

The Michigan Vision Services Severity Rating Scale For Students With Additional Needs

Michigan Department of Education

Low Incidence Outreach

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State Board of Education

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Introduction

The Vision Services Severity Rating Scale With Additional Needs (VSSRS+) has been developed to assist the Teacher Consultant for the Visually Impaired (TCVI) or Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) in making recommendations for services to students who are blind or visually impaired in the state of Michigan. It should be stressed that the Severity Rating Scales are not assessment/evaluation instruments, but rather tools for assisting in determining service delivery times.

Each of the seven categories listed on the VSSRS+ Severity of Need Profile is structured in terms of the impact on vision functioning as it relates to the student's educational program. When using the VSSRS+, criteria provided within each of the categories is not all inclusive and many criteria overlap from one severity of need level to the next. Additional factors may influence the selection of the severity of need level by the teacher.

Rationale

A task force consisting of TCVIs and TVIs throughout the state of Michigan and from the Michigan Department of Education Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) was formed to continue the process of revising the VSSRS+ and to address the standardization of service delivery to students who are blind or visually impaired. Proposed revisions were presented and discussed during working sessions at the 2010 Michigan Association for Education and Rehabilitation (MAER) of the Blind and Visually Impaired conference. The need for consistency when determining the educational needs of the visually impaired was the main focus. The Revised VSSRS+ is the result of extensive discussion in each of these discussions.

Purpose and Development

The purpose of this manual is to define criteria and guidelines for using the VSSRS+ with students identified as visually impaired and for whom the VSSRS categories do not adequately apply. Further, it is intended to assist the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team in the selection of a vision service delivery model for existing as well as newly identified students with a visual impairment. The VSSRS+ will also be used to document change of frequency of services for students already identified as visually impaired.

A Revised VSSRS+ may be completed for:

1. Initial assessment
2. IEP team meeting
3. End of each school year
4. Visual status changes
5. Placement changes
6. Other

Suggested steps for Evaluation of a Student with a Visual Impairment:

1. Assess the student to determine his or her strengths and needs using a variety of assessment tools.
2. Complete the VSSRS+ to determine service delivery times.
3. Include recommendations of vision services in the TCVI or TVI report and share at the IEP team meeting.

The VSSRS+ consists of the following seven categories:

- Distance Visual Acuity
- Level of Functional Vision
- Impact of Developmental/Communication Delays
- Response to Vision and/or Other Sensory Stimulation and/or Instruction
- Level of Skill in Activities of Daily Living
- Need for Material Preparation by the TCVI/TVI
- Need for Communication with student's team/pertinent individuals by the TCVI/TVI

The Severity of Need in each of the scales is sequentially structured to correlate the degree of need for intervention/instruction from a TCVI or TVI, based on the severity of a student's visual impairment and educational needs.

Each of the categories is structured in terms of impact on the educational program as it relates to the student's age-appropriate needs. The Severity of Need descriptors within each category purposely overlap to some degree. To aid the TCVI/TVI in the selection of the Severity of Need that is most characteristic of the student with a visual impairment, additional evaluations may be necessary.

Category Definitions for the VSSRS+

The purpose of this manual is to define criteria and guidelines for using the VSSRS+ with students identified as visually impaired with additional needs. It was developed for use with students in grades K-12 and those in ungraded programs (preschool, young adult).

- **Distance of Visual Acuity:** refers to the student's level of distance vision as reported by an eye care/low vision specialist (suggested methods for non-verbal students include use of Teller Acuity Cards, LEA Vision Assessment Materials, etc.).
- **Level of Functional Vision:** refers to the student's ability to apply visual skills to the educational setting.
- **Impact of Developmental Delays/Communication Delays:** refers to the impact of these delays on the student's ability to benefit from services from the TCVI/TVI.
- **Response to Vision and/or Other Sensory Stimulation and/or Instruction:** refers to the ability of the student to respond to stimulation and/or instruction.

- Level of Skill in Activities of Daily Living: refers to the level of independence in skills of daily living.
- Need for Material Preparation by the TCVI/TVI: refers to the estimated time needed by the TCVI or TVI to modify materials necessary for the student's participation in his or her educational program. Additional material preparation may be completed by a teaching assistant/paraprofessional/brailist, but is not to be considered for this rating scale.
- Need for Communication with Student's Team/Pertinent Individuals by the TCVI/TVI: refers to the amount of time needed for communication with school personnel, parents, medical personnel, technology support personnel, and agencies concerning the student's educational program.

Contributing Factors to Service Delivery

Other factors may influence the selection of a service model that may not be mentioned in the Severity of Need Profile. If appropriate, those factors which influence a modification of the frequency of service may be marked.

A choice of one or more of the Contributing Factors to Service Delivery on the Severity of Need Summary may increase or decrease the frequency of service that is indicated by the Final Severity of Need Score.

