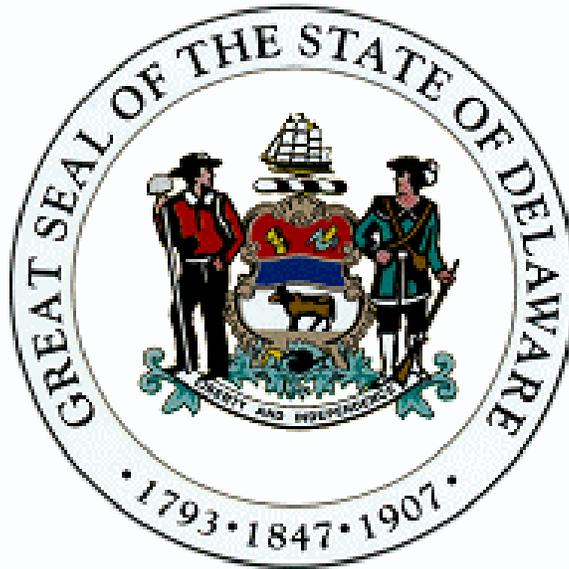


SENATE CONCURRENT Resolution #2 (amended by #1)

*Creating A Task Force to Study and Make Recommendations
regarding the
Division for the Visually Impaired and Statewide Programs
for the
Blind and Visually Impaired*

Final Report to the 148th General Assembly

June, 2015



A report of findings and recommendations regarding the education of students who are blind or visually impaired as initiated by the Task Force to Study and Make Recommendations regarding the Division for the Visually Impaired and Statewide Programs for the Blind and Visually Impaired

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Task Force Members

The membership of the Blind and Visually Impaired Education Task Force was outlined within the legislation and resulted in the following membership:

	Task Force Membership	Member
1	State Senator (Majority Party)	Sen. Bethany Hall-Long
2	State Senator (Minority Party)	Sen. Dave Lawson
3	State Representative (Majority Party)	Rep. Edward Osienki
4	State Representative (Minority Party)	Rep. Kevin Hensley
5	Governor's Office Designee	Darlene Cole
6	Secretary of Education or Designee	Mary Ann Mieczkowski
7	Secretary of Health & Social Services or Designee	Dorothe Mumford
8	Parent of a Student with a Visual Impairment	JeanMarie Gagliano
9	Parent of a Student with a Visual Impairment	Sonya Lawrence
10	Parent of a Student who is Blind	Debbie Harrington
11	Parent of a Student who is Blind	Takiya Benson
12	Individual who is Blind or Visually Impaired	Miriam Nabi
13	Individual who is Blind or Visually Impaired	Lloyd Schmitz
14	Director of the Division of the Visually Impaired	Dan Madrid
15	Teacher for the Visually Impaired	Thea Suchodolski
16	Teacher for the Visually Impaired	Sharon Coutu Donovan
17	Orientation & Mobility Specialist	Bill Reece
18	Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	Genelle Fletcher
19	Executive Director of Delaware Association of the Blind	Janet Berry
20	Executive Director of Parent Information Center of Delaware	Keith Morton
21	Chair of the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council or Designee	Kevin McAllister
22	Director of DE Birth to Three Early Intervention System	Susan Campbell
23	Member of Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens	Ronald Russo
24	Assistive Technology Specialist with Expertise in Visual Impairments	Matthew Tseronis
25	LEA Special Education Director	Kevin Thompson
26	LEA Special Education Director	Dr. Lisa Lawson
27	President of the DSEA or Designee	Clare Walker
28	Ophthalmologist	Dr. Sharon Lehman
29	Low-Vision Optometrist	Dr. Amanda Friess
30	Special Educator	Megan Stoffa
31	Special Educator	Karen Degler
32	Member of DE Association of School Psychologists	Christina MacKerchar

