**DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION SERVICES (DORS)**

**BUREAU OF EDUCATION AND SERVICES FOR THE BLIND (BESB)**

**CHILDREN’S SERVICES**

**POLICY MANUAL**

**REVISED July 1, 2017**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[Section 1: Legislative Authority 4](#_Toc489268400)

[Section 2: Definitions 7](#_Toc489268401)

[Section 3: Confidentiality and Availability of Case Records 10](#_Toc489268402)

[Section 4: Referral and Eligibility 13](#_Toc489268403)

[Section 5: Services For Clients No Longer Visually Impaired 15](#_Toc489268404)

[Section 6: Services For Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers 16](#_Toc489268405)

[Section 7: School Age Individuals with Legal Blindness or Visual Impairments Enrolled in Public Schools 19](#_Toc489268406)

[Section 8: BESB Education Consultants for School Age Clients 21](#_Toc489268407)

[Section 9: Reporting Requirements 27](#_Toc489268408)

[Section 10: Adaptive Devices, Software and Services 29](#_Toc489268409)

[Section 11: Adaptive Materials and Aids 32](#_Toc489268410)

[Section 12: Braille and Large Print Texts 35](#_Toc489268411)

[Section 13: American Printing House (APH) Items 36](#_Toc489268412)

[Section 14: Low Vision Services 37](#_Toc489268413)

[Section 15: Orientation and Mobility 40](#_Toc489268414)

[Section 16: Psychological Evaluation 41](#_Toc489268415)

[Section 17: Vocational Rehabilitation 42](#_Toc489268416)

[Section 18: Enrollment in Non-Public Schools 43](#_Toc489268417)

[Section 19: Homeschooling 44](#_Toc489268418)

[Section 20: Consultation Services to Local Education Agencies 45](#_Toc489268419)

[Section 21: In-Service Education 46](#_Toc489268420)

[Section 22: Appeals Procedures 47](#_Toc489268421)

[Section 23: Independent Living Programs 50](#_Toc489268422)

[Section 24: Paraprofessional Training 55](#_Toc489268423)

# Section 1: Legislative Authority

**Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 10-295(a) through (b)(4) state the following:**

**Sec. 10-295(a) through (b) (4) of the Connecticut General Statutes. “Specialized vision-related instruction, educational programs, goods and services. Expense of services. Teachers and educational resources; funding.”**

**(a) All residents of this state, regardless of age, who, because of blindness or impaired vision, require specialized vision-related educational programs, goods and services, on the signed recommendation of the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services, shall be entitled to receive such instruction, programs, goods and services for such length of time as is deemed expedient by said commissioner. Upon the petition of any parent or guardian of a child who is blind or visually impaired, a local board of education may provide such instruction within the town or it may provide for such instruction by agreement with other towns as provided in subsection (d) of section 10-76d. All educational privileges prescribed in part V of chapter 164, not inconsistent with the provisions of this chapter, shall apply to the pupils covered by this subsection.**

**(b) The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall expend funds for the services made available pursuant to subsection (a) of this section from the educational aid for children who are blind or visually impaired account in accordance with the provisions of this subsection. The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services may adopt, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 54, such regulations as the commissioner deems necessary to carry out the purpose and intent of this subsection.**

**(1) The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall provide, upon written request from any interested school district, the services of teachers who instruct students who are visually impaired, based on the levels established in the individualized education or service plan. The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall also make available resources, including, but not limited to, the braille and large print library, to all teachers of public and nonpublic school children. The commissioner may also provide vision-related professional development and training to all school districts and cover the actual cost for paraprofessionals from school districts to participate in agency-sponsored braille training programs. The commissioner shall utilize education consultant positions, funded by moneys appropriated from the General Fund, to supplement new staffing that will be made available through the educational aid for children who are blind or visually impaired account, which shall be governed by formal written policies established by the commissioner.**

**(2) The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services may use funds appropriated to said account to provide specialized books, materials, equipment, supplies, adaptive technology services and devices, specialist examinations and aids, preschool programs and vision-related independent living services, excluding primary educational placement, for eligible children.**

**(3) The Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services may, within available appropriations, employ certified teachers who instruct students who are visually impaired in sufficient numbers to meet the requests for services received from school districts. In responding to such requests, the commissioner shall utilize a formula for determining the number of teachers needed to serve the school districts, crediting six points for each child learning braille and one point for each other child, with one full-time certified teacher who instructs students who are visually impaired assigned for every twenty-five points credited. The commissioner shall exercise due diligence to employ the needed number of certified teachers who instruct students who are visually impaired, but shall not be liable for lack of resources. Funds appropriated to said account may also be utilized to employ additional staff in numbers sufficient to provide compensatory skills evaluations and training to children who are blind or visually impaired, special assistants and other support staff necessary to ensure the efficient operation of service delivery. Not later than October first of each year, the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall determine the number of teachers needed based on the formula provided in this subdivision. Based on such determination, the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services shall estimate the funding needed to pay such teachers’ salaries and related expenses.**

**(4) In any fiscal year, when funds appropriated to cover the combined costs associated with providing the services set forth in subdivisions (2) and (3) of this subsection are projected to be insufficient, the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services may collect revenue from all school districts that have requested such services on a per student pro rata basis, in the sums necessary to cover the projected portion of these services for which there are insufficient appropriations.**

# Section 2: Definitions

**(1) "Agency" refers to the Department of Rehabilitation Services.**

**(2) "Birth-to-Three System" refers to the state of Connecticut program which operates under the requirements of Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and assists and strengthens the capacity of families to meet the developmental and health-related needs of infants and toddlers who have delays or disabilities.**

**(3) "Blind" or "Legally Blind" refers to "legally blind" as defined in section 10-294a of the general statutes. The terms "blind" and "legally blind" are interchangeable for the purposes of these policies.**

**(4) “Bureau” or “BESB” refers to the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, within the Department of Rehabilitation Services.**

**(5) "Children's Services Program" refers to that program of the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind which provides services to children who are blind, deafblind and visually impaired.**

**(6) “Client” refers to a recipient of services from the BESB Children’s Services Program, or in a case where 1) the recipient is a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship and 2) a parental decision is required in behalf of the recipient, client refers to the parent, guardian, conservator or authorized legal representative.**

