

# Highlighting Potential: A Beginner's Guide

## General Evaluation Process for Sensory Impairments:

- 1) Review Regulations & Guidance
  - a) State Regulations - TAC § 89.1040. Eligibility Criteria
  - b) Federal Regulations - CFR § 300.304 Evaluation procedures
  - c) APH Guidance - Comprehensive Evaluations of Individuals With Visual Impairments...
  - d) TSBVI Guidance - Making Evaluation Meaningful
  
- 2) Establish Multidisciplinary Team
  - a) Locate team
  - b) Collaborate within team
  - c) Consult outside of team
  
- 3) R.I.O.T.
  - a) Review records of individual
  - b) Interview "experts" of individual (family, teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.)
  - c) Observe multiple times in a variety of settings
  
- 4) Plan Assessments & Ensure Accessibility
  - a) Develop assessment plan & collect assessment tools
  - b) Ensure accessibility of assessments with specialists
  - c) Plan days, times and locations
  
- 5) R.I.O.T.
  - a) Establish rapport
  - b) Test, likely over multiple sessions/ days
  - c) Test with appropriate team members when needed
  
- 6) Multidisciplinary Team Data Analysis
  - a) Analyze data as a team
  - b) Collaborate during report writing
  - c) Guidance from specialists when determining additional areas of eligibility

## Essential Information:

Code of Federal Regulations §300.304. (2006).

<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/section-300.304>

Engle, J. A., Nguyen, M. T., Goodman, S. A., Evans, C., & Loftin, M. (2024).

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Texas Administrative Code § 89.1040. (2022).

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Texas Education Agency. (2022, December). Sensory Impairments and Specific Learning Disabilities. Austin.

<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/sld-and-sensory-impairments-12-2022.pdf>

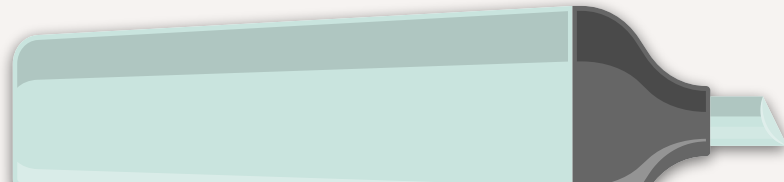


# Highlighting Potential:

**A Beginner's Guide** to Evaluating Students with Blindness, Low Vision and Deafblindness.

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Educational Diagnostician  
Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Graduate Certificate in Deafblindness

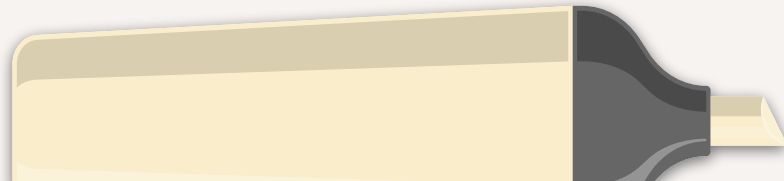
A thorough and well-conducted  
**evaluation is the foundation**  
of developing an effective IEP.



# General Evaluation Process for Sensory Impairments

- 01** Review Regulations & Guidance
- 02** Establish Multidisciplinary Team
- 03** R.I.O.T.
- 04** Plan Assessments & Ensure Accessibility
- 05** ~~R.I.O.T.~~
- 06** Multidisciplinary Team Data Analysis

