings and events throughout the year that are specific to Transition age students age 14 and older. In addition, two summer residential programs are provided, LIFE and STEPS to Success (Strategies & Techniques for Enhancing Performance & Skills).

The LIFE program is a 5 week residential training program during the summer for students between the ages of 14-18 years old who are returning to a high school

academic program. The LIFE program provides basic training in the skills of blindness; advocacy skills; and independent living skills. It also provides students with opportunities to explore employment and college goals and to gain work experience and to network with successful mentors who are blind or vision-impaired. It also affords students opportunities to participate in physical fitness and confidence building activities. Students work part-time in a community-based setting during the last three weeks of the LIFE program. Note that in some instances staff will recommend that a student continue to focus on skills of blindness (Travel skills, Braille, Access Technology, and Cooking) during the last three weeks of the program. Please contact VRCBVI for program requirements.

Process for referring Individuals to VRCBVI

The Education Coordinator will provide information to students age 14 and older and their families on these programs and will refer to the appropriate VR counselor if the student does not have an open Potentially Eligible or VR case.

Library Resource Center

The Library Resource Center provides services to individuals who are print disabled and administers two different programs are administered. Library. Library services are provided free of charge to those eligible, through the [National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped](#) (NLS) network of the Library of Congress. DBVI works with affiliated sub-regional libraries in public libraries in [Alexandria](#), [Arlington](#), [Fairfax](#), [Fredericksburg](#), [Roanoke](#), [Staunton](#), and [Virginia Beach](#). The books and equipment are provided free to the affiliated libraries from The Library of Congress, and services are administered at the state and local level. Currently, 8,000 people who are print disabled are patrons of a lending collection of 80,000 titles recorded on cassette, digital cartridge, Braille, large print and descriptive movies. The library collection includes books and magazines covering a range of topics and reading levels. Required playback equipment and accessories are also furnished. Books and equipment are mailed to and from eligible persons using the “free matter for the blind” mailing privilege. The LRC is currently focused on the NLS transition to complete digital format, which will take place over the next three years.

A variety of Resource Center services are provided to blind and vision impaired and deafblind children and students from birth through the 12th grade, school divisions, and teachers in the Commonwealth. The Center houses an inventory of [adaptive equipment](#) that is distributed to blind, and vision impaired and deafblind infants, children and youth throughout the state. Inventory items range from technology such as Braille note-takers and specialized software, to Braille paper. The Resource Center also provides [Braille textbooks](#), workbooks and novels for use by blind and visually impaired students in their local school districts. Orders for books in adapted formats are placed through the Virginia Department of Education’s statewide ordering system, [AIM-VA](#), located at George Mason University. The LRC receives automated copies of orders for Braille. Textbooks are produced by the LRC or purchased from another state, and loaned for

the school year. Expanding methods of Braille production continues to be a major focus of this program.

Chapter 6: Education Services Case Closure

The cases of children who are being served through DBVI's Education Services are no longer eligible for these services and must be closed when:

1. The child who was determined eligible for services is no longer enrolled in a school program (including children who are home schooled).
2. The child who was determined eligible for services has reached the age of 23.
3. The Child was determined not eligible for Education Services.
4. The Child moves out of state, dies, is incarcerated, or otherwise is unable to participate in Education Services.
5. The Child or Parents determines they do not wish to pursue or to continue Education Services.
6. The Child or Parents is/are non-cooperative, fails to respond, or otherwise fails to participate in Education Services.

The Education Coordinator must document in AWARE both the Closure Outcome and the Closure Reason. Closure outcomes include:

1. Rehabilitated
2. Other Than Rehabilitated
3. Not Eligible

The Education Coordinator will use the Closure Outcome of "*Other than Rehabilitated*" for children who are no longer enrolled in a school program or who have aged out (over the age of 22). Children who were determined not eligible for services will have the Closure Outcome of "*No Impairment/No Disability*".

The Education Coordinator will determine the appropriate Closure Reason based on the specific circumstances of the closure. Closure Reasons include:

1. Death
2. Disability Too Severe/Unable to Benefit
3. Failure to Cooperate
4. Institutionalized
5. Moved from Virginia
6. No Impairment / No Disability
7. Not Applicable – Rehabilitated
8. Other / All Other Resources
9. Refused Services or No Further Services

Documentation Requirements

The Education Coordinator will properly document case closure by completing the [“Education Services Closure Narrative”](#), which can be found in the AWARE Letters Catalog or in the DBVI document repository. The Education Coordinator shall include in the Closure Narrative specific explanation of the reasons for the closure of the child from Education Services. Particular attention must be made to provide documentation justifying the closure if the child was determined not eligible for services, refused services, was closed due to failure to cooperate, or other situations in which the child did not simply complete their schooling and/or aged out of services.

At the time of closure, the Education Coordinator will ensure the child’s confidential paper file contains at minimum an Eye Examination report (or other reports used to document the vision loss) and the signed DBVI General Application for Services. All relevant reports and case notes in AWARE must be up to date and complete prior to closing the child’s case from services, and there shall be no outstanding authorizations (vendor or service authorizations).

Chapter 7: Dispute Resolution

Children and/or their parents have the right to initiate dispute resolution proceedings if they disagree with the way DBVI is providing services to them and/or wish to appeal a decision regarding services. Education Services will be maintained during any dispute resolution or appeal process unless the child or parents requests otherwise. Children and their families will be provided with information regarding the [Client Assistance Program \(CAP\)](#).

Dispute Resolution between the Student or Parent and the Education Coordinator

Students and/or their parents with concerns or questions regarding their Education Services will be encouraged to contact their assigned Education Coordinator directly so that the relevant issues can be addressed quickly and informally. Where attempts to resolve the dispute between the student/parent and the Education Coordinator are not successful, the Education Coordinator will provide the student/parent with the contact information for their Regional Manager. The Director of Services for Children and Youth shall be notified as well of the issue, either by the Education Coordinator or the Regional Manager.

The Regional Manager is responsible for contacting the student/parent in an attempt to resolve the issue. Meetings with the student/parent to clarify their concerns is strongly encouraged, with participation by the Regional Manager, the Education Coordinator, and the Director of Services for Children and Youth, as appropriate. Disputes that cannot be resolved through the Regional Manager, including specific requests by the student/parent that have been denied, shall be referred to the Deputy Commissioner for Services for further action.

Specific requests related to the dispute, such as a request for a service that has been denied, a request for transfer to a different the Education Coordinator, and any subsequent decisions by DBVI related to the dispute, must be documented in Case Notes in AWARE and written communication between the student/parent and involved DBVI staff must be documented in AWARE as well.

