**Position Paper of the AER Itinerant Personnel Division**

(Related to Goal 4 of the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youths with Visual Impairments, Including Those with Multiple Disabilities)

**CASELOAD ANALYSIS: A CRITICAL COMPONENT OF QUALITY SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS**

Caseload analysis is a powerful tool for administrators to use in addressing both efficient use of monetary and human resources and quality issues related to student outcomes. The goal of caseload analysis is to provide consistent, quality, cost effective service to all students with visual impairments. Annual caseload analysis, resulting in a manageable number of students, is a critical component of quality services for students with visual impairments. The majority of students with visual impairments are educated in public schools where the itinerant service delivery model predominates. Itinerant teachers’ caseloads must be determined analytically based on the needs of the individual students.

It is the position of AER Division 16, Itinerant Personnel, that a valid caseload analysis must encompass the following.

1. Identification of a standard method that assesses the program’s needs in relation to individual students.

2. Training of Teachers of Students with Visual Impairments (TVIs) and supervisory staff in the use of the procedure.

3. Annual analysis of caseload accomplished jointly by TVIs and supervisors

4. Interpretation of results with recommended action

5. Presentation of results to administration for action

The extreme low incidence of students with visual impairments, including those with multiple disabilities, requires that general and special education administrators, as well as legislators, receive background information relating to needs specific to this population. An appropriate caseload analysis includes these considerations:

1. Children with visual impairments are an extremely heterogeneous group. They vary in age, degree of vision loss, cognitive ability educational needs and may have additional disabilities.

2. Because of this heterogeneity, TVIs fulfilla variety of roles that differ widely from the typical roles of classroom teachers.

3. Student instruction focuses on the acquisition of skills to allow access to the general curriculum, where appropriate, and to compensate for visual loss.

4. Students require access to an Expanded Core Curriculum of compensatory skills to meet their unique needs. Skills such as: compensatory skills, orientation and mobility, social interaction skills, independent living skills and personal management, recreation and leisure, career and vocational education, assistive technology, visual efficiency skills and self determination must be addressed.

5. Service is time intensive because of the variety of students and the typical “one on one” nature of instruction.

6. Needs of individual students change over time, therefore caseload analysis must be done annually.

7. Student’s need for specialized services should be considered annually.

8. Service must be provided in a timely manner; access to instruction and materials must be provided to the student at the same time as sighted peers.

9. Newly blind students or newly diagnosed blind infants and children must receive early and immediate intervention with a high degree of intensity.

10. Service to students provided by TVIs may include instruction, collaborative consultation, material adaptation, ordering and production, instructional planning, assessment, case management, required meetings, and travel.

11. Staff members trained in visual impairment are more effective and efficient in service delivery to this population than generically trained teachers.

12. Equitable allocation of caseloads among itinerant staff can best be addressed through caseload analysis.

13. The availability or non-availability of support staff to the itinerant teacher (e.g.: resources center, braillists, paraeducators) must be included in the analysis.

14. Planning time varies for novice and experienced teachers depending on the demands of their caseloads. (e.g.: new technology, advanced Braille instruction, etc.)

15. Sophisticated and constantly changing specialized software and hardware requires ongoing training, instruction and troubleshooting.

Conclusion: The over-arching goal of educating students with visual impairments is to allow each individual to become as independent and self-supporting as possible. A significant percentage of these students graduate from high school, go on to post secondary education, and/or enter the work force. Others may need some level of support throughout their lives, but can achieve a level of independence when given adequate educational programming and intervention. AER Division 16, Itinerant Personnel, supports quality services to students with visual impairments and caseload analysis as a strategy for achieving that goal.

Information and assistance in conducting caseload analyses can be obtained from AER, Division 16 Itinerant Personnel at: http://www.aerbvi.org/Division16