**(7) "Deafblind" refers to having combined vision and hearing losses which challenge a person's ability to communicate and interact with others, to access information and to move about safely.**

**(8) “Education Consultant” refers to an employee of the agency who is certified under Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines to instruct students with legal blindness and visual impairment and is employed for the purpose of providing such special services and instruction.**

**(9) "Education Plan" or “applicable Education Plan” refers to any of the following: an Individualized Education Program (IEP), an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a Section 504 Accommodation Plan and a Services Plan.**

**(10) "Expanded Core Curriculum" or "ECC" refers to a curriculum of instruction that encompasses the knowledge and skills that are needed by students with legal blindness or visual impairment in addition to a traditional academic core curriculum. The ECC includes orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, use of assistive technology, sensory efficiency skills, self-determination and compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes.**

**(11) "IEP" refers to an Individualized Education Program developed in accordance with the requirements of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and state special education requirements.**

**(12) "IFSP" refers to an Individualized Family Service Plan developed in accordance with Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.**

**(13) "Learning Media Assessment" refers to an assessment tool used by the Education Consultant or Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind to assist in identifying the best learning and literacy media for a student including print, Braille, audio, objects or any combination thereof.**

**(14) "Local Education Agency" or "LEA" refers to a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within Connecticut for either administrative control or direction of or to perform a service function for public elementary schools or secondary schools in a town, city, school district or other political subdivision of the state or for such combination of towns, cities or school districts as are recognized in Connecticut as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.**

**(15) "Reading Rate Assessment" refers to an assessment administered and used by the Education Consultant or Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind to track the rate, accuracy and fluency of a student's reading skills.**

**(16) "Section 504 Accommodation Plan" or "Section 504 Plan" refers to a plan for a child who does not have a learning disability but who has a disability which requires accommodation in the educational setting.**

**(17) "Services Plan" refers to a written statement that describes the special education and related services an LEA will provide to a parentally placed private school child with a disability.**

**(18) “Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind" refers to a person who is certified under Connecticut State Department of Education guidelines to instruct students with legal blindness and visual impairment and is employed or contracted by a Local Education Agency for the purpose of providing such special services and instruction.**

# Section 3: Confidentiality and Availability of Case Records

**All information, both medical and personal, given or made available to the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind shall be held confidential. Use of such information will be limited to purposes directly connected with the administration of the client’s applicable Education Plan. Information will not be disclosed, directly or indirectly, to any individual, agency or organization without the written consent of the client unless:**

**a) sharing or releasing of information is needed to protect the client or another person from possible physical harm or violence;**

**b) the Bureau is ordered to share the information by a court order or subpoena; or**

**c) the information is required by mandatory reporting laws.**

**When information is requested but is not required by law to be released, the authorization to so release shall be obtained from the client prior to release of the information.**

**All clients have a right to:**

**a) request in writing an appointment to review the case record with such appointment scheduled within ten (10) working days after receipt of a written request;**

**b) have copied (at cost) any part of the record with copies to be furnished within five (5) working days after receipt of a written request;**

**c) challenge the content of the record and request deletion or change with written notice of Children’s Services action on such request to be furnished within ten (10) working days.**

**All clients shall receive written information and, if appropriate, in the native language and in their preferred mode of communication regarding the scope of confidentiality at the time of application for Children’s Services. Such written information shall:**

**a) identify the agency authority to gather and collect information;**

**b) explain the intended purpose for using or releasing such information;**

**c) provide an explanation of whether the provision of information is mandatory or voluntary and the effect that withholding requested or required information could have on service delivery;**

**d) identify the situations where the agency does or does not require informed written consent of the individual before information may be released, and;**

**e) identify the other agencies to which information is routinely released.**

**When personal information has been obtained from a third party (i.e., another agency or organization), it may be released only by, or under the conditions established by that party. If that source has indicated that the information is not to be re-released, then the requester is to be referred back to the original source. Medical, psychological, or other information which the Bureau believes may be harmful to the client may not be released directly but must be provided to a designated authorized legal representative and/or a physician or psychologist.**

**The determination of whether information would be harmful to the individual must be made with input from the supervisory staff of Children’s Services. Clients must be advised of the right to appeal any denial of release of records. Furthermore:**

**a) An official of the Bureau shall be present at all inspections. This person will interpret the record, if appropriate.**

**b) A record shall be kept of the people who have seen the record. The client must sign the review form.**

**c) Psychological reports, clinical diagnoses, and subjective evaluations, when developed for a case study and when shared with other personnel are accessible. Routine medical and eye reports may be reviewed; however, copies will be furnished only with the written permission of the physician or optometrist.**

**d) The client has the right to request and receive a copy, at cost, of any or all parts of their records. This copy will be furnished within five business days after receipt of a written request. A charge may be made, based upon the prevailing rate for photocopying services but may be waived in cases of financial hardship or if the number of pages requested is 10 or fewer. Individualized Family Service Plans, Individualized Education Programs, Section 504 Accommodation Plans or Service Plans shall be provided at no cost to the client.**

# Section 4: Referral and Eligibility

**In order to be eligible for services from the Children’s Services Program of the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, an individual must meet the statutory definition of legal blindness or vision impairment and have at least one parent, guardian, conservator or authorized legal representative who is a resident of the State of Connecticut. In addition, clients of school age (kindergarten through high school exit) must be eligible for special education services through a Local Education Agency (LEA) within the State, as supported by the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP), or be eligible for services under a Section 504 Accommodation Plan (Section 504 Plan) or Services Plan. Children who have not attained the age of three must meet the eligibility criteria for the statewide Birth-to-Three System as supported by the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).**

**The legal definition of blindness states that the best corrected visual acuity of the indivdual can be no greater than 20/200 in the better eye; or that a loss of visual field in the better eye retains no greater than 20 degrees of field vision.**

**For a person to meet the legal definition of visually impaired, their best corrected visual acuity in the better eye can be no greater than 20/70.**

**Anyone may make a referral to the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, Children’s Services Program. Upon request, an Eye Report Form is sent to the individual, who requests their Physician or Optometrist to complete it and return it to the Bureau. After the Eye Report has been reviewed by the Bureau and the referred individual’s vision has been determined to fall within the legal guidelines for eligibility, an Application for Services will be mailed to the individual’s home.**