Executive Summary

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 2 created a Task Force to study and provide recommendations regarding the overall education of Delaware students who are blind or visually impaired and served through the statewide programs for the blind and visually impaired within the Division for the Visually Impaired. The Task Force commenced with an introductory conference call that introduced the members and outlined the charge. This was followed by a series of seven (2-hour) meetings conducted either in Dover or Smyrna. These meetings were chaired by Senator Bethany Hall-Long, staffed by Dr. Sarah Celestin (DE Department of Education), and facilitated by Dr. Jerry G. Petroff (Consultant). The Task Force addressed the seven areas of study outlined within the establishing resolution which included (1) the administrative structure and authority of the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) in regards to education; (2) DVI's funding sources designated for use in the education of students in the State of Delaware; (3) Appropriate educational services delivery model; (4) The disposition of the Resource Rooms in New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties; (5) Assistive technology provisions; (6) Individual Education Plans (IEP) for the blind and visually impaired; and (7) Post-secondary transition planning and programming.

The overall findings of the Task Force found that there are serious challenges in the provision of optimal educational services to infants and students who are blind or visually impaired in Delaware. These challenges include the lack of available teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists; the inconsistent involvement of vocational rehabilitation counselors in the transition of students from school to adult life; difficulties in acquiring needed assistive technology including the absence of technical assistance for implementation; and an inconsistent level of direct specialized instruction in Braille and other specialized educational needs. Therefore, the Task Force has offered a series of recommendations / actions that focus on improving educational services through the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI); increased involvement with the DE Department of Education (and Local School Districts); and other avenues to improve services to infants and children who are blind or visually impaired.

Intentions and Spirit of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 2

The intention of the Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 2 was initiated for the purposes of gathering information and making recommendations to improve the educational services for students who are blind or visually impaired, specifically within the Division for the Visually Impaired (Department of Health and Social Services), and across the Department of Education. Understanding that students who are blind or visually impaired are an extremely low incidence of children with disabilities reflecting specific and highly specialized educational needs, the sponsors of this Task Force intended to bring together a large representative membership to this Task Force to provide impressions and information regarding the current status of education and services for these children. The resolution stated that there was knowledge or impressions that the legislatively mandated student to teacher ratio within the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) was exceeded; there was also confusion regarding responsibilities between DVI and the DE Department of Education; there were difficulties in the

provision of resources; and students who are blind or visually impaired were not receiving appropriate services through the IEP process. These impressions framed the Task Force charge to further investigate the status of students who are blind or visually; identify the current challenges, and offer a set of reasonable recommendations to the Department of Health and Social Services and Department of Education, both of which have state-mandated authority in this area.

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 2 outlined that the Task Force report shall include the following topics:

- 1) The administrative structure and authority of the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) in regards to education;
 - a. Existing Teachers for the Visually Impaired and other vision service providers;
 - b. Compensation and benefits for teaching staff;
 - c. Development of quality standards for teachers and related professional servicing blind and visually impaired students;
- 2) DVI's funding sources designated for use in educating students in the State of Delaware;
- 3) Appropriate educational services delivery model;
- 4) The disposition of the Resource Rooms in New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties;
- 5) Assistive technology provisions;
- 6) Individual Education Plans (IEP) for the blind and visually impaired;
- 7) Post-secondary transition planning and programming.

Overview of Approach to Task Force Implementation & Overall Meeting Summaries

A professional facilitator for the Task Force was hired by the DE Department of Education upon agreement with the Chairperson, Senator Hall-Long. This was to assure that the group would establish outcomes and meet their goals to the extent possible. Therefore, a formal structure to the meeting was implemented and review of each past meeting was summarized. Processes were then implemented to move the group forward toward recommendations. Due to the fact that there were over 30 task force members, and a very short period to complete its task, it was not feasible to construct any additional workgroups outside of the seven planned formal meetings. However, the meetings were well attended, and there was a structure designed to support a progression from fact-finding to solution-finding so that recommendations could be yielded by an 8th meeting of the task force in June. Additional meetings to organize the information that was collected at the Task Force meetings were established between the Chairperson and staff. These were meetings to address logistical issues and assure that the information being shared was accurately processed toward the overall goal of establishing recommendations.

