



SD School for the Blind
and Visually Impaired

Student and Guardian Handbook

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Dear Parents and Guardians,

Each year, SDSBVI's team updates the Guardian and Student Handbook to reflect changes to policies and procedures that have been made throughout the past year. Once the updates are complete on July 1st, we will add the handbook to our website for your convenience.

A copy of the updated handbook will be emailed to you if an email address exists in our files. Each new student will receive a hard copy of the handbook, as will anyone who requests one.

Please take the time to read through this extensive resource of information about our programs and policies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Vogel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jessica" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Vogel".

Jessica Vogel
Superintendent

Guiding Principles

Mission and Vision

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SDSBVI), serving as an essential part of South Dakota's special education continuum, meets student achievement expectations by setting high standards and providing best practice programs to students ages Birth to twenty-one.

Mission

Preparing students to step forward with confidence and a vision of lifetime success.

Vision

All South Dakota children who are blind or visually impaired will have full access to educational resources that prepare them for life.

Core Values

- We foster each child is an individual, deserving of uniquely designed learning opportunities focused on helping them achieve their highest level of independence.
- We promote families, communities, and school districts as key partners in meeting the needs of each child.
- We support knowledgeable and caring professionals who provide experiences for each child in the least restrictive environment.
- We use innovative technological tools to meet the needs of the individual child.
- We provide safety and security in a positive healthy environment.
- We commit to the highest level of independent readiness as each child embraces adulthood with a sense of opportunity.

Strategic Priorities

- Increase local, state, and national understanding of SDSBVI's roles and responsibilities as a resource for children in need of specialized vision services.
- Expand and enhance outreach service support to assure equitable access to consultative services statewide.
- Establish a statewide center of excellence in vision loss resources for families and providers of children who are blind or visually impaired in South Dakota.
- Review South Dakota Smarter Balanced Assessment results on an annual basis to identify longitudinal trends for individual student growth and proficiency in the areas of math, English language arts, and science.

Programs at SDSBVI

The mission of the SDSBVI is to educate children who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf-blind. This is done through programs available on the campus in Aberdeen and through outreach vision consultant services statewide. SDSBVI is an accredited K-12 educational program and meets all the requirements set forth by the State of South Dakota Department of Education and Federal guidelines.

General Academic Program

The General Academic Program serves students who are on an academic diploma track. Students also receive direct instruction in functional academic skills as well as in the areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum for students who are blind or visually impaired. The General Academic Program is designed to address the specific skill needs of students for high school graduation. The South Dakota Board of Education and SDSBVI have adopted [requirements for graduation](#) from high school. These requirements must be met for a student to receive a high school diploma from SDSBVI.

Academic Grading System

A = 93% - 100%

D = 67% - 74%

B = 84% - 92%

F = 0% - 66%

C = 75% - 83%

Distance Education

SDSBVI recognizes that students have a need or desire to enroll in classes from outside the school. The state of South Dakota requires that these distance education classes be registered for through the Virtual High School and provided by the institutions associated with the Virtual High School. Delivery methods and costs vary depending on which providers are selected. Only distance classes which are completed through Virtual High School will be transcribed by SDSBVI. All distance education courses, via internet, DDN or other means, will need to be approved by the SDSBVI and the student's LEA. Coverage for the cost of the courses will be determined by the student's LEA and SDSBVI.

Functional Academic Program

The Functional Academic Program is programming to meet the educational and social needs of our students who are blind or visually impaired and are seeking vocational training and a certificate of completion.

Functional Grading System

E= Excellent

CP= Continued Progress

S= Satisfactory

I= Improvement Seen

N= Need for Improvement

NA= Not Applicable

Transition Program

The Learning to be Equipped for Adulthood Program (L.E.A.P.) provides students with an opportunity to develop skills from a secondary educational setting into a postsecondary environment. The program utilizes the nine areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) for students with visual impairments, with a focus on real-life practice and application. Students should apply for L.E.A.P. by January 31st of their senior/final academic year. The LEAP application can be found on the website www.sdsbvi.org.

Outreach Services

Our Outreach Vision Consultants are professionals who specialize in working with children with visual impairments from birth through age 21. They provide services in the home for children ages birth-3 and focus on creating functional ways to include children into typical household routines. The Outreach Vision Consultants also provide consultation in classrooms and focus on creating meaningful ways to support students with visual impairments throughout the school environment. The Outreach Vision Consultants schedule regular visits at the school or family's convenience.