**When the Bureau has received the completed Application for Services and officially enrolled the individual on the Registry of the Bureau, a letter is sent to the individual and a copy is sent to the assigned Education Consultant, or to the Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind, informing them that the referred individual is now eligible for services from the Children’s Services Program of BESB.**

# Section 5: Services For Clients No Longer Visually Impaired

**The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) pursuant to Connecticut General Statute 10-295(a), may provide time-limited educational services to an individual whose vision has improved to the level that the individual is no longer visually impaired, provided that the individual has an Individualized Education Program, Section 504 Accommodation Plan, Service Plan, or Individualized Family Service Plan.**

**These services will apply to an individual who was a BESB client immediately preceding a determination that the individual is no longer visually impaired. Services will continue for the remainder of the current school year, following the guidelines of the applicable Education Plan.**

**The extent of services to the individual in the subsequent school year will be limited to no-cost services, if available, such as consultation by a BESB-employed Education Consultant twice per school year (as available), and the loan of large print textbooks and materials available within the Resource Library at BESB. No additional services will be provided unless a reevaluation by a Physician or Optometrist indicates that the individual once again qualifies for BESB services by meeting the statutory definition for legal blindness or vision impairment, or if there is clear evidence from a Physician or Optometrist that the individual’s eye condition has continued to deterioriate and will result in vision impairment or legal blindness within the subsequent school year.**

# Section 6: Services For Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

**The Department of Rehabilitation Services collaborates in the Statewide Birth-to-Three System per Memorandum of Understanding with the State Office of Early Childhood. Education Consultants from BESB assume a consulting role for clients enrolled in the Statewide Birth-to-Three System who are experiencing vision impairments that meet the definition of “visually impaired” or “legally blind.” Education Consultants from BESB work directly with the clients and their parents, guardians, conservators, or authorized legal representatives, and educators on vision-related or blindness-related issues and may directly provide or purchase such items and services as are necessary for the vision-related or blindness-related development of the client. Such services may include:**

1. **Vision, independent living, or orientation and mobility services;**
2. **Assistive technology devices; and**
3. **Ongoing assessment with instruments developed specifically for clients who are deafblind, blind, or visually impaired.**

The Education Consultants from BESB remain involved in the provision of vision-related or blindness-related educational and consultation services until the client is enrolled in kindergarten through the Local Education Agency, with an applicable Education Plan, unless the Local Education Agency opts to serve the client directly at a younger age, under an applicable Education Plan. At the time of enrollment in kindergarten through the Local Education Agency, the involvement of BESB-provided Education Consultants is determined by the Children’s Services policies for School-Age clients.

**BESB eligible preschool clients who turn age 3, and who are not eligible for an**  **Individualized Education Program, Section 504 Accommodation Plan or Service Plan, may continue to receive consultation services from a BESB Education Consultant, as well as Orientation and Mobility services, with supervisory approval. Low vision services and aids to maintain normal development may also be provided. These clients may participate in BESB sponsored events to address the expanded core curriculum.**

**BESB may cover the costs of eligible vision-related or blindness-related services and items as noted in the applicable Education Plan, consistent with state fee schedules from approved vendors. Services and items that are not directly related to the visual or blindness-related development of the client may be available through another public or private agency that has been assigned case coordination responsibilities under the Statewide Birth-to- Three System. Parents, guardians, conservators, or authorized legal representatives who desire services and items that are determined by the BESB Education Consultant to not be directly related to the visual or blindness-related development of the client shall be instructed to contact the case coordinator to explore whether those services are available through other sources. Services provided by BESB to preschool clients who are visually impaired or legally blind shall be pre-authorized through the issuance of purchase of service commitments by this agency, and are not directly reimburseable to the Local Education Agency.**

**Clients with legal blindness or visual impairments, whose parents, guardians, conservators, or authorized legal representatives decline to participate in the Statewide Birth-to-Three System remain eligible for vision-related or blindness-related services under BESB authorizing statutes, consistent with state fee schedules from approved vendors.**

**Assignment of Education Consultants will be done by the Education Supervisor, based upon caseload size, geographic location and availability of staffing. Periodic adjustments in the caseload composition resulting in Education Consultant reassignment will be implemented by the Education Supervisor as necessary to ensure the appropriate allocation of staffing resources to cover the requests for services.**

**Education Consultants from BESB will inform parents, guardians, conservators and authorized legal representatives about services that are available through the Statewide Birth-to-Three System and other programs that may be applicable. For clients that are enrolled in the Statewide Birth-to-Three System and who are also receiving services through BESB, all services provided through this Bureau will be listed under the “Early Intervention Services and Supports” section of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) if the service is required under the Statewide Birth-to-Three System, or under “Other Services” on the IFSP if the service is offered by BESB but is not a required early intervention service under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

**The Birth-to-Three provider that has been designated as the service coordinator will be responsible for coordinating all services across agency lines and serve as a single point of contact in helping parents , guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives to obtain services and assistance from BESB and other required Birth-to-Three service providers. Not later than the 15th of each month, the BESB Education Consultant providing services in conjuction with a comprehensive program for a client enrolled in the Statewide Birth-to-Three System will mail, fax or email the attendance information with dates and locations of services and any accompanying progress notes for the previous month to the Birth-to-Three System.**

# Section 7: School Age Individuals with Legal Blindness or Visual Impairments Enrolled in Public Schools

While the Local Education Agency (LEA) has the responsibility for the education of clients who are legally blind and visually impaired enrolled within their service area, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind is authorized through Statute to assist with the vision-related or blindness-related special educational and expanded core curriculum needs of these individuals. The Children's Services Program discharges this responsibility by providing certified Education Consultants upon written request of the Local Education Agency (LEA) to offer direct instruction to eligible clients in vision-related or blindness-related skills and consultation services to Local Education Agencies and families, by distributing books and materials, and by purchasing, within available appropriations, vision-related or blindness-related equipment and services as noted in the applicable Education Plan that are necessary for the client to experience full inclusion in the educational setting.

The education of clients with vision impairments or blindness, who also have additional, significant disabling conditions as documented through medical professionals or others so licensed or certified to make such determinations, is also the responsiblity of the Local Education Agency (LEA). BESB Education Consultants can also work with these individuals to address the vision-related or blindness-related equipment and service needs as noted in the applicable Education Plan that are necessary for the client to experience full inclusion in the educational setting.

