

SPECIAL EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY IN THE IDEA CATEGORY OF "DEAFBLINDNESS"

WHAT IS SPECIAL EDUCATION ELIGIBILITY?

If a parent or a teacher thinks a student (PreK - 12th grade) might have a disability and benefit from special education services, they need to first make a referral. The referral is the start of the special education process. Once a school receives a referral, the school team, including the student's parents/guardians, must meet to hold an initial eligibility meeting. This meeting allows team members to discuss what data are needed to determine if the student has one or more of the disabilities listed in IDEA (2004). General definitions of each disability category are listed in IDEA. However, states are allowed to set their own definition for each disability category. Eligibility criteria for the category of deafblindness varies from state to state.

The following tables were developed for families, policy makers, educators, researchers, advocates, and teacher preparation programs. The purpose is to help individuals understand the special education eligibility criteria for students with deafblindness in each state/territory. The eligibility criteria reported were collected in 2021 and are for informational purposes only. Be sure to check your state/territories' specific eligibility criteria to ensure you are looking at the most up-to-date information.

Information presented in the tables is based on Schles and colleagues' (2022) research. All data were compiled as part of the National Plan to Train Personnel 2 initiative. Access to the full dataset is available publicly ([Schles et al., 2022](#)).

Understanding the Key Used in the Table:

'Required' - A checkmark indicates that state required the specific component as part of the eligibility process.

'Conditional' - An asterisk indicates that only in certain conditions did the state require this component as part of the eligibility process.

'Not Required' - A dash indicates that specific component was not required and/or mentioned in the state's eligibility criteria. In some cases, the component was recommended as best practice even though it was not required.

Additional definitions for terms used in this document can found at the end of this file.

This resource is available in both English and Spanish. Este recurso está disponible en español e ingles.

This document is available in a screen-reader friendly Word document at this [link](#).

DEAFBLINDNESS ELIGIBILITY

The following was developed for use by families, policy makers, educators, researchers, advocates, and teacher preparation programs to promote understanding of special education eligibility criteria for students with DB based on Schles and colleagues' (2022) research. The eligibility criteria reported here was collected in 2021 and is for informational purposes only. Be sure to check your state/territories' specific eligibility criteria to ensure you are looking at the most up-to-date information.

KEY	
—	NOT REQUIRED
✓	REQUIRED
*	CONDITIONAL

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STATE	MUST MEET THE DEFINITION OF HEARING IMPAIRMENT OR DEAF	MUST MEET THE DEFINITION OF VISUAL IMPAIRMENT, INCLUDING BLINDNESS	AUDIOLOGICAL DATA OR DIAGNOSIS	OPTOMETRIC / OPHTHALMIC DATA OR DIAGNOSIS	FUNCTIONAL VISION ASSESSMENT	LEARNING MEDIA ASSESSMENT	ORIENTATION & MOBILITY ASSESSMENT	SIGN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT	ASSESSMENT OF SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	MEDICAL REPORT	EVALUATION OF RECEPTIVE & EXPRESSIVE COMMUNICATION
MISSISSIPPI	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
NORTH CAROLINA	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
OKLAHOMA	—	—	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	*	✓
PUERTO RICO	—	—	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SOUTH CAROLINA	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
TENNESSEE	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	—	✓	*	✓
TEXAS	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
VIRGINIA	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
WEST VIRGINIA	—	—	✓	✓	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

DEFINITIONS

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING - student must meet the definition of hearing impaired or deaf to be eligible for services.

VISUALLY IMPAIRED - student must meet the definition of visually impaired or blind to be eligible for services.

AUDIOLOGICAL DATA - student must have data or diagnosis of a hearing impairment.

OPTOMETRIC/OPHTHALMOLOGIC DATA - student must have data or diagnosis of a visual impairment.

FUNCTIONAL VISION ASSESSMENT - an assessment of how the student functionally uses their vision in everyday environments, like their classroom.

LEARNING MEDIA ASSESSMENT - an assessment to select the appropriate literacy medium (i.e., braille, print, audio, etc.) for a student.

ORIENTATION & MOBILITY ASSESSMENT - an assessment to examine how a student orientates themselves in everyday environments, like their classroom.

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT - an assessment of a student's use and knowledge of ASL.

SOCIAL - an assessment of the student's social development.

COMMUNICATION - an evaluation of student's receptive and expressive communication.

MEDICAL REPORT - medical report is needed in the eligibility process.

Citation:

Schles, R. A., Gosnell, G., & Johanns, G. (2023). Summary report of states' deafblindness IDEA special education eligibility criteria in 2021. Nashville; Vanderbilt University.

This document can be found online at the [Vanderbilt University Institutional Repository](#).