The following is a synopsis of the formal task force meetings and the content addressed. It should be noted that detailed notes of each task force meeting, as well as all presentations are archived and available. This includes a summary of comments offered by the public at each of the Task Force meetings.

February 26, 2015 Conference Call – Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force Opening

A conference call to open the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force was conducted by Senator Hall-Long who introduced the facilitator and staff of the Task Force, as well as outlined the purpose and overall expectations.

March 10, 2015 1st Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the first in-person meeting of the Blind & VI Task Force, members introduced themselves and their interests in the work for this group;*
- *Dan Madrid, Director of the DE Division for the Visually Impaired, provided the Task Force with a review of the agency with a specific focus on educational services; the Task Force members requested additional information for the next meeting;*
- *The facilitator reported that an on-line survey will be sent to each of the Task Force members to complete which addressed their specific concerns or issues. This would result in a content analysis to develop an overall structure for reporting findings and moving forward in the fact-finding process.*

March 25, 2015 2nd Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the second meeting of the VI Task Force, additional information regarding the DVI data was presented by Dan Madrid that focused on the Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) Service Delivery (Minutes per month/week of service); Braille Instructional Reading Levels; and Reading Level Differentials.*
- *Mary Ann Mieczkowski and Lisa Lawson presented a view from DOE and a Local School District with explanation regarding needs based funding and the unit count system;*
- *The facilitator offered a schedule for the Task Force in regards to the overall process including: Fact Finding (Meetings 1-3), Focusing on Solutions (Meetings 4-5) & Confirming Recommendations and Outcomes (Meetings 6-7).*
- *The facilitator also presented the summary of the content analysis that was yielded from the on-line survey of the Task Force Members that reflected three themes: (1) Individualizing Services to Meet Needs; (2) Provision of Assistive Technology; and (3) Availability of Trained Teachers of the Blind / Visually Impaired.*
 - *Task Force members presented inquiries regarding the process of ruling out Braille as not appropriate; and decisions regarding Braille instruction for students with intellectual disabilities;*

- *TVI Task Force members were asked to put together a presentation on the day in a life of a Delaware TVI, and the Parent representatives were asked to create a list of perceptions that the Task Force could explore;*
- *There was a request for the Task Force to conduct a field survey to gather additional information – to be considered and discussed at the next meeting.*

April 7, 2015 3rd Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the third meeting of the VI Task Force, the following additional information was gathered:*
 - *Parent Perspectives & Perceptions: A presentation by Sonya Lawrence & Debbie Harrington was provided, supported by Keith Morton (Parent Information Center of Delaware);*
 - *DVI teachers and Karen Degler (Colonial School District TVI) presented an idea of their schedules and responsibilities;*
 - *It was agreed that Task Force Members would submit survey questions for consideration in the development of a Statewide Survey;*
 - *It was suggested that if possible, an Executive Workgroup would be formed and Task Force Members willing to serve will submit their names via an on-line format to be disseminated.*

April 24, 2015 4th Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the fourth meeting of the VI Task Force, the following additional information was gathered:*
 - *Current Revisions of the DVI/DOE/LEA MOU was presented by Sarah Celestin (DOE) and Dan Madrid (DVI);*
 - *It was agreed that Task Force Members would submit comments and suggestions regarding the MOU prior to the next Task Force Meeting;*
 - *Current Challenges to the Provision of Assistive Technology & Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) was presented by Matthew Tseronis (DVI);*
 - *Description of Orientation & Mobility Services was presented by Darlene Cole (DVI);*
 - *It was decided it would be impossible to identify an Executive Workgroup due to the fact that most of the task force members were interested; therefore, generating recommendations would proceed within the entire membership, and members were encourage to submit additional suggestions for consideration to the final report.*

May 5, 2015 5th Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the fifth meeting of the VI Task Force, the additional information was gathered regarding Birth to 3 Services for Infants who are Blind/Visually Impaired and presented by Susan Campbell (Director, Birth to 3 Early Intervention System). It was further noted that*

certified Teachers of the Blind were not involved in the provision of direct services to infants (birth to 3);

