



**Florida’s Educational
Opportunities for
Students with Sensory
Impairments**

September 2025



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OVERVIEW OF STUDENTS WITH SENSORY IMPAIRMENTS

In Florida, students with special needs who meet specific eligibility criteria are considered to be students with disabilities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that eligible students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services administers IDEA programs, coordinates student services and participates in interagency efforts to enhance services for students with disabilities. Exceptional student education (ESE), or special education, in Florida refers to programs and services designed for students with disabilities. Students with low-incidence disabilities often require specialized support and individualized approaches in the classroom, and are considered sensory impaired. Examples of low-incidence disabilities include blindness, low vision, deafness, hard of hearing, dual sensory impairment, significant developmental delay and complex health issues. Families and schools work together to determine and address the unique learning and educational needs of these students on an individual basis.

When a student is suspected of having a sensory impairment, the following steps should be taken to initiate the individual educational plan (IEP) process. Parental consent is needed before a student may be evaluated. Under the federal IDEA regulations, a full and individual evaluation needs to be completed within 60 days after the parent gives consent. The evaluation results are intended to determine the student's eligibility for special education and related services, and to make decisions about the student's unique needs for specially designed instruction (SDI). A group of qualified professionals and the parent must consider and discuss the evaluation results collected about the student. Together, they determine if the student is a student with a disability, as defined by IDEA, who is eligible for special education and related services. Within 30 calendar days after a student is determined eligible, the IEP team must conduct any assessments waived for the eligibility determination, including the special skills assessment described in [Rule 6A-1.09401\(1\)\(k\), Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#), then the IEP team must meet to write an IEP for the student. The student begins to receive services as soon as possible after the IEP team meeting. All the qualified professionals and related services providers must have access to the IEP and understand their specific responsibilities for carrying out the IEP. This includes the accommodations, modifications and supports that must be provided to the student in accordance with the IEP.

The IEP team also decides where the student will receive services. This includes deciding on the appropriate educational placement (e.g., general education classroom, resource room or specialized program) based on the student's unique needs. Most students with disabilities spend the majority of their school day in general education classrooms. Some students are pulled out of the general education classroom for part of the day to receive services in an ESE resource class, whereas others spend their entire day in a special class, specialized school or residential school.

School districts must provide SDI to eligible students with sensory impairments who are three years of age through high school graduation or age 21, whichever comes first. Children with sensory impairments who are younger than three years of age are eligible for early intervention services under Part C of IDEA.

The Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB) is a state-supported residential public school serving students who are deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) or visually impaired (VI) from preschool through 12th grade. The school functions as part of Florida's Early Learning-20 education system and is funded through FDOE. It is mandated to provide educational programs and support services designed to meet the academic, evaluative and counseling needs of students who are found eligible for DHH and VI in the state who meet the enrollment criteria.

The IEP team meeting can be held within the local school district or, if requested from the district or the parent, at FSDB. Parents may also ask for FSDB to be involved in the evaluation process conducted by the local school district. After eligibility is determined, the IEP team may recommend placement in either the local school district or FSDB. The IEP process is a collaborative effort among families, educators and professionals, and is aimed at providing the best educational experience for students with sensory impairments.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE

The following definitions are used to describe the various types of sensory impairments for the purpose of determining eligibility.

Students With Visual Impairments

Visual impairment, including blindness, means any impairment in vision regardless of significance or severity that, even with correction, adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness, including ocular, brain-based and neurological disorders.

Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Deaf means a hearing level that is so severe that it impacts the processing of linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, and adversely affects the student's educational performance.