Education Coordinator and School System Disputes

Given the role of the Education Coordinator with both the student/parent and the public school system, the potential exists for a request for the involvement of the Education Coordinator when disputes arise. The participation of the Education Coordinator in meetings or conferences involving the local school system and the student/parent for education planning is encouraged as schedules permit. However, the Education Coordinator may be asked to participate in meetings that are more formal in nature (such as a hearing) and are specific to resolving a dispute between the child and parents and the school system. In these situations, the Education Coordinator must not assume the role of an advocate, either for the child or the school system, nor shall legal advice of any kind be provided by the Education Coordinator. Referral to the Client

Assistance Program (CAP) is appropriate. With an appropriate release of information, the Education Coordinator may participate in these proceedings in order to provide information regarding the child's vision impairment and the services that have been provided by DBVI.

Subpoenas or Judicial Orders issues to Education Coordinator must be submitted to the Deputy Commissioner for Services. The Director of Services for Children and Youth and the Regional Manager must be notified when and that a subpoena or Judicial Order has been received. Requests for records through a subpoena or Judicial Order may be honored with approval from the Deputy Commissioner for Services. The Education Coordinator may provide requested records with an appropriate release of information from the child or parents authorizing the release of records.

The Education Coordinator shall retain the subpoena (or a copy) in the child's case file and a copy of the DBVI written response. All relevant activity specific to the subpoena shall be documented in AWARE Case Notes.

Chapter 8: Electronic Signatures, Confidentiality, Documentation, and File Requirements

Education Services has adopted policies and procedures to safeguard the confidentiality of all personal information of children who apply for or are receiving services through DBVI. DBVI assures that applicants and eligible children, their representatives, services providers, cooperating agencies, and interested persons are informed through appropriate forms of communication of the confidentiality of personal information and the conditions for accessing and releasing this information.

Education Services Electronic Signature Policy

Education Services staff may utilize agency approved electronic signature processes for the purpose of acquiring the individual's signature on documents where Education Services policy requires a signature from the individual. The use of the electronic signature process is intended to ensure Education Services are efficiently implemented and maintained when issues of time, travel, geographic location, or other reasons challenge the timely acquisition of a traditional "wet" signature, either in person or through the mail. Agency approved electronic signature processes may be found in the Education Services section of the DBVI Document Repository.

Electronic signatures are deemed to be a valid signature when:

1. The individual purposely and deliberately signs the document in question. That is, they understand and agree with the information contained in the document as demonstrated by their consent to use their electronic signature as a valid signature.
2. The email address that the individual uses for the electronic signature process is unique to them; that is, the email address is not a shared email address with others and the individual has control over access to the email address via a password, a PIN, or similar controls. The individual is responsible for updating the Education Coordinator should their email address change.
3. **The document is retained as a record that is accessible for future access.**

DBVI and the individual must both agree to utilize an electronic signature procedure for each and every document requiring the individual's signature. That is, individuals who consent to use an electronic signature procedure for a document do not waive their right to decline to sign future documents electronically. The individual will have been deemed to have approved the document to be signed and to have provided consent to use the electronic signature process once they have completed the steps outlined in the electronic signature process. The approved date of the signed document is the date the electronic signature process was completed (date email was returned, time stamp in AWARE, etc.).

1. The Education Coordinator will ensure individuals are provided with the *Education Services Electronic Signature Information Sheet*:
 - At the point of application for Education Services; or,
 - If not provided at application, prior to the first use of the electronic signature process; and,
 - At any point the individual requests the document.

The Education Coordinator will review the information contained in the *Education Services Electronic Signature Information Sheet* with the individual at any point the document is provided or upon request for further review by the individual.

2. In order to participate in the electronic signature process, the individual must provide the Education Coordinator with their unique email address. This should ideally be provided to the Education Coordinator during the application process, but *must* be provided prior to the initial use of the electronic signature process. Individuals who do not have a unique email address may not participate in the electronic signature process.
3. The individual will provide the Education Coordinator with any changes in their email address in a timely manner. In the circumstance where it becomes apparent to the counselor that the email address has changed (e.g., email does not go through; bounces back) and they were not notified of the change, the electronic signature process will not be utilized until the individual has clearly communicated a new unique email address.
4. Prior to initiating an electronic signature process for the purposes of acquiring an electronic signature, the Education Coordinator, through the informed choice process, must ensure the document to be signed has been thoroughly reviewed with the individual. This review may be done in person, by telephone, or through other virtual means (e.g., Google Hangouts, FaceTime, etc.). The Education Coordinator must document this review and the justification for using the electronic signature process in the Case Notes section in AWARE.
5. Individuals who approve a document through the electronic signature process are both approving the document and are consenting to use the electronic signature process.
6. Individuals who do not approve the document, have questions regarding the document, or do not wish to use the electronic signature process, may decline to complete the electronic signature process. Those individuals will be instructed to contact their Education Coordinator.
7. Once the individual has completed the electronic signature process, the Education Coordinator will ensure that the individual has a copy of the document they've signed electronically, providing a copy of the document to the individual if

needed (either electronically or by hard copy). All electronically signed documents, as well as any accompanying documentation (e.g. emails), will be maintained in the individual's confidential file. Documentation that can be stored electronically within AWARE does not need to be maintained in the individual's paper file.

8. Documents that have been signed electronically by the individual and require a signature of the Education Coordinator may be also signed electronically by the Education Coordinator if agency procedure allows for it. If not, the Education Coordinator must sign the document with a "wet" signature.
9. Upon request by the individual, the Education Coordinator will provide them with all relevant documentation substantiating their approval of the document and their consent to use the electronic signature process.
10. The Education Coordinator will document in AWARE case notes the results of the electronic signature process, for example noting the status of the electronic signature process, any problems or issues, etc.

Protection, Use, and Release of Personal Information

Federal and state law, regulations, and agency policy dictate that DBVI staff and contractors maintain the confidentiality of all children served by the agency. As such, the Education Coordinator may not acknowledge whether a child is or is not receiving services through Education Services without a release of information. If a release of information exists, only the information specified on the release may be shared, and only with the individuals or entities designated by the child or parent on the release of information.

In any situation where it is determined that the child poses a danger to themselves or others, in response to an emergency where medical or police intervention is required, or in compliance with any subsequent court order, necessary information may be shared without consent.

Personal Information Policy and Procedure

Personal information is defined as all information that describes, locates, or indexes anything about the child who is applying for or receiving Education Services, including real or personal property holdings derived from tax returns, education records, financial transactions, medical records, ancestry, criminal record, and employment record, or that affords a basis for inferring personal characteristics, such as finger and voice prints, photographs, or things done by or to the child, including the record of the child's presence, registration, or membership in an organization or activity, or admission to an institution. Formats for personal information may include, but are not limited to, written

records, photographs, audiotapes, videotapes, electronic data, or other media reproductions.

1. Personal information that identifies a child shall not be disclosed to, exchanged with, or requested from another person or entity, unless the child (or the child's parent, guardian, or authorized representative, as appropriate) gives informed written consent, or unless federal or state law or regulations permit or require release without consent.
2. The Education Coordinator will use personal information only for the purposes directly connected with the administration of Education Services. The Education Coordinator may communicate with other DBVI staff members who are serving the child without a release of information.
3. The Education Coordinator has the authority to disclose requested personal information, including health information, without consent as necessitated by an emergency situation or investigations in connection with law enforcement, fraud, or abuse, unless expressly prohibited by federal or state law or regulations. The Education Coordinator may also release personal information in order to protect the child or others if the child poses a threat to his or her safety or to the safety of others.
4. Personal information will be released to Adult or Child Protective Services if the Education Coordinator has reason to suspect instances of abuse and neglect as described in this chapter in the mandated reporter section, or if required to do so through federal or state regulations.