- *The results of the Task Force Member Survey for additional recommendations to the MOU between DVI/DOE was not well responded, but the overall results reinforced current findings regarding the difficulty in obtaining educational materials in alternate formats since districts do not identify books and other printed material until late in the year. Therefore, it was suggested to address this issue within the new MOU;*
- *The Task Force began the process of initiating recommended actions that related to the current summary findings presented under the initial collective impressions of the Task Force Members which included Individualizing Service to Meet the Needs of Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired; Adequate and Appropriate Provision of Assistive Technology; Availability of Trained and Certified Teachers of the Blind and Visually Impaired; and Other Factors (to include but not limited to Access to Alternate Material Formats; Transition to Adult Life Services and Supports; Extended School Year Programming; and Available Orientation & Mobility Services).*

May 20, 2015 6th Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the sixth meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force, the Task Force members generated recommendations and/or comments regarding the MOU between DOE and DVI, as well as continued to initiate recommended actions that related to the on-going summary of findings;*
- *Information was presented regarding the DVI teacher salaries that indicated these positions were on the DOE salary scale for teachers which represented a salary that is an average teacher salary considering all districts within the state;*
- *Additional O&M information was provided by DVI representative.*

May 27, 2015 7th Meeting of the Blind & Visually Impaired Task Force

- *During the seventh meeting of the Blind and Visually Impaired Task Force, the Task Force members continued to generate recommendations or actions needed to improve educational services to Delaware infants and students who are blind and visually impaired. In addition, the following information/data was provided:*
 - *Dr. Celestin presented a comparison between DOE and DVI student census showing that although there are some discrepancies, this difference can be explained and efforts to reconcile can be accomplished;*
 - *Dr. Petroff presented the results of the Statewide Parent Survey representing a N=41 participants primarily of school age children. These results validated some of the challenges that the Task Force has identified regarding the systems support students who blind or visually impaired. In addition, many parents praised the services and support that their children have received from the DVI teachers.*

Summary of Need /Findings

The Division for the Visually Impaired (DE Department of Health and Social Services) is a state agency that provides services to Delaware citizens who are blind or visually impaired. These include a wide range of educational services within the school currently through, 8 full time certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI); 2 Child Youth Counselors; 4 Orientation & Mobility Specialists (providing services to children and adults); support by 3 vocational rehabilitation counselors, and a unit focusing on the provision of assistive technology/alternate materials production. This Task Force was charged with reviewing the provision of educational services and support to infants and children who are blind or visually impaired by gathering information and making recommendations. The findings of this Task Force are summarized as follows:

- The Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) is charged with providing mandated educational services in conjunction with the Local School Districts to Delaware's children who are blind or visually impaired. Through a formal Memorandum of Understanding that is currently being updated, DVI provides the majority of educational services and support to Delaware's children who are blind or visually impaired. DVI currently employs eight teachers of the visually impaired (TVI) to serve approximately 250 identified students. In addition, DVI provides educational materials (e.g. textbooks) in alternate formats in collaboration with the University of Delaware's AIM Center; assistive technology specifically addressing the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired; vocational rehabilitation services for transition-aged students; and Orientation & Mobility services. However, the Task Force has identified the following impressions:
 - DVI Regulations indicate that there must be no more than a 1:28 teacher to student ratio /caseload, and currently this is exceeded to 1:32. However, although there are no agreed averages within the literature, there is indication from some sources that a ratio that is much lower should be established. It appears that when establishing a ratio, the overall needs of students and the services required must be factored into the decision-making process. It appears evident to the Task Force that there is a serious shortage of available teachers of the visually impaired in Delaware.
 - Local Districts have the ultimate responsibility to provide services to students who are blind or visually impaired; and therefore, it appears that when DVI teachers cannot provide the level of services indicated by the IEP team, school districts must seek additional services from contractors or hiring their own teachers of the blind or visually impaired, which becomes very difficult if not impossible. In addition, there is an impression by some Task Force members that services may be determined at times by the availability of teachers, rather than the needs of the child.
 - There does not appear to be any uniformed decision-making process regarding the provision of learning media (specifically Braille instruction); therefore, there are students that may benefit from Braille that are not receiving Braille instruction, and the overall literacy levels of students who are blind or visually are well below average. This is supported by the fact that there are only nine students currently receiving Braille instruction in the State, and only three of them are on or above grade level. In addition, there is a high percentage of reported non-readers (nearly 1/3 of those served). It is recognized that many students with visual impairments may have additional

disabilities, but Task Force members were concerned that the decision regarding Braille was exempting students due to perceived cognitive status.