Residential Program

Residential placement is appropriate when the family lives at a distance that makes a daily commute unfeasible OR the child would benefit in the residential setting from educational services warranted. If residential accommodations are to be considered for a child enrolled at the SDSBVI, it will be done as a part of the IEP process. Because the dormitories are considered a more restrictive environment, the IEP team must consider the benefits and any potential detriment to the student. Additional residential policies can be found in the residential handbook on SDSBVI's Website.

School Visitation Guidelines

Visitation by parents/guardians to observe the programs at SDSBVI is encouraged. If, as part of your visit to observe your child's program, you would like to consult with staff, please call ahead and schedule an appointment. All visitors are required to sign in and obtain a visitor's pass.

Students

Athletics and Extracurricular Participation

Students at SDSBVI who choose to participate in athletics and/or other extracurricular activities, special events, do so with the understanding that participation is subject to compliance with the [South Dakota High School Activities Association](#), [Special Olympics](#), and/or [The North Central Association of Schools for the Blind](#) rules and regulations student handbook(s).

Bullying to Include Harassment

SDSBVI is committed to maintaining a constructive, safe school climate that is conducive to student learning and fostering an environment in which all students are treated with respect and dignity.

Bullying is an intentional isolated act or pattern of repeated physical, verbal, or cyber conduct toward another person that is sufficiently severe and offensive to the person, and

1. has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive school environment for one or more students, and/or
2. has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with a student's educational opportunities (i.e., academic, co-curricular activities, extra-curricular activities, and social opportunities, etc.) within the school environment.
3. places a person in reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, and/or
4. causes physical hurt or psychological distress to a person, and/or
5. constitutes retaliation against any person for asserting or alleging an act of bullying, and/or
6. disrupts the orderly operation of a school.

Reporting

Any individual who believes a student has been the victim of bullying, as defined above, by students, staff, or third parties shall report the alleged acts immediately to the Student Services Director and Superintendent. The report must be submitted in writing on the SDSBVI bullying form and is available from the Student Services Director, Superintendent, or on the SDSBVI website.

Cell Phones and like Devices

- Students may have their cell phones or like devices during the school day but must be kept in the student's backpacks or lockers and placed on silent mode. The only exception is if the phone is being used as a medication reminder or when requested by the faculty for classroom instruction.
- The phone/device shall not be used without faculty or administrator permission, except between 12:40 PM and 1:00 PM in the dormitory during the school day.
- The devices can be taken for out-of-town outings; the rules set by the staff in charge are to be followed. SDSBVI is not responsible for lost or damaged student devices.
- Students are prohibited from making unauthorized recordings or social media posts that would be a violation of another person's right to privacy or violate any law or rule/policy.
- Cell phones are to be turned off and out of sight in all locker rooms and rest rooms. All such violations will be handled by SDSBVI school administration.
- Students refusing to comply with a staff's request to turn in their device will constitute insubordination and subject to consequences.
- The consequence for not following the guidelines (except for locker room or restroom violations) are as follows:
 - 1st offense: The device will be confiscated and returned to the student at the end of the school day and the student will receive education on current policy and future consequences.
 - 2nd offense: The device will be confiscated, and the student's guardian must come to the office to retrieve the device.
 - More than two offenses: Administration will determine the consequences for students who habitually violate this policy.

Cheating

Any student who cheats on a test, other assignment, or violates normal testing procedures will receive an automatic zero for the test or assignment. Guardian(s) and the LEA will be notified.

Communicable Diseases

The purpose of the Communicable Disease Policy is to keep all students, staff, and visitors as safe, healthy, and free from exposure to communicable illnesses as possible.

If your student is ill, please call the school office to notify them of your student's illness and absence.

If your child becomes ill at school and needs to go home, Health Services staff will attempt to contact the parent or guardian in the student's Infinite Campus file. The emergency contact will be contacted if we feel your child needs to go home and we are unable to reach a parent or guardian. In the event of a medical emergency, 911 will be called. The school will then attempt to contact the parent or guardian listed. Your child will be transported to a hospital if deemed necessary.

Students are to stay home if they have experienced:

- an oral temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher in the past 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication)
- vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- a new, undiagnosed rash
- symptoms of illness such as fatigue, cough, and difficulty breathing

Specific Communicable Conditions Regulations:

Illness	Exclusion Regulation
Chicken Pox	The student may attend school after all pox are dry and scabbed.
Fifth Disease	The student may attend school when fever no longer exists. Rash may persist for several weeks.
Hepatitis A	The student may attend school one week after onset of illness or jaundice (yellowing of eyes and skin).
Impetigo	Students can return to school once they have started treatment and exposed areas are dry or able to be covered.