The Education Coordinator shall inform all Education Services applicants and their family of the following:

1. DBVI's need to collect confidential information is only for the purposes of providing Education Services. This need could include but is not limited to collecting personal information necessary for case management, determining eligibility for Education Services, developing and implementing an Education Services plan, referral and coordination of services with the local school system and other community partners.
2. How the child's personal information will be used;
3. That children applying for or receiving Education Services are not legally required to provide their social security number to DBVI (per [§ 2.2-3808 of the Code of Virginia](#)) and that the impact of not providing the social security number will not delay the determination of eligibility for services nor the implementation of an Education Services plan;

4. The consequences of not providing information that DBVI requires in order to provide Education Services (for example, an unwillingness to provide an updated eye exam or other required documentation of the visual impairment) could mean the child would not be eligible to receive Education Services;
5. Other agencies (if any) to which the Education Coordinator routinely releases individual information (e.g., the child's school);
6. The child's right (or family) to ask what information has been shared with whom and why;
7. That the child's signed consent (or parent/guardian, as appropriate) is required in order for Education Services to obtain or release information in which the individual's identity is or may be readily ascertained except when disclosure without consent is allowed or mandatory under federal or state law or regulations;
8. The purpose and key provisions and protections of the DBVI confidentiality release form. This includes disclosure parameters (e.g., types of information to be disclosed, expiration date of release form, parties to be listed on the release), the right to view the information released unless access is prohibited, and the individual's right to revoke and amend the release form.
9. The Education Coordinator shall explain the consequences of not signing the release;
10. The Education Coordinator will explain the child's right to confidentiality by giving the child (or parent/guardian, as appropriate) materials in the child's preferred format during the initial meeting, during Education Services, or in other instances where the child's release of information is required to enable the child to comprehend and respond to information.

Except as identified in numbers 1 and 2 below, DBVI must make all requested information in the child's record of services accessible to and must release the information to the individual or the individual's representative in a timely manner.

1. DBVI shall not release medical, psychological, or information the agency has deemed harmful to the child directly to the child (or parent, guardian, or representative), but must be provided to the child through a third party chosen by the child (or parent, guardian, or representative), which may include, among others, an advocate, a family member, or a qualified medical or mental health professional, unless a representative has been appointed by a court to represent the individual.
2. Personal information in the case record that DBVI obtained from another agency or organization may be released only by, or under the conditions established by,

the other agency or organization (per [34 CFR § 361.38](#)), unless specifically requested by judicial order.

Release of Information to Parents, Legal Guardians, or Authorized Representatives

The parents or legal guardians of children who are applying for or receiving Education Services who are under age 18 have the right to review the minor child's case record (including information about the child dropping out of school, sexual activity, etc.), discuss the child's Education Services, or make decisions about the child's Education Services (including signing DBVI documents for the child), without the child's informed written consent except:

1. Any information regarding outpatient diagnosis, treatment, care, or rehabilitation for alcohol or other substance abuse, mental illness, or emotional disturbances ([§ 54.1-2969 of the Code of Virginia](#)). However, the child's consent is not required for parental access to inpatient treatment, care, or rehabilitation since minors cannot check themselves into an inpatient treatment program, or for parental access to other types of information (e.g., child is sexually active, child has dropped out of school, etc.), or;
2. When parental rights have been terminated or a court has restricted or denied parental or representative access to the individual's confidential records, or;
3. When the individual is emancipated (e.g., married, court order, etc.), or;
4. Any information furnished in confidence to the Virginia Department of Social Services and an investigation is ongoing (e.g., on abuse or neglect charges) and any information Social Services provided to the Education Coordinator with a stipulation that release of the information is prohibited.

For parents of children who are applying for or receiving services and are 18 or older and are legally competent, informed written consent is required in order for the parent, guardian, or representative to review or obtain a copy of the child's Education Services case file, discuss the child's Education Services or make decisions on the child's behalf (including signing DBVI documents). Informed written consent is required for parental access to special education records when the individual is 18 years or older (per P.L. 105-17 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, [Federal Regulation 34 CFR § 300.520](#)).

The parent cannot make decisions on behalf of a child who is 18 years or older unless the parent is a court-appointed legal guardian. The guardian must furnish personal identification (e.g., driver's license) and sign a written statement for the individual's DBVI Education Services case file that he or she is the legal guardian. The Education Coordinator shall ensure that a copy of the identification document and statement are in the child's Education Services case file.

Non-Education Services DBVI Staff

Informed written consent shall not be required for other DBVI divisions and staff of DBVI who do not have responsibility for administering the Education Services Program.

Service Providers.

Informed written consent shall be required from the child (or parent, guardian, or representative) in order for DBVI Education Services staff to provide information to any school division or service providers outside the agency.

Consent to Release Information

Personal information in which the identity of the child being served is or may be readily ascertained shall not be disclosed to, exchanged with, or requested from another person or entity unless the child student (or parent, guardian, or representative, as appropriate) gives informed written consent or unless federal or state law or regulations permit or require release without consent (per [§ 2.2-3803 of the Code of Virginia](#) and [34 CFR § 361.38](#)).

The Education Coordinator must use the appropriate consent to release information form in order to obtain necessary documents for eligibility determination and for the coordination and provision of Education Services and to allow for necessary and ongoing communication related to the Education Services the child is receiving. However, the Education Coordinator must ensure there is a specific need for the information or communication that the release provides for and that the child (or parent/guardian, or representative) has been given clear information and informed choice regarding the need for them to consent to the release. At any point where the Education Coordinator determines that the information or communication is no longer required, the consent to release must be terminated through informed choice with the child (or parent/guardian, or representative, as appropriate).

As such, the Education Coordinator will determine at the required one year review of each consent to release information if there is a continuing need for the consent and, if there is not a continuing need, will not request the individual to sign a new consent.

Education Services uses two primary consent to release information forms (below). Other consents designed for more specific information may be found in the DBVI Document Repository.

1. Authorization for Disclosure of Protected Health Information
2. Authorization for Release of Personal Information

General DBVI Rules for Use of Consent to Release Information

Expiration: DBVI authorizations for release of information will terminate one year from the original date of signature unless the child (or parent/guardian, or representative) specifies an earlier or condition such as case closure with one exception. The ***Authorization for Release of Personal Information*** does not have an annual renewal requirement.

Signature(s): To be legally binding, DBVI's authorizations for release of information must be signed by the child, parent, legal guardian, or an authorized representative of the child. DBVI staff cannot sign on behalf of any individual applying for or being served by DBVI. Verbal signatures are not allowed.