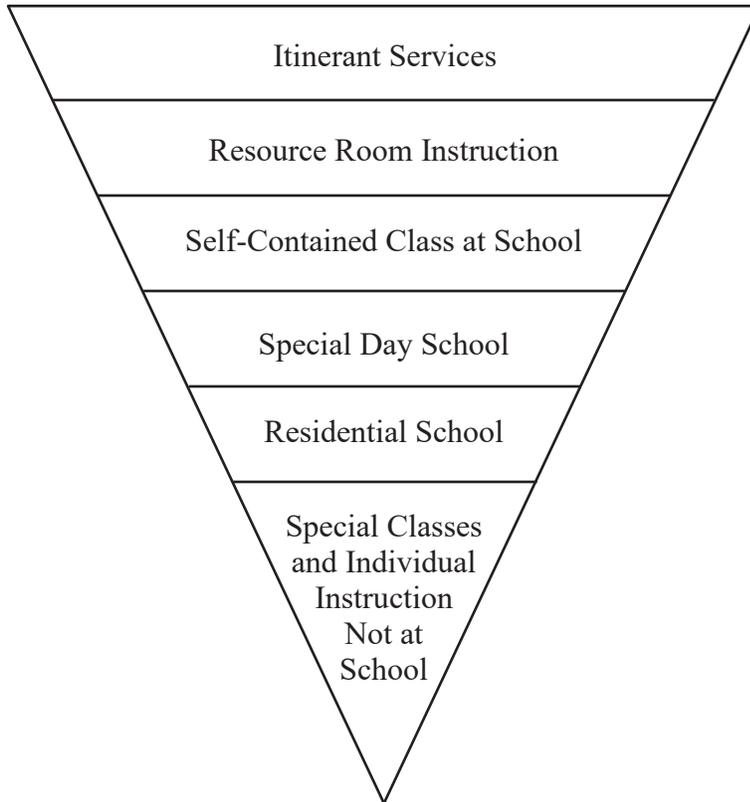
Hard of hearing means a hearing impairment or loss, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a student's educational performance, but that is not included under the definition of deaf.

Students Who Have Dual Sensory Impairments

Dual sensory impairment is defined as the presence of both hearing loss and a visual impairment, or an etiology or medical diagnosis that indicates a potential dual sensory loss, the combination of which adversely affects the student's educational performance. The term includes congenital deafblindness, congenital visual impairment with acquired hearing loss, congenital hearing loss with acquired visual impairment, and acquired hearing loss and visual impairment, including blindness.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

Due to the unique needs of students with sensory impairments, these students require highly specialized instruction. There are many types of programs that provide instruction in one or more of the following ways:



Itinerant Services

Itinerant services are provided in two ways: Consultation and direct instruction.

Consultation may include one or more of the following services: Participating in IEP team meetings; requesting annual medical evaluations; checking equipment to make sure it is working properly; orienting, advising and coaching parents, classroom teachers and other professional staff; advocating for the student's needs; observing the student in educational environments; and providing comprehensive assessments of skills known to be impacted by the sensory impairment.

Direct instruction may include one or more of the following services: Compensatory academic skills; social interaction skills; use and care of assistive technology; independent living skills; career education; and specific sensory deficit instruction, such as auditory training and visual efficiency skills. The IEP team determines the need and amount of services provided (e.g., daily, weekly or monthly) depending on the student's needs.

Resource Room Instruction

A resource room is a designated classroom where ESE students receive focused small group instruction. Resource rooms provide instruction such as math, reading and writing. Students in a resource room often split their time between general education classes and the resource room, depending on their specific needs as outlined in their IEP.

Self-Contained Class at School

A self-contained classroom is a specialized education setting designed to meet the needs of students with specific learning requirements or disabilities who require tailored instruction in a smaller, more supportive environment.

Special Day Classroom

A special day classroom is an intensive educational program where students with similar educational needs receive individualized instruction and a tailored curriculum, and where no general education interaction occurs. This is the most restrictive placement.

Residential School

A residential school is the most restrictive option in which students with disabilities live at a residential facility where they access their education and instruction.

Special Classes and Individual Instruction Not at School

Special classes and individual instruction not at school refers to different types of educational plans and services for students with disabilities (e.g. hospital, home or other facility that is not at school).

Related Services

Some of the related services that may be available to students who are sensory impaired include transportation, speech or language therapy, parent counseling, guidance, orientation and mobility (O&M), and specialized instructional materials and equipment. Additionally, students may receive services from interpreters and braillists. These services are identified at the IEP team meeting.

Specially Designed Instruction (SDI)

[Rule 6A-6.03411, F.A.C.](#), defines SDI as adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible exceptional student, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability or giftedness, and to ensure access of the student to the general curriculum, so that he or she can meet the educational standards that apply to all students within the jurisdiction of the school district.