**1.**  
**Review Regulations  
& Guidance**



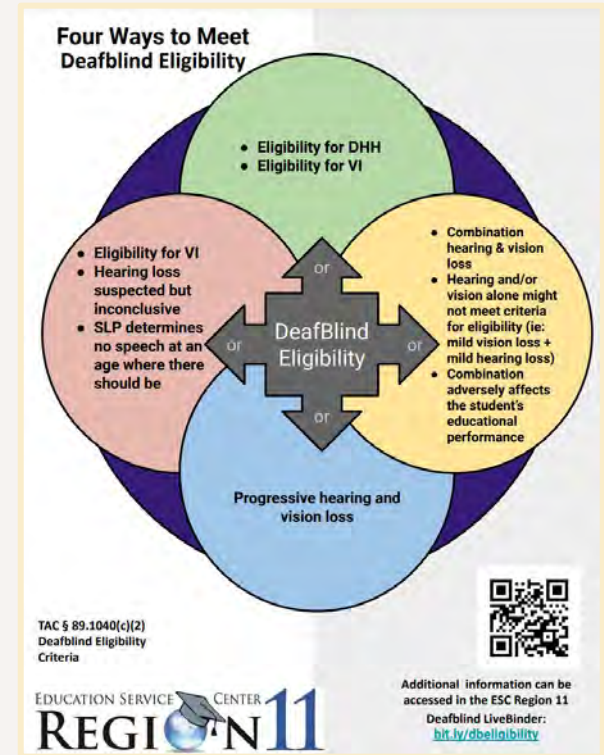
# 1 Review - TAC § 89.1040. Eligibility Criteria

## Visual Impairment

- Eye Medical Report
- Functional Vision Evaluation (FVE)
- Learning Media Assessment (LMA)
- **\*if evaluation is seeking to establish initial VI eligibility, Orientation and Mobility evaluation is required\***

## Deafblind

- DHH + VI
- VI + suspected hearing loss + no speech at age when speech would be expected per SLP
- Hearing loss and vision loss, if considered individually would not meet criteria, but combination of both adversely affects
- Documented medical diagnosis of progressive medical condition impacting hearing and vision



Reference:

Texas Administrative Code § 89.1040. (2022).

[https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac\\$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p\\_dir=&p\\_rloc=&p\\_tloc=&p\\_ploc=&pg=1&p\\_tac=&ti=19&pt=2&ch=89&rl=1040](https://texreg.sos.state.tx.us/public/readtac$ext.TacPage?sl=R&app=9&p_dir=&p_rloc=&p_tloc=&p_ploc=&pg=1&p_tac=&ti=19&pt=2&ch=89&rl=1040)

# 1

## Review - CFR § 300.304 Evaluation Procedures



- **Select and administer assessments that accurately reflect the child's abilities rather than reflecting their impaired sensory skills.**
- The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, **if appropriate**,
  - health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities.
    - It may not be appropriate to assess general intelligence in some children due to available assessments reflecting only impaired sensory skills and not true cognitive abilities.
- Assessments should be tailored to assess specific areas of educational need
  - not merely those that are designed to provide a single general intelligence quotient



# 1

## Review - American Printing House

### Seek guidance from sources within the field!

- American Printing House
  - Comprehensive Evaluations of Individuals With Visual Impairments
    - MUST READ
    - Published 2024, hot off the press!
    - Updated from 2011 publication
    - 8 topics with 31 total guidelines
    - Valuable insights!
    - Best practice!

#### Comprehensive Evaluations of Individuals With Visual Impairments

By Jennifer Aileen Engle, May Thien Nguyen, Stephen A. Goodman, Carol Evans, and Marnee Loftin

To cite or attribute this publication: Engle, J. A., Nguyen, M. T., Goodman, S. A., Evans, C., & Loftin, M. (2024). Comprehensive evaluations of individuals with visual impairments. American Printing House. [CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).  
<https://sites.aph.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-APH-Guidance-Document.docx>.

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#### Acknowledgments

This work is an adaptation of "Intelligence testing of individuals who are blind or visually impaired" (2011) by Stephen A. Goodman, Carol Evans, and Marnee Loftin, with permission from the American Printing House. The original document is archived at <https://sites.aph.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/2024-APH-Guidance-Document.docx>. The authors wish to acknowledge and express appreciation to everyone who contributed to these guidelines including reviewers, particularly Dr. Roberta Heaven, Rebecca Henry, Stephanie Herlich, Sydelle Murphy, Dr. Adam Wilton, and Shelby Zimmerman.

#### Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	1
Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
Guidelines	3
Topic 1: Examiner Collaboration	3
Topic 2: Ecological Validity and the RIOT (record review, interview, observation, and testing) Model	4
Topic 3: Impact of Visual Impairment on Development	7
Topic 4: Considerations in Test Selection and Administration	8
Topic 5: Considerations for Braille and Tactile Graphics	10
Topic 6: Use of Visual Stimuli in Assessment	11
Topic 7: Adaptations and Modifications	12
Topic 8: Evaluating Co-occurring Conditions	14
Comprehensive evaluations.	14
Autism	15
Deafblind	15
Intellectual developmental disorder	16

Comprehensive Evaluations of Individuals With Visual Impairments | 1

# 1

## Review - American Printing House

### Topic 1: Examiner Collaboration

- Collaboration with Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments is essential for accurate assessments
- Most evaluators lack specific experience in low vision, blindness and deafblindness
- Consult with colleagues within your own field

### Topic 2: Ecological Validity and the RIOT (record review, interview, observation, and testing) Model

- Multiple data sources
- Multiple data methods
- RIOT Model



# 1

## Review - American Printing House

### Topic 3: Impact of Visual Impairment on Development

- Understand the specific visual condition
- Low vision and blindness can lead to delays in many areas
- Missed incidental learning
- Consider opportunities for learning and previously provided interventions before identifying additional areas of eligibility

### Topic 4: Considerations in Test Selection and Administration

- Standardized tests are not designed with low vision and blindness in mind
- Clinical judgement when interpreting results



# 1

## Review - American Printing House

### Topic 5: Considerations for Braille and Tactile Graphics

- Braille is complex!
  - Unified English Braille, Nemeth, uncontracted, contracted, etc.
  - Evaluate with TSVI if using braille assessments
- Consider proficiency with tactile graphics

### Topic 6: Use of Visual Stimuli in Assessment

- Possibly appropriate to use assessments with visual stimuli
- Interpret results as a minimum estimate of functioning
- Use caution with timed visual tasks



# 1

## Review - American Printing House

### Topic 7: Adaptations and Modifications

- Adaptations allow access without altering the difficulty or construct
  - Report both qualitative and quantitative
- Modifications change the concept being measured
  - Report both qualitative data only

### Topic 8: Evaluating Co-occurring Conditions

- VI can directly affect other areas of development
- VI can coexist with additional eligibilities
- Must have knowledge of VI and suspected co-occurring condition to properly identify



# 1

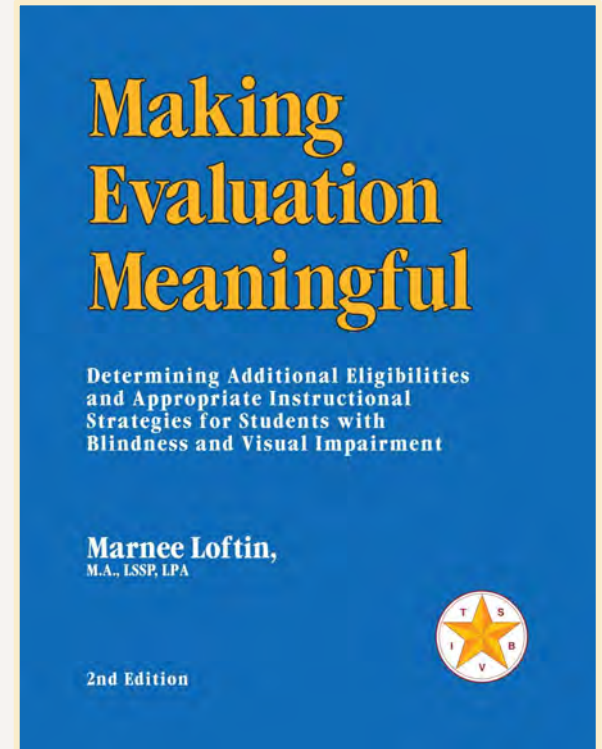
## Review - Making Evaluation Meaningful

### Obtain a copy of Making Evaluation Meaningful

- Education Service Center may have books to borrow
- Keep this nearby during the entire evaluation process!