Powers of Attorney (POA) and Guardianship: DBVI requires documented proof of the authority/designation of individuals who are reported to be a child's POA or Guardian. This documentation will be included in the child's case file.

Witness: A witness name and signature are required when the child is legally competent to make an informed choice to provide but does not have the ability to affix a signature due to disability or medical condition. Any DBVI staff member may serve as a witness in this instance.

The DBVI staff member requesting the authorization to release information shall ensure that the child (or parent/guardian, or representative) receives a copy of said authorization. Authorizations to release information shall not be modified or amended after the signature of the child (or parent, guardian, or representative) has been obtained. Authorizations to release information shall not be signed by the child (or parent, guardian, or representative) unless said authorization is complete; in no circumstance shall a blank authorization to release information be provided to the child by a DBVI employee for signature.

Authorization for the Release of Personal Information (DBVI-70-29)

This release form is used to request or exchange/disclose personal information that does not include protected health information or alcohol/drug/substance abuse diagnosis or treatment information. It is to be used when sharing school records, criminal backgrounds or other specific information that is not protected by more stringent regulations. This release allows for the release of information verbally as well as in writing and can be used for more than one entity.

Examples of types of records released with this authorization include but are not limited to:

- School Records and Transcripts

- Communications with family members or representatives
- Communication with Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI's) or other school personnel

Revocation: Revocation of this release can be made verbally and when that occurs, a case note must be developed in AWARE and attached to the print copy in the case file. If revoked in writing, the documentation must be attached to the release form in the child's case file.

Authorization for Disclosure of Protected Health Information (DBVI-70-23)

This release form shall be used to obtain, exchange, or disclose protected health information (PHI) / individually identifiable Health Information (IIHI). The authorization is intended for two, and only two, entities to share information between them and only them. List one entity in the "custodian of information" field and list DBVI as the other entity in the "to disclose to" field. Check only the items that are required for DBVI to conduct business. If seeking an entire record, identify "All Records" in the "other" section of the form.

Examples of types of records released with this authorization include but are not limited to:

- Medical Provider Records – Ophthalmologists, Hospitals, Physicians, hospitals or healthcare facilities
- School information that includes PHI or IIHI such as IEPs, school psychological reports, eye reports, Immunization Records

Signature(s): DBVI staff shall explain the HIPAA privacy statement before the child (or parent, guardian, or representative) signs the form. DBVI staff shall not sign on behalf of the child and verbal signatures are not allowed. To be a legally binding document, the consenting individual must be the individual receiving services, the custodial parent, legal guardian, or power of attorney.

Revocation: Revocation of this release must be in writing. The revocation documentation must be attached to the release in the individual's case file. Once revoked, the release cannot be used under any circumstance; a new release will be required if PHI/IIHI is requested in the future.

Mandated Reporters

[DBVI Policy No. 11 \(Code of Virginia, Title 63.2.1606\): Reporting of Suspected Adult Abuse, Neglect or Exploitation – DBVI Document Repository, Policy Manuals](#)

[Code of Virginia, Title 63.2.1509: Mandates the immediate reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children](#)

If a DBVI staff member suspects that child applying for or receiving Education Services is about to confide abuse, neglect or exploitation of themselves, a child, or of another adult, the staff member must inform the child that the DBVI staff member is required by law to report complaints to the Department of Social Services but that all information relating to the complaint and any forthcoming investigation will remain confidential and will not be released without a judicial order. The staff member must note in the child's case file the date the report was made and list any documents DBVI provided to the Department of Social Services.

DBVI staff must report, within 72 hours, to Department of Social Services any suspected abuse or neglect of a child, even if the child shares the information with the staff member in confidence. The staff member may be subject to a state fine for failing to report the information within 72 hours of first suspicion. The DBVI staff member must report the information to the Social Services office in the locality where the individual resides, or where the alleged incident is believed to have occurred. Suspected child abuse and neglect may also be reported through the Social Services toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline. The report may be oral or in writing (per [§ 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia](#)).

DBVI must immediately report any suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an individual, even if the individual shares the information with the staff member in confidence, to the appropriate protective services hotline or the Department of Social Services office in the locality where the individual resides or where the abuse, neglect or exploitation is believed to have occurred. The DBVI staff must note in the case file the date the report was made and list any documents DBVI provided to the Department of Social Services. Any Education Coordinator who has reason or cause to suspect that an individual has died as a result of abuse or neglect must immediately report this suspicion to the appropriate medical examiner and law enforcement agency.

The Education Coordinator may be subject to a fine for failing to immediately report the information upon reason to suspect and will be subject to a criminal conviction for making or causing to be made a false report (per [§ 63.2-1606 of the Code of Virginia](#)).

Even with informed written consent, DBVI shall not release any information that the Department of Social Services has indicated shall not be re-released (per [§ 63.2-105 of the Code of Virginia](#), and [34 CFR § 361.38](#)).

Guidance: *The Education Coordinator is determined by law to be a mandated reporter and must therefore adhere to policies outlined above regarding suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation. The law is in place to ensure that service providers who see evidence of suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation do act on these suspicions in order to protect the child. However, the Education Coordinator is strongly encouraged to act with caution where a suspicion exists and to consult with the Director of Services for Children and Youth and/or the Regional Manager before making such a report. For example, a student is not progressing in school and the parent, in the opinion of the Education Coordinator, does not appear to be taking the necessary steps to address*

this issue. This may involve poor parental judgement, but does not suggest specific neglect. Situations where children appear to be significantly malnourished or physically abused must to be reported to Child Protective Services.

Education Services Case File

A confidential case file will be maintained for all individuals receiving services through DBVI. A confidential paper file shall be contained in the child's case file, which will be housed in the appropriate Regional Office. The paper case file shall contain at a minimum:

1. The DBVI General Application for Services;
2. Release of Information forms;
3. Voter Registration forms;
4. A Comprehensive Eye Examination Report;
5. As appropriate, a Functional Vision Assessment, a Low Vision Eye Report, Low Vision, Order Form APH Quota Consent Form, Copy of IEP/504, End of Year Report from School Division, other medical or school documentations.

A second component of the child's case record will be the child's confidential information maintained in the AWARE database, which shall include case notes, emails, the Education Services plan, eligibility determination information, authorizations for services, etc.

Note: Where the child is receiving Education Services and is being served by another DBVI program, there will be situations where the child is receiving DBVI services out of multiple Regional Offices. For example, a child is receiving VR services from the Fairfax Regional Office, but is receiving Education Services from the Richmond Regional office. In this case, paper copies of documents from other service divisions must be maintained in both regional offices and AWARE access will need to be available for all DBVI service providers.

Access to Case Record – Policy and Procedure

In general children receiving Education Services have the right to review or obtain a copy of their case record (including the paper file and AWARE information), either directly (if 18 years or older) or through their parents, guardian, or representative. The case record shall not be accessible to the parents when the parental rights have been terminated or a court has restricted or denied parental or representative access to the individual's confidential records. The case record shall be accessible to the child who is under the age of 18 when they are emancipated (e.g., married, court order, etc.).