SDI for Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH)

In addition to regular classes available to all students, students who are DHH may receive SDI to meet their needs. One of the reasons SDI is integral is that students who are DHH need instruction in [Florida's Expanded Skills](#) and/or [Speech and Auditory Training Standards](#). These standards focus on the unique skills students need to access their environment, receive meaningful educational benefit from the educational experience, and prepare for postsecondary education and/or employment. This instruction emphasizes the use of amplification and learning language, communication skills and speech based on the student's need. Teaching aids include

auditory assistive listening devices, captioned media, telecommunication devices for the deaf and videophones. Support services may include oral and sign language interpreters, note takers, and real-time captioning.

SDI for Visually Impaired (VI)

In addition to regular classes being available to all students, students who are VI may receive SDI to meet their needs. This instruction emphasizes compensatory skills such as communication and listening modalities, visual efficiency skills, O&M, the use of low vision devices, independent living skills, recreation and leisure activities, and career and technical education skills. Teaching aids include accessible textbooks in braille, large print and digital format; braille writers and electronic note takers; tactile graphics and manipulatives; specialized curriculums for math, reading and assistive technology; and emergent literacy books in braille and large print.

SDI for Dual Sensory Impaired

Instruction for students with dual sensory impairments can be delivered in settings ranging from regular classrooms to residential schools and is based on early establishment of communication. Support services may include communication interpreters, interveners, classroom aides, O&M services, vision instruction, vocational training and job coaches. Educational aids are determined by the needs of each student and may be similar to those provided for students who are DHH or VI.

RESOURCES

BUREAU OF EXCEPTIONAL EDUCATION AND STUDENT SERVICES (BEES), FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (FDOE)

325 West Gaines Street, Suite 614
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
Phone: 850-245-0475

Website: [Exceptional Student Education](#)

BEES provides leadership for the development, communication and effective implementation of state policies and procedures related to exceptional student education (ESE) for students with disabilities. In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), BEES implements a comprehensive system of general supervision, including targeted technical assistance and professional development, integrated monitoring activities, fiscal management, data collection, analysis and interpretation, parent involvement, and effective dispute resolution.

DIVISION OF BLIND SERVICES (DBS)

325 West Gaines Street, Room 1114
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
Phone: 850-245-0300
Toll Free: 800-342-1828

Website: [Division of Blind Services](#)

DBS provides services to individuals of all ages from infant to senior citizen, whose primary disability is a visual impairment, to help them maximize their physical, vocational, social and economic well-being. Services include vocational rehabilitation, counseling, guidance, parent training, postsecondary planning services, independent living, employer services, and assistance in locating school and other community-based programs.

Who Does DBS Serve?

DBS serves people of all ages with:

- Blindness or low vision;
- A physical disability;
- A perceptual or reading disability that prevents them from using regular print materials; and
- A traumatic brain injury (known as TBI), stroke, Parkinson's disease, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (known as ALS), multiple sclerosis (known as MS), spinal cord injury, dyslexia and other forms of a reading disability.

THE FLORIDA BUREAU OF BRAILLE AND TALKING BOOK LIBRARY (BBTBL) SERVICES

421 Platt Street
Daytona Beach, Florida 32114
Toll Free: 800-226-6075
Email: OPAC_librarian@db.s.fldoe.org
Website: [Braille and Talking Book Library](#)

The BBTBL is a no-cost service that provides information and reading materials in braille and recorded audio format to Florida residents who are unable to use standard print reading materials as the result of visual, physical or reading disabilities. It is the largest library of its kind in the United States (U.S.), with a collection of more than 2.4 million items in braille and audio formats. The BBTBL serves Florida residents with annual loans exceeding 1.99 million items. Equipment needed for the service is loaned to customers by the BBTBL, including digital players and accessories. Books can be played on personal devices such as iPhones[®], iPods[®], Android[™] devices, Victor Streams[™] and BrailleNotes[™].

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR), FDOE

325 West Gaines Street, Room 1114
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400
Phone: 850-245-3399
Toll Free: 800-451-4327
Website: [Vocational Rehabilitation, FDOE](#)

VR is a federal-state program that assists people who have physical or mental disabilities to prepare for, gain or retain employment. This includes those people with sensory disabilities (hearing loss and vision loss). VR offers access to services to attain desired job skills.

When does VR get involved with students with disabilities attending school?

VR services play a crucial role in supporting students with disabilities during their educational journey. Below are some key points for when VR gets involved with students attending school:

- **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS):** VR serves students with disabilities through Pre-ETS while they are still in school. Any student from 14 to 21 years of age can receive these services, regardless of whether they have applied for or been found eligible for VR services.
- **Referral and Application:** Students receiving special education services in secondary school can receive VR services while still in school, beginning at age 14 but not later than age 16. A member of the individual educational plan (IEP) team or any school staff member can refer the student for VR services. Additionally, students can also self-refer.
- **Postsecondary Planning:** VR services can assist students in their progression from high school to work and independent living. While qualifying for VR services is different than qualifying for special education, having a postsecondary plan is essential. The purpose of this plan is to create a smooth progression to whatever the student plans to do after high school.

What type of assistance may be available from VR?

VR provides the following services to help students find, get or keep employment:

- Diagnostics and evaluation of rehabilitation;
- Evaluation of rehabilitation technology needs;
- Career counseling and guidance;
- Family member services;
- Interpreter services;
- Work experience while in high school;
- Training and education after high school;
- Job-related services;
- Maintenance and occupational expenses;
- Personal assistance services;
- Physical or mental restoration;
- Referral services;
- Supported employment services;
- Self-employment and supported self-employment assistive technology and devices;
- Job training to learn new work skills; and
- Transportation.

Are all students with disabilities eligible for VR services?

VR services are made available to all students with disabilities, including services for students who may not have applied for or been determined eligible for VR services. Contact your local VR office to apply. To locate the VR office nearest to you, go to the [Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Service Provider Choice Directory](#). There is a VR counselor assigned to every high school in Florida.

FLORIDA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND (FSDB)

207 North San Marco Avenue

St. Augustine, Florida 32084

Phone (Voice): 904-827-2200

Videophone (VP): 904-245-1022

Website: [Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind](#)

FSDB is a fully accredited, state public school for eligible students prekindergarten (PreK) through grade 12 who are deaf/hard of hearing (DHH), blind or low vision, and deaf-blind. Tuition at FSDB is offered at no cost to eligible students. FSDB also offers a continuing education program.

FSDB offers comprehensive academic educational, career educational and extracurricular programs for eligible students. The school also has an early learning center that includes a toddler and PreK program. The K-12 program complies with all state curriculum and assessment requirements, and students work toward achieving state and national standards. Additional continuing education services include programs to prepare students for independent living and pursuing employment or postsecondary options.

The campus is approximately 80 acres, which includes 45 major buildings. Facilities include a swimming pool, two auditoriums, student activity centers and a state-of-the-art music center. The outdoor athletic complex consists of a football field, baseball diamond, track, fitness course and tennis courts. Students at FSDB may participate in varsity and junior varsity teams in a variety of sports (e.g., football, basketball, swimming, wrestling, volleyball, goalball, cross country, track and field, tennis, soccer, and cheerleading).

Interested parents may contact the school's Parent Services Office for information regarding admission (voice at 904-827-2212 and VP at 904-201-4527).

DEAF SERVICE CENTERS

There are a number of independently operated deaf service centers across Florida. These centers provide a variety of services that include interpreting services, informational resources and assisting individuals with making appointments with agencies and individuals who do not have telecommunication devices for the deaf. Centers will often provide advocacy services, employment assistance, sign language classes, reading programs and community education programs.

These centers are known as both deaf service centers and independent living centers. To find one in your area, simply search on the Internet.

DESCRIBED AND CAPTIONED MEDIA PROJECT (DCMP)

General Interest Videos National Association of the Deaf

1477 East Main Street

Spartanburg, South Carolina 29307

Phone: 864-585-1778

Toll Free: 800-237-6213

Website: [Described and Captioned Media Project](#)

The DCMP houses the national library of accessible educational materials. These materials are available to teachers, parents and guardians of students in kindergarten through grade 12 who are DHH, visually impaired (VI) or deaf-blind. A person can register to borrow from the library and materials are loaned at no charge.

EARLY HEARING DETECTION AND INTERVENTION (EHDI) PROGRAM

Florida Newborn Screening Program

Department of Health Children's Medical Services

Mailing Address:

4502 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A-06

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1707

Overnight Address:

4025 Esplanade Way, Room 235-N

Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1707

Phone: 850-245-4049 or 850-841-8675

Website: [National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management: EHDI Information by State](#)

The Florida Newborn Hearing Screening Program, also known as the EHDI Program, in conjunction with the Newborn Screening Program and Early Steps Program, supports a comprehensive statewide hearing screening and follow-up referral system.

Hearing loss is one of the most common birth defects in the U.S., with approximately two newborns per 1,000 born with hearing loss each year. The goal of early detection and intervention is to improve communication, education and overall social development for children who are DHH.

It is important to determine as soon as possible whether a baby has hearing loss so parents and health care providers can provide the best possible resources for language and communication development. Florida's EHDI Program is committed to providing parents with relevant and helpful information before and after diagnosis.

The objective of the EHDI Program is to encourage early diagnosis of hearing loss and provide the opportunity for early intervention. Florida follows the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, 2019 guidelines for:

- Hearing screening by one month of age;
- Hearing loss diagnosed by three months of age; and
- Early intervention by six months of age.

FLORIDA DIAGNOSTIC AND LEARNING RESOURCES SYSTEMS (FDLRS)

Website: [FDLRS](#)

FDLRS is an IDEA-funded state project of BEESS. Local, regional and statewide contact information for FDLRS may be found on the [FDLRS webpage](#).

FDLRS Associate Centers provide an array of instructional and technical support services to school district ESE programs statewide. The four central functions of each FDLRS Associate Center are Child Find, Parent and Family Services, Human Resource Development and Technology. FDLRS includes Associate Centers that serve all Florida school districts. These centers collaborate with districts, agency and support personnel, administrators, and students with disabilities. Funding also supports the implementation of the BEESS Portal to Professional Learning Alternatives (PLA). PLA online courses are designed to provide Florida teachers with widely available, easily accessible opportunities to increase their skills in the area of ESE.

FDLRS Four Functions

1. **Child Find:** FDLRS Child Find, in coordination with the school districts, locates children who are potentially eligible for services under IDEA and connects them with needed services. FDLRS Child Find specialists help to promote general public awareness of programs and services available for young children who have or are at risk of developing disabilities. Service coordination for diagnostic screening, placement, training and support are also provided.
2. **Parent and Family Services:** FDLRS Parent and Family Services provide information, training and support to districts and families in order to promote effective parent participation in the education of students with disabilities. FDLRS Parent and Family

Services specialists assist in the development of family-friendly programs, training and support for services for students with disabilities, and the support of partnerships between schools and parents to support student achievement.

3. **Human Resource Development:** FDLRS Human Resource Development personnel have knowledge of research-based instructional practices and resources in the areas of classroom behavior management, instructional strategies (reading, math and science), differentiated instruction, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), explicit instruction, postsecondary planning, collaborative teaching; and other FDOE initiatives. FDLRS Human Resource Development specialists collaborate with school district personnel, community agencies, educational service providers and other stakeholders to plan, deliver, follow-up and evaluate data-based professional learning opportunities.
4. **Technology:** FDLRS Technology personnel provide assistance and support in the appropriate use of a variety of technologies for students, teachers, professional staff and parents. Support services are available in the areas of assistive technology, instructional technology, UDL, accessible instructional materials (AIM) and virtual instruction. FDLRS Technology specialists at all of the local FDLRS Associate Centers also collaborate with the multi-tiered system of supports, technology and learning regional technology specialists, and district-based assistive technology specialists.

FLORIDA INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS CENTER FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED (FIMC-VI)

4716 West Montgomery Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33616
Phone: 813-837-7826
Fax: 813-559-8314
Website: [FIMC-VI](#)

Established in 1972 by the Florida Legislature, FIMC-VI is an IDEA-funded state project maintained by BEESS. FIMC-VI is located in the Hillsborough County Public School District.

FIMC-VI is a statewide resource center that assists in the provision of AIM to students with visual impairments enrolled in Florida's local school districts and private schools, as well as homeschool students. Provided in a timely manner, these academic materials allow eligible students to participate in the curricula offered throughout their district. FIMC-VI supports the provision of textbooks and related materials in braille, large print and digital formats. Through Florida's participation in the Federal Quota Program, FIMC-VI also provides instructional materials and products that allow students to access Florida's State Standards and Student Performance Standards - Special Skills (Expanded Core Curriculum). These materials address compensatory skills for access and literacy, sensory efficiency, orientation and mobility (O&M), assistive technology, career education and postsecondary planning, self-determination, social skills, and recreation and leisure.