- The provision of assistive technology is a serious problem for those teachers on the Task Force who report a need for on-going training in assistive technology; and therefore, experience difficulty in training the students and teachers in the use of new technology provided. In addition, there has been a reduction in the number of DVI staff members dedicated to assistive technology, which seriously impacts any in-district technical assistance. It is reported that devices that students who are blind or visually impaired use, are often incompatible with districts' firewalls, and often there is no contact in-district to collaborate or solve these problems.
- Task Force members report that districts often misunderstand that DVI is responsible for the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, and that DVI Vocational Rehabilitation (VR Counselors) are often not invited, or do not attend IEP meetings of transition-aged students. In addition, there are no VR counselors who focus exclusively on transition-aged students.
- There is a limited number of Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialist at DVI to provide the needed services of students who are blind or visually impaired. In addition, O & M services are not provided within early intervention (Infants – 3 Years Old).
- DVI's educational services are supported primarily through state appropriation and a substantial grant from the DE Department of Education (IDEA Federal Funds).
- Due the lack of DVI instructors during the summer months, students who are blind or visually impaired are in jeopardy of either not receiving their extended school year services and/or do not receive the additional instruction within the Expanded Core Curriculum that they require to become optimally independent.
- Local school districts are monitored for accountability through the current system of random IEP review; however, there is no direct accountability and/or monitoring of DVI education services to assure that they are appropriately providing the agreed or expected level of services. In addition, Task Force members reported that parents are often confused regarding the expectations between the local school district special education services and DVI educational services.
- Infants are receiving services from Youth Care Workers that are trained, but not certified teachers of the blind or visually impaired.
- There are no preservice or advanced training programs for teachers of the blind or visually impaired in the state of Delaware. Task Force members report that there is difficulty in recruiting teachers from other states, and many districts' attempts to secure teachers outside of DVI have been to no avail.
- Task Force members reported that there are little to no opportunities for students to be instructed in the Expanded Core Curriculum, which reflect skills necessary for independent living and social skills development.

- Students who are blind or visually impaired with additional disabilities require specialized attention and skills that are currently not being addressed.
- It is reported that the DVI teachers are paid on a state DOE teacher salary scale which is lower than some school district teacher salary schedules. There is a concern that salaries are lower than neighboring states and there are little incentives (e.g. education reimbursement benefits, sign-on bonuses, etc.) to attract teachers of the visually impaired to the state.
- The use of the Resource Room model has been discontinued with the introduction of Needs Based Funding. Currently, local districts may choose to hire a Teacher of the Visually Impaired using Needs Based Funding units if needed. Out of the original county resource rooms, Colonial School District (New Castle County) is the only district that has continued to employ a dedicated full-time Teacher of the Visually Impaired. The Colonial TVI currently serves six students from districts throughout New Castle County. Prior to the funding change, enrollment in the county resource rooms decreased as the desire to have students remain in their home school settings led to the need for a greater number of itinerant teachers.

Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force has identified a series of recommendations and further actions to be considered as a response to the summative collection of facts, impressions, and discussions within and outside of the activities of the Task Force Team. As directed by the establishing legislative mandate, each of the seven topics was infused within the context of discussions and fact-finding. These topics, as well as other suggested actions, are presented below for consideration by the relative Departments of State, General Assembly, and Governor to improve the educational services and support to Delaware's children who are blind or visually impaired. Please note that the following represent a balanced summary of the collective recommendations/actions of the Task Force:

Regulatory Changes

- Students who are blind or visually impaired shall be included in the list of special education classifications that receive a 12-month entitlement. These students often require specialized educational support and services that cannot be accommodated solely within a typical academic school year. These include Braille/literacy instruction; Orientation & Mobility skills; skills in the use of specialized assistive technology; and instruction within the Expanded Core Curriculum*.