### Additional Eligibilities

- Overidentification
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Underidentification
  - Gifted and Talented
  - Learning Disabilities



Reference:

Loftin, M. (2022). *Making Evaluation Meaningful: Determining Additional Eligibilities and Appropriate Instructional Strategies for Students with Blindness and Visual Impairment* (2nd ed.). Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. <https://www.tsbvi.edu/product/making-evaluations-meaningful>

# 1

## Review - Making Evaluation Meaningful

### Characteristics of Young Children with Low Vision or Blindness

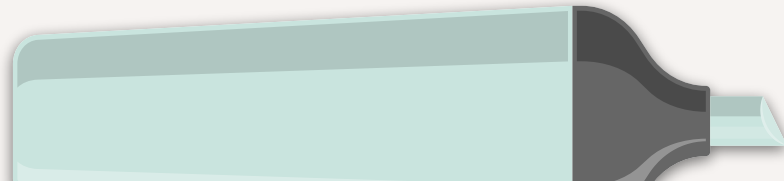
- Echolalic speech
- Strong expressive vocabulary
- Limited receptive skills
- Delayed motor milestones
- Hesitancy in exploration and initiation
- Self-stimulatory behaviors
- Lack of concepts
- Focus on parts over whole
- Passive in problem solving
- Egocentrism
- Difficulty with peer interactions
- Resistance to transition or change
- Social Isolation

Reference:

Loftin, M. (2022). *Making Evaluation Meaningful: Determining Additional Eligibilities and Appropriate Instructional Strategies for Students with Blindness and Visual Impairment* (2nd ed.). Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. <https://www.tsbvi.edu/product/making-evaluations-meaningful>

**2.**

# **Establish Multidisciplinary Team**





# 02

## Establish Multidisciplinary Team

### Locate your team!

- Team Composition: TSVI, O&M, Educational Diagnostician, LSSP, SLP, TDB, TDHH
- Additional Specialists based on need: OT, PT, APE, etc.

### Collaborate with your team!

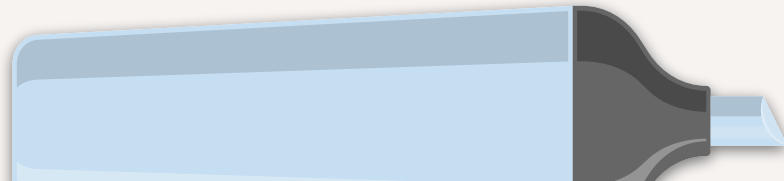
- Plan together
- Assess together
- Analyze together
- Do not divide and conquer

### Consult with staff outside of your team!

- Colleagues within your own field
- Regional and state specialists



# 3. R.I.O.Æ



# 03

## Review. Interview. Observe. Test.

### Review Records

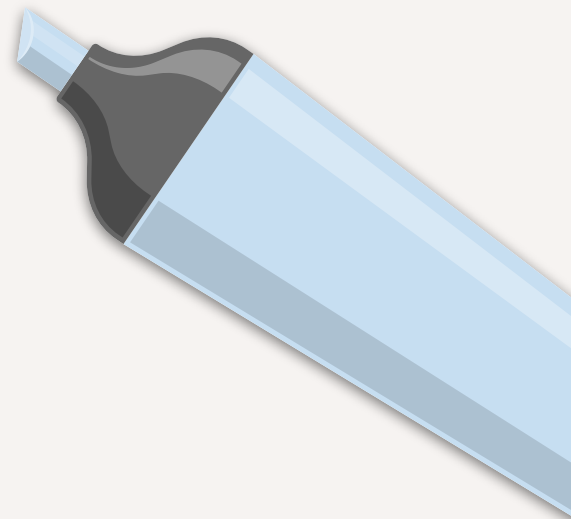
- Previous evaluations
- Current medical information
- Functional Vision Evaluation / Learning Media Assessment
- Use of assistive technology

### Interview

- Interview experts on the individual child
  - Family, Teachers, Paraprofessionals