As stated in Connecticut General Statutes 10-295(b)(3), the Bureau cannot be held liable for lack of resources to deliver these services. The Bureau shall make all practical efforts for BESB staff to directly deliver the entire number of hours of service for vision-related or blindness-related goals that are in the applicable Education Plan of the client. However, the ultimate responsibility for fulfilling the terms identified in the applicalbe Education Plan rests with the Local Education Agency. In situations where the applicable Education Plan has specified a level of service or programming that exceeds the capacity of BESB staff or funding, it shall be the responsibility of the Local Education Agency to address the remaining service hours or programming that is outside of the capacity of BESB.

# Section 8: BESB Education Consultants for School Age Clients

**The Department of Rehabilitation Services may, within available appropriations, employ Education Consultants to meet the requests for services received from Local Education Agencies by May 31st of each preceding school year. Based on such determination, the Department of Rehabilitation Services shall estimate the funding needed to pay such Education Consultants’ salaries, benefits and related expenses.**

**In responding to such requests, the agency shall utilize a formula for determining the number of Education Consultants needed to collectively serve the Local Education Agencies that have requested a BESB Education Consultant, crediting six points per each Braille learning client of the Children’s Services Program and one point for each other client of the Children’s Services Program, with one full-time Education Consultant for every twenty-five points. The agency shall exercise due diligence to employ the needed number of Education Consultants, but shall not be liable for lack of resources.**

**Assignment of Education Consultants will be done by the Education Supervisor, based upon caseload size and point distribution as noted above, geographic location and availability of staffing. Periodic adjustments in the caseload composition resulting in Education Consultant reassignment will be implemented by the Education Supervisor as necessary to ensure the appropriate allocation of staffing resources to cover the requests for services.**

**As identified in State Statute, not later than October 1st of each year, the agency shall determine the number of Education Consultants needed for the current school year based on the formula provided in this Section. Through the completion of a form provided by BESB no later than May 1st of every year, Local Education Agencies will be given the option of selecting to receive the services of a BESB provided Education Consultant for the upcoming school year to provide direct instruction and consultation services for eligible clients.**

**The option for selecting a BESB provided Education Consultant will be at the discretion of each Local Education Agency (LEA). Those Local Education Agencies opting to make their own arrangements for the provision of a Certified Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind for the upcoming school year shall be fully responsible for the service delivery to all enrolled school age clients within their service area. BESB will be under no obligation to provide the services of an Education Consultant to supplement these services for school age clients enrolled in the Local Education Agency service area. In emergency circumstances that occur during the course of a school year, such as the loss of a Certified Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind who is directly hired or contracted by the Local Education Agency, BESB will make every effort to cover the short-term needs of the LEA while they actively recruit for a replacement, or the LEA may opt to request a BESB provided Education Consultant, if available. In such emergency situations, first priority will be coverage for clients who are actively learning Braille.**

**In any fiscal year, when funds appropriated to cover the combined costs associated with providing BESB services to the Local Education Agencies (LEA) that have requested such services are projected to be insufficient, the Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services may collect revenue from all Local Education Agencies that have requested such services on a per student pro rata basis, in the sums necessary to cover the projected portion of these services for which there are insufficient appropriations.**

**In such circumstances, the agency shall notify each LEA in writing no later than December 1st of the school year, indicating the projected shortfall and the prorated fee necessary to cover the costs for the remainder of the school year. Funds will be due to BESB within the school year, within such time as specified by BESB, in order to avoid interuptions in services.**

In circumstances where a Local Education Agency has chosen to hire or contract for its own Certified Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind to serve enrolled school age clients within their service area, the following exceptions will apply, unless the LEA specifically requests a waiver in writing of these provisions:

1. BESB will provide Education Consultant services to all enrolled clients of the LEA who are classified as deafblind.
2. BESB will provide Education Consultant services to all eligible clients who attend state vocational technical schools.
3. BESB will provide Education Consultant services, up to two hours consultation per year to all eligible clients who attend Perkins School for the Blind.
4. BESB will provide In-service training and orientation on topics related to the education of children who are blind or visually impaired to all interested staff of the Local Education Agency at no cost.
5. BESB will provide, within available funding, textbooks and materials from the Bureau’s loaning library at no cost to the Local Education Agency, provided the books are returned at the completion of the school year, or when no longer needed for the educational needs of the client.
6. BESB, within available funding, will cover the applicable cost of adaptive technology services including recommending appropriate, vision-related or blindness-related devices, software and aids, and training in their use.

If a Local Education Agency has opted to receive services from an Education Consultant from BESB rather than directly hiring or contracting for their own Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind, the Bureau may offer the following services within available funding and staffing resources, consistent with Bureau policy and where applicable, as stated in the applicable Education Plan of the client:

1. Braille instruction for clients when it is included in the applicable Education Plan;
2. Direct instruction, guidance and programs to a client in the Expanded Core Currriculum;
3. Adaptive technology services, including the recommendation and provision of appropriate vision-related or blindness-related adaptive devices, software and aids, and training in their use;
4. Textbooks and materials from the Bureau’s lending library, provided the books are returned when no longer needed for the educational needs of the client;
5. Curriculum consultation for classroom teachers who have clients with blindness or visual impairment;
6. In-service training and orientation on the education of clients who are blind or visually impaired to the staff of the LEA.

In circumstances, where the applicable Education Plan of the client identifies a level of service that exceeds the availability of BESB staffing resources, the Local Education Agency will be responsible for coordinating and providing the additional services that cannot be provided by BESB staff.