Lice (Pediculosis)	Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after the appropriate treatment has begun.
MRSA	The student should be excluded only if MRSA is confirmed from a wound in which drainage is occurring and cannot be covered or contained.
Mononucleosis	The student may attend school with the physician's permission; however, the student may need adjusted school days and activities based on physician recommendations.
Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)	The student may attend school upon resolution of redness/irritation and discharge/drainage from eye or the student is under medical treatment from physician.
Ring Worm	The student may attend school if the area is under treatment and covered.
Rubella	The student may attend school seven days after onset of rash.
Scabies	The student may attend school after treatment has started.
Streptococcal Infections	The student may attend school 24 hours after initiating antibiotic therapy, if clinically well.
Whooping Cough (Pertussis)	The student may attend school after completing five days of antibiotic therapy.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon ([SD CL 22-1-2](#)) is defined as a firearm, air gun, knife, instrument, material or substance, whether animate or inanimate, which is calculated or designed to inflict death or serious bodily harm. No dangerous weapons are permitted on any school premises, school vehicle, in any school building or other building or premises used for school functions. Any student bringing a dangerous weapon to school may face suspension or expulsion based on the nature of the violation and shall be referred to law enforcement ([SD CL 13-32-7](#)).

Dress Code

Students are expected to dress with standards that support and enhance a safe learning environment. School administration has the responsibility to monitor the dress code policy for the safety of its students and is the final authority on what is appropriate or acceptable attire for the school setting. Therefore, students are prohibited from wearing clothing, headwear, jewelry, book bags, or other articles of personal attire that:

- Depict profanity, obscenity, disrespect, the use of weapons, or violence.
- Promote the use of tobacco, drugs, alcohol, or other illegal or harmful products.
- Contain sexually suggestive messages.
- Excessively exposed skin or undergarments such as tube tops, halter tops, mesh tops, bare midriff tops, spaghetti straps, pants worn below the hips, and skirts or shorts above mid-thigh.
- Hats are permitted at the discretion of the superintendent and may be worn due to visual condition. However, sweatbands and bandanas are not to be worn inside the school building during the school day but may be worn in student residences.

Students not meeting the expected dress code requirements will be expected to change clothes before leaving the dorm or attending class.

Drug Free School

The South Dakota Legislature has decreed that possession of tobacco or alcohol by minors is prohibited. No smoking, vaping, chewing tobacco, inhalants, or alcohol is allowed on campus. If any prohibited products are found while on campus, they will be confiscated. Any chemical misuse for the purposes of intoxication is against the law and such products will be confiscated and may lead to legal intervention.

Any student who violates the provisions of State law will be subject to disciplinary action. The guardian will be notified of a first offense, and a conference will be held, and disciplinary action(s) taken. Severe state and federal penalties are possible for violations under state law and the federal "SAFE AND DRUG-FREE SCHOOLS ACT."

The South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired will maintain age-appropriate drug and alcohol education and prevention programs for students in all grades.

Inclement Weather

In the event of inclement winter weather, an automated calling system will be used to communicate school closure to our selected parent/guardian contact list.

Day Students: If a school district announces that their schools are closed due to inclement weather, but SDSBVI remains open, they will not transport students to SDSBVI. Guardians are encouraged to make a well-informed travel decision. Attendance will not be counted against a student if their home school district cancels school due to weather.

Restraint

Staff at SDSBVI are trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention® techniques to ensure the safety and support of students. The approach emphasizes Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security® without prescribing specific actions in crisis situations. Nonviolent Crisis Intervention® promotes a person-centered approach, prioritizing the dignity and rights of individuals. Physical restraint will only be used in case of emergency where a student is a harm to themselves or others. Restraints are to be used for minimal time and will be implicitly documented. Any use of restraint is reported immediately to superintendent and guardians. The superintendent reviews each incident to ensure policy adherence and identifies any trends requiring further action.

Suspension

If a short-term suspension from a class, classes, or school is anticipated because of a student's violation of a rule, regulation, or policy, the Superintendent will give oral or written notice to the student as soon as possible following the alleged violation, stating the basis for the suspension. In all cases of short-term suspension, the parents will be contacted by telephone, in person, or through written notice. In no cases will a student be suspended from school without prior notification of parents and provisions made for travel home or to an alternate site. No student will be suspended from school for more than ten (10) days for a violation of a rule, regulation, or policy without a proper hearing as defined in [Administrative Rule 24:05:26](#). In all cases when suspension is contemplated, the parents and LEA will be notified.