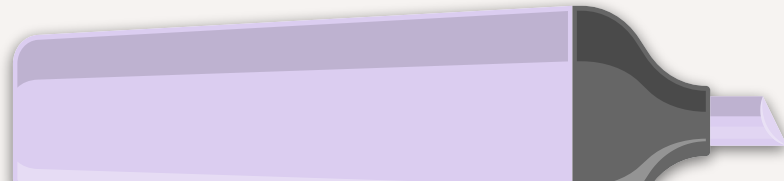
### Observe

- Observe in a variety of settings, across multiple days
- Observe how the child accesses their environment and curriculum
- Consider observing FVE/LMA



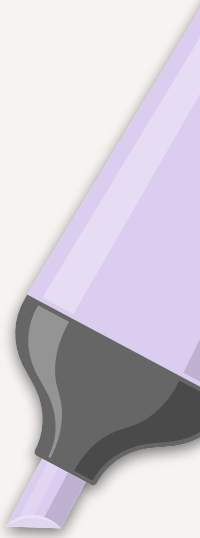
**4.**

**Plan Assessments  
& Ensure Accessibility**



To highlight potential in a student outside the norm,

**deviation is necessary!**



# 04 Plan Assessments

- **Use standard assessments (if appropriate)**
  - Consider built in adaptations (Ex. KABC but scoring without Time Points)
- **Use standard assessments + assistive technology**
  - Consider addition of assistive technology devices
    - Dome magnifier, video magnifier, etc
- **Use adapted assessments**
  - Tactile, Big Picture, Braille
    - Reach out to Educational Service Center to borrow assessment kit
- **Adapt your own materials**
  - Use qualitative information only, do not report out scores
  - Consider copyright laws



# 04 Plan Assessments

- **Tests Available in Braille and/or Large Print**
  - Boehm-3
    - Preschool Tactile Edition
    - Preschool Big Picture Kits
    - K-2 Tactile Edition
    - K-2 Big Picture Kit
  - Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills II
    - Uncontracted and Contracted Braille
    - Large Print
  - KeyMath-3
    - Uncontracted and Contracted Braille
  - Woodcock-Johnson IV (WJ IV)
    - Adapted for Braille Readers
    - Large Print Edition



Boehm-3 Preschool Tactile Edition  
<https://www.aph.org/product/boehm-3-preschool-tactile-edition-kit/>

# 04 Plan Assessments

Broad Ability	Narrow Ability	Subtest
<b>Comprehension/Knowledge (Gc)</b>	Language Development (LD) / Lexical Knowledge (VL)	WJ-IV COG: Oral Vocabulary
	Listening Abilities (LS)	WJ-IV COG: Story Recall
	General Information (KO)	WJ-IV COG: General Information
<b>Fluid Reasoning (Gf)</b>	Induction (I)	WISC-V: Similarities
	Quantitative Reasoning (RQ)	WISC-V: Arithmetic
<b>Short-Term Memory (Gsm)</b>	Memory Span (MS)	WISC-V: Digit Span
	Working Memory (WM)	WISC-V: Letter-Number Sequencing
<b>Long-Term Retrieval (Glr)</b>	Free Recall Memory (M6)	NEPSY-II: List Learning
	Meaningful Memory (MM)	NEPSY-II: Narrative Memory
	Ideational Fluency (FI)	NEPSY-II: Word Generation
<b>Auditory Processing (Ga)</b>	Phonetic Coding (PC)	TAPS-4: Word Discrimination
	Speech/General Sound Discrimination (US/U3)	TAPS-4: Auditory Figure-Ground

Reference:

Nguyen, M., Herlich, S., Zimmerman, S., & Henry, R. (2024). *Psychoeducational evaluations of blind and low vision students* [Webinar handout]. California School for the Blind. [https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vQVKavWNXJ9bB08FtWo2GtbrhvDjNkzc1KYAKNya88gwDGelqPgOhLyxsbEs\\_ohBtFzmQKR1mFfRhU/pub](https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vQVKavWNXJ9bB08FtWo2GtbrhvDjNkzc1KYAKNya88gwDGelqPgOhLyxsbEs_ohBtFzmQKR1mFfRhU/pub)



