The Vision Services Severity Rating Scale 2.0 (VSSRS 2.0)

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Introduction

About

The Vision Services Severity Rating Scale 2.0 (VSSRS 2.0) is a tool designed to assist the Teacher of Students with Visual Impairment (TVI) in making suggestions for service time for students who are Blind/Visually impaired (BVI), birth to 26, including those with additional disabilities, regardless of their educational placement or service delivery model. This document includes the history of the VSSRS, its purpose and intended use, what to gather before completing the rubric, instructions for completing it, and considerations for additional service time needs for non-instructional services. After obtaining a score using the rubric, a "severity of need" score will be calculated to assist with determining a suggested service time.

History and Development

In 2010, the Michigan Department of Education - Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) gathered a task force of Michigan TVIs to revise the VSSRS and VSSRS+. Their goal was to facilitate consistency in service delivery for students who are BVI. Proposed revisions were presented and discussed during working sessions at the 2010 Michigan Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (MAER) conference in Livonia, Michigan. Afterward, the VSSRS and VSSRS+ were updated and field-tested based on those working groups and used by school personnel throughout Michigan.

Years later, it was ultimately determined that revisions were necessary to further develop the content, consistency, and objectivity of the VSSRS and the VSSRS+ based on the updated Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE) R 340.1708 Visual impairment, including blindness definition; determination. Rule 8.

During the 2021-2022 school year, MDE-LIO consultants met and began reviewing the documents and proposed changes. During the 2022-2023 school year, TVI stakeholders in Michigan reviewed the proposed changes, and MDE-LIO gathered input for further revisions. In 2023, additional TVIs used the revised scale and offered feedback to MDE-LIO about the VSSRS 2.0.

Purpose

The purpose of the VSSRS 2.0 is to assist TVIs in making suggestions for service delivery of existing and newly identified students who are BVI, birth to 26, regardless of their educational program or service delivery model.

Intended Use:

Please note that the VSSRS 2.0 is not an assessment/evaluation instrument, but rather a tool for assisting with determination of service delivery times for the current individualized education program (IEP) or individualized family service plan (IFSP). Determination of actual service time is an IEP/IFSP team decision based on the needs of the student. The VSSRS 2.0 combines what was formerly the VSSRS and the VSSRS+. It is intended to be used with students, ages birth to 26, who are eligible for services through the IEP or IFSP process, are BVI, and experience adverse educational affects, even with correction.

The VSSRS is a living document and should represent the current best practices for students who are BVI.

The VSSRS 2.0 may be completed for:

1. Initial assessment
2. IEP/IFSP team meeting
3. End of each school year
4. Visual status change
5. Placement change
6. Change in service frequency
7. Other

Prior to Completing the VSSRS 2.0

1. Obtain an eye report as defined in MARSE R 340.1708
2. Complete a Functional Vision Assessment (FVA)
3. Complete a Learning Media Assessment (LMA)
4. Complete a Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) Needs Assessment (optional)

Completing the VSSRS 2.0

Part One:

1. Analyze the results from an eye report, FVA, LMA, and ECC needs assessment.
2. Read all instructions and descriptors before completing the scoring process.
   a. Descriptors are listed horizontally for each category. The severity of need score ranges from 0-4.
   b. For each category, select the descriptor that best describes the student, based on results from your eye report, FVA, LMA and ECC needs assessment. Enter the appropriate severity of need number in the right-hand column (Severity Score Column).
   c. Once completed, the form will auto-generate a Severity of Need Score.

Considerations of Service Delivery Categories:

- Distance Vision and/or Peripheral Field (Medical or Functional)
- Functional Near Vision
- Change in Visual Function
- Learning Media
- Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)
- Assistive Technology (AT)

Part Two: Additional Considerations

This section is designed to consider service needs beyond instructional time. Additional time from the TVI may be needed for material preparation, consultative services, and/or communication with the IEP/IFSP team or pertinent individuals and training of school personnel. Use this chart to document the estimated time needed for non-instructional service. Consider the frequency and amount of time for each section and write it in the appropriate box.

Additional Considerations to Support Student Success

- Material preparation
- Communication
- Training school personnel

Part Three: Calculating Suggested Service Time

1. Using the Severity of Need Summary, refer to the Severity of Need Score and Frequency of Need table. Locate the range which contains the Final Severity of Need Score to determine the frequency of service.
2. Enter the time needed for Additional Considerations.
3. Calculate the range of time for the combined Service Delivery Time and Additional Considerations and write it in the suggested Service Delivery Time (Direct and Indirect).
4. Include suggestions for service delivery times in the TVI report and present them at the IEP or IFSP team meeting.