The Education Coordinator will make available to the child (or parent, guardian, or representative) all information in the confidential case file (AWARE case notes, reports, emails notes, reports, AWARE screens, emails, etc.) when requested in writing by them (or by their parents, guardians, or representative, as appropriate), either by making the information accessible to the child (or their parents, guardian, or representatives) or by

releasing a copy to the child in a timely manner (per Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in [§ 2.2-3700 of the Code of Virginia](#), and [34 CFR § 361.38](#), and [§ 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia](#)). Information within the case file that originated from another agency or organization shall not be disclosed to the child (or parent, guardian, or representative) if the originating source has stipulated in writing that disclosure is prohibited, even if a consent to release has been signed ([per 34 CFR § 361.38](#), and [§ 63.2-1509 of the Code of Virginia](#), and [§ 63.2-1606 of the Code of Virginia](#)). The Education Coordinator, Regional Manager, or the Director of Services for Children and Youth will communicate to the Deputy Commissioner for Services when a Freedom of Information request (FOIA) has been made by a child (or for the individual by their family or an authorized representative).

Case File Review Procedures

If the child (or parent, guardian, or representative, as appropriate) being served requests to review the original case file rather than a copy, the Education Coordinator counselor shall take all necessary precautions for the preservation and safekeeping of the case file. The case file may be viewed only during normal business hours. One or more people of the child's choosing may accompany them. DBVI staff may require proper identification. The Education Coordinator must obtain consent, if not already on file, to discuss confidential information in the presence of the child's parent(s), guardian, or representative(s) or guests, if the individual is 18 years or older. A DBVI staff member shall remain with the case file to ensure information is not removed, changed, added, defaced, etc. (per Government Data Collections and Dissemination Practices Act, [§ 2.2-3806 of the Code of Virginia](#)).

Challenges to Case File

The child (or parent, guardian, or representative, as appropriate) has the right to challenge, correct, or explain information contained in the Education Services case file. Should the child (or parent, guardian, or representative, as appropriate) wish to challenge their case file, they must submit in writing to the Director of Services for Children and Youth that information which is specifically being challenged as well as their own version of the information (that is, why they feel it's inaccurate). The written submission will include justification of why it should be altered or expunged. The Director of Services for Children and Youth will ensure both the Education Coordinator and the Regional Manager are aware of the challenge.

1. The Director of Services for Children and Youth will review the statement with the Education Coordinator who created the documentation of the challenged information in order to make a determination as to whether to amend or purge the information in the case file that is being challenged. The Deputy Commissioner for Services will be provided with a copy of the individual's statement and will be consulted as need be.
2. If the decision is to purge, the Director of Services for Children and Youth will inform the child (or parent, guardian, or representative), and will remove the

challenged information from the child's case file. The child (or parent, guardian, or representative) must be communicated to in writing that the information in the case file has been expunged.

3. If the decision is to amend, the Director of Services for Children and Youth will replace the old information with the amended information within the case file. A copy of amended information will be sent to the child.
4. If the decision is not to amend/purge, the Director of Services for Children and Youth will notify the child, and then will add the written statement to the challenged information in the child's case file such that they will be accessed together. The child shall be informed of their right to appeal the decision to not amend or purge the information.
5. No documents in the case record such as reports, assessments or evaluations, medical records, etc. received by the Education Coordinator from a source external to DBVI may be amended other than by the author of the document.
6. Information in the case file for which the Education Coordinator was the author may be amended at any point by the Education Coordinator, either by editing the original case note or drafting a new note referencing the information that needs to be changed. If they determine they need to purge information in the case file (e.g., delete a case note), approval from the Director of Services for Children and Youth or the Regional Manager is required.
7. Information in the case file for which the Education Coordinator was not the author but for which they believe should be amended or purged must be communicated to the Director of Services for Children and Youth or the Regional Manager along with a justification. The Director of Services for Children and Youth or the Regional Manager will then make a determination as to whether the information will be amended or purged after consultation with the Education Coordinator and the author of the information.

Any amendment, alteration, or purging of information in a child's case record which potentially will impact their Education Services shall be communicated in writing to the child being served.

Case Record Security

The Education Coordinator, as well as DBVI regional office staff, and DBVI Headquarters staff shall safeguard all confidential information of children being served within the Education Services program in work areas and outside the office from loss, defacement, unauthorized changes, access by unauthorized persons, or unauthorized access to restricted information (per Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act and [§ 2.2-3800 of the Code of Virginia](#)). The Regional Manager shall institute office procedures, including storing information out of plain view at the end of the day, and locking the office when it is unattended to safeguard confidential

information.

Transporting Case Folders

The preferred method of transporting a confidential case record from one regional office to another is by personal carrier. When the case record is carried from one DBVI regional office to another by a staff member, the carrier is to sign out the case folder from the transferring office and a staff member of the new office is to sign it in upon arrival.

When transporting a case folder by personal carrier is not timely or practical, it is to be sent by certified mail. If a case folder is to be sent by certified mail, the transferring counselor is to photocopy all essential case documents and keep them on file until the certified mail receipt card is returned.

Documentation Policy and Procedure

The Education Coordinator is responsible for documenting the services and activities specific to the children they serve. Documentation is primarily through AWARE Data Pages and Case Notes. Case Notes must be entered within five (5) business days of the contact or activity. Documentation must include at a minimum:

1. Documentation of the referral process, including Referral Notes as appropriate;
2. Completion of the AWARE Application Documentation page (“Reasons for seeking services” and “Describe the needs” text boxes);
3. Documentation of the Initial Interview in AWARE using the “Education Services Initial Interview” template;
4. Completion of the AWARE Eligibility Determination Data Page, to include a short description of services it is anticipated the child will be receiving;
5. Documentation in AWARE Case Notes at least annually, to include a summary of the Year-End Report (if received) from the child’s Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI);
6. Documentation in AWARE Case Notes of each direct contact they have with the child and/or parents receiving services, including face-to-face meetings, and significant phone and e-mail communication.
7. Documentation of case closure by completing the “Education Services Closure Narrative”.
8. Documentation in AWARE Case Notes regarding receipt of records, activity specific to any consent to release information forms, substantive meetings with the child, family, school personnel, other DBVI staff or programs, or other individuals, programs or services relevant to the child’s Education Services.
9. Other documentation as required.

Documentation Requirements per the DBVI-DOE Agreement

Per the written agreement between the Virginia Department of Education and DBVI, the local school division is responsible for providing the Education Coordinator with the following documents:

1. Special Education or 504 eligibility determinations;
2. Individual Education Plan (IEP), including:
 - a. IEP cover page (including student's address, grade, and telephone number),
 - b. Present level of performance page, and,
 - c. As appropriate, the transition page for each student who is served jointly by the School Division and DBVI unless otherwise prohibited by law.
3. Transition documents, including those related to Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Documentation of Education Services Substantive Meetings

The Education Coordinator is responsible for documenting substantive meetings with the child, parents, school personnel, or others that are impactful on the child's Education Services. The Education Coordinator shall document these meetings using the "Substantive Meetings" template found in the DBVI Document Repository.

