6A-6.03014 Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Visual Impairments Who Are Visually Impaired.

(1) Definition. Visual Impairment Including Blindness: An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a student’s current or future educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness, including ocular, brain-based and neurological disorders.

(2) Eligibility Determination
(a) Identification, evaluation, and placement procedures for initial evaluation under Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C., Rule 6A-6.03411 F.A.C., and Rule 6A-6.03028, F.A.C., must be met to determine and meet the unique needs of a student with a visual impairment.

1. Medical Examination. A student with a visual impairment is one who has been diagnosed by a licensed ophthalmologist, optometrist, or neurologist to have any impairment in vision. A medical report which indicates any impairment in vision, regardless of significance or severity, provided that such impairment, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance, as evidenced by their skills in academic, developmental, or functional domains.

2. A comprehensive evaluation must include:
   a. A functional vision assessment or evaluation conducted by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments; an assessment of visual functioning during daily tasks performed across a variety of natural environments, to determine factors that influence visual access. This information is used to determine how a student’s vision functions outside of the clinical setting;
   b. A learning media assessment, conducted by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments; an assessment which involves systematically selecting learning and literacy media to include recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and auditory learning media are appropriate for the student, and must include instruction in and the use of braille unless determined and documented that braille is not an appropriate medium;
   c. An expanded core curriculum assessment; conducted by a certified teacher of students with visual impairments; an assessment of skills known to be impacted by vision impairment that are aligned with the special skills referenced in Rule 6A-1.09401(j), F.A.C., and that includes current and future needs in the areas of assistive technology, compensatory skills to include communication modes, career education, recreation and leisure skills, sensory efficiency skills, self-determination, social interaction skills, independent-living skills, and orientation and mobility screening; and
   d. If indicated by the orientation and mobility screening, an orientation and mobility assessment conducted by an endorsed orientation and mobility instructor; an assessment to be conducted of present and future travel needs and abilities in a variety of environments.

(b) A comprehensive reevaluation of students with visual impairments may occur not more than once a year, and must occur at least every three (3) years. Reevaluation must include:
   1. a medical eye examination within the last calendar year if a suspected change in visual functioning;
   2. a comprehensive evaluation of skills known to be impacted by visual impairment as required for determining initial eligibility; and
   3. if appropriate, any other formal evaluations addressed in the initial evaluation in accordance with Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C.

(c) The medical eye examination of a reevaluation for students with bilateral anophthalmia may be waived by a written recommendation of a physician.

(1) Definition. Students who are visually impaired include the following:
   a. A student who is blind, has no vision, or has little potential for using vision;
   b. A student who has low vision;
   c. A student who has a visual impairment after best correction that adversely affects the student’s educational performance; and,
   d. A student who has been diagnosed with a progressive condition that will most likely result in a visual impairment or no vision after best correction.

(2) Activities Prior to Referral. Prior to referral for evaluation, the requirements in Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C., must be met.

(3) Procedures for student evaluation.
(a) The minimum procedures necessary for determining eligibility shall include:
   1. A medical eye examination describing etiology, diagnosis, treatment regimen, prognosis, near/distance,
corrected/uncorrected acuity measures for left eye, right eye and both eyes, measure of field of vision, and recommendations for lighting levels, physical activity, aids, prescribed low-vision aids, or use of glasses or contact lenses, as appropriate. For students who are otherwise unable to be assessed, a medical assessment describing visual functioning shall be documented when standard visual acuities and measure of field of vision are unattainable; and,

2. A comprehensive assessment of skills known to be impacted by visual impairment, which shall include, but is not limited to:
   a. A functional vision evaluation that includes an assessment of skills known to be impacted by vision impairment that are aligned with the special skills referenced in Rule 6A-1.09401, F.A.C., and include assistive technology, compensatory skills, career education, recreation and leisure, sensory efficiency, self-determination, social skills, and independent-living skills;
   b. A learning media assessment; and,
   c. An orientation and mobility screening.

(b) Reevaluation shall occur at least every three (3) years and shall include a minimum of a medical eye examination within the last calendar year; a comprehensive assessment of skills known to be impacted by visual impairment as required for determining initial eligibility; and, if appropriate, any other formal evaluations addressed in the initial evaluation in accordance with Rule 6A-6.0331, F.A.C. The medical aspect of a reevaluation for students with bilateral anophthalmia may be waived by a written recommendation of a physician.

(4) Criteria for eligibility. A student is eligible for special education and related services if the following medical and educational criteria are met:

(a) Medical. A licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist has documented an eye condition that causes an impairment as manifested by at least one of the following:
   1. A visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye after best possible correction,
   2. A peripheral field so constricted that it affects the student’s ability to function in an educational setting,
   3. A diagnosis of visual impairment after best correction, or
   4. A progressive loss of vision that may affect the student’s ability to function in an educational setting.

(b) The student needs special education as defined in Rules 6A-6.0331 and 6A-6.03411, F.A.C.

(5) Supportive services.

(a) The district shall make available the professional services needed to support the program. This shall include registration of all students who are visually impaired for services from the Florida Instructional Materials Center for the Visually Impaired.

(b) Other support services may include, but are not limited to:
   1. Provision of specialized textbooks, learning materials, assessment materials, and equipment; and,
   2. Cooperative planning with the Division of Blind Services, including parent involvement activities.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.02, 1001.42(4)(a), 1003.01(3)(a), (b), 1003.57 FS. Law Implemented 1001.02, 1003.57, 1011.62(1)(c) FS. History—New 7-1-77, Amended 7-13-83, Formerly 6A-6.3014, Amended 2-12-91, 3-1-08, 8-23-17.