The term expanded core curriculum (ECC) is used to define concepts and skills that often require specialized instruction with students who are blind or visually impaired in order to compensate for decreased opportunities to learn incidentally by observing others. In addition to the general education core curriculum that all students are taught, students with visual impairments, starting at birth, also need instruction in the ECC. The ECC areas include (A) needs that result from the visual impairment that enable the student "to be involved in and make progress in the general education curriculum; and (B) other educational needs that result from the child's disability" as required by IDEA (34 CFR 300.320 (a)(2)(A)(B)).

- The caseload ratio between students who are blind or visually impaired and teachers of the visually impaired shall be reduced within existing regulations to reflect the recommended National average. The Task Force is suggesting 1:15 ratio.
- DVI, or other responsible agencies must provide Teachers of the Visually Impaired, specialists, and counselors with expertise in the development of appropriate educational programs for students who are blind or visually impaired.
- Local School Districts shall identify and provide required print materials (e.g. textbooks) for students who require alternate formats at least 60-90 days prior to the beginning of the school year.

Division for the Visually Impaired – Agency Structure and Services

- Consistent with a 1:15 teacher to student ratio, additional teachers of the blind and visually impaired shall be added to the DVI educational unit, including an increase in the number of teachers that are 12 month employees in alignment with the 12 month entitlement recommendations set forth above.
- At least two Orientation and Mobility Specialists must be dedicated to the provision of services to students served by the educational unit of the DVI. Students shall be defined to include children from birth through their formal school exit (18 or 21).
- There shall be at least two dedicated vocational rehabilitation counselors added to the DVI VR Unit who shall only serve students who are receiving service from DVI's educational program.
- All students referred to DVI for services, regardless of age, shall receive appropriate screening assessments and referrals to determine service needs for instruction provided by Certified Teachers for the Visually Impaired, Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Independent Living Specialists, and Assistive Technology Experts,
- All Certified Teachers for the Visually Impaired, Brailist, paraprofessionals, and other providing educational services to students shall maintain competencies established by the Library of Congress, Delaware regulations, and federal requirements. In addition, all professionals addressing the education of students who are blind or visually impaired must adhere to current National and State certification requirements and maintain the appropriate continuing education requirements.
- A formal program review and/or an initiative that establishes formal systems of collaboration and fosters efficient/effective communication among and within the DVI units that address the needs of students who are blind or visually impaired should be implemented.
- DVI shall develop a manual of professional service delivery that includes policies, procedures, and guidance to parents, districts, and IEP/IFSP teams in the decision-making process for levels of direct and consultative educational services to students who are blind or visually impaired by Teachers of the Visually Impaired and Orientation & Mobility Specialists.

- Specialized programs to support the transition from school to adult life including post-secondary education shall be developed and implemented for youth who are blind or visually impaired. These may include pre-employment training, college-readiness programs, and transition assessments.
- DVI must demonstrate the appropriate level of service delivery regarding academic and assistive technology instruction and related services within six months of the submission of this report (January, 2016), or the State must consider alternative placements to centralize educational services such as within a local school district or if appropriate, the Department of Education.

Department of Education

- The Delaware Department of Education, in collaboration with the Division for the Visually Impaired shall develop an effective practices manual / guide in education to be disseminated to local districts and reflects critical considerations in the developing of programs for students who are blind or visually impaired.
- Development of a pre-service training program or an articulation with an out-of-state institution for higher education must be implemented to ensure continuity and development of appropriate educational services provided to students who are blind or visually impaired students in Delaware. In addition, incentive programs such as loan forgiveness for service must be utilized in the state to enhance recruitment and retention efforts.
- A system developed and approved by the DE Department of Education to establish performance, quality, and accountability measures for professionals rendering educational services to students who are blind and visually impaired must be established and implemented in the State of Delaware.
- A Statewide Director for Education of Blind and Visually Impaired Students shall be employed by the Delaware Department of Education, with indirect reporting to the Commission for Education of Blind and Visually Impaired Students, as described below. The Statewide Director shall conduct targeted monitoring processes, provide technical assistance and guidance to DVI education and related staff efforts, conduct formal annual program reviews, and oversee all aspects of provision of educational services to students who are blind and visually impaired.