**REQUEST FOR BESB EDUCATION CONSULTANT FORM**

**SCHOOL YEAR:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**LEA Name (Please fill in)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Requesting BESB Education Consultant:**

* **Yes. Our LEA is requesting a BESB Education Consultant to serve the students in our service area who are eligible for services in the next school year.**
* **We currently have no BESB eligible students, but would like BESB to send an Education Consultant if a student in our service area is identified as eligible for services during the next school year.**
* **No. Our LEA will hire or contract our own Certified Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind.**

**Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **Special Education Director Date**

**Please return this form by May 31, ­­­\_\_\_\_\_ to:**

**Education Supervisor**

**Department of Rehabilitation Services, BESB**

**184 Windsor Avenue**

**Windsor, CT 06095**

**Fax: 860-602-4030**

# Section 9: Reporting Requirements

**Based on the requirement in Section 10-295(a) of the Connecticut General Statutes to provide specialized vision-related or blindness-related educational programs, goods and services to individuals who are visually impaired or blind, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind must maintain:**

1. **a list of all children within the State of Connecticut who meet the statutory definition of Legal Blindness or Visual Impairment;**
2. **a list of children with Legal Blindness for the American Printing House for the Blind (Federal Quota money);**
3. **an inventory of state-owned books and equipment;**
4. **a record of the expenses charged to the agency appropriation for the Children’s Services Program.**

Local Education Agencies that directly provide a Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind rather than utilizing BESB Education Consultant services shall notify the Bureau within 30 days of:

 a) changes in address or in visual status;

 b) changes in the location of books provided by the Bureau;

 c) changes in the location of equipment lent by the Bureau.

**Additionally, Local Education Agencies that directly provide a Teacher for Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind rather than utilizing BESB Education Consultant services shall provide the following information to the Bureau no later than the last business day in May of each school year:**

1. **An annual report on the education progress and placement of each client on forms provided by the Bureau;**
2. **Minutes of each student’s Planning and Placement Team (PPT) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan meetings;**
3. **Each client’s applicable Education Plan;**
4. **An annual Learning Media Assessment on forms provided by BESB for any client who is legally blind or visuallly impaired who is not receiving instruction in Braille, regardless of age or presence of additional disabilities;**
5. **An Annual Reading Rate Assessment on forms provided by BESB for every client who is seven years-old or older who is a reader of print, Braille or auditory formats;**
6. **A summary and narrative of transition school-to-work activities offered to each client age 16 or older and the outcomes achieved or, if applicable, an explanation for why no such services were offered;**
7. **A narrative summary of the expanded core curricula and extracurricular activities provided to the client or, if applicable, an explanation for why no such services were offered.**

# Section 10: Adaptive Devices, Software and Services

**BESB may, within available approriations provide the most effective, least expensive, vision-related or blindness-related adaptive devices and adaptive software, that are essential to the client’s participation in education and the expanded core curriculum.**

**Regardless of cost, prior to the provision of adaptive devices and adaptive software by BESB, the item(s) must:**

**a) be recommended in a written report by a Rehabilitation Technologist or Rehabilitation Teacher provided by the Bureau, and;**

**b) be specified in the applicable Education Plan of the client.**

**Clients shall have the opportunity to participate in the assessment by the Rehabilitation Teacher or Rehabilitation Technologist.**

**BESB shall not provide mainstream equipment, devices and software that is made available by another service provider, the Local Education Agency, or a non-public school for all students to utilize, regardless of disability. The provision by BESB of non-adaptive equipment and devices such as tablets, computers or peripheral items such as printers shall only be considered when another service provider, the Local Education Agency, or the non-public school does not make such devices available to students in general, and when the Rehabilitation Teacher or Rehabilitation Technologist of the Bureau documents through a written assessment that the device is the most effective, least expensive and age-appropriate solution for a vision-related or blindness-related need of the client. A computer or tablet will not be considered as necessary for vision-related or blindness-related needs, and therefore not provided by BESB if no adaptive features of the device itself or products such as large print software, refreshable Braille, or text-to-speech software are required by the client in order to use the computer or tablet.**

**Blindness-related adaptive devices, software, scanners and peripherals may be purchased as early as the kindergarten year for school use by the paraprofessional for Braille production on behalf of a Braille learning client in an academic program.**

**Braille embossers for home use may be provided when deemed essential for the client to produce their own Braille materials outside of the school setting.**

**Stationary electronic magnification devices can be provided for both home and school locations only when the Rehabilitation Teacher or Rehabilitation Technologist determines through an assessment that a portable electronic magnifying device is not suitable to meet the magnification needs for the client to adequately participate in educational or expanded core curriculum activities.**

**Sensory devices for clients who are deafblind, adapted switches for clients with motor impediments, and ancillary devices that enhance or augment speech or motor functioning, may be provided to facilitate the use of adaptive vision-related or blindness-related adaptive devices, equipment or software.**

**Ownership of all adaptive technology devices, software, equipment and peripherals provided by BESB shall be with the client. The cost of maintenance or repair of the equipment shall rest with the client. In circumstances where the client requests, the agency shall reimburse for the documented cost of the repair and applicable shipping by the client of said equipment to and from the repair location. Temporary loan of equipment to clients to address short-term needs (such as a loan while the client’s equipment is being repaired or for a short-term assessment) shall be assigned through the agency loan process and will not transfer in ownership.**

**Rehabilitation Technology services are available on a short-term basis, within available resources, to train clients in the use of adaptive technology provided by the Bureau.**

**All adaptive technology devices, equipment, software, and peripherals shall be purchased in accordance with State of Connecticut purchasing procedures, using state-authorized vendors.**

# Section 11: Adaptive Materials and Aids

a) Adaptive Materials and Educational Aids for Infants, Toddlers and Preschool Clients who are Visually Impaired or Blind

Vision loss can have an impact on many areas of a client’s development. Adaptive educational materials and aids are beneficial to facilitate and assess the development of play, social skills, motor skills, language skills and daily living skills for the clients who are infants, toddlers or preschoolers. Materials are needed to assess pre-reading and writing skills, including tactual sensitivity, motor coordination and relative strengths in tactual, visual and auditory modes. Pre-Braille materials are needed to encourage literacy skills in the tactile learner. Preschool clients with low vision require materials to make the preschool experience accessible in all developmental domains both at home and at school.

Adaptive materials and aids that may be ordered include:

(1) Vision-related or blindness-related developmental toys.

(2) Visually stimulating materials to promote visual efficiency and increased visual access to the environment.

(3) Braille and Pre-Braille materials for literacy development, including adaptations to the environment that provide appropriate access to the materials. ( i.e. story boxes).

(4) Materials to compensate for the client’s visual loss. (i.e. slant boards, brightly colored arts and crafts materials, switches & switch activated toys).

