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**Date:** September 3, 2019

**To:** Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, CESA Directors, School Administrators, Vision Professionals, and Parents/Guardians

**From:** Dawn Soto, Director of Outreach Services, DPI Vision Consultant, and APH Ex-Officio Trustee

**Subject:** Individual Short Courses at the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Over the course of the 2018-2019 school year, the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired Short Course team has received several questions regarding Individual Short Courses. To address these questions, we have developed an FAQ to help further understanding of this program.

#### *What is a Short Course?*

In order to promote, facilitate, and provide appropriate educational opportunities for all Wisconsin children who are blind or visually impaired, regardless of their educational placement, Outreach staff offer courses of variable length designed and tailored to a child's specific Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) needs. According to the American Foundation for the Blind, "The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is the body of knowledge and skills that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique disability-specific needs. Students with visual impairments need the Expanded Core Curriculum in addition to the core academic curriculum of general education. The ECC should be used as a framework for assessing students, planning individual goals and providing instruction." These areas include the following: compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes, orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills, recreation and leisure skills, career education, use of assistive technology, sensory efficiency skills, and self-determination.

#### **Individual Short Courses**

An Individual Short course is when a student receives direct instruction from a Short Course instructor on one or more areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum at the Wisconsin Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired; instruction is driven by goals created by the student's IEP team.

#### **Group Short Courses**

A Group Short Course occurs via one of two channels:

- A student is signed up for a pre-planned short course, such as a “Winter Weekend.” These pre-planned short courses are on scheduled dates throughout the school year and are held in Janesville or in various locations in Wisconsin.
- A program is selected from our [menu of preplanned Short Courses](#), which are available to be hosted anywhere in the state of Wisconsin! We prefer to provide these programs for small groups of students, as that is how they have been designed, but we will absolutely adapt the program to work for only one student if desired! If hosted somewhere other than Wisconsin Center for the Blind campus, these group short courses will be held on weekends or a maximum of three days during the week.

#### *Why would the IEP team consider a Short Course?*

An IEP team may consider a Short Course for a student that is in need of *intensive* instruction for a short period of time in the area of the Expanded Core Curriculum that a student’s local Teacher of the Blind or Orientation and Mobility Specialist is not able to provide. Examples of intensive need include, but are not limited to the following scenarios:

- A student recently began using a new piece of assistive technology and needs extra instruction on how to efficiently use it
- A student recently lost their vision and needs a jump start on learning braille and orientation and mobility skills
- A student will be participating in a work experience in their home community and will need to take the bus, but the student is not comfortable taking the bus and would benefit from several lessons over the course of several days
- A student will be participating in a home economics course and needs intensive instruction in the area of Daily Living Skills so they are able to participate at the same time as their peers

#### *How can Short Course team members support IEP Teams? Can they attend IEP team meetings?*

Short Course team members can support IEP teams in a variety of ways, from sharing general information on Short Course programming to assisting in the planning of an Individual Short Course. Short Course team members can participate in IEP team meetings as **a resource for planning and logistics** to ensure the student’s programming at WCBVI meets the IEP team’s goals for the student, but may **not attend for purposes of determining areas of student need**.

Please see DPI Bulletin 11.01 for more information on WCBVI Outreach Team Member Roles: <https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sped/pdf/bul11-01.pdf>

#### *When does an IEP need to be held for Short Course programming (both group and individual)?*

Groups: It is not necessary to hold an IEP, as WCBVI is not providing FAPE, this responsibility lies on the district. In order for a student to participate, ask if additional needs to be aware of-if so, contact directly the parent/guardian directly to determine what needs are. Look to see if it will be needed during the program and then if you can provide it.

Example: A student uses a walker at all times and training from a PT is required for staff.

Individual: The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction gives guidance that if a student misses **more** than ten days of school at their LEA, a change of placement should be indicated. This follows the disciplinary rule (manifestation determination) and focuses on the concept of missing more than ten days of school. If an IEP team would like their student to participate in a WCBVI Short Course that is more than ten days, they will need to indicate so on their change of placement form (P2), as well as under special education services (I-4). Additionally, if an IEP team determines the child should attend a Short Course on a regular basis (i.e. the first week of each month for a quarter), this should also be documented in the same places.

If a Short Course program runs less than ten days, the IEP team can determine how they would like this programming documented, if at all. If a goal is being addressed that is not already in the IEP, this should be added to the IEP. Communication should occur between parents/guardians and the IEP team/school district that their child will be here attending programming; however in this scenario, FAPE belongs to the school district.

*What is the timeline for submitting paperwork?*

All Short Course paperwork **must** be submitted one month prior to each program; this includes parents and guardians updating any previously submitted paperwork.

*My student attended a Group Short Course last month, do they need to fill out the paperwork again?*

Parents or guardians will need to review the paperwork they submitted to ensure there have not been any changes for their student. Short Course paperwork is good from September 1 to August 31 each year, after that window of time as passed, a new set of paperwork will need to be filled out.

*What if there is a waiting list for Short Courses?*

In the event that a Short Course is full, we will create a waiting list of students. Families will be notified if/when a space opens up.

*Can Short Courses be held over the summer months?*

Short Courses are not held over the summer months. WCBVI offers a variety of programming over the summer for students who are blind or visually impaired; our Short Course team members help staff these programs!

*For further information regarding WCBVI Outreach Short Course Programming, please contact Meghan Fredel (contact information below). For other Outreach services, please visit the center's website at: [www.wcbvi.k12.wi.us](http://www.wcbvi.k12.wi.us).*

Meghan Fredel, TVI, COMS  
WCBVI Outreach Dual Licensure Consultant  
Short Course Instructor  
[Meghan.Fredel@wcbvi.k12.wi.us](mailto:Meghan.Fredel@wcbvi.k12.wi.us)  
PH: 608.758.4926