

PROSPECTIVE TVI CANDIDATE RESOURCE

Becoming a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) is an amazing career choice! There are multiple pathways to become a TVI, so it is important to pick a TVI preparation program that is a good fit for your personal and professional priorities. As you explore different programs, consider asking these questions to help guide your decision:

WHERE TO START

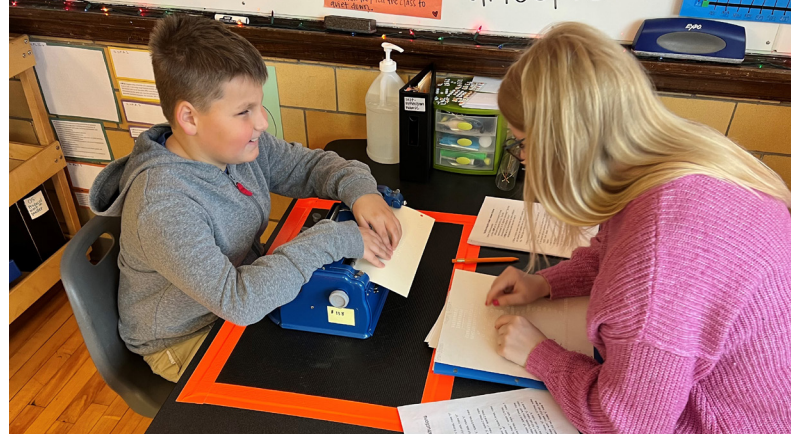
There is no single comprehensive list of all university-based TVI training programs, though these websites are a good place to start:

[Professional Preparation Programs →](#)

[Directory of University Programs in Visual Impairments →](#)
(older but still useful list)

PROGRAM FORMAT & CLASS EXPERIENCES

- Are you looking for a local or remote/hybrid training program?
Multi-state consortium programs and distance programs that train folks across large regions are growing. If you can't relocate for a program, don't be discouraged!
- What time of day are classes typically offered? Are they online or in person?
- Are you looking for a program where you can work full- or part-time and earn your degree/licensure, or are you looking to be a full-time student while working on your degree?
- What does the courseload typically look like during the fall, spring, and summer semesters?
- How long (in semesters or years) are the programs you're considering?
- Does the program follow a cohort model, and how big or small is the typical class size?
- For online programs, are courses typically taught in a synchronous or asynchronous format?



TEACHER LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

- Do you already have a teaching license (in any domain), or would becoming a TVI be your first teacher license/certificate?

If you don't have any teaching licensure, find a program that will provide an initial teaching license pathway.

If you have a teaching license (in any domain), does the program have an endorsement/certificate pathway?
- What support does the program provide to help you transfer your license from one state to another, either if you're looking at an out-of-state program or planning to move after graduation?

PRACTICUM, FIELDWORK & STUDENT TEACHING

- How many hours or semesters of practicum (directly working in schools with students with VI) does the program offer?
- Are placements/mentor teachers assigned to you, or do you have to find your own placement/mentor teacher?
- Where do the practicums occur (e.g., public schools, schools for the blind, camps, etc.), and are there any opportunities to observe students in the community (e.g., home visits, eye exams, etc.)?
- If you're working as a TVI while in the program, can you get credit through an embedded practicum for the time you spend on your caseload?

YOUR PRIORITIES

What are the unique aspects you will value most from your training?

- Do you want to learn about and engage in research and other traditional academic pursuits during your training? Are you interested in having regular engagement with research or a graduate assistantship?
- What types of student resources, supports, and social opportunities does the program or university provide?
- Does the program have scholarships to pay for tuition and/or other expenses related to your training?
- Is the program committed to building strong community partnerships?

Contact:

Rachel Schles, PhD | rachel.schles@vanderbilt.edu

As a TVI, you'll have a range of job settings to choose from. As an itinerant teacher working within a school system you will have the opportunity to work across multiple schools. You may also choose to work at a single public school in a vision resource room, or maybe teaching at a school for the blind is the place for you! Below we've highlighted just a few of the best parts of being a TVI.

The following information was collected through the Visual Impairment Professionals in Education Survey - Tennessee 2022 (Schles et al., 2022).

BEST PARTS OF BEING A TVI

Working with a high need population	Itinerant: not running a whole classroom	Individualized work with each student	Smaller caseloads
Work with students of all ages	Close bonds with students	Providing access to environment and materials	Job security
Small, close-knit field	Braille and technology	Push-in or pull-out services	Always having other TVIs to rely on
Leading professional developments for teachers	Promoting inclusion	Support system in every school	Meeting new people in each school setting

KEY SKILLS

Creativity	Adaptability & flexibility	Data analysis	Active collaboration
Tech-oriented	Life-long learner	Independent work style	Active listening

Quote from Tennessee TVI describing what it takes to be a TVI:

“Key necessary abilities: Time management, flexibility, good communication skills, collaboration (working with other service providers of all personality types), handling travel routinely in a all travel conditions and planning routes, awareness of policies and procedures, sound decision making skills, ability to multitask, ability to hold in memory details about each student / situation, ability to recall each district's methods and protocol, ability to communicate with all related parties including parents, ability to handle conflicts in a manner that promotes cohesion, ability for clear documentation and daily logs for travel and service, willingness to work more hours than are in a workweek, ability to get to know home situations that affect the student at school of which communication and compassion for struggling parents is necessary.”

Contact:

Rachel Schles, PhD | rachel.schles@vanderbilt.edu