(5) Materials to enhance tactile and auditory learning modes. (i.e. calendar boxes, audio playback devices, textured switches)

b) Adaptive Materials and Educational Aids for School Age Clients who are Visually Impaired or Blind

**A variety of devices and materials may be needed throughout the education process to support Braille, tactile and low vision learning. This includes instructional materials that relate to the expanded core curriculum. Examples may include the following, based upon individual circumstances:**

**(1) Daily Living Skills:**

**(A) Materials that are modified for clients with blindness or low vision, including Braille or large-numbered watches, large print keyboard labels, liquid level indicators, signature and writing guides, bold lined paper, large print or Braille calendars, and similar adapted materials to access daily living and education activities.**

**(2) Recreation/Leisure/Social:**

**(A) Tactual or auditory materials such as Beep balls, modified board games, card games, etc.**

**(3) Compensatory Skills:**

**(A) Reading and writing materials.**

(B) Talking/large print calculator, talking dictionary.

(4) Subscriptions to accessible literature such as but not limited to Bookshare.org, Learning Ally, National Braille Press Book Club, etc.

**(5) Assessment materials for evaluating literacy and functional vision.**

**(6) Art supplies that are specifically needed for modification purposes, beyond those supplies typically provided to all students in the art class.**

**(7) Accessible typing and keyboarding software programs.**

(8) Visual Efficiency:

(A) Low vision aids as recommended by a Rehabilitation Teacher of the Bureau, an agency approved Low Vision provider, or Low Vision Center.

(9) Money Management:

(A) Money identifiers, check writing guides, calculators, etc.

(10) Orientation and Mobility:

(A) White Canes and instruction in their use.

# Section 12: Braille and Large Print Texts

**The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind can provide, within available resources, Braille and large print textbooks and materials to BESB clients who attend schools within a Local Education Agency’s service area, or in a state or non-public school.**

**The school personnel are responsible for providing BESB with a list of educational materials needed for the client’s curriculum for the next school year by no later than March 1st of the current school year. BESB will make every effort to assist in providing the materials requested by the start of the new school year. Items that are on-shelf in the Materials Resource Center at the Bureau are then assigned to the client using a bar code inventory system. This system tracks each book checked out, the client history and when the book is due back. The books and materials are then loaned to the school for the client to use. If the materials requested are not available from the Materials Resource Center, they are purchased by BESB from vendors that are under State contract. Upon receipt by the Bureau, these books and materials will be loaned to the school for the client to use.**

**Upon completion of the course, the school must promptly return to the Bureau all volumes of each book that was loaned. Failure to return the book within thirty (30) days of the completion of the course, or to return all volumes that were loaned may result in a fee to the school for the actual cost of replacing the missing volumes or books.**

**If, for any reason the school changes the client’s curriculum after the materials originally requested by the school have been ordered, the school will be responsible for purchasing the new materials.**

# Section 13: American Printing House (APH) Items

**The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) receives federal Quota funds for students that are legally blind. Each year there is an amount allocated per student. Each state is responsible to complete a census for APH every year to give them the number of students that qualify for the funding.**

**Education Consultants and Teachers of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind must submit a Purchase Request for Goods or Services to the Ex Officio Trustee for items from the APH catalog to be ordered from APH Quota funds. The Ex Officio Trustee then confirms the client is eligible to receive items from Quota and orders them from APH. The student must have a current applicable Education Plan to be considered for purchases through the APH Quota funds.**

# Section 14: Low Vision Services

**For the client who has some functional vision, it is important that he or she gain maximum benefit from that vision. A thorough low vision evaluation and the accompanying optical aids, if recommended, is an essential part of helping the client make the best use of his/her vision.**

**Low vision evaluations should become a continuing facet of the client’s educational program, because through the years various changes occur, including:**

**- changes in the eye conditions;**

**- developments in technology;**

**- increasing efficiency in the use of vision;**

**- improvement in the manipulation of optical aids.**

**In accordance with fee schedules adopted by the agency, the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind may cover the cost of a client’s low vision evaluation and follow-up training by a BESB-approved low vision provider. The cost of low vision devices recommended by the low vision provider may only be paid for in accordance with approved fee schedules and upon the request of the assigned Education Consultant or Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind. A client may receive low vision services even if those services are not in the client’s applicable Education Plan.**

**Clients shall be provided with the list of agency approved low vision providers to select from for the provision of the low vision examination. A purchase authorization request from the agency must be issued to the low vision provider in advance of the provision of services. Low vision services that are not pre-authorized cannot be paid for with agency funds.**

**To obtain a low vision evaluation, the Education Consultant or Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind should complete and submit the required referral form, consent form and purchase request to the Children’s Services Supervisor for review and approval.**

**After the request has been given supervisory approval, a purchase authorization along with the referral forms and invoices are sent to the low vision specialist. A written notification form is sent to the client, who may then call the examiner's office to schedule an appointment.**

**After the low vision evaluation has been completed, the examiner will forward to the Bureau a copy of the results, along with any recommendations for magnifying aids or glasses.**

**Upon supervisory approval, a purchase authorization will be sent to the examiner for the aids to be dispensed. The examiner will contact the client when the devices are available. A subsequent office visit will occur, where the examiner will teach the client how to use the devices.**

**Education Consultants and Teachers of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind may, if requested, accompany the client to the evaluation, particularly if there are specific educational questions.**

**It will be the responsibility of the Education Consultant or Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind to verify the provision of low vision aids to the client before the agency will release funds to cover the costs associated with the low vision process.**

The Low Vision Evaluation may be repeated every two years if needed, unless a degenerative eye condition or significant, noticeable reduction in functional vision may require an interim visit. Low vision services are not intended to replace regular eye care and examinations.

# Section 15: Orientation and Mobility

**Clients with vision impairments or legal blindness may be referred for orientation and mobility training at any age. The Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind employs Mobility Specialists whose function is to assist and train clients to move more confidently and safely through their environments. Orientation and Mobility Instructors are available to provide travel training and to provide canes and anti-glare sunglasses to facilitate safe travel. Instruction may occur in the home, in the school, in the community, and in the use of public and private transportation services.**

Referral is made by completing an Orientation and Mobility Referral form and submitting it to the Quality Control Reviewer at the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind. Services available through BESB staffing need not be listed in the client’s applicable Education Plan, except that in a school setting such services or aids must be provided for in the applicable Education Plan. Services are provided within available BESB staffing resources and the Bureau is not liable for the delivery of hours of Orientation and Mobility instruction that are identified in an applicable Education Plan of the client that are in excess of staff availability.

