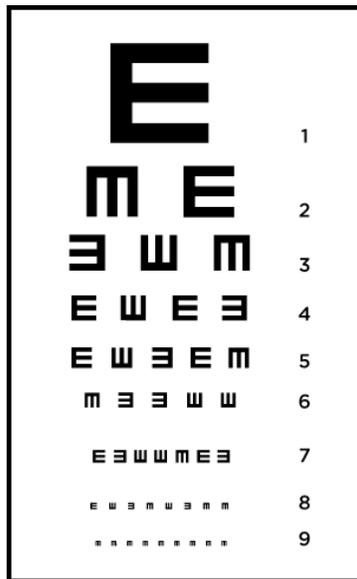
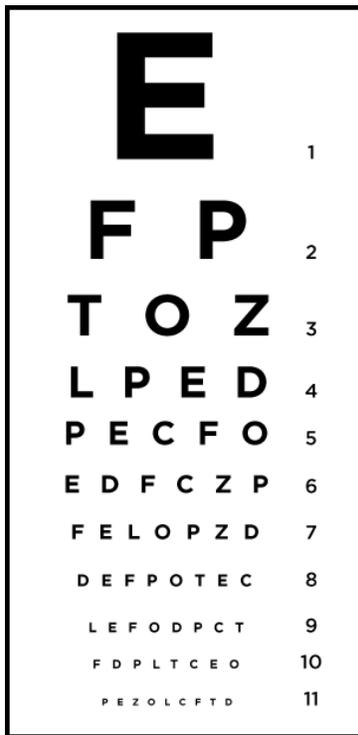




# Intake for ABE Students with Low Vision or Blindness



## Using this Guide

Thank you for contacting PANDA - Minnesota ABE Disability Specialists. This guide is intended to help your organization plan for enrolling students with special vision-related needs. Begin this process before the student meets with you so you are prepared and confident. If you have already identified a student with low vision in your program this document can help guide you in creating a plan to accommodate the student's needs. The first section of the guide is to inform your program about services available, proper etiquette, and common terms regarding students who are blind or vision impaired. The second section is a questionnaire for you to use with the student to gain more information about their needs and how to best accommodate them in class. This packet was developed by Minneapolis South Adult Education and PANDA staff.

**Minneapolis South Adult Education is PANDA's vision loss site for ABE students.** This location has teachers that are trained to work with students who have vision loss/blindness. The location has adaptive equipment, Braille materials and assistive technology to assist and accommodate students. We recommend students enroll here if possible. If this is not possible, this guide will help you to accommodate the student in your program. To learn more about our vision loss site, contact Romana Pulkrabek at [romana.pulkrabek@mpls.k12.un.us](mailto:romana.pulkrabek@mpls.k12.un.us)

### Resources for Vision Loss/Blindness

1. **PANDA's Website** has a chapter on blindness and vision loss, which includes general information, classroom strategies, and resources. Please read the chapter and watch the two videos about teaching students who are blind/have vision loss at <http://mn.abedisabilities.org/abe-disability-manual/vision-loss-and-blindness/instructional-strategies> PANDA can inform you about the possibility of receiving low incidence disability aid through the Minnesota Department of Education Adult Basic Education. Upon approval your program could receive an elevated per pupil rate for students who are blind or have severe vision loss. Additionally, contact PANDA staff with any questions and adaptive equipment needs at 763-504-4095 or [panda@rdale.org](mailto:panda@rdale.org)
2. **State Services for the Blind** assists people with a wide range of services for people with vision loss/blindness. They provide mobility training, assistive technology training, vocational rehabilitation, and support services. They transcribe books and other materials into alternative formats, including audio and braille. They assist Minnesotans who are blind, DeafBlind, losing vision, or who have another disability that makes it difficult to read print. Individuals need to apply for services and, if approved, are assigned a case worker who assesses needs and orders services. They have offices throughout the state of Minnesota. To find an office location call 651-539-2300. Their website is [mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/blind-visual-impaired](http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/blind-visual-impaired)
3. **Blind Inc.** is a non-profit training center that offers 'adjustment to blindness' training. They teach Braille, home management, the use of the white cane, how to use screen reading software on computers and more [www.blindinc.org/](http://www.blindinc.org/)
4. **Vision Loss Resources** provides services, skills and community support to assist people to regain independence after vision loss, such as how to use a cane and learn braille. (612) 871-2222; <http://visionlossresources.org/> or email at [info@virw.org](mailto:info@virw.org)