AT / Materials in Alternate Format

- Services specializing in the assistive technology used by students who are blind/visually impaired shall be provided through efforts coordinated by DVI for the purpose of supporting the TVIs, IEP/IFSP program district teams, and individual students. Specific focus should include assessment and implementation of the use of appropriate assistive technology. Therefore, a system for assistive technology evaluations and the provision of technical assistance should be developed and implemented with statewide availability. This may be accomplished through a state contract with the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies.

- DVI shall employ at least two Certified Assistive Technology Specialists who are dedicated to providing AT assessments, training, equipment selection, and other assistance as needed, to the educational unit.
- DVI LEAs and DHSS shall be responsible to implement evaluations, subsequent procurement of assistive technology and provision of training/technical assistance to students and teachers, when deemed necessary as a component of a student's IEP. Specific parameters regarding the provision of assistive technology and services shall be included within the policies and procedures that are published within the suggested manual for educational services.
- The current Memorandum of Understanding between DVI and the University of Delaware's AIM Center should be updated to assure a maximum level of cooperation between the two systems yielding the most efficient and timely production of materials in alternate formats for students.

Other

- Braille instruction is mandated for all students who are blind or visually impaired unless assessment indicates otherwise inappropriate. A uniformed assessment protocol that reflects multiple assessments and based on evidence-based practices should be developed and applied to determine the most appropriate learning media for all students who are blind or visually impaired.
- Braille instruction should be provided that will enable each student who is blind or visually impaired to develop literacy skills with the same proficiency expected of their sighted peers unless declined by the family.
- A Commission or Statewide Advisory Committee should be established to provide oversight to the overall education of infants and students who are blind or visually impaired. This group should be established and authorized through a legislative initiative and operated outside of DVI or any other agency responsible for the education of blind and visually impaired infants and children within the state.
- Beginning July 1, 2015, DVI and DOE shall convene a Statewide Strategic Planning Workgroup that focuses on the education and post-school lives of children and youth who are blind or visually impaired. The Workgroup will begin with the planning of a Statewide Summit followed by the development of a Statewide Strategic Plan which will be developed to detail further recommendations and improvements to educational services provided to blind and visually impaired students in Delaware. This Work Group shall continue work related to funding and programming of DVI's education-related services.

SPONSOR: Sen. Lawson & Sen. Lopez & Sen. Hall-Long & Sen.
Poore & Sen. McBride
Sens. Bonini, Cloutier, Hocker, Pettyjohn,
Richardson, Sokola, Townsend; Reps. Baumbach,
Briggs King, Carson, Gray, Heffernan, Hensley,
Hudson, Q. Johnson, Kenton, Matthews, Miro,
Mitchell, Outten, Potter, Ramone, D. Short,
Spiegelman, Wilson, Bolden, Jaques, K. Williams

DELAWARE STATE SENATE
148th GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION
NO. 2

AS AMENDED BY

SENATE AMENDMENT NO. 1

CREATING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE
DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED AND STATEWIDE PROGRAMS FOR THE BLIND
AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

WHEREAS, students who are blind or visually impaired have complex learning needs and require specific interventions and instruction from specialized teachers of the visually impaired (TVIs), certified orientation & mobility instructors, and other related service providers; and

WHEREAS, students who are blind or visually impaired require appropriate accommodations, modifications of materials to facilitate access to information, and adaptations designed to address their unique educational needs; and

WHEREAS, students who are blind or visually impaired require systematic and regular instruction in the Expanded Core Curriculum from certified teachers and other specialists and technicians who are properly trained to teach such specialized and unique skills, including but not limited to, technology and computer proficiency, braille literacy, safe and independent mobility, age-appropriate career education, independent living skills, and social interaction skills; and

