

# Pennsylvania's Approach to the National Agenda for Children and Youths With Visual Impairments, Deafblindness, and Visual and Multiple Disabilities

## Goal 7

### Access to Instructional Materials

Access to developmental and educational services will include an assurance that textbooks and instructional materials are available to students in the appropriate media and at the same time as their sighted peers.

Provisions within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) require that textbooks and related core instructional materials are provided to students with print disabilities in specialized formats in a timely manner (IDEA 2004 Final Regulations, Sec 300.172). The Pennsylvania Special Education

Regulations: Chapter 14 further defines how core instructional materials are provided to students. The term "timely" indicates that students who are blind or visually impaired should receive instructional materials in a specialized format at the same time their sighted classmates receive these materials in standard print.

### Core Instructional Materials

Core instructional materials include printed textbooks and related materials published with the texts. This also includes other materials required by state education agencies or local education agencies for use by students in the classroom. Thus, instructional materials refers to both textbooks and all of the

other printed materials a student may be required to access in order to fully participate in the curriculum. This may include workbooks, teacher-developed worksheets, newspaper or journal articles, educational software, websites, and other documents.

### Access to Materials

All students who qualify for vision services and have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) may obtain instructional materials in specialized formats under the Chafee Amendment to the Copyright Law. These materials may be obtained through various agencies or produced locally using assistive technology tools. Texts are also available through the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC), a repository where publishers can safely store National Instructional Materials Access Standard (NIMAS) copies of their texts. These texts

in the NIMAS format can be easily converted into one of the four specialized formats by authorized materials producers. The term "specialized formats" refers to an alternative means of presenting standard printed materials and may include:

- Braille or tactile graphics
- Enlarged print or graphics
- Audio presentation of text or graphics, and
- Digital text or graphics

## Selection of Appropriate Materials

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Students who are blind or visually impaired should receive both a functional vision assessment and a learning media assessment conducted by a teacher of students with visual impairments. These assessments will assist the student's education team to determine the types of specialized formats that are most appropriate for each individual student. Students who use audio or digital formats should also participate in an assistive technology assessment to determine the most appropriate tools and training necessary for the student to effectively access these materials. Students who prefer to use Braille or enlarged print may also require tools and instruction to access these formats using electronic files.

Once the education team has determined that a student cannot effectively use standard print materials to access the general curriculum, they should:

- Determine the type(s) of specialized formats that will allow the student to effectively access core instructional materials,

- Determine the most appropriate specialized format to be used for specific tasks and in specific environments,
- When possible, identify existing sources of the student's instructional materials in appropriate specialized formats,
- Determine which tools will be necessary to produce or access the specialized formats,
- Determine what instruction and supports will be necessary in order to allow the student and others to effectively prepare or access the specialized formats, and
- Develop a plan for obtaining or preparing materials in the specialized formats in a timely manner.

The IEP team must include individuals who are very familiar with the student's strengths, needs, and preferences. An assistive technology specialist should be consulted to ensure that all appropriate options for preparing and using the specialized formats are considered and assessed.

## Obtaining Instructional Materials

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All students with qualifying visual impairments can sign up for free memberships to organizations that produce materials in specialized formats. These organizations include:

- The National Library for the Blind and Physically Impaired ([www.loc.gov/nls](http://www.loc.gov/nls))
- Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFB&D)
- BookShare ([www.bookshare.org](http://www.bookshare.org))

Many textbooks and other instructional materials can be obtained from these agencies free of charge. Both RFB&D and BookShare can produce materials not in their collection given adequate

lead time. The education team should investigate these resources and assist families to obtain the appropriate memberships. LEAs may also obtain organizational memberships to assist in the timely acquisition of instructional materials.

The Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) Accessible Instructional Materials (AIM) Center is an additional resource for materials in specialized formats for students in Pennsylvania. Visit [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net) to learn how to submit a request to the PaTTAN AIM Center to produce materials in any of the specialized formats.

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For more information about the National Agenda, go to [www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/](http://www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/).

For more information about PANA, go to [www.panationalagenda.com](http://www.panationalagenda.com) or contact the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network: 200 Anderson Road, King of Prussia, PA 19046, (610-265-7231 or 800-441-3215).