# 04 Plan Assessments

## Ensure accessibility of assessments with specialists

- Collaborate with the TSVI to review selected testing instruments for accessibility
- Ensure materials like braille, large print, or tactile graphics are appropriate
- Address necessary adaptations in advance for a more accurate and equitable evaluation

## Plan days, times and locations

- Coordinate with the multidisciplinary team to avoid over-scheduling
- Carefully plan testing locations and times to:
  - Minimize distractions
  - Prevent visual fatigue
  - Ensure a smoother and more accurate assessment process



**If using Braille assessment, schedule to administer with ancillary examiner proficient in Braille!**

**5.**  
**R.I.O.T.**



### **Establish rapport**

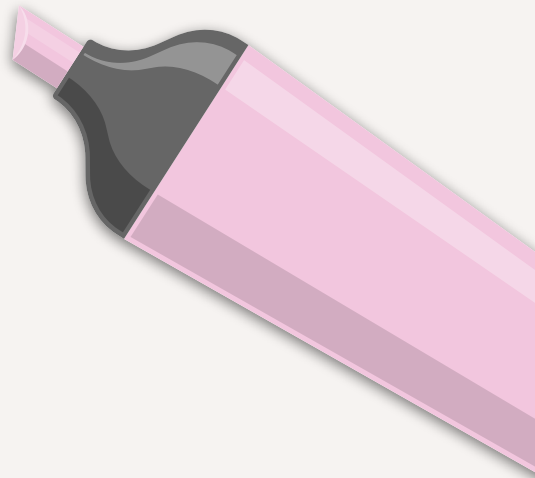
- Build trust and comfort before starting the assessment

### **Test, likely over multiple sessions/ days**

- Plan to test over several sessions to prevent fatigue and maintain accuracy

### **Test with appropriate team members when needed**

- Include appropriate team members (e.g., TSVI, O&M specialists) to support the assessment and provide insights

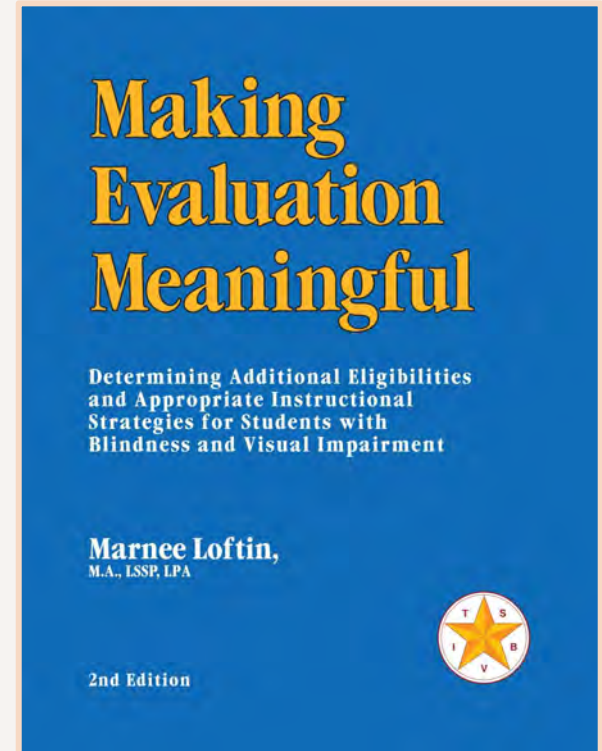


**6.**  
**Multidisciplinary Team**  
**Data Analysis**



# 06 Multidisciplinary Team Data Analysis

- **Obtain guidance from specialists when determining additional areas of eligibility!!!**
  - Always reference Making Evaluation Meaningful
- **Analyze data as a team**
  - Qualitative data AND Quantitative data
- **Collaborate during report writing**
  - Write a single cohesive document
  - Integrate data across areas



Reference:

Loftin, M. (2022). *Making Evaluation Meaningful: Determining Additional Eligibilities and Appropriate Instructional Strategies for Students with Blindness and Visual Impairment* (2nd ed.). Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. <https://www.tsbvi.edu/product/making-evaluations-meaningful>

# 06 Multidisciplinary Team Data Analysis

## Sensory Impairments and Specific Learning Disabilities

- Presence of a sensory impairment is **NOT automatically an exclusionary factor** for specific learning disability.
- A sensory impairment can coexist with a specific learning disability (including dyslexia and related disorders).
  - **Primary factor vs. contributing factor**
- **Identification of a coexisting disability is not a prerequisite for a student to receive appropriate academic interventions and supports.**
  - A student who is eligible for special education should receive **any** appropriate support that will enable progress in the general curriculum.

