

2025 VERMONT ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED: CHILDREN SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Objectives for today:

- VABVI services Roles & Responsibilities
- What is the “Expanded” Core Curriculum
- VABVI Evaluations offered
- Types of Contracted Services (direct vs consultation)
- VABVI “Educating Students with a Visual Impairment in Vermont” Booklet
- VABVI vs DBVI
- What is P2P?
- How to make referrals to VABVI



4 Major Job Descriptions at VABVI

- TVI = Licensed Teacher of the Visually Impaired
 - COMS = Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists
 - CATIS = Certified Assistive Technology Instructional Specialist for Individuals with Visual Impairments
 - CVRT = Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (works mostly with adults)
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- In general, VABVI provides services from birth to end of life.



Role of the Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) revolves around the “Expanded Core Curriculum”

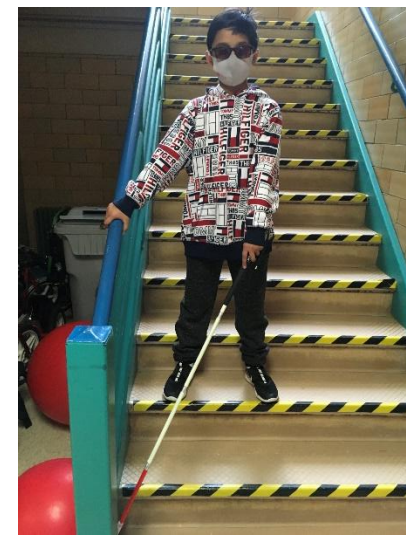
The term Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is used to define concepts and skills that often require specialized instruction with students who are blind or visually impaired in order to compensate for decreased opportunities to learn incidentally by observing others. The ECC targets the learning needs specific to children with blindness/visual impairment. Our responsibilities typically cover these 9 ECC areas:

- ✓ **Compensatory (braille instruction)**
- ✓ **Socialization (making friends, finding your peers at recess, understanding body language)**
- ✓ **Daily Living skills (make your breakfast & lunch)**
- ✓ **Recreation/Leisure (exercise, stay healthy)**
- ✓ **Career Education (reduce 70% unemployment rate)**
- ✓ **Sensory Skills (increase “auditory” speed reading)**
- ✓ **Self-Determination (confidence, I can do it myself)**
- ✓ **COMS = Orientation & Mobility (creating independent travelers who are unable to drive, learning to use a cane, pre-requisite for a guide dog)**
- ✓ **CATIS = Assistive Technology (skills needed to stay employed)**



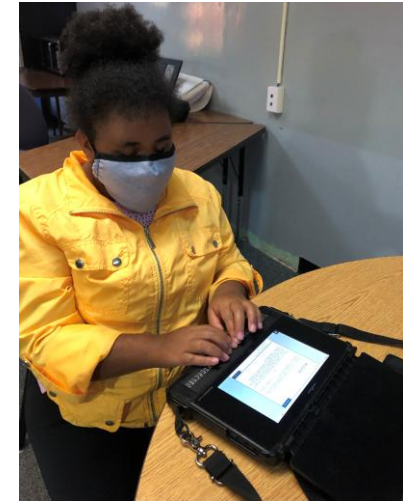
Role of the Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist (COMS)

- COMS are required to complete 37 college credits (12 courses) specific to visual impairments
- Trained in non-visual travel skills specific to the visually impaired to access their schools and communities.
- Trained in the use of a long cane, monocular telescope , echolocation
- Demonstrate proficiency in human guide, protective, alignment, and search techniques in orientation and mobility with developmentally appropriate modifications
- Teach orientation, body image, spatial, positional, directional, and environmental concepts based on individual needs to promote motor skill development, orientation and mobility, to reduce social isolation
- Adapt non-visual tasks
- Create tactile maps
- Teach talking GPS, mobility apps and the use of mobility devices
- Understand the prerequisites to becoming a guide dog user
- Teach students to find destinations with strategies that include following directions and using landmarks and compass directions
- Teach students techniques for crossing streets, such as analyzing and identifying intersections and traffic patterns
- Teach students problem-solving skills to determine what to do if you are disoriented or lost or need to change your route
- Teach students to use public transportation and transit systems.



Role of the Certified Assistive Technology Specialist for Individuals with Visual Impairments (CATIS)

- This is a post-master level certification that includes in-depth coursework and an extensive supervised internship.
- Expertise in:
 - Assessment & Instruction in AT for people with a VI
 - Configuration & Exploration of AT Solutions for VI
 - Collaborating with school-based IT and Ed Tech staff to increase student access
 - Operate and instruct on both screen reading (talking) software and screen magnification software (larger print)
 - Expertise in Chromebook Accessibility for VI
 - Operate braille tablets and braille displays
 - Engage in a collaborative team approach to support students with VI and additional disabilities (switch access, iPads, AAC, etc.)
 - Knowledgeable about accessible features of statewide tests and supports teachers, paraprofessionals and students during the statewide testing process



Why is a CATIS important?

Can YOU complete all computer tasks without looking at it?