# Section 16: Psychological Evaluation

**It may be desirable at times for a client with vision impairment or blindness to have an individual evaluation of his or her intellectual functioning, interests and aptitudes, emotional health and stability and social interaction.**

**If a client has enough eyesight to function visually, then the school psychologist may properly administer the same sort of tests that are used for all the children in the school system. If, however, the client functions non-visually, then it may be more helpful for the testing to be done by a psychologist who is familiar with the modifications and adjustments that are made for individuals who are blind.**

**It is essential that the psychological examiner be acutely sensitive to the subtle ways in which a visual disability may have limited a client's experience or understanding, and thus influence the results of an examination.**

**BESB may pay for psychological testing through approved psychologists or other professionals certified or licensed to administer intellectual and developmental testing where such testing is recommended in the client’s applicable Education Plan.**

**The Education Consultant or Teacher of Children who are Visually Impaired or Blind should contact the Supervisor of the Children’s Services Program to discuss the options that are most appropriate in each situation. It is important that the LEA provide a copy of all psychological reports directly to BESB, after obtaining an authorization to release the information from the client so that the report(s) may become part of the client’s permanent file.**

# Section 17: Vocational Rehabilitation

**Clients of BESB who are legally blind (and visually impaired, if registered as a client of the Bureau’s Children’s Services Program on or after January 1, 2010) are served by the Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind, Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Referral to the Vocational Rehabilitation Program of BESB for clients served by the Children’s Services Program of BESB may occur as early as the 14th birthday, but should not occur later than the 16th birthday for a client that has a pre-vocational or vocational component to his/her applicable Education Plan. During the transition years, it is critically important to involve the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Planning and Placement Team process to ensure a smooth transition into employment, vocational training or higher education after graduation.**

Specialized services and funding may be available through the Vocational Rehabilitation Program for transition school to work activities, such as, but not limited to mentoring programs with former recipients of BESB services who are successfully employed, job shadowing experiences, leadership development camps, independent living training, adaptive technology training and related skills development opportunities during the school year and over the summer break. Transition programs and services that require a funding obligation from BESB should be included in the applicable Education Plan of the client.

Further information on activities can be obtained by contacting the Supervisor of Vocational Rehabilitation.

# Section 18: Enrollment in Non-Public Schools

Clients who are enrolled in a non-public school may receive vision-related or blindness-related consultation services from BESB staff. These clients may participate in Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) activities sponsored by the Bureau. Low vision services and aids to maintain optimal visual functioning may also be provided. Other purchased vision-related or blindness-related goods and services may only be provided if recommended in the applicable Education Plan.

# Section 19: Homeschooling

Clients who have withdrawn from public school who are being homeschooled may receive vision-related or blindness-related consultation services from BESB staff. These clients may participate in Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) activities sponsored by the Bureau. Low vision services and aids to maintain optimal visual functioning may also be provided. No other BESB provided services are available to homeschooled clients.

# Section 20: Consultation Services to Local Education Agencies

**BESB staff members are available to speak to community groups, and professional organizations on topics related to the education of individuals who are visually impaired or blind.**

**Staff members of the Bureau are available to act as leaders or speakers in local school workshops or seminars for regular classroom teachers if desired.**

**Staff members are able to offer consultation in some specialized areas such as science, math, adapted educational items that feature speech, large print or Braille access technology, curriculum modification to make classroom instruction accessible to clients of BESB, preschool needs, orientation and mobility or needs of children with multiple disabilities.**

# Section 21: In-Service Education

**The Children’s Services Program has a commitment to provide in-service professional development and enrichment opportunities to educators and support staff by utilizing such approaches as one-day workshops, lectures and seminars, and Connecticut based publications.**

**BESB’s Children’s Services Program strives to assist educators and support staff in their efforts to learn about new vision-related and blindness-related materials and techniques; solve specific problems; assimilate new concepts in educational theory; discover new or different approaches to teach children with vision impairments or blindness; gain new perspectives on their roles as educators; and work cooperatively to improve the education of children with visual impairments or blindness.**

**The Bureau distributes to Local Education Agencies a listing of upcoming educational seminars and training opportunities.**

# Section 22: Appeals Procedures

**a) Any client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives who is dissatisfied with any determinations made by personnel of BESB’s Children’s Services Program concerning the furnishing or denial of services may request a timely review of those determinations. The client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives shall make a written request for a review of the decision that was made by the BESB personnel and state in the written request the nature of the matters to be addressed in the review. The Bureau may not institute a suspension, reduction or termination of services being provided under the applicable Education Plan during the review period unless the client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives so requests or the Bureau has evidence that services have been obtained through misrepresentation, fraud, collusion or criminal conduct on the part of the client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives.**

**b) Review Options**

**(1) Informal Resolution:**

**A client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives may seek an informal review of a decision by sending a written request to the Education Supervisor. This review will be conducted within twenty business days of receipt of the written request for such a review. The Education Supervisor shall issue a written decision, citing relevant BESB Children’s Services policies, statutes and regulations that factored into the outcome of the review.**

**(2) Formal Review:**

**A client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives may seek a formal review of a decision by sending a written request to the Bureau Director of BESB. This review will be conducted within twenty business days of receipt of the written request for such a review. The purpose of this subsequent review is to offer the client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives an option to provide written documentation of their concerns for timely resolution of disputed decisions that could not be resolved in the informal review process. The Bureau Director shall review pertinent information, including the policies referenced as the basis for the decision issued by the Education Supervisor, as well as any additional information that the client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives provides. The Bureau Director shall issue a written decision, citing relevant BESB Children’s Services policies, statutes and regulations that factored into the outcome of the review.**

**c) Disputes with Local Education Agencies**

**A client, or in the case of a minor or person under guardianship or conservatorship, their parents, guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives who is in disagreement with a determination made by personnel directly hired or contracted through a Local Education Agency should direct their concerns to the immediate supervisor of the individual within the Local Education Agency. BESB can assume a consultation role to facilitate clarifying understanding of Bureau policy as it pertains to the provision of vision-related or blindness-related services on the client’s behalf.**

**d) Disputes with Statewide Birth to Three System Providers**

**Additional formal hearing options may be available to parents guardians, conservators or authorized legal representatives of children who are enrolled in the Statewide Birth-to-Three System, administered through the Office of Early Childhood for disputed matters.**

# Section 23: Independent Living Programs

The Children’s Services Program may, within available funding and resources, purchase or directly provide for a client’s participation in independent living programs, both in state or out of state. Such programs must support the development of skills as identified in the Expanded Core Curriculum and shall be identified in the applicable Education Plan of the client.

