

The Vision Services Severity Rating Scale 2.0 (VSSRS 2.0)

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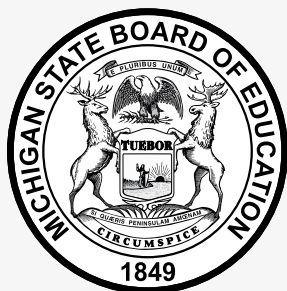
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Introduction

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/low vision (BLV), 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), recently renamed Michigan Department of Education Resource for Blind/Low Vision (MDE RBLV), 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 BLV. 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 RBLV 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 RBLV gathered input for further revisions. In 2023, additional TVIs used the revised scale and offered feedback to MDE RBLV 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 BLV, 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 BLV, 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 BLV.

The VSSRS 2.0 may be completed for:

- Initial assessment
- IEP/IFSP team meeting
- End of each school year
- Visual status change
- Placement change
- Change in service frequency
- 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 an 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.
 - Descriptors are listed horizontally for each category. The severity of need score ranges from 0-4.
 - 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).
 - 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 that 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 box for 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:	Birth Date:
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).

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

Score:

2. Functional Near Vision

The level of near vision as documented by the FVA should reflect the font size 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.

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

Score:

3. Change in Visual Function

Documented change to visual function.

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

Score:

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 are 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), ancillary staff, paraprofessionals, braille transcribers, and assistive technology (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).

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

Score:

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.

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

Score:

6. Assistive Technology

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

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

Score:

Service Delivery Time Considerations for a TVI

Total Severity of Need Score:

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

- Services may include direct instruction as related to the IEP or IFSP. All listed times serve as a guideline.
- *See Project SLATE (Supporting Literacy Achievement and Teacher Effectiveness for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired) chart in Appendix B for time amounts to consider beyond the suggested time.

Enter the frequency of need in the frequency of need field on page 10.

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 TCVI or 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 documents in braille, creating tactile diagrams, or ordering braille, large print, or auditory books and/or materials. Other school personnel may have this responsibility. Examples of other school personnel are paraprofessionals, braille transcribers, and media specialists.

Check the appropriate box or boxes and describe the additional time in the notes field below.

☐ Material preparation is completed by other school personnel ☐ Quarterly ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly

Notes:

2. Communication

The estimated time needed for communication with school personnel, parents/guardians, medical personnel, and outside agencies concerning access to the student's educational program. Examples may include parents, caregivers, paraprofessional, braille transcriber, ancillary staff, classroom teacher, custodian, principal, or technology support specialist.

Check the appropriate box or boxes and describe the additional time in the notes field below.

☐ 1-3 times per year ☐ Quarterly ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly

Notes:

3. Training School Personnel

The estimated time needed to provide parents, caregivers, and school personnel in-service training, and instruction for using and supporting assistive technology and adaptive software, as well as best practices for adapting materials and working with a student who is BLV. Consider school personnel's experience working with a student who is BLV and their individual knowledge of Unified English Braille. Examples of school personnel are paraprofessional, braille transcriber, ancillary staff, classroom teacher, custodian, principal, and technology support specialist.

Check the appropriate box or boxes and describe the additional time in the notes field below.

☐ Additional training of school personnel is not needed ☐ Quarterly ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly

Notes:

Part Three: Calculating Suggested Service Time

Considerations	Time/Frequency
Frequency of Need	
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	Example
0.8	8	Example (Newspaper)
1.0	10	Example (High school texts)
1.2	12	Example

Metric	Point Size	Equivalent Reading
1.6	16	Example (Children's books)
2.0	18	Example (Large-print books)
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 BLV. 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 - 1 hour per day	Infancy to preschool	Throughout at least one school year
Early Formal Literacy Skills ("pre-braille")	Daily contact	½ - 1 hour per day	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 ½ hour per day	Grades 4 - 8	Throughout at least one school year
Advanced Braille Literacy Skills	1 to 3 days per week to semimonthly or monthly contact	1 - 2 hours per day to ½ - 1 hours per day	Grade 9 - 12	Throughout at least one school year

Skill Areas	Consistency	Total Time per Day	Time Span	Duration
Braille Literacy Skills for Students with Print Literacy Skills	Daily contact	1 - 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	$\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 hour per day to less than $\frac{1}{2}$ 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	$\frac{1}{2}$ - 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ - 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	$\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 hour per day to less than $\frac{1}{2}$ hour per day	Begin in grade 3 or 4	Throughout one quarter or semester or throughout at least one school year
Writing Skills	1-3 days/week	$\frac{1}{2}$ - 1 hour per day to less than $\frac{1}{2}$ hour per 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](https://pathstoliteracy.org/resource/project-slate-framework-braille-literacy-instruction) (pathstoliteracy.org/resource/project-slate-framework-braille-literacy-instruction).