

VI Times

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MN Regions 5 & 7 Vision - O&M Staff
Barb Lhotka, Editor



Vision-O&M Staff

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to parents and teachers of students with vision impairments. We hope to send regular newsletters that will cover topics of interest that are informative and create a base of knowledge that will assist our students with their on-going success!

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Contact your Teacher for the Blind / Visually Impaired or Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialist if:

- You have further questions on the newsletter topic
- Would prefer the newsletter in electronic format by email or in print.

Benton-Stearns Ed District

Amy Ormerod, TBVI, O&M

Buffalo District #877

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Glen Hoppe, TBVI

Elk River

Molly Ouellette, TBVI, O&M

Pam Schumacher, TBVI, O&M

Freshwater

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Nicole Schmidt, TBVI

Little Falls

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Beth Lehn, TBVI

MAWSECO

Liz Karels, TBVI, O&M

Midstate

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Beth Lehn, TBVI

Paul Bunyan

Louise Flickinger, TBVI

Diane Grundyson, TBVI, O&M

Rum River

Lois Jacobson, TBVI, O&M

Tracy Shimer, TBVI

Sherburne-Northern Wright

Karen Maruska, TBVI, O&M

St Cloud

Doreen Bohm, TBVI, O&M

Marissa Mahowald, TBVI

St Croix Ed District (SCRED)

Cindy Bruning

West Central

Diane Grundyson, O&M

Glen Hoppe, TBVI

Transition

Students in grade 9 or who are age 16 are entering the time in their educational career we call the transition years. Transition simply means planning and getting ready to move out of the high school setting into the world of work or further education. Every student with an IEP needs a transition plan to make certain the steps are in place for the student to take advantage of the opportunities that await him/her without the support of a school team.

Once the student graduates and receives a signed diploma, the school team and the IEP are no longer in place. The IEP can be used as a reference, but legally there are no rules and regulations that take care of the needs of a student with a vision loss like the IEP and IEP team did in school. The student becomes an adult with the responsibility of self-advocacy and working with employers and instructors to make accommodations together for success.

A transition plan in the IEP should be directed at making the steps toward self-advocacy. It should also help the student with decision-making.

U of MN Tuition Waiver



Student's self-advocacy is a key to independence.

Students who are planning to pursue an post secondary education at the University of Minnesota, the following information will be helpful. "To receive a full tuition waiver as a blind student, you are not required to be in a certificate or degree program, a common criteria in other financial aid programs. You are eligible for a full tuition waiver if you are a legally-blind Minnesota resident. Your vision must be no better than 20/200 or 20 degrees of

visual field in the better eye for a full tuition waiver. Periodic exams will be required if blindness is temporary. Submit a [Tuition Waiver/Assistance for Blind](#) to a One Stop Student Services Center ([contact information](#)). Your physician, ophthalmologist, or Disability Services specialist is required to complete a section of the form to document your disability. After approval, a waiver for the full amount of your tuition will be credited to your student account.

Resources for Families



There are several excellent resources to learn more about transition:

www.afb.org The American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) has many print, video and webinar resources on the topic of transition.

CareerConnect is AFB's resource on career exploration, making connections, knowing how to find a job, learning to be successful at work, and learning about other people who have gone through a similar experience.

CareerConnect's Explore Careers gives the student an opportunity to find a mentor with a vision loss and develop skills with the use of the Job Seeker's Toolkit. Teachers of the visually impaired frequently use this section as a teaching tool. The Job Seeker's Toolkit is an "accessible, self-paced, and free online course that helps users develop skills and tools that last a lifetime. The course covers self

awareness, career exploration tools, the preliminary employment process, the interview (video), and maintaining employment."

CareerConnect allows the student to explore careers by:

- occupational category
- interest area
- key word or job title

CareerConnect has 1,000 mentors who have vision impairments and are willing to be contacted by students. An account and a communication system are a part of the service.

In the Job Seeking section of the website, students can explore how to:

- prepare to search for a job
- research a job
- get hired

Resources for Families (cont'd.)

There are job listings and useful links to more information, too.

www.afb.org AFB also has an online journal dedicated to technology accessible for individuals with vision impairments. **AccessWorld** is a searchable database of articles found on the AFB website.

Reviews of current technology are highlighted monthly.

www.perkins.org The Perkins School for the Blind has a resource filled website. One of the pages is called: *Transition For Students Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*. On that page are articles and resources for families and professionals from many other sources about the transition process. Other topics the site provides articles for relate to:

- Career exploration and planning
- General transition information
- Legal and financial aspects
- Organizations and resources
- Person Centered Planning
- Postsecondary Education
- Research
- Self-Determination
- Training and Independence Programs
- Transition for Students with Deafblindness or Multiple Disabilities

Minnesota Department of Education transition events are held annually or every other year (eoy). They include:

- Family Transition Weekend (eoy)
- LIFE Program
- Summer Transition Program

The Family Transition Weekend occurs in February and is held at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind campus. Families meet in small group and individual sessions with SSB counselors, teachers of the visually impaired, career mentors, etc. to learn about the road to life after high school.

The LIFE program is a life skills program for students with vision and additional disabilities held for a session in the summer. The LIFE program takes place at the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind.

The Summer Transition Program (STP) is held at the end of June. Students that are in the 10th grade or above, are planning on going to college or are capable of being competitively employed, are registered with Minnesota State Services for the Blind (SSB) and have a current Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) should be considered for participation in the program. Students who may be interested must have corresponded with their SSB Counselor prior to application.

Minnesota State Services for the Blind also is involved with transition activities. There is a checklist for transition developed by SSB counselors and state teachers of the visually impaired to address activities for students in grades 9-12.

SSB also has a booklet available called "Are You Prepared for College?"

Work with your teacher for the visually impaired for resources and information as you move through the transition period with your son or daughter. You are a team!

Topic Preview

Future issues of this newsletter will address:

- Braille
- Early Childhood Intervention
- Parenting
- Self-Determination & Advocacy
- Sensory Efficiency
- Social Skills
- Technology

Past Topics

- Introduction to BVI
- Cortical Vision Impairment
- Living Skills
- Low Vision
- Multiple Disabilities
- Orientation & Mobility
- Recreation & Leisure
- Transition

Issues in Transition

Susan Dalton and Kelsey Thompson from the Chicago, IL, area wrote a short article on the most important skills students need as they emerge from high school. They identified:

- Organization—efficient labeling/storage systems for personal, school, and work materials and belongings. The system must be their own and work for them—not your system.
- Time management—getting all the work done that is required, allowing for fatigue, having some fun, and staying healthy requires time management. Organization and travel skills also will impact time management. The student must be able to estimate how long it takes him/her to do a task.
- Notetaking—the student must not only be able to take sufficient notes, they must also be able to take them quickly, relocate and use those notes. Notetaking devices are nice, but the student needs the skills to use them effectively.
- Social Skills—students have developed the skills to join a new group, participate in a group, lead and follow, and show appropriate etiquette.
- Computers and Assistive Technology—be efficient!
- Self-Advocacy—student must be able to explain their vision impairment and the accommodations used. He/she will also need to access student services for some assistance over their college careers.
- Mobility and Transportation—independence is a key.
- Vocational/Career Training—students must have had some exploration and experience prior to graduating high school.
- Mentors and Role Models—does the student have people he/she can turn to as a resource? The IEP team will no longer be there as a resource. Mentors can be very helpful in guiding the way.

Working closely with the teacher for the visually impaired and the SSB counselor will be an asset to your child.