AWARE Case Notes

Case Notes provide DBVI staff with chronological records of what has transpired while DBVI and the child work together to complete their plan(s). Case notes identify services being provided, skills being taught, successful acquisition of new skills by the individual, and difficulties encountered which may require additional work or consideration of alternate approaches. Education Coordinators will enter Case Notes:

1. Documenting each direct contact they have with individuals receiving services, including face-to-face meetings and significant phone and e-mail communication.
2. Within five (5) business days of the contact.

Chapter 9: Education Services Staff and Virginia Teaching Licenses

A. Overview

The Department of Education's (DOE) re-licensing process is detailed in the DOE publication, the [Virginia Recertification Manual](#).

The responsibility for re-license is placed on the license holder and the Employing Educational Agency. As an Employing Educational Agency, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) has the following responsibilities:

1. Each employee holding a renewable Virginia license needs an "advisor."
2. Advisors should have a copy of the Virginia Recertification Manual.
3. There should be a variety of re-license options available within the resources of the agency (e.g., College Credit, Professional Conference, and Publication of an article or book, other professional development opportunities).
4. The Education Coordinator is responsible for maintaining and submitting all required documentation required for re-licensure to the Director of Services for Children and Youth (or their designee) in a timely manner such that the documentation may be reviewed and submitted to the Department of Education prior to the re-licensure deadline.
5. The Director of Services for Children and Youth or their designee will certify and forward the license holder's completed Individualized Re-license Record to the Virginia Department of Education, Office of Professional Development and Teacher Education after January 1 but before June 1 of the tenth year of the license holder's current validity period.

B. Process For Re-licensure

1. The Director of Services for Children and Youth will be the primary source of information concerning re-licensing requirements.
2. The Director of Services for Children and will be the "advisor" for any DBVI staff member who holds a Virginia teaching license.
3. The advisor, the license holder, and the license holder's supervisor will collaborate to develop a re-licensing plan that will enhance the license holder's job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities. All activities related to re-licensing must have prior approval from the advisor. Upon completion of an activity, the employee's supervisor and the advisor must initial the "Individualized Re-license Record" form in the appropriate space.
4. License holders will be responsible for maintaining their own Record form and for maintaining documentation of successfully completed activities.

5. Once the required number of re-license points is accrued and documented and the record form is reviewed by the Director of Services for Children and Youth, both the applicant and the advisor must sign the record form.
6. The Education Services program director will forward the record to the Department of Education.

Appendix

Cooperative Agreements

- A. [DBVI/Department of Education Cooperative Agreement](#)

Education Services Forms

- A. [Education Services Referral Form](#)
- B. [Education Services Low Vision Exam and Aids Process](#)
- C. [Electronic Signature Instruction Letter](#)

**A. Cooperative Agreement Between
The Virginia Department of Education and
The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

I. Parties

This agreement is made and entered into by the Virginia Department of Education (DOE) and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), also known as the “Agency(ies)” for the purpose of the Cooperative Agreement.

II. Authority

The legal basis for this Agreement is found in the *Workforce Investment Act of 1993*, *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA)*, the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*, P.L. 113-128, the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, P.L. 114-95, The Every Student Succeeds Act, Dec. 2015, and the *Perkins V Act of 2018*. Executive Order 55 issued, November 16, 2012, designates Virginia as an *Employment First* State functioning under the premise that all citizens, including individuals with significant disabilities, are capable of full participation in integrated employment and community life. In addition, by Executive Order 46 issued July 27, 2015, stating “It is the policy of this Commonwealth, as set forth in § 51.5-1 of the *Code of Virginia*, to encourage and enable persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth and to engage in remunerative employment.”

III. Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to assist students and youth who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind to fully participate in pre-school, elementary school, middle school, and high school in order to prepare them for transition into post-secondary education, training, competitive integrated employment, and community living. Additionally, this agreement provides for cooperation, coordination, and provision of transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to students and youth with disabilities, including students who are potentially eligible for these services. This agreement encompasses the respective and joint responsibilities of DOE and DBVI. Nothing in this agreement relieves either participating agency of the responsibility to provide or pay for any Transition or Pre-Employment Transition Services that the agency would otherwise be required to provide under applicable law to students who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind who meet the criteria of that agency.

IV. Population

This agreement addresses the educational and vocational rehabilitation needs of children, students, and youth age two to 21 inclusive who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind.

V. Term of Agreement

The term of this agreement is effective upon the signature of the Superintendent of Public Instruction or designee, and the Commissioner of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. The agreement will be reviewed annually by designees of both agencies and will remain in effect until altered by amendment or termination by either Agency with no less than thirty (30) calendar days' notice in writing. This agreement may be amended by mutual consent of the parties, provided such changes are stated in writing 30 days prior to the effective date of such changes.

VI. Interagency Coordination Responsibilities of Each Agency

A. Department of Education (DOE)

DOE will facilitate collaboration between DBVI and local school divisions consistent with the local school division cooperative agreements (See Attachment A).

1. DOE will serve as the SEA for assuring that eligible students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education and ensures that local school divisions meet their obligation to refer blind, vision impaired and deafblind students to DBVI with written parental consent, or, when appropriate, consent of eligible students.
2. DOE will designate a DOE employee to serve as a liaison between DOE and DBVI.
3. Standards of Entitlement/Eligibility for DOE Special Education Transition Services:
 - a. Students with disabilities are found eligible for special education by a local educational agency under the *Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia* in accordance with the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) or Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. Special education and related services are specified on an Individualized Education Program (IEP). For each student beginning at age 14, (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), the IEP includes a statement of the transition service needs that focuses on the student's courses of study (such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program); and for each student beginning

at age 16 (or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP Team), the IEP will also include a statement of the interagency responsibilities or any needed linkages. 8VAC20-81-110(G)(10)

B. Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)

1. DBVI will assist the local school divisions in developing and implementing “child find” efforts to locate and identify all children who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind age birth to 21 inclusive.
2. DBVI will offer a lending service to local school divisions through DBVI’s Library and Resource Center (LRC) from which the local school division may borrow the following items that are appropriate for teaching students who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind:
 - a. Adaptive equipment and instructional materials. The student must meet American Printing House for the Blind (APH) eligibility criteria.
 - b. Braille textbooks, workbooks and LRC produced novels that are loaned through a cooperative arrangement and through the Accessible Instructional Materials – Virginia Center (AIM-VA).
 - c. Braille novels that are available for loan through a cooperative arrangement between the LRC and the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped (NLS) of the Library of Congress.
3. DBVI will provide technical assistance to help the local school divisions determine eligibility, provide information to assist in the development of IEP’s, and develop and maintain appropriate educational services for students who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind.
4. DBVI will provide professional development opportunities for Teachers of the Vision Impaired (TVIs) on a regional basis semi-annually. In addition, DBVI will offer training sessions those new Teachers of the Vision Impaired (TVIs) must attend to access services and materials from the DBVI Low Vision program and to order materials from the LRC.
5. Education Services Program
 - a) DBVI will provide the necessary disability specific supports for education services for students who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind who have been determined eligible for Education Services. These services are primarily provided by

DBVI Education Coordinators who are located in each DBVI Regional Office.

