

NEW MEXICO SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED	SUBJECT: No. 507 Student Placement/ Residential Campus Policy
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Distribution: All Staff	Kind: Board Policy

GENERAL POLICY

It is the policy of the New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to adhere to Federal and State Regulations when accepting students into site based and outreach programs. The Federal Regulations CFR 300.7 (13), states "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." The New Mexico Regulations incorporate the NMAC 6.5.2.7A Federal definition: "Visual impairment: means a visual impairment which, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes children who are partially seeing and blind."

REFERRALS

All referrals of students to NMSBVI shall be coordinated by the child's originating local education agency (LEA) or current educational provider. When a parent or medical professional or any other person seeks information on possible placement at NMSBVI, NMSBVI will contact the LEA or current educational provider to inquire about the child. Specifically, NMSBVI will coordinate with the LEA or current educational provider to determine 1) whether the LEA and its Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team believe that a change in placement should be considered, 2) whether, upon observation and assessment of the child and/or the child's records, NMSBVI believes that a placement at NMSBVI may be viable, the least-restrictive available, and may offer a free and appropriate education (FAPE) services not currently available to the child. NMSBVI will participate in an IEP held by the LEA or educational provider in which placement at NMSBVI is considered by the team.

PLACEMENT DETERMINATION

NMSBVI is constitutionally created to serve students who require specialized or intensive educational or related services specific to their visual impairment. NMSBVI retains the ultimate right to reject placement referrals or IEP team determinations by the LEA if NMSBVI believes, in its discretion, (1) that the criteria for placement listed in this policy have not been met, (2) where FAPE is provided by the LEA already, or (3) where placement at NMSBVI would otherwise not be advantageous for the child.

An initial placement on the residential campus for a student is usually a 45-day placement; this time is used for assessment and program development. After 45 days, an IEP is developed that includes transition planning, to support a student's return to their local district. The determination of appropriate placement and least restrictive environment and a review of the transition planning will be re-examined at every IEP and a decision will be made about the continued appropriateness of placement.

Any LEA or educational provider that seeks or permits placement of a child at NMSBVI is considered to be an LEA for that child with joint responsibilities for provision of FAPE pursuant to NMAC 6.31.2.11J. Where not otherwise outlined in the IEP, NMSBVI will require a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the originating LEA or educational provider that outlines responsibilities for the provision of resources and services to the child.

In order to assure appropriate and safe placement of students, and to ensure that all students are able to benefit from their educational experience, the following criteria must be considered for placement at NMSBVI.

PLACEMENT CRITERIA

- Students being placed at NMSBVI will have specific vision-related goals and objectives to accomplish during their placement and the length of their placement will be in relation to those goals.

- Placement will be based on visual needs related to academic and expanded core curriculum.
- NMSBVI must be able to review all academic, medical, psychiatric, discipline and behavior records before placement decisions are made.
- Because NMSBVI's residential campus is located in the southeast quadrant of the state, the ability to be transported safely to and from NMSBVI is a strong consideration for placement. Ability to safely transport is defined as:
 - Students must be able to travel in a bus with a seatbelt or three point restraint. Wheel chair students must be able to ride in their wheel chair or in an adapted car seat.
 - Students with medical conditions that can result in emergency medical crises must have clearance from a medical doctor stating they are safe to travel long-distance without medical support/staff available. Students at risk for medical crises must also carry with them any medical aid that they can administer themselves (ex: EpiPen, diabetic medication, cortisol injection, asthma medication, etc.)
 - Students must not be in significant, immediate danger of harming themselves or others.
 - Students may not have a current level of escalated behavior that requires the regular use of either mechanical or chemical restraint.
- All students receiving related services including physical, occupational or speech therapy must be assessed by NMSBVI therapists before they can be transported by NMSBVI or before they are placed in a dorm. First time students must be transported to the school initially by their parents so that these evaluations can be completed.
- A student requiring 24 hour nursing care is not a candidate for placement on NMSBVI's residential campus.
- NMSBVI will look for evidence that a student is able to tolerate at least an 8 hour day of programming prior to acceptance in a residential setting.
- Enrollment may be postponed until a student's behavior has stabilized if a significant portion of a student's day is involved in negative behavior or de-escalation intervention. A student with this level of emotional/behavioral issues will not gain full benefit from the intensive curriculum available at NMSBVI.
- Following placement at NMSBVI, if a student's behavior significantly escalates and does not decrease in a reasonable period of time, placement will be re-evaluated by the IEP team to determine whether the distance from the student's supportive home environment is detrimental to their wellbeing.
- Students who have had a psychiatric crisis within the last 6 months must have clearance from their psychologist or their psychiatrist who will determine whether or not the student is stable enough to attend a residential school. Students with current prescriptions for psychotropic medication must take the medications as prescribed.
- The LEA's or educational provider's demonstrable willingness to jointly administer and support the provision of FAPE for the child.
- The LEA's or educational provider's demonstrable willingness to set benchmarks and/or timelines for the child's return to the LEA or educational provider for completion of the child's education.
- Any factor bearing on the provision of FAPE for the particular child.