Can you shut off your computer, cover your screen, then turn it back on and get to the internet without looking or using the cursor?

Our students must use assistive technology designed for the visually impaired because many software products are still not 100% accessible. They may say they are, but they are only partially accessible, for example pictures and graphs are not typically accessible to the blind. Think about how often you are viewing pictures and gaining information by looking. They are usually lacking image descriptions for the blind.

Schools are using fewer and fewer hard copy books...

Therefore, it takes a combination of technology resources to meet their needs, such as the APH products in combination with downloaded books from Bookshare, BARD (Vermont State Library), Learning Ally...

**No one product meets all of their needs
any more than 1 product meets all of your
needs at work.**

Evaluations provided by VABVI Staff:

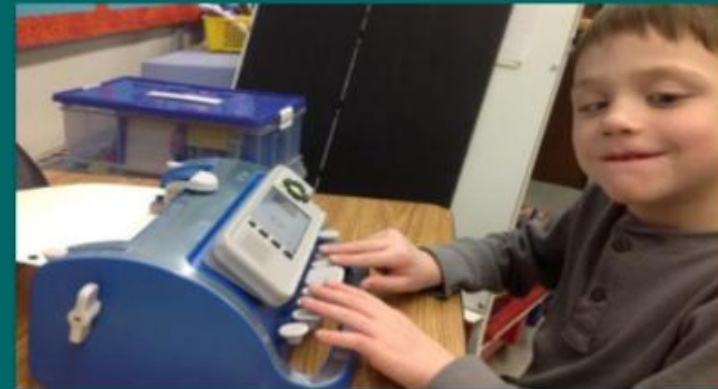
- **Functional Vision Assessment**
- **Learning Media Assessment (large print vs braille)**
- **Cortical Visual Impairment Assessment**
- **Orientation and Mobility Assessment**
- **Daily Living Skills Assessment**
- **Social Skills Checklist**
- **Assistive Technology Assessment**
- **Assessment of Braille Literacy Skills**

3 Levels of VABVI Contracted Services (Direct and/or Consultation)

- **Weekly** = 1 or more visits per week includes direct instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) areas, consultation with the team, interpretation and explanation of functional implications of eye reports, written functional visual assessments and other types of assessments as related to the ECC for students with visual impairments, mileage and travel time.
- **Monthly** = 1 to 3 visits per month includes same description of services as above.
- **Consultation** = typically, 5 or less visits per year.
- **First evaluation for a new referral for students ages 3-22 who are NOT in our database is FREE.**
- Otherwise, a **contract** between VABVI and the school district is created for each student, each year.

**VABVI's Educating
Students with Visual
Impairments in
Vermont (2025)
located
on our website or we
can email you a copy**

**Educating
Students with
Visual
Impairments
in Vermont**



Vermont Association for the Blind

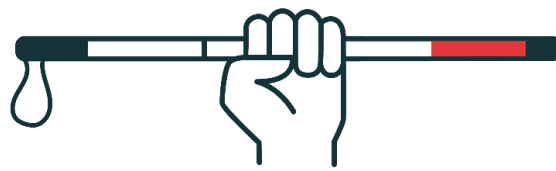
What's the difference between VABVI and DBVI?

- There is consistent collaboration between VABVI and the VT State Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI)
- DBVI is a part of Hire Ability specific to transition students who are visually impaired.
- VABVI staff refer students to DBVI starting at age 14.
- Approximately 70% of adults with visual impairments are unemployed.
- Each year VABVI's staff collaborate with the Learn Earn and Prosper (LEAP) workforce development program to provide pre-employment transitional services to transition-aged youth who are blind or visually impaired and whose goal is to become employed
- The LEAP program has been so unique and successful it has gone national.



Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program: The individual's goal is to obtain or maintain employment. Services provided may include vocational training, visual restoration, vision rehabilitation services, daily living skills training, guidance and counseling, vocational assessments, job placement, adaptive technology and aids, education, and more.

- Youth Services
 - LEAP Program- Virtual, Community Internships, and Residential
 - Assistive technology evaluation and training
 - Job Development services
 - Post-secondary services and vocational training
- Independent Living (IL) Program: The individual's goal is to remain as independent as possible within their home and community. Services provided may include information, referral, advocacy, counseling and skills training in activities of daily living such as independent travel, cooking, using magnification and self care.



LEAP

LEARN • EARN • PROSPER

- Provides blind or visually impaired youth the opportunity to gain the skills needed to become independent, confident, and productive with the outcome of increased employability
- Offers Winter Retreat and Spring Programs
- LEAP collaborates with the VABVI staff, for example:
 - LEAP meets with the Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) to help determine which transition-aged students are interested and who qualifies for their program.
 - LEAP employs Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists (COMS) from VABVI to ensure that transition-aged students are improving their mobility skills by taking the bus to and from their work sites and learning to navigate a college campus and dorm (their living quarters).
 - LEAP employs a Certified Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (CVRT) from VABVI to teach students to plan, organize and cook their daily meals during their programs.
- Their summer employment programs occur online, residentially or in the student's local community
- Their Skills Shops are teenage gatherings to;
 - Learn about tools for accessing your community & living independently
 - Attend Mobility (O&M) / Independent Living (CVRT) workshops
 - Provide multiple opportunities to connect with peers
 - Meet and learn with professional blind and visually impaired mentors at Speaker Retreats
- Develop skills for job readiness and employment
- Attend Self Advocacy and Self-Disclosure Workshops
- Get paid for a job for the first time in their lives
- Given opportunities to start building a resume

FYI: What is P2P?