In cases where the safety or wellbeing of the student or others is jeopardized, the SDSBVI may elect to contact civil authorities, medical, or mental health professionals for immediate intervention.

Support Services

Fire, Tornado, and Lockdown Drills

Drills will be conducted throughout the school year to prepare students for emergency situations. Students' cooperation is needed to act in a safe and responsible manner. Drills are conducted according to state codified law.

Internet and Email Use

Prior to the use of SDSBVI's internet, a legal guardian is required to sign an "Acceptable Use Policy for the Technology Resources Agreement Form" confirming their understanding and compliance with SDSBVI's network policies. This form will be updated annually and will be included in the Back to School Packet.

Latex Free Environment

SDSBVI is a latex free environment. In accordance with this policy, no latex balloons, band aids, gloves, etc. are allowed into the building.

Medication

Guardians are required to fill out a medical information form annually. This form may grant SDSBVI medication certified staff to administer medication to students while at SDSBVI. Updates or changes to medications or authorization to administer medication by SDSBVI certified staff should be directed to the Health Services office.

Meals

Routine meals and snacks served at SDSBVI following the dietary guidelines for Child Nutrition Programs provided by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). [Final Rule - Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 DGAs | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#). Student lunch and snacks are provided at no cost to the parents or the LEA.

Off Campus Independent Travel

Prior to independent travel in and or around the community, permission must be granted by SDSBVI Orientation and Mobility Instructor and school administration.

Picking Up Students

If someone other than a custodial guardian is picking a student up from school, written permission per the student information sheet, collected at the start of the school year from the custodial guardian, or updated written consent must be provided before the student is released. SDSBVI has the right to request picture identification of those picking students up.

Scent Sensitive Environment

Due to health concerns from exposure to scented products, SDSBVI is a scent sensitive environment. Scented lotions and strong perfumes, cologne, and deodorant are not permitted to be worn on campus.

Service Animals

The SDSBVI acknowledges its responsibility to permit students and/or adults with disabilities to be accompanied by a service animal in its school building, in classrooms, and at school functions as subject to the definitions and requirements of the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#).

Student Enrollment

Students are enrolled at SDSBVI through their local school district. The student application process is located on SDSBVI's website.

Guardians are required to complete the following forms to be on file at SDSBVI. Students who do not have this information on file will not be enrolled until these records are complete.

- Acceptable Use Policy for the Technology Resources Agreement Form
- Athletic Eye Examination Form (if applicable)
- Athletic Physical Form (if applicable)
- General Information
- Medical
- Residential Cell Phone and Like Devices (if applicable)
- SPURS forms (if applicable)

- Student Media Release (Annually)
- Student Transportation Consent

Student Suicide Threat Response

SDSBVI recognizes that depression and self-destruction are problems of increasing severity among children and adolescents.

Staff who are aware of or suspect the potential of a student suicide threat or attempt, will immediately inform the school counselor or superintendent, who will evaluate the situation and contact the student's guardian(s). If the situation is deemed a medical emergency, the student will be transported to the nearest or most appropriate medical facility for observation and/or treatment.

A suicide threat is defined as a verbal or written statement or physical gesture that implies, indicates, or signals the student's intention or decision to fatally harm themselves. Any such signs or the report of such signs from another student or staff member will be taken with the utmost seriousness.

Suspected Child Abuse Reporting

To comply with the mandatory reporting law ([SDCL 26-8A-2](#), [26-8A-6](#) and [26-8A-8](#)), it is the policy of SDSBVI that any school employee having reasonable cause to suspect that a child's physical health or mental health or welfare may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect will make a report to the Student Services Director or Superintendent. [SDCL 26-8A-3](#) further provides that any person required to report, but who willfully fails to do so, is guilty of a Class 1 Misdemeanor.

Travel Release

A Student Transportation Consent Form must be signed by a student's legal guardian annually to authorize SDSBVI staff to transport students to or from activities. This authorization form will be sent out in the Back to School Packet in August of each year.

Students are not permitted in private cars without special written permission from parents. Parental permission (either in writing or on the telephone with two witnesses) must be obtained before a child can attend any activity not sponsored by SDSBVI.