The following factors may be considered:

- Age of student—Because the age of the student is sometimes a key factor in deciding the amount of service time, an additional one to four points may be applied to the Severity of Need score.
- Attendance
- Availability of materials/equipment
- Consultation and coordination of Expanded Core Curriculum activities
- Progressive condition
- Recent vision loss
- School staff need for support
- Student cooperation
- Training of Paraprofessional/Teaching Assistant/Brailist
- Transition to new school/building
- Numerous accommodations provided by TCVI/TVI
- Direct Curriculum Instruction—Occasionally, the TCVI or TVI is the staff person responsible for all or the majority of curriculum instruction in math, reading, or another subject. In this situation, an additional one to four points may be applied to the Severity of Need score.
- Other

Recommendations of Services

- Service Not Indicated: The student does not require vision services provided by a TCVI or TVI.
- One to Four Times per Year: Contact by the TCVI or TVI may be with the student or other pertinent individuals, one to four times per school year.
- Four to Eight Times per Year: Contact by the TCVI or TVI may be with the student or other pertinent individuals, four to eight times per school year.
- One to Four Times per Month: The student is seen directly by the TCVI or TVI one to four times a month. In addition, the certified TCVI or TVI may provide consultation with pertinent individuals.
- Two or More Times per Week: The student is seen by the TCVI or TVI two or more times a week for 45 or more minutes each. This recommendation is designed primarily for a student who is non-visual and who requires an inclusive program in all areas of instruction related to an appropriate educational program.

Directions for Completing the Vision Services Severity of Need Profile and Severity of Need Summary

The Severity of Need Profile and Severity of Need Summary can be found at the end of this document.

1. Category names are listed vertically along the left hand side of the Vision Services Severity of Need Profile Worksheet. Refer to definitions on the preceding page as necessary.
2. Descriptors are listed horizontally for each category. The descriptors are listed sequentially in terms of severity of need, from none to profound.
3. The numbers attached to each severity of need are considered part of a continuum. The specific number under each severity of need name is the numerical rating to be given for that level. For example, under Mild, a numerical rating of 1 is possible, while under Severe, a numerical rating of 3 is possible.
4. For each category, mark the descriptor that best describes the student. Place the appropriate severity of need number in the right hand column (Severity Score Column).
5. Total the right hand column to get a Severity of Need Score.
6. If appropriate, fill out the Contributing Factors to Service Delivery on the Severity of Need Summary by adding or subtracting 0.5 points. This number will be combined with the Severity of Need Score on the Severity of Need Profile and the result will be placed in the Final Severity of Need Score box on the Severity of Need Summary.
7. Using the Severity of Need Summary, refer to the table titled "Severity of Need Score and Frequency." Locate the range which contains the Final Severity of Need Score to determine the frequency of service.

Vision Services Severity Rating Scale FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS (VSSRS+) Revised 2013 Severity of Need Profile

Student: _____ Birthdate: _____ Grade/Program: _____ Date: _____

Severity of Need	NONE 0	MILD 1	MODERATE 2	SEVERE 3	PROFOUND 4	SCORE
(1) Distance Visual Acuity	20/40 – 20/70	20/70 – 20/100	20/100 – 20/400	20/400 – Count fingers	Light perception to nil	
(2) Level of Functional Vision	Functional vision sufficient for educational needs	Functional vision requires minimal accommodations for educational needs	Functional vision requires some accommodations for educational needs	Minimal functional vision, many accommodations needed	No functional vision	
(3) Impact of Development/Communication Delays	Receptive/ expressive communication & cognitive delays significantly impact response to instruction	Receptive/ expressive communication & cognitive delays impact response to instruction	Receptive/ expressive communication & cognitive ability is adequate to support minimal gains through instruction	Receptive/ expressive communication & cognitive ability is adequate to support some gains through instruction	Receptive/ expressive communication & cognitive ability is adequate to support steady progress through instruction	
(4) Response to Vision/Other Sensory Stimulation and/or Instruction	Response to stimulation or instruction-demonstrates no measurable gains	Response to stimulation or instruction-demonstrates minimal and inconsistent gains	Response to stimulation or instruction-demonstrates small but inconsistent gains	Response to stimulation or instruction-demonstrates some measurable gains	Response to stimulation or instruction-demonstrates measurable, consistent, & steady gains	
(5) Level of Skill in Activities of Daily Living	Dependent on full time care for medical and daily living tasks	Dependent on others for daily living tasks	Moving toward semi-independence in some daily living tasks	Moving toward independence in some daily living tasks	Moving toward independence in many daily living tasks	
(6) Need for Material Preparation by the TCVI/TVI	None	Occasional preparation and modifications needed	Monthly preparation and modifications needed	Weekly preparation and modifications needed	Daily preparation and modifications needed	
(7) Need for Communication with Student's Team/Pertinent Individuals by the TCVI/TVI	Minimal communication necessary	Occasional communication necessary	Monthly communication necessary	Weekly Communication necessary	Daily communication necessary	
Severity of Need Score						

Vision Services Severity Rating Scale FOR STUDENTS WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS (VSSRS+)

Severity of Need Summary

Student: _____ **Birthdate:** _____ **Grade/Program:** _____ **Date:** _____

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO SERVICE DELIVERY	
If appropriate, add (+.5) or subtract (-.5) points for each	
	Age of student (add 1 to 4 points)
	Attendance
	Availability of materials/ equipment
	Consultation and coordination of Expanded Core Curriculum activities
	Progressive condition
	Recent vision loss
	School staff need for support
	Student cooperation
	Training of Paraprofessional/ Teaching Assistant/ Brailist
	Transition to new school/ building
	Direct curriculum instruction and/or support (add 1 to 4 points)
	Other (explain)



Severity of Need Score	Frequency of Service
0 - 8	Service not indicated
9 - 13	1 - 4 times/ year
14 - 18	4 - 8 times/ year
19 - 23	1 - 4 times/ month
24 - 28	2 or more times/ week



RECOMMENDATION OF SERVICES	
Final Severity of Need Score	Frequency of Service



Severity of Need Score	
Contributing Factors +/-	
Final Severity of Need Score	