Appendix A: Definitions

For purposes of federal and state special education law:

*Vision Impairment or Blind* - The capacity to see, after correction, is limited, impaired, or absent and results in one or more of the following: reduced performance in visual acuity tasks; difficulty with written communication; and/or difficulty with understanding information presented visually in the education environment. The term includes students who are blind and students with limited vision. CMR 28.02 (7)(d)(2)

**legal blindness**
Is a level of vision loss that has been legally defined to determine eligibility for benefits. The clinical diagnosis refers to a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction, and/or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Often, people who are diagnosed with legal blindness still have some useable vision.

**low vision**
Low vision refers to a vision loss that may be severe enough to impede a person's ability to carry out everyday activities, but still allows some functionally useful sight. Low vision may range from moderate impairment to near-total blindness. Low vision cannot be fully corrected by eyeglasses, contact lenses, or surgery. However, a person with low vision may benefit from any of a variety of available optical devices, such as electronic magnifying glasses, eyeglass-mounted telescopes, etc. In addition, special software developed for computer users with low vision can display type in large size or read text aloud.

**low vision examination**
An examination performed by an ophthalmologist or optometrist who specializes in low vision to determine whether special low vision devices, better lighting, or other types of training can help with utilizing functional vision more effectively.

**low vision therapists**
Low vision therapists conduct functional vision assessments (after clinical low vision examinations) and teach the use of functional vision and low vision devices.
ophthalmologist
A physician (MD) specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of refractive, medical and surgical problems related to eye diseases and disorders.

optician
A professional who makes and adjusts optical aids, such as eyeglass lenses, from prescriptions supplied by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.

optometrist
A doctor of optometry (OD) specializing in vision problems, treating vision conditions with spectacles, contact lenses, low vision aids and vision therapy, and prescribing medications for certain eye diseases.

orientation and mobility specialists
Orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists conduct evaluations and teach skills for safe and independent travel, including the use of sighted guides, canes and electronic devices.

sensory impairment (Vision)
The capacity to see, after correction, is limited, impaired, or absent and results in one or more of the following: reduced performance in visual acuity tasks; difficulty with written communication; and/or difficulty with understanding information presented visually in the environment. The term includes students who are blind and students with limited vision.

Snellen Chart
This is a standard eye chart that is used to evaluate people's visual acuity. It has a series of letters or letters and numbers, with the largest at the top gradually becoming smaller as one reads down the chart. The Snellen fractions, 20/20, 20/30, etc., are measures of a person's ability to identify small letters at specified distances. They give no information about seeing larger objects and objects with poor contrast (such as steps and curbs).

TVI (see Appendix D, p. 46)
A TVI is a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments. They are educators who are specially trained to work with students with visual impairments.

20/20, twenty-twenty
Normal visual acuity. The Upper number is the standard distance (20 feet) between an eye being tested and the eye chart; and the lower number indicates that a tested eye can see the same small standard-sized letters or symbols as a normal eye at 20 feet.

vision rehabilitation therapists (see Appendix D, p. 37)
Vision rehabilitation therapists teach adaptive independent living skills, enabling people with vision loss, to confidently carry out daily activities.

visual acuity
The clinical measure of the eye's ability to distinguish details. This measurement is usually given in a fraction and is based upon visible print size. Typical vision is 20/20. If an individual sees 20/200, the smallest letter that this individual can see at 20 feet could be seen by someone with typical vision at 200 feet.
visual field
This refers to the scope of what the eye sees; includes central and peripheral vision and is sometimes called tunnel vision. The normal visual field means the person can see details that are approximately 60 degrees inward, toward the nose in each eye, to 100 degrees outwards, away from the nose, and approximately 60 degrees above and 75 below the horizontal meridian.

Definitions adapted from: the American Foundation for the Blind, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology