

Education

Students who are Blind and Visually Impaired

What will appropriate educational programming look like for my child?

All children can learn, but not all children learn in the same way, at the same time, or at the same rate. Learning is an individual process. There are many different ways of meeting a student's exceptional learning needs. What is right for one student may not be the best for another.

A doctor's diagnosis of a specific condition or disability does not provide enough information for planning for a child's individual needs. No two children are exactly alike. Children identified with the same diagnosis often have different abilities and learning needs, and require different supports. A support team, including parent(s), classroom teacher, and others, will collaborate to identify your child's unique learning needs and will then determine, implement and evaluate appropriate educational supports. A Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning Consultant for Blind and Visually Impaired (BVI) may be a member of your child's support team.

What does a Consultant for the Blind and Visually Impaired do?

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning Consultants for BVI provide support services across the province to students who are blind or visually impaired. A Consultant for BVI helps the school team by providing specialized expertise which may not be available within the school division.

A Consultant for BVI may:

- deliver programming and provide teaching adaptations in the classroom, gymnasium, playground and other school environments
- participate in the IEP process
- communicate with parents about their child's needs and progress
- provide workshops to school division personnel and parents
- provide training for educational support staff working with the student who is visually impaired and their equipment
- co-ordinate additional supports both within the education system and the wider community (ex: pre- and post-transition services)

Consultants for BVI also work directly with students, providing instruction in:

- Braille literacy
- orientation and mobility
- assistive technology devices and software
- use of specialized equipment
- optimal use of residual vision
- keyboarding and handwriting
- skills of daily living
- concept development
- career education
- sensory development

How does a Consultant for BVI become involved with my child?

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning Consultants for BVI are available to work with those students who have **one or more of the following**:

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

A referral form completed by the school and signed by the parents, as well as a recent eye report from an ophthalmologist or optometrist, are required before a consultant can conduct a **functional vision assessment** and begin working with your child and the school support team. The referral form and eye report are sent to Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning for review and approval.

The required referral forms are available on the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning website at:

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/viconsult/application.html>



During a **functional vision assessment**, a Consultant for BVI observes a student performing activities using their near and far vision. The consultant may use special tools and may ask the student to do specific activities. A functional vision assessment helps the consultant for BVI decide which supports will be helpful for the student and assists the school team in program planning.

How will I know if my child needs special equipment and materials?

A Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning Consultant for BVI can assess a student's technology needs and consult on the supply, purchase, set-up and installation of recommended equipment and software. Consultants can provide direct teaching in the use of technology for students using Braille who need instruction in the use of specialized computer hardware/software or access devices. Consultants can also assist with training in low vision magnification devices, software and tablet applications.

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning offers Alternate Format Services (AFS). AFS supports the education of students who are print disabled by providing books in alternate formats, such as audio files, Braille, large print and electronic text. Alternate format materials are available for students who are blind, visually impaired, as well as students with a physical or learning disability. The Consultant for BVI will work with Alternate Format Services to arrange for the development and provision of alternate format books.

For more information

Information about services available from Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning for students who are blind or visually impaired is available on the Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning website at

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/index.html>

or

**Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning
Student Services Unit**

Winnipeg: 204-945-7912

Manitoba toll free: 1-800-282-8069 ext. 7912