- b) Students are eligible to receive services through the Education Services program when:
 - I. There is documentation by an eye care or other medical specialist within the past 12 months that a student is either vision impaired, blind or meets the Functional Definition of Blindness (FDB), and;
 - II. The student's vision impairment is or could interfere with full participation in their education program.

6. Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR)

- a. DBVI will serve as the lead agency for Vocational Rehabilitation services, including Transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students and youth with disabilities who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind, including students who are potentially eligible for these services, age 14 to 21 inclusive.
- b. Prior to a determination of eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation services, DBVI will collaborate with students, their families, and local education officials to provide information regarding DBVI's referral and application process, eligibility criteria, and the scope of potential Vocational Rehabilitation services. The individualized services provided will assist the eligible student in transitioning from secondary education and in obtaining the skills necessary that will ultimately lead to employment. To the extent appropriate, DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors may attend IEP meetings with the prior consent of the student's parent(s) or a student who has reached the age of majority. 8VAC20-81-110(C)(3)(c) DBVI VR Counselors will provide appropriate outreach, coordination and information regarding VR services; provide career related guidance and counseling; information on resources, and other services necessary for the student.
- c. DBVI will provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) as mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act for students with disabilities who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind age 14 to 21 inclusive, including students who are potentially eligible for these services. Pre-ETS can include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary education and training programs; workplace readiness training to develop social skills and

independent living; and instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

- d. DBVI will provide Vocational Rehabilitation services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) to students and youth with disabilities aged 14 to 21 inclusive who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind and who have been found eligible for services. DBVI's eligibility criteria is:
 - I. A determination has been made by qualified DBVI personnel that the individual has a vision impairment; and;
 - II. A determination has been made by qualified DBVI personnel that the individual's vision impairment results in a substantial impediment to employment; and;
 - III. A determination has been made by qualified DBVI personnel that the individual requires vocational rehabilitation services in order to prepare for, secure, retain, advance in, or regain employment consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, interests, and informed choice; and;
 - IV. There is a presumption that the individual can benefit in terms of an employment outcome. 22VAC45-51-40
- e. DBVI will develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), for those students and youth with disabilities who have been determined eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services, as early as possible during the transition planning process, but no later than when that student leaves the school setting or, if DBVI is operating under an Order of Selection, at the point at which the student is removed from the waitlist.

C. Mutual Responsibilities

- 1. DOE and DBVI will collaborate and promote the development, expansion, and evaluation of Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services, and of Education Services that include but are not limited to those educational services identified in the Cooperative Agreement between DBVI and the Local School Divisions.
- 2. DOE and DBVI will collaborate to ensure that necessary Vocational Rehabilitation services are provided to students and youth with disabilities, including students who are potentially eligible. The

ultimate goal is to assist them in achieving competitive integrated employment in the community, including supported and customized employment.

3. DOE and DBVI will collaborate to identify students and youth with disabilities, including students who are potentially eligible, to ensure that these individuals have access to Education Services and Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
4. DOE and DBVI will collaborate to disseminate information across their respective agencies, local school divisions and regional offices that is relevant to Secondary Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services and resources.
5. DOE and DBVI will seek additional resources to improve or enhance Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services for students and youth with disabilities, including students who may be potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.
6. DOE and DBVI will coordinate among agencies to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR Part 397 with regard to students and youth who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind who are seeking subminimum wage employment.

VII. Professional Development and Training

Each Agency will identify and designate a liaison to the other agency with the responsibility to collaborate regarding education, transition, and pre-employment activities and services for students and youth who are blind, vision impaired and deafblind, including potentially eligible students. Additionally, each agency will provide and/or collaborate in state, regional, and local professional development to respective staff and constituents on the availability, benefits, and services of each. Each agency will identify staff or other professionals in education services, transition planning or program development, regulatory matters, and effective practices who may be qualified to provide training as defined by the agencies. Training on specific topics may be determined necessary for each agency's staff, school division staff, regional office staff, constituents, and as appropriate, students.

VIII. Financial Responsibility of Each Agency

A. Department of Education (DOE)

1. DOE will implement regulatory requirements for educational services provided by Local School Divisions to students with disabilities in

accordance with applicable Federal and State laws, regulations, agency policies and guidelines. DOE will provide guidance, training and technical assistance to Virginia LEAs pertaining to the implementation of the State and Federal laws and regulations under IDEA for special education and related services for students with disabilities. DOE will review the annual application and budget request submitted by DBVI to request IDEA Part B funding to supplement costs for the provision of braille textbooks and instructional materials, and low vision evaluations and devices for eligible students who are blind and visually impaired in Virginia public school special education programs. Contingent upon approval and the availability of IDEA Part B funding, DOE will commit financial resources to DBVI as outlined in DOE's annual IDEA Part B Grant Award Notification and the specified Cooperative Agreement for the awarded funding.

2. DOE may pursue grant or other funding opportunities from federal, state and/or local agencies and other private/public partners, jointly or independently.
- B. Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)
1. DBVI will coordinate, provide, and/or fund Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services as required by students and youth with disabilities, including students who are potentially eligible for these services. The goal is to prepare students for transition from secondary to post-secondary education, training, and/or competitive and integrated employment. Vocational Rehabilitation Transition services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services that are Required, Coordinated and Authorized, will be provided by DBVI in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws, regulations, agency policies and guidelines.
 2. DBVI may pursue grant or other funding opportunities from federal, state and/or local agencies and other private/public partners, jointly or independently.

IX. Resolution of Disputes

Both agencies agree to seek resolution of any dispute arising from the provisions contained within this agreement at the lowest possible level and in compliance with the applicable Federal and State laws, regulations, agency policies, and guidelines.

The Agencies will maintain documentation relative to disputes and subsequent resolutions consistent with requirements for confidentiality.