Expanded Core Curriculum categories include:

**a) Compensatory academics**

**(1) Concept development**

**(2) Organizational skills**

**(3) Communication skills (including Braille or print reading and writing)**

**b) Orientation and Mobility**

**(1) Travel training to move independently in the home, school and community**

**(2) Use of white canes**

**(3) Training in the use of and access to public and private transportation**

**c) Social interaction**

**(1) Interpersonal skills**

**(2) Soft Skills and Behaviors**

**d) Independent living**

**(1) Self-care**

**(2) Cooking**

**(3) Cleaning**

**(4) Time management**

**(5) Money management**

**(6) Laundry and clothing care**

**e) Recreation and leisure**

**(1) Participation in sports**

**(2) Participation in recreation activities, outdoors and indoors**

**(3) Participation in community and social events**

**(4) Strategies for safety in recreation and leisure activities**

**f) Sensory efficiency**

**(1) Use of other senses (auditory, olfactory)**

**(2) Tactile access to environmental information**

**g) Use of technology**

**(1) Voice access technology**

**(2) Refreshable Braille technology**

**(3) Software and electronic visual magnification**

**(4) Use of accessible software and apps**

 **h) Career education**

**(1) Developing work traits and habits**

**(2) Career exploration**

**(3) Mentoring opportunities**

**(4) Job Shadowing**

**(5) Work Experiences**

 **i) Self-determination**

**(1) Self-advocacy skills**

**(2) Strategies for decision-making**

Within available funding, examples of programs and initiatives to address the Expanded Core Curriculum may include but not be limited to the following:

a) Paid Work and Internship Opportunities

These opportunities are designed to promote the development of worker traits and job readiness in school age clients, to better prepare them for the transition from school to careers. Clients perform work at community-based, integrated employment sites for competitive wages or a stipend.

b) Upward Bound Experiences

These programs include day camps and residential camp experiences that are operated by the Bureau or another public or private entity, agency, or person who has sufficient experience, training, expertise, and personnel to enable secondary education students of the Children’s Services Program to learn skills that promote the achievement of greater self-sufficiency and independence. These experiences may include immersion into physically challenging programs in an environment that promotes self-confidence, problem solving, analytical skills, self-understanding, self-advocacy, and social interaction with peers who are blind or visually impaired.

c) Technology Camp Experiences

These camps shall be administered by this Bureau or a public or private entity or person with sufficient experience, training, expertise, and personnel to meet the requirements of this Policy. The camp experiences shall take place in a facility that is equipped with state of the art adaptive technology for clients. The goal of the learning experience shall be to develop positive skills with adapted computer hardware and software that will encourage or allow clients who are blind or visually impaired to achieve greater self-sufficiency, proficiency, and independence.

d) Mentoring Experiences

Client participation in events, seminars, immersion camps (including residential situations) and related experiences that afford clients who are blind or visually impaired the opportunity to interact with mentors who are blind and who are successfully employed. Said experiences may include but shall not be limited to job shadowing experiences, tours of companies that employ people who are blind, tours of business enterprise locations, tours of other self-employment situations operated by individuals who are blind, and related experiences that promote career development for clients who are blind or visually impaired.

# Section 24: Paraprofessional Training

**BESB may offer Braille instruction classes to paraprofessionals employed or contracted by Local Education Agencies in Connecticut. Priority for participation shall be granted first to paraprofessionals who are assigned to work directly with BESB clients and who are endorsed to participate by their Local Education Agency and BESB.**

**To assist Local Education Agencies with enabling paraprofessionals to participate in these training classes, BESB offers financial incentives for the actual cost of participation of any paraprofessional whom the Bureau has selected to participate in the training program.**

**Upon request of the Local Education Agency, BESB may reimburse the full cost of any substitute paraprofessional brought in to cover the time period when a paraprofessional assigned to a BESB-eligible client is participating in BESB-sponsored Braille instruction classes. A written request from the Special Education Director of the Local Education Agency, in advance of each day of substitute paraprofessional coverage is required, along with an estimate of the cost for the substitute hours for each day. When it is known in advance that a substitute will be needed for coverage over multiple dates, the request may be submitted to cover the full scope of dates. Upon completion of the substitute hours for each approved day, a billing invoice from the Local Education Agency, verifying the actual cost incurred, shall be submitted to BESB for processing.**

**In addition, BESB may also cover the mileage reimbursement costs for the paraprofessional to participate in Braille instruction classes. Such reimbursement shall be paid directly to the Local Education Agency at the state approved mileage reimbursement rate for actual miles incurred for a round trip from the school to the training location. Such requests shall be submitted by the Local Education Agency in advance of participation in each Braille instruction class, and may cover multiple dates of participation. The written request will state the total mileage estimated for the participation in the classes. Upon completion of each training session, the Local Education Agency shall submit invoices for the round trip mileage incurred.**

**Paraprofessionals who participate in the Braille Instruction classes, and who are required by their Local Education Agency to take accrued leave time (excluding educational or professional development leave) such as vacation or personal leave, or who are otherwise uncompensated directly by the Local Education Agency for the hours required for participation at BESB-sponsored Braille instruction classes, may seek reimbursement for the actual cash value of vacation leave, personal leave, or lost wages. In such matters, a letter will be required by the Special Education Director of the Local Education Agency in advance of participation of the paraprofessional at the training classes, attesting to the lost wages, or requirement that vacation or personal leave time must be used for the paraprofessional to participate in the Braille instruction classes. Such written certification shall include the hourly wage rate of the paraprofessional and the total number of hours of accrued leave charged or wages lost. Upon completion of each training session for which the Local Education Agency has not provided direct compensation to the paraprofessional, the paraprofessional may seek reimbursement from the Bureau by submitting an invoice that includes the date of the session.**

**BESB reserves the right to terminate participation of a paraprofessional in Bureau training who does not demonstrate satisfactory progress or continuous and sequential participation in the Braille Instruction classes.**