## Tips for Meeting and Greeting a Blind or Vision-Impaired Person

- Never grab a person who is blind or has vision loss by the arm. Ask if they require assistance. If they need assistance, stand alongside the person and let them take your arm just above the elbow so you can guide them.
- If a student who is blind is using a guide dog, remember the dog is a working dog and should not be distracted by petting or offering food.
- Some people feel uncomfortable when interacting with a person who has a disability because they don't know how to act. The key is to use common courtesy and be respectful.

### Other tips:

**Don't make assumptions** about people or their disabilities. If you have a question about what to do, how to do it, what language or terminology to use, or what assistance to offer, ask them. That person should be your first and best resource and generally they are happy you asked.

**Ask before you help.** Before you help someone, ask if they want help. Do not be offended if they decline your offer of assistance.

**Speak normally.** Some people tend to talk louder and slower to people with disabilities; don't.

**Use people-first language** when referring to people with disabilities, say the person first and then the disability. For example, say "I have a student who is blind" rather than "a blind student".

## Two Types of Blindness

**Congenitally Blind:** People who are born blind are not able to "visualize" anything in their surroundings. They will not be able to perceive scenes, shapes, or colors like those who later became blind (adventitiously). If you describe a scene with trees and a blue sky, for example, to a person who is congenitally blind he/she will not perceive your description like a person who has some visual memory of trees and colors.

**Adventitiously Blind:** Persons who became adventitiously blind after language developed may be able to "see" a word they have spelled or read. They will be able to visualize color and form to a varying degree.

## Causes and Implications

Glaucoma, macular degeneration, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and other conditions may affect vision or acuity. An individual may have a greatly impaired field of vision but may still be able to "read" with the aid of enlarged print, magnifiers, and lenses. In certain circumstances, small print might be preferable. Head injury or physical trauma to the brain may lead to different degrees of visual impairment and/or blindness.

## IMPORTANT

All time spent with blind and visually impaired students should be documented in student time/attendance, including: phone conversations, interviews, coordination of educational plan, assessments, counseling, meetings, etc. Determine a staff member that will be responsible for the entire enrollment process.

### Screening

Contact the student to gather information prior to the completing the student intake questionnaire (next page). This screening may be done over the phone or in person (give the student the option) depending on the student's ability to converse in English (you may need an interpreter-see below). Inquire whether the blind/visually impaired person who is seeking classes has the following skills:

1. Does the person cane travel?	Yes	No
2. Is the person able to read Braille?	Yes	No
3. Do they possess computer skills?	Yes	No

If the answer to any of these questions is no, refer the person to Vision Loss Resources prior to enrolling (see contact information on page 2). If yes, move forward with the process outlined below.

Ask the following questions:

- Is the student proficient in English? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the student's first language? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will they be bringing anyone with them to registration? \_\_\_\_\_
- Will an interpreter be needed? \_\_\_\_\_

Possible sources for interpreters:

- Family members
- School Staff
- Interpreter arranged through counselor at State Service for the Blind (SSB)

### **Provide instructions for navigating the building when the student arrives for registration.**

- Identify which door the student should use to enter.
- Inform front desk or office staff to notify you when the student arrives.
- Make sure someone meets the student at the door.
- Give the student a tour of the building after registration. Keep in mind it takes a totally blind student at least one week to get familiar to a new building.

# Student Intake Questionnaire for Learners with Vision Loss

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

First Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Estimated language or literacy level: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational goal: \_\_\_\_\_

*It is not necessary to answer all the questions on this form, however, the more information you are able to gather the easier it will be to choose an assessment for the student and make an appropriate class placement.*

## Student's support system:

- Do you live with family members? \_\_\_\_\_  
Do any of them speak English? \_\_\_\_\_  
What languages are spoken at home? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you a client at State Services for the Blind? \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, who is your counselor? \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you taking other adaptation to blindness classes at Vision Loss Resources, State Services for the Blind, or Blind, Inc.? \_\_\_\_\_  
Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Ask for the student's case worker name and number and have them sign the release of information form (on the last page) so you can collaborate regarding student needs.