X. Signatures of Agency Representatives

_____ Raymond E. Hopkins Commissioner Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired	_____ Date
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------

_____ James F. Lane or Designee Superintendent of Public Instruction Virginia Department of Education	_____ Date
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------



Commonwealth of Virginia
Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired
397 Azalea Avenue
Richmond, VA 23227

Education Services Referral Form

Date: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____ **SSN:** _____
Last Name: _____ **First:** _____ **Middle:** _____
Address: _____
City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____ **County:** _____
Phone Number: _____ **Alternative Phone Number:** _____
Address: _____
Email: _____

Sex: ___ Male ___ Female **Primary Language:** _____
English Speaking: ___ Functional ___ Limited
English Reading: ___ Functional ___ Limited
Ethnicity: ___ White ___ Black or African American ___ Hispanic/Latino
___ Asian ___ American Indian/Alaskan Native ___ Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander

Name of School: _____ **School System:** _____
Grade Level: _____ **IEP** ___ Yes ___ No

Cause of Vision Loss: _____
Hearing Impairment: ___ Yes ___ No
Primary Impairment: _____
Secondary Impairments: _____
Reason for Referral: _____

Referral Source Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

***Please complete all items, attach current Eye Exam Report and other appropriate medical documentation, and return to the address above.**

**For additional information please contact: Caren Phipps, Dir. of Education Services
Office 804-371-3194 Email: Caren.Phipps@dbvi.virginia.gov**

DBVI EDUCATION SERVICES LOW VISION EXAM AND AIDS PROCESS

Requests for Low Vision Exams and Aids will now be processed regionally and sent to your Regional Education Coordinator

- Low Vision Exams – find the DBVI contracted LV Exam specialist you will be using for the Exam and *make the Low Vision Exam appointment prior to processing any paperwork.*
- Send the request with the **student's name (1st initial/last name); date and time of the exam; name of the LV Specialist; address of appointment; a comprehensive Eye Report done within the past 12 months; and the Functional Vision Assessment (FVA)** to your regional Education Coordinator.
- **As soon as the LV Exam has been scheduled please send the requested documents so DBVI staff has time to complete the packet and mail it to you in time for the exam.**

After reviewing your request, you will be sent a **LOW VISION EXAM PACKET** that will contain the following:

- Authorization for payment
 - DBVI Low Vision Exam Form
 - DBVI Low Vision Aids Order Form
- Please remember to take the FVA, the Comprehensive Eye Report and the forms in the Low Vision Packet with you to the eye exam.
 - Once the exam is completed, please deliver or mail the Invoice for the exam, the DBVI Low Vision Exam Form and the DBVI Low Vision Aids Order Form (if aids are recommended) to your regional Education Coordinator.
 - Once the Exam, Invoice and completed LV Aid Order form have been received, the DBVI Regional Office will process the invoice and as per policy, order the recommended aids or similar aids. Please note DBVI cannot purchase glasses, bioptics, or electronic magnifiers.
 - DBVI no longer has a central Low Vision Aids inventory so all low vision aids will have to be ordered for students on an individual basis. Please address any questions regarding aids to the Low Vision Examiner or to your Education Coordinator.
 - The aids will be delivered or mailed to the TVI to be delivered to the student, so please let your Education Coordinator know what works for you in regard to mailing or delivering. You can also call the office and pick the aids up. Due to COVID or other community health emergencies, aids can be mailed directly to the student's home.

Thanks and please don't hesitate to reach out to your Education Coordinator with any questions you might have!

Anne Roningen – Staunton Regional Office
Tracy DeLuca – Richmond Regional Office
Kathy Malone – Bristol Regional Office Contact
Valery Kircher – Norfolk Regional Office
Anne Roningen – Fairfax Regional Office
Jill Tomlinson – Roanoke Regional Office

anne.rningen@dbvi.virginia.gov
tracy.deluca@dbvi.virginia.gov
kathy.malone@dbvi.virginia.gov
valery.kircher@dbvi.virginia.gov
anne.roningen@dbvi.virginia.gov
jill.tomlinson@dbvi.virginia.gov

Education Services Electronic Signature Policy

Education Services staff may utilize agency approved electronic signature processes for the purpose of acquiring the individual's signature on documents where Education Services policy requires a signature from the individual. The use of the electronic signature process is intended to ensure Education Services are efficiently implemented and maintained when issues of time, travel, geographic location, or other reasons challenge the timely acquisition of a traditional "wet" signature, either in person or through the mail. Agency approved electronic signature processes may be found in the Education Services section of the DBVI Document Repository.

Electronic signatures are deemed to be a valid signature when:

3. The individual purposely and deliberately signs the document in question. That is, they understand and agree with the information contained in the document as demonstrated by their consent to use their electronic signature as a valid signature.
4. The email address that the individual uses for the electronic signature process is unique to them; that is, the email address is not a shared email address with others and the individual has control over access to the email address via a password, a PIN, or similar controls. The individual is responsible for updating the Education Coordinator should their email address change.
5. **The document is retained as a record that is accessible for future access.**

DBVI and the individual must both agree to utilize an electronic signature procedure for each and every document requiring the individual's signature. That is, individuals who consent to use an electronic signature procedure for a document do not waive their right to decline to sign future documents electronically. The individual will have been deemed to have approved the document to be signed and to have provided consent to use the electronic signature process once they have completed the steps outlined in the electronic signature process. The approved date of the signed document is the date the electronic signature process was completed (date email was returned, time stamp in AWARE, etc.).

1. The Education Coordinator will ensure individuals are provided with the *Education Services Electronic Signature Information Sheet*:
 - At the point of application for Education Services; or;
 - If not provided at application, prior to the first use of the electronic signature process; and;
 - At any point the individual requests the document.

The Education Coordinator will review the information contained in the *Education Services Electronic Signature Information Sheet* with the individual at any point the document is provided or upon request for further review by the individual.

2. In order to participate in the electronic signature process, the individual must provide the Education Coordinator with their unique email address. This should ideally be provided to the Education Coordinator during the application process, but *must* be provided prior to the initial use of the electronic signature process. Individuals who do not have a unique email address may not participate in the electronic signature process.
3. The individual will provide the Education Coordinator with any changes in their email address in a timely manner. In the circumstance where it becomes apparent to the counselor that the email address has changed (e.g., email does not go through; bounces back) and they were not notified of the change, the electronic signature process will not be utilized until the individual has clearly communicated a new unique email address.
 6. Prior to initiating an electronic signature process for the purposes of acquiring an electronic signature, the Education Coordinator, through the informed choice process, must ensure the document to be signed has been thoroughly reviewed with the individual. This review may be done in person, by telephone, or through other virtual means (e.g., Google Hangouts, FaceTime, etc.). The Education Coordinator must document this review and the justification for using the electronic signature process in the Case Notes section in AWARE.
 7. Individuals who approve a document through the electronic signature process are both approving the document and are consenting to use the electronic signature process.
 8. Individuals who do not approve the document, have questions regarding the document, or do not wish to use the electronic signature process, may decline to complete the electronic signature process. Those individuals will be instructed to contact their Education Coordinator.
 9. Once the individual has completed the electronic signature process, the Education Coordinator will ensure that the individual has a copy of the document they've signed electronically, providing a copy of the document to the individual if needed (either electronically or by hard copy). All electronically signed documents, as well as any accompanying documentation (e.g. emails), will be maintained in the individual's confidential file. Documentation that can be stored electronically within AWARE does not need to be maintained in the individual's paper file.
 10. Documents that have been signed electronically by the individual and require a signature of the Education Coordinator may be also signed electronically by the Education Coordinator if agency procedure allows for it. If not, the Education Coordinator must sign the document with a "wet" signature.

11. Upon request by the individual, the Education Coordinator will provide them with all relevant documentation substantiating their approval of the document and their consent to use the electronic signature process.
12. The Education Coordinator will document in AWARE case notes the results of the electronic signature process, for example noting the status of the electronic signature process, any problems or issues, etc.