Part One: VSSRS 2.0 Severity of Need Profile

Student:	Birthdate:	Grade/Program:	Date:

1. Distance Vision and/or Peripheral Field (Medical or Functional)

The distance vision and/or peripheral vision as documented by a medical evaluation and/or the FVA. Acuities, fields, and ranges are based on World Health Organization standards (WHO, 2019, p. 11; see also, Colenbrander, 2009).

0	1	2	3	4	Score
20/10 – 20/40	20/50 – 20/180	20/200 – 20/400 or 11-20 degrees of visual field	20/500 – 20/1000 OR 6-10 degrees of visual field	Counts fingers, hand motions, light perception, no light perception, OR 5 degrees or less visual field	

2. Functional Near Vision

The level of near vision as documented by the FVA should reflect the font size that the student can visually identify at the recommended testing distance sufficient for the completion of work at a rate that meets grade-level expectations.

See Appendix A for an indication of the approximate relationship between metric notation, font size, and common reading materials. Examples include font, symbol, or picture size.

0	1	2	3	4	Score
Visually identifies 3 to 11 point font/symbols/pictures	Visually identifies 12 to 24 point font/symbols/pictures	Visually identifies 25 to 66 point font/symbols/pictures	Visually identifies 67 to 72 point font/symbols/pictures or larger	Unable to visually identify print/symbols/pictures	

3. Change in Visual Function

Documented change to visual function.

0	1	2	3	4	Score
Vision is stable	Visual functioning has changed. Those changes have not resulted in a change in preferred learning media or materials.	Visual functioning has changed and has resulted in a change in materials format/size. No additional instruction is needed.	Visual functioning has changed and has resulted in a need for instruction in a new learning medium (e.g., braille, auditory). Student can still access their preferred learning media.	Visual functioning has changed. Student no longer has access to the curriculum and must learn a new medium (e.g., braille, auditory).	

4. Learning Media

The primary mode of accessing information, as documented by the LMA. Examples of learning media include print, pictures, real objects, braille, tactile symbols, and audio. Instruction and input needed from a TVI.

- **Other School Personnel:** Examples may include, but are not limited to, general education teachers, elective teachers (e.g., art, gym, music, foreign language) and ancillary staff, paraprofessionals, braille transcribers, AT and media specialists.

- **Emergent Literacy:** Emergent literacy is a term used to describe early literacy skills and includes knowledge and abilities related to the alphabet, phonological awareness, symbolic representation, and communication (Rohde, 2015).

0	1	2	3	4	Score
Reading speeds and comprehension comparable to peers, or receives instruction from other school personnel	Independent with preferred learning media; may need a review of existing skills	Instructional level with preferred learning medium; needs training in new skills	Has a preferred learning medium; receives instruction in a new learning medium to meet current or future need	Emergent reader and/or has no current learning medium; needs to learn a primary learning media	

5. ECC Defined Areas

Instruction and input needed from a TVI in the following ECC areas: career education, compensatory skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure, self determination, sensory efficiency, and social interaction skills.

*Note that assistive technology and orientation and mobility are addressed separately.

0	1	2	3	4	Score
ECC is addressed by other school personnel	1 defined area	2-3 defined areas	4-5 defined areas	6-7 defined areas	

6. Assistive Technology

AT needed to facilitate equitable access to the curriculum. Instruction and input needed from a TVI.

0	1	2	3	4	Score
Mastered existing AT or receives instruction from other school personnel	Independently using AT may need a review of existing skills	Independently using AT and need instruction in advanced techniques.	Instructional level learning using basic techniques for existing AT	Introduction to new AT (e.g., notetaker, screen reader, keyboard skills)	

Total Severity of Need Score	

Severity of Need Score

Service Delivery Time Considerations for a TVI

Services may include direct instruction as related to the IEP or IFSP. All listed times serve as a guideline.

Score	Frequency of Need
0-2	Monitor 1-3 times per year
3-5	Quarterly: 3-5 times per year
6-9	Monthly: 1 time per month (8-10x per year)
10-14	Weekly: 2-4 times per month, 30-60* minutes per session
15-19	Bi-Weekly: 1-2 times per week, 60-120* minutes per session
20-24	Daily: 3-5 times per week, 120-180+* minutes per session

*See Project SLATE chart in Appendix B for time amounts to consider beyond the suggested time.

Part Two: Additional Considerations to Support Student Success

This section documents time needed for material preparation, communication with the IEP/IFSP team or other pertinent individuals, and training of school personnel. Use this chart to document time needed for non-instructional service.

1. Material Preparation

The estimated time needed by the TVI to ensure that student materials are appropriate and allow for equitable access to the student's educational program. Examples of this may include modifying materials, producing braille, tactile

Material preparation is completed by other school personnel	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly

2. Communication

Communication with members of the IEP or IFSP team, other school personnel, parents/guardians, medical personnel, and outside agencies concerning access to the student's educational program.

1-3 times per year	Quarterly	Monthly	Weekly

3. Training School Personnel

The time needed to provide parents, caregivers, and school personnel in-service training, instruction for using and supporting AT, and best practices for adapting materials and working with a student who is BVI. Consider school personnel's experience working with a student who is BVI and knowledge of adopted braille codes.

Additional training of school personnel is not needed	Monthly	Weekly	Daily

Part Three: Calculating Suggested Service Time

Considerations	Time/Frequency
Service Delivery Time	
Additional Considerations Time	
Suggested Service Time (Direct and Indirect)	

Service Delivery Notes

References

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Appendix A

Table of Approximate Functional Near Visual Acuity Equivalents

These notations serve as an indication of the approximate relationship between metric notation, font size, and common reading materials.

Metric	Point Size	Equivalent Reading
0.5	5	
0.8	8	(example) Newspaper
1.0	10	(example) High school texts
1.2	12	(example)
1.6	16	(example) Children's books
2.0	18	(example) Large print books

Metric	Point Size	Equivalent Reading
2.5	24	(example)
3.0	28	(example)
4.0	36	(example) Newspaper subtitles
5.0	48	(example)
6.0	60	(example) Headline
8.0	80	(example)

Appendix B

Project SLATE

Project SLATE was a research study with a purpose of gathering professional agreement about the levels of instructional services essential for students in braille literacy programs. (Koenig & Holbrook, 2000).

The table below provides a framework for educational teams to contemplate the frequency and amount of time necessary for literacy and additional categories of instruction for students who are BVI. It shows skill areas, consistency, total time per day, time span, and duration to determine proper instructional services for learners.

Skill Areas	Consistency	Total Time per Day	Time Span	Duration
Emergent Braille Literacy Skills	1 to 5 days/week	½ to 1 hour	Infancy to preschool	Throughout at least one school year
Early Formal Literacy Skills ("prebraille")	Daily contact	½ to 1 hour	Preschool - kindergarten	Throughout at least one school year
Beginning Braille Literacy Skills	Daily contact	1-2 hours per day	Kindergarten - grade 3	Throughout at least one school year
Beginning Literacy Skills in Dual Media (Print and Braille)	Daily contact	1 - 2 hours per day	Kindergarten - grade 3	Throughout at least one school year
Intermediate Braille Literacy Skills	1 to 3 days/week up to daily contact	2 hours per day to 1/2 hour per day	Grades 4-8	Throughout at least one school year

Skill Areas	Consistency	Total Time per Day	Time Span	Duration
Advanced Braille Literacy Skills	1 to 3 days per week to semimonthly or monthly contact	1-2 hours per day to 1/2-1 hours per day	Grade 9-12	Throughout at least one school year
Braille Literacy Skills for Students with Print Literacy Skills	Daily contact	1 to 2 hours per day	Introduced at an appropriate time as determined by the educational team	Throughout at least one school year
Listening, Aural Reading, and Live Reader Skills	1 to 3 days/week to Periodic	1/2-1 hour per day to less than 1/2 hour per day	Throughout the school years	Throughout at least one school year overall; concentrated for specific applications
Technology Skills	1 to 3 days/week to daily	1/2-1 hour per day	Throughout the school years	Throughout at least one school year overall; short or concentrated for specific devices
Keyboarding and Word Processing Skills	Daily contact to 1-3 days/week	less than 1 hour per session to 1/2 to 1 hour per session	Begin in grade 1, 2, or 3	Throughout at least one school year
Slate and Stylus Skills Signature	Daily contact to 1-3 days/week	1/2-1 hour per day to less than 1/2 hour per day	Throughout one quarter or semester or Throughout at least one school year	Begin in grade 3 or 4
Writing Skills	1-3 days/week	1/2-1 hour/ day to less than 1/2 hour/day	Begin in grades 5-7, grade 3, or grade 4	Throughout one quarter or semester or Throughout at least one school year

Note: Table originally displayed by Paths to Literacy at Project SLATE: Framework for Braille Literacy Instruction (pathstoliteracy.org/resource/project-slate-framework-braille-literacy-instruction).