For the most current information regarding available supports and services, visit and explore the FIMC-VI website above, specifically:

- Information regarding statewide student and family-centered events, such as the Florida Regional Braille Challenge, Florida Cane Quest, Florida American Printing House Abacus Math Bee and FIMC-VI at the Family Café;
- An extensive array of in-person and virtual professional learning opportunities for teachers, paraprofessionals, state and private agency staff, and families, which are offered at no cost to attendees and include webinars, self-paced online modules and in-person workshops, many of which are recorded and posted on the website;
- Eligibility requirements for accessing FIMC-VI's services; and
- Resources regarding the eligibility and education of students with visual impairments.

RESOURCE MATERIALS TECHNOLOGY CENTER FOR THE DEAF/HARD OF HEARING (RMTC-DHH)

FSDB

207 North San Marco Avenue

St. Augustine, Florida 32084

Phone (Voice)/VP: 904-827-2663

Toll Free: 800-356-6731

Fax: 904-827-2338

Email: info@rmtcdhh.org

Website: RMTC-DHH

Established in 1978 by the Florida Legislature ([section \[s.\] 1003.55, Florida Statutes \[F.S.\]](#)), RMTC-DHH is an IDEA-funded state project maintained by BEESS that operates through an agreement with FSDB.

RMTC-DHH is committed to effectively researching, recommending and supporting the implementation of evidence-based practices through the building of partnerships in Florida school districts and beyond. The project works collaboratively with all Florida stakeholders to positively influence the postsecondary outcomes of students who are DHH in preparation for college, career and life.

RMTC-DHH promotes the utilization of AIM for students who are DHH, through the curation, organization and distribution of media, including captioned and signed videos, professional resources, and other reference materials.

RMTC-DHH staff members provide professional learning opportunities and assistance to all Florida school districts, families and IDEA-funded state projects, by offering information and referral services. Partnerships with other state and federal agencies are key to increasing awareness and building capacity in order to meet the unique needs of students who are DHH, their families and the professionals working with them. Media and materials are available for loan at no cost to educators, families, interpreters and other professionals serving students in Florida who are DHH through the [RMTC-DHH Media and Materials Loan Library](#).

RMTC-DHH delivers in-person and virtual technical assistance and training on a number of statewide initiatives and professional learning opportunities. Topics related to the education of students who are DHH include, but are not limited to, Florida's Communication Plan, Working With the Experts: Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and online modules found in the BEESS Portal to PLA, such as Language Reading Connections: Deaf/Hard of Hearing, How to Screen for Usher Syndrome, and DeafEd Express, in addition to a variety of professional learning communities.

CLARKE SCHOOL FLORIDA PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Auditory-Oral Education Project/Bridge to Speech Project

9803 Old Saint Augustine Road, Suite 7

Jacksonville, Florida 32257

Phone (Voice)/Teletypewriter: 904-880-9007

Fax: 904-880-9001

Email: florida@clarkschools.org

Website: [Clarke Florida: Hearing and Speech Education](#)

The Clarke School Auditory Oral Education Program provides opportunities for families of students who are DHH to enroll their children in an early education program where they can learn to listen and talk from certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialists. The Clarke School serves children in multiple counties, from birth to seven years of age, including rural and underserved areas. The project provides funding for services provided by auditory oral education programs, as defined in [s. 1002.391, F.S.](#), to attending Florida students who meet the eligibility criteria for programs for students who are DHH ([Rule 6A-6.03013, Florida Administrative Code \[F.A.C.\]](#)) or programs for students who have dual sensory impairments ([Rule 6A-6.03022, F.A.C.](#)) and have a current IEP or individualized family support plan. This project also seeks to provide technical assistance and trainings related to auditory oral education for families and public school districts with students who are DHH or who have dual sensory impairments.

The Clarke School Bridge to Speech Project provides opportunities for families of students who are DHH, from three to seven years of age, to choose a private auditory oral program with faculty members who hold credentials as certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialists. Both center and virtual-based schooling and services are available. The Bridge to Speech funding includes audiology services, evaluations, listening and spoken language therapy, family education, consultation, and technical assistance for students throughout Florida. Highly qualified educational specialists will address goals on Florida's State Board of Education Strategic Plan to create the foundation for lifelong success for students with hearing loss.

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI DEBBIE SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Auditory-Oral Education Project/Bridge to Speech Project

Debbie Institute

1601 Northwest 12th Avenue

Miami, Florida 33156

Phone: 305-243-6961

Website: [Debbie Institute Miller School of Medicine](#)

The Debbie School Auditory-Oral Education Program provides opportunities for families of students who are DHH to enroll their children in an early education program where they can learn to listen and talk from certified Listening and Spoken Language Specialists. The Debbie School serves students in multiple counties, from birth to seven years of age, including rural and underserved areas. The project provides funding for services provided by auditory oral education programs, as defined in [s. 1002.391, F.S.](#), to attending Florida students who meet the eligibility criteria for programs for students who are DHH ([Rule 6A-6.03013, F.A.C.](#)) or programs for students who have dual sensory impairments ([Rule 6A-6.03022, F.A.C.](#)) and have a current IEP or individualized family support plan. This project also seeks to provide technical assistance and trainings related to auditory oral education for families and public school districts with students who are DHH or who have dual sensory impairments.

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CRITICAL INITIATIVES IN VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (CIVI) FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY (FSU) AND THE FLORIDA LOW VISION INITIATIVE (FLVI)

1114 West Call Street

Tallahassee, Florida 32306-4459

CIVI-FSU Phone: 850-644-8409

Project Director: Tim Puch, tcp20u@fsu.edu

FLVI Phone: 850-739-3584

FLVI Coordinator: Kimberly Roberts, kmroberts@fsu.edu

Website: [FSU Blindness and Low Vision Program](#)

The CIVI-FSU project provides teacher-preparation courses for teachers of students with visual impairments (TVIs) and O&M specialists through FSU, the sole provider in the state. The project is comprised of the Personnel Preparation Initiative (PPI) and FLVI. The PPI addresses the statewide critical shortage of TVIs and O&M specialists by making university training in these content areas available to residents in the state. Through this initiative, a master's degree track provides support for currently certified general and special education teachers who are interested in developing or refining the competencies necessary to effectively teach students with visual impairments. This master's program is provided through online coursework combined with hands-on, accessible practice opportunities. Through this initiative, technical assistance related to appropriate services for students with visual impairments is provided and strategies for addressing the personnel shortages are explored.

FLVI provides no-cost, clinical low vision evaluations for eligible students; assistance to IEP teams to support students' effective use of residual vision and low vision devices to access educational and environmental information; and training in the use of low vision tools and strategies for participating students, TVIs and parents.

Florida students with an IEP who receive direct services from a TVI may be eligible to participate. Qualifying students have identified low vision needs, such as difficulty accessing standard-sized printed materials and/or difficulty accessing distance tasks from their classroom seat or when in the community.

Participating students receive a no-cost, comprehensive low vision evaluation and authorized prescribed portable low vision devices. Devices provided by FLVI belong to the student and should be used at school, home and in the community.

Students are provided with the resources to build a "toolbox" of low vision aids that meet their specific access needs. When visual demands change, routine low vision evaluations will allow this optical toolbox to adapt and grow. Students learn how to use optical aids to increase their access to visual information and how to apply self-determination to access materials inside and outside of the classroom setting.

The IEP team, including the student, the TVI and the parents, work together to support instruction to encourage the student to develop device efficiency and proficiency, a plan for routine use of the prescribed optical devices in and out of the classroom setting, and a plan to reduce the use of enlarged-text materials.

Referrals are initiated by the TVI and can be submitted to FLVI any time during the school year. The Request for Services form is in the open enrollment tab on the [FLVI LiveBinders](#) resource platform.

EDUCATIONAL INTERPRETER PROJECT (EIP)

University of South Florida
4202 East Fowler Avenue, PCD 1017
Tampa, Florida 33620
Phone (Voice) and Video Relay: 727-210-7150
Email: eip-csd@usf.edu
Website: [Educational Interpreter Project](#)

EIP is an IDEA-funded state project maintained by BEESS. Its primary goal is to expand the pool of qualified service providers, such as sign language interpreters, oral transliterators, and others who work with students who are DHH in Florida's schools. This includes individuals who are screened, evaluated, and either nationally certified or have achieved high scores on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA), as well as those preparing to join the state's K-20 specialized service providers workforce.