Sensory Impairments and Specific Learning Disabilities

**TEA**  
Texas Education Agency

**What is a sensory impairment?**

For the purposes of this guidance document, sensory impairments include visual impairment, deaf or hard of hearing, and deafblind.

A “**visual impairment**, including blindness, means an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness” (34 CFR, 300.8(c)(13)).

“**Deafness** means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance” (34 CFR, 300.8(c)(3)). “**Hearing impairment** means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child’s educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness” (34 CFR, 300.8(c)(5)).

“**Deaf-blindness** means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness” (34 CFR, 300.8(c)(2)).

**What is a specific learning disability?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines a **specific learning disability (SLD)** as “a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia” (34 CFR, 300.8(c)(10)(i)). IDEA goes on to clarify disorders that are not included in the definition of SLD. “Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage” 34 CFR, 300.8(c)(10)(ii).

**What does “not primarily the result of” mean when considering students with sensory impairments?**

As noted above, the IDEA recognizes that a specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of intellectual disability, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. These are often referred to as exclusionary factors. A common misconception is that the mere presence of a sensory impairment automatically rules out specific learning disability. Rather, a sensory impairment can coexist with a specific learning disability (including dyslexia and related disorders). Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committees need to consider this possibility, particularly when students’ academic skills are not progressing as expected despite receiving adequate instruction and appropriate supports and services to meet the needs that result from the sensory impairment. It may be that the sensory impairment does not fully explain the student’s current academic underachievement. For some students, the sensory impairment may be a contributing factor but is not what is primarily causing the observed academic underachievement. For these students, a specific learning disability may also be present.

The presence of a specific learning disability in addition to a sensory impairment may create obstacles to learning and affect rates of progress and growth. Understanding if additional disabilities are present can help educators develop appropriate interventions and plan for an effective Individualized Education Program (IEP) that meets all the student’s needs. It is important to note, however, that the identification of a coexisting

December 2022

Reference:

Texas Education Agency. (2022, December). Sensory Impairments and Specific Learning Disabilities. Austin. <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/sld-and-sensory-impairments-12-2022.pdf>

01

## Review Regulations & Guidance

- State Regulations - TAC § 89.1040. Eligibility Criteria
- Federal Regulations - CFR § 300.304 Evaluation procedures
- APH Guidance - Comprehensive Evaluations of Individuals With Visual Impairments...
- TSBVI Guidance - Making Evaluation Meaningful

02

## Establish Multidisciplinary Team

- Locate team
- Collaborate within team
- Consult outside of team

03

## R.I.O.F.

- Review records of individual
- Interview “experts” of individual (family, teachers, paraprofessionals, etc.)
- Observe multiple times in a variety of settings

04

## Plan Assessments & Ensure Accessibility

- Develop assessment plan & collect assessment tools
- Ensure accessibility of assessments with specialists
- Plan days, times and locations

05

## ~~R.I.O.T.~~

- Establish rapport
- Test, likely over multiple sessions/ days
- Test with appropriate team members when needed

06

## Multidisciplinary Team Data Analysis

- Analyze data as a team
- Guidance from specialists when determining additional areas of eligibility
- Collaborate during report writing

# References



Code of Federal Regulations §300.304. (2006). <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/section-300.304>

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Texas Administrative Code § 89.1040. (2022).

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<https://tea.texas.gov/academics/special-student-populations/special-education/sld-and-sensory-impairments-12-2022.pdf>





# Thank you!

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