## Student's level of vision:

- Do you have any useable vision? \_\_\_\_\_
- If so, can you see black and white line drawings? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you see photographs? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have a limited field of vision? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you need to hold the paper close to your face to read it? \_\_\_\_\_

**Cause of vision loss:**

What has caused your vision loss? Check those that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Stargardt Disease	<input type="checkbox"/>	Macular Degeneration	<input type="checkbox"/>	Retinal Detachment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Glaucoma	<input type="checkbox"/>	Diabetic Retinopathy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cataracts
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:				

- Is it degenerative? \_\_\_\_\_
- Was it the result of a brain injury? \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain your brain injury (i.e. from a car accident, stroke, head injury, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

- When did your vision loss begin? \_\_\_\_\_

**Use of assistive technology:**

- Do you own a small audio recorder? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you use a computer?     Apple         PC
- Have you ever used:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Voiceover	<input type="checkbox"/>	Jaws
<input type="checkbox"/>	Kurzweil Scanner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other screen readers?

- Do you have an iPhone or assisted cell phone? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you ever used any kind of magnifier? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have a talking watch? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you ever used a talking dictionary? \_\_\_\_\_

**Literacy:**

- Can you read in your first language? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do you usually read? (regular print, large print, Braille, or audio) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Have you ever learned to read Braille in any language? \_\_\_\_\_

- If yes in English, \* grade I or grade II? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do you take notes? Slate and stylus? \_\_\_\_\_ Perkins Braille? \_\_\_\_\_  
Laptop? \_\_\_\_\_ Tape recorder or another device? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have experience using a computer or JAWS? \_\_\_\_\_  
Voiceover? \_\_\_\_\_ Systems Access on PC? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many years of schooling did you complete? \_\_\_\_\_  
Where did you attend school? \_\_\_\_\_  
What were your favorite subjects? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Grades/marks? \_\_\_\_\_ Did you receive a diploma or equivalent? \_\_\_\_\_
- Did you start learning English before the loss of vision? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you use any visual aids? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you use a dark pen or dark-lined paper? \_\_\_\_\_
- What size print can you read comfortably? (Have a few large font samples available.)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How long can you read print before experiencing eyestrain? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you read print from the blackboard comfortably? \_\_\_\_\_
- Does glare keep you from seeing objects correctly? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you write and read back what you have written? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you see colors? \_\_\_\_\_
- What color background helps make objects easier to see? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have any other disabilities that may interfere with your ability to learn (hearing impairment, head injury, diabetes, specific learning disorder, ADHD, mental health challenges, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you have someone to help you at school and/or at home? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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\* Grade I is alphabetic braille in which each letter is represented by a braille symbol. In grade II, also called contracted braille, common words, prefixes and suffixes are condensed into a single symbol.

**Mobility:**

- Do you use a white cane? \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you find your way around a new building? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you use public transportation, Metro Mobility, or rides from family members? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Educational goals:**

- Have you attended school before? \_\_\_\_\_  
In the U.S. or elsewhere? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you want to work in the future? \_\_\_\_\_
- Have you worked before? \_\_\_\_\_
- Why do you want to come to our program/school? \_\_\_\_\_
- What are your academic goals? \_\_\_\_\_

**Acquire verbal consent, then ask the student to sign the written consent for release of information form.** Ask the student to sign the consent form on the next page. This is required to contact anyone about the student, i.e., their case worker at State Services for the Blind, family members, PANDA, etc. Ask the student to sign or mark the consent for release of information.

- You may offer to place the pen in the appropriate place, then ask the student to take the pen and sign.

## CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

This consent form gives staff your permission to obtain or release your Protected Health Information (PHI) as required by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). You have a right to receive a copy of this form. You may revoke this consent with a written request at any time.

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

**I authorize the adult education program to release,  
exchange or obtain my information from:**

Name/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Information to be released:**

- Health Records
- School Records
- Psycho-Educational Report
- Other information or instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for releasing information:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date Authorization Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

**Authorization Granted By:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature** **Date**

## Assessment

Acceptable accommodations for students with vision loss or blindness:

- Make sure the student receives 100% extended testing time (2x)
- Allow breaks
- Testing in a private, quiet area.

### Consider appropriate assessment(s)

- Consider Student Intake Questionnaire responses and class requirements to determine appropriate assessments (i.e. If the student hopes to take a GED class the needed assessments are different than for an ESL class).
- Consider how you will assess student's literacy, speaking (for ESL), and technology abilities.
- Plan at least two hours for assessing students.

Contact PANDA for Braille testing materials, audio materials or other adaptive equipment needs prior to the assessment. Allow at least two weeks to get materials from PANDA.

Email: [panda@rdale.org](mailto:panda@rdale.org) Phone: 763-504-4095

### Gather all necessary materials for the assessment appointment which may include:

- ✓ Test booklets
- ✓ Answer sheets
- ✓ Special pens
- ✓ Magnification equipment (hand magnifier, CCTV)
- ✓ Computers, screen readers
- ✓ Perkins Braille
- ✓ Large print testing materials
- ✓ Braille samples
- ✓ Slate/stylus
- ✓ A volunteer reader
- ✓ Private room for testing

# Enrollment

## Determine classes the student may be eligible for.

- Create a plan of action for training and obtaining resources and to determine a start date.
- The teacher should be notified about incoming blind/vision loss (B/VI) students at least three weeks prior to the student's start date to prepare and get training to teach the student.
- The teacher should watch the instructional videos on PANDA's website and read about teaching students with vision loss or blindness prior to student enrollment in their class at: <http://mn.abedisabilities.org/abe-disability-manual/vision-loss-and-blindness/overview>
- Discuss student technology requirements and reading/speaking levels.
- A student may not be able to attend a computer class until he/she receives technology training from Blind, Inc. or Vision Loss Resources (this should be discussed with the student's counselor at State Services for the Blind).
- A student may have excellent oral communication skills but low reading and writing ability in Braille.

Schedule a meeting to enroll the student. Participants should include:

- Student
- Student's family members
- Interpreter (if necessary, through State Services for the Blind)
- Case worker from State Services for the Blind
- Braille teacher from Vision Loss Resources or Blind, Inc.
- Teachers who will work with this student
- Program manager or lead

## Present classes to the student.

- Discuss schedule and attendance policy.
- Explain how these classes are related to the student's stated goals.
- Determine a start date.

Contact PANDA if additional advice, training, or resources are needed.

Email: [panda@rdale.org](mailto:panda@rdale.org)

Phone: (763) 504-4095



## Terminology

**CCTV:** Closed-circuit Television, which helps to enlarge any printed page and some images.

**Duxbury:** A computer software program that translates written text into Braille.

[www.duxburysystems.com/](http://www.duxburysystems.com/)

**Grade I Braille:** Uncontracted Braille. When every letter of every word is expressed in Braille, it is referred to as Grade I Braille. Very few reading materials are transcribed in Grade I Braille. However, all newly blind adults learn this system of Braille.

**Grade II Braille:** Contracted Braille. This is the system used for reproducing most textbooks and publications. This system does not correspond to English contractions but is maybe more akin to shorthand. This system is not suitable for beginning to intermediate ELL students.

**Emboss:** To print Braille translated material.

**Embosser:** The large and noisy printer that prints (embosses) Braille.

**JAWS (Job Access with Speech):** This system converts text and components of the Windows operating system into synthesized speech, allowing for access to Windows-based computer systems.

**Notetaker:** This is a portable Braille note-writing device for higher-level (GED) students.

**Perkins Brailier:** A portable Braille typewriter with keys corresponding to the six dots of Braille code, a space key, a backspace key, and a line space key.

**Scanner and Reader:** A scanner that has OCR (Optical Character Recognition). Combined with a screen-reading program, students can access scanned text through speech, magnification, or Braille display that can be embossed.

**Slate and Stylus:** The Braille equivalent of paper and pencil. Portable.

**Translation Software:** Computer software which translates written documents into Braille to be embossed later. Examples are Duxbury and MegaDots.

**Zoomtext:** Screen magnification system/software for computers.