EIP provides a variety of professional learning opportunities to interpreters and service providers working with students who are DHH, including the following:

- Workshops, such as professional learning days or Saturdays, at no cost for interpreters and districts.
- The annual Summer Institute, which includes a variety of presenters who teach and discuss different topics and skills.
- No-cost online webinars for K-12 educational interpreters and interpreters placed in schools by agencies through a partnership with CEUs [Continuing Education Units] on the Go! EIP assists in proctoring the national interpreter performance evaluations. Financial assistance is provided for educational interpreters (K-12) with the fees for these performance assessments. EIP also financially assists interpreters who are working toward college degrees.
- Mentorships for K-12 educational interpreters and agency interpreters placed in schools to work on specific interpreting skills or to improve their EIPA scores. Interpreters are placed with mentors who are certified or hold 4.0 or higher scores on the EIPA. Mentorships are at no cost to the interpreters.
- EIP provides “in-district” professional learning days or technical assistance to school district personnel regarding educational interpreters working with students who are DHH.

LEARNING THROUGH LISTENING PROJECT/LEARNING ALLY

State Contract Manager: Martaluz Pozo, mpozo@learningally.org

Website: [Learning Ally | Florida Education - Print Disabilities - Audiobooks](#)

Beginning as Recording for the Blind from the 1940s to 1995, then Recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, and now Learning Ally, this project has provided accessible content through assistive technology since 1948.

Today, Learning Ally is the nation’s largest library of human-read accessible educational materials for students who are blind, VI, orthopedically disabled or dyslexic, or who have reading deficits. Audiobooks are available in all K-12 curriculum areas from the top U.S. school publishers to help struggling readers access grade-level content to achieve their personal best. State funding helps support access for students in Florida’s public and public charter school programs, and individual memberships are available for at-home use.

Learning Ally supports Florida educators in developing their students’ literacy skills by enabling the learning process, giving access to the learner and most importantly being a partner with the educator to support student achievement.

FLORIDA AND VIRGIN ISLANDS (FAVI) DEAF-BLIND COLLABORATIVE

1600 SW Archer Road

Gainesville, Florida 323610

Phone: 352-273-7529

Fax: 352-273-8539

Email: info@deafblind.ufl.edu

Website: [FAVI Deaf-Blind Collaborative](#)

FAVI is funded through the U.S. Department of Education for the purpose of providing technical assistance to families and educational teams who support students with deaf-blindness. FAVI provides individualized consultation and training to families, professionals, schools and districts serving children and young adults (birth through 21 years of age) who are affected by both hearing loss and vision loss (diagnosed or suspected), with or without other disabilities. If you know a child or young adult who is unable to use his or her vision and hearing effectively for communication and learning, please contact the FAVI team for assistance.

A person-centered teaming approach is used, and the strengths of staff and students are used in designing strategies. Specific services include the following:

- Technical assistance and support (on-site visits with follow-up);
- Lending library (books, videos and manuals);
- Training for staff and families (locally or at statewide conferences);
- Mentor teacher program; and
- Identification of eligible students.

FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS

[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B](#)

[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C](#)

[Rule 6A-1.09401\(1\)\(k\), Florida Administrative Code \(F.A.C.\)](#), Student Performance Standards - Florida's State Academic Standards – Special Skills

[Rule 6A-1.09414, F.A.C.](#), Course Requirements - Grades PK-12 Exceptional Student Education

[Rule 6A-6.03013, F.A.C.](#), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility and Assessments for Student Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

[Rule 6A-6.03014, F.A.C.](#), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility and Assessments for Students with Visual Impairments

[Rule 6A-6.03022, F.A.C.](#), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility and Assessments for Students with Dual Sensory Impairments

[Rule 6A-6.03028, F.A.C.](#), Provision of Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and Development of Individual Educational Plans for Students with Disabilities

[Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C.](#), General Education Intervention Procedures, Evaluation, Determination of Eligibility, Reevaluation and the Provision of Exceptional Student Education Services

[Rule 6A-6.03411, F.A.C.](#), Definitions, ESE Policies and Procedures, and ESE Administrators

[Section 1003.55, Florida Statutes](#), Instructional Programs for Blind or Visually Impaired Students and Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing Students.