Vermont Pathways to Partnerships

DBVI was awarded \$10 million from the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to create the Vermont's Pathways to Partnerships (VT-P2P) project, which aims to facilitate a smoother transition for young people with disabilities into independent living, employment, continued education or training, and community engagement. This is one of twenty P2P projects nationwide. This funding presents an exceptional opportunity for Vermont to develop meaningful partnerships and training programs aimed at fostering the post-school success of students with disabilities. This initiative seeks to identify more effective strategies for supporting these individuals in achieving success following their transition from school to adulthood.



Vermont Pathways to Partnerships

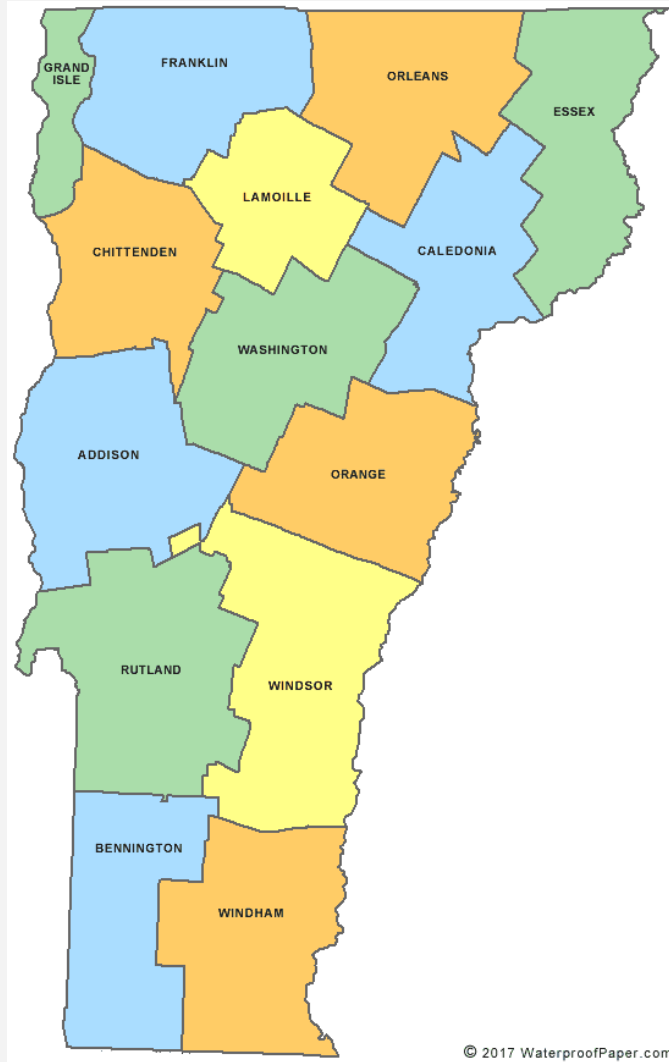
Rooted in support, soaring to success

In the following school year 2025-26, YOU will be hearing more about the P2P project.

VABVI is one of many P2P partners, including DBVI, Hire Ability, VT AOE, VFN, Green Mountain Self-Advocates, UVM-CDCI, VT Center for Independent Living, ReSource and by September 2025 the P2P Project will begin to expand to these 24 high schools:

1. Arlington Memorial HS
- 2. Bellows Falls Union HS (Pilot)**
3. BFA Fairfax
4. Blue Mountain Union
5. Brattleboro Union HS
6. Burlington HS
- 7. Champlain Valley Union HS (Pilot)**
8. Fair Haven Union HS
- 9. Green Mountain HS (Pilot)**
10. Hazen Union HS
11. Lamoille Union HS
12. Mill River Union HS

13. Missisquoi Valley Union
14. Mount Abraham Union HS
15. Mount Anthony Union HS
16. North Country Union HS
17. Otter Valley Union HS
18. Oxbow HS
19. South Burlington HS
20. Spaulding HS
21. Twin Valley High School
22. U-32 Middle High School
23. White River Valley UHS
24. Williamstown Middle High School



VABVI Services & How to Make Referrals

- VABVI provides services from birth to end of life.
- We are a statewide organization with 4 offices:
 - **South Burlington**
 - **Berlin**
 - **Rutland**
 - **Brattleboro**
- An application for referrals for Children Services can be found on our web site www.vabvi.org or by calling Stephanie Bissonette at 1-800-639-5861 ext 225.
- The initial VABVI evaluation for a NEW referral is FREE.



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VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

1-800-639-5861



What questions do you have for me?