WHEREAS, the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) currently provides academic and life skills instructions to 260 individuals from birth to age 21 who are deemed eligible to receive such services; and

WHEREAS, DVI has surpassed its legislatively mandated student teacher ratio of 28:1 for the delivery of educational services; and

WHEREAS, the educational resources for students who are blind or visually impaired are constrained by the division of responsibility and authority between two state agencies, the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, The IEP Improvement Task Force, established by Senate Concurrent Resolution 63 to examine means to improve the IEP process, determined that the unique educational needs of students with visual impairments are not being met through the existing IEP process and recommended establishment of a separate task force assigned to specifically address the needs of students who are blind and visually impaired.

NOW THEREFORE:

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the 148th General Assembly of the State of Delaware, the House of Representatives concurring therein, that the Blind and Visually Impaired Education Task Force is hereby created by the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the membership of the Blind and Visually Impaired Education Task Force shall be as follows:

1. Two members of the State Senate, a member of the majority party appointed by the Senate President Pro Tem and a member of the minority party appointed by the Senate Minority Leader;

2. Two members of the Delaware House of Representatives, a member of the majority party appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and a member of the minority party appointed by the House Minority Leader;

3. A representative from the Governor's office;

4. The Secretary of Education or the Secretary's designee;

5. The Secretary of Health and Social Services or the Secretary's designee;

6. Two parents of students who are visually impaired, from a variety of age groups and geographic areas, one to be appointed by the Chair of the Senate Education Committee and one to be appointed by the Chair of the House Education Committee;

7. Two parents of students who are blind, from a variety of age groups and geographic areas, one to be appointed by the Chair of the Senate Education Committee and one to be appointed by the Chair of the House Education Committee;

8. Two individuals who are blind or visually impaired, one to be appointed by the Senate President Pro Tem and one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House;

9. The Director of the Division for the Visually Impaired;

10. Two Teachers for the Visually Impaired, one Orientation and Mobility Specialist, and one Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor who are certified and actively working with blind and visually impaired students in the State of Delaware where preschool, elementary, middle, and high school educational service areas are each represented, to be appointed by the Director of the Division for the Visually Impaired;

11. The Executive Director of the Delaware Association of the Blind or the Executive Director's designee;

12. The Executive Director of the Delaware Parent Information Center or the Executive Director's designee;

13. The Chair of the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Blind or the Chair's designee;

14. The Director of the Delaware Birth to Three Early Intervention System or the Director's designee;

15.A member of the Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens, appointed by the Chair of the Council;

16.An assistive technology specialist trained with blindness and visual impairment technology assessments, evaluations, and use in educational settings, to be appointed by the Director of the Division for the Visually Impaired;

17.Two local education agency special education directors, to be appointed by the Secretary of Education;

18.The President of the Delaware State Education Association or the President's designee;

19.An ophthalmologist and a low-vision optometrist appointed by the Secretary of Health and Social Services;

20.Two persons who teach special education in Delaware public schools, to be appointed by the Secretary of Education.

21.A member of the Delaware Association of School Psychologists, appointed by the President of the Association.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force shall convene its first meeting no later than 30 days after enactment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the member of the Delaware State Senate appointed by the President Pro Tem shall serve as the chair of the Task Force, and shall convene the first and subsequent meetings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Task Force shall report to the General Assembly and Governor by June 1, 2015 on the following topics:

1.The administrative structure and authority of the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) in regards to education;

i.Existing Teachers for the Visually Impaired and other vision service providers;

ii.Compensation and benefits for teaching staff;

iii.Development of quality standards for teachers and related professionals serving blind and visually impaired students.

2.DVI's funding sources designated for use in educating students in the State of Delaware;

3.Appropriate educational services delivery model;

- 4.The disposition of the Resource Rooms in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties;
- 5.Assistive technology provisions;
- 6.Individual Education Plans (IEP) for the blind and visually impaired;
- 7.Post-secondary transition planning and programming.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that staff support for the Task Force shall be provided by the Delaware Department of Education.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that suitable copies be delivered to each appointee and appointing authority.