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Determining Type and Amount of Itinerant TVI Service using VISSIT

Presented by Rona Porgund

Please stand by for real time captions.

### [Silence]

### [Jay Morris]

Welcome, to Perkins webinar. Today's presentation, Determining Type and Amount of Itinerant TVI Service using VISSIT. These webinars are presented monthly. Webinar series is just one offering in our program. This includes webcasts, online classes and self-paced study. Today we have Dr. Rona Pogrund. She is from Texas Tech University. She has over 40 years experience in the field of visual impairment and [Indiscernible]. She has presented state and national levels. She has several publications. Working with children who are visually impaired. She also is a chairperson, on education for students with visual impairment. She is also one of the investigators in the Validation studies. 1. To manage noise levels, we have muted all of your lines. 2. We encourage you to post your questions as they occur to you during the webinar. And we will address them at the end because we will have a Q&A session. 3. We are using this room for audio so please make sure that your volume is turned on and up. 4. You have individual control, for audio and visual you will be able to make adjustments there as you need them. 5. Audio and video: you may find that the audio in the video are not in sync, this often happens with wireless connections which can be a bit sketchy. 5. The event is being recorded, and it will be available tomorrow on the Perkins eLearning website along with the PowerPoint presentation you will be seeing today. Thank you so much for joining us and we appreciate your feedback and topic suggestions. I would like to introduce our guest speaker today Dr. Rona Pogrund.

[Rona Pogrund] I appreciate your introduction. I think we’re going to be starting out the webinar today with a couple of polling questions. If you all can find your polling response button. The first question we wanted to ask was: Have any of you already used VISSIT for your student with visual impairments? You can all answer that quickly

[Polling class]

It looks like the majority of people have not used it which is good. Because hopefully you’ll learn a lot about the tool in today's webinar. The second polling question we wanted to start out with was, What method or tool do you currently use in determining the recommended type and amount of service for your students with visual impairment? And your choices are: VISSIT, Michigan Severity Scale, no particular method or tool, or determined by what my caseload will allow.

[Polling class or waiting for a response]

[Rona Pogrund] It looks like; the majority use the Michigan Severity Rating Scale. And that is good because maybe you will be able to have a new tool after today. Thank you so much for your response to the polling questions. We are going to get started.

The first thing I would like to do is to acknowledge the people who have worked on this tool and developing it. As Jay said, they are members of the Service Intensity subcommittee and they are part of a larger stakeholder committee called the Texas Action Committee on Education for Students with Visual Impairments. It was out of this committee, that this tool was developed. But I want to acknowledge other members of the sub-committee that have worked on this for quite some time. Cyral Miller from TSVBI Outreach, Frankie Swift, who is retired now but worked for Stephen F. Austin State University. Kitra Gray from Region 10 ESC up in Dallas. We also have Mary Ann Siller from Richardson ISD. Chrissy Cowan from the TSVBI Outreach program. Michael Munro, from Stephen F. Austin State University, Tracy Hallak, from Stephen and Foster University, Cecilia Robertson, from Region 4 ESC, which is the Houston area and Shannon Darst who started out being a doctoral student and has now completed her Ph.D. at Texas Tech University. They have been involved in this project all along.

I would first like to talk about, what the VISSIT is. It stands for Visually Impaired Scale of Service Intensity of Texas. We worked really hard to come up with an acronym that was easy to say and remember but said what we wanted it to say. So basically it was developed to guide teachers of students with visual impairments in determining the type and amount of itinerant TVI services. So, it’s really targeted the itinerant TVIs. Hopefully that’s what the majority of you are. And this scale supports the TVI in quantifying information for the IEP committee. It is basically a quantifiable way to determine how much and what type of TVI service to recommend. There have been variations between the level of service offered to students with visual impairments and that may not be fully explained by individual student characteristics or circumstances. You may have one student in one state, or one school district that might be almost identical to another student and the service is so, so different. So this is a way to kind of help focus on what each individual student will need. The hope is that VISSIT will provide guidance to all students to get the benefit of getting appropriate amount and type of service. For the purposes of this scale, we divided TVI services into two types—direct intervention and collaborative consultation. That’s talking about collaborative consultation from the TVI to other team members and to family members as well. We included that as members of the team because we felt that was a really important thing that often a lot of TVIs spent time on, but they do not get to count that time for working with families.

We also talked a long time about collaborative consultation and whether that should be broken out in the scale. We decided as a subcommittee that it was really important because it is a significant type of service and it takes time to do effective collaborative consultation and so it should be counted toward the time you are serving a particular student. VISSIT will help develop recommendations for the amount of time for the TVI instructional services per individual student. And I will talk a little bit more about this in the FAQs. But it is not addressing the overall workload of the TVI. The workload analysis – is a little bit different. Workload factors that can significantly impact the total number of students that a TVI can adequately serve, such as materials preparation, travel time between students and schools, number of IEP meetings, case management type issues. Those are not considered in the scale because this scale is talking about primarily student need. And what it is based upon is student need in the Expanded Core Curriculum areas. That is the way this scale was designed because that was the primary role of the TVI is to be evaluating and instructing in the Expanded Core Curriculum. That is probably one of the most significant differences in this tool than other tools such as the Michigan Severity Scale that’s really based more on student characteristics such as degree of visual acuity or amount or type of other additional disabilities. This scale is really based on student need in all areas of the Expanded Core Curriculum. And that is probably the major difference between this tool and the others that are out there.

Let's talk a little bit about the history of the VISSIT. How did it come about? This was started as far back as 2010 and it came as a charge from the Texas Action Committee for the Education of Students with Visual Impairments. It came about because we had administrators on that stakeholder group, and they kept saying I really do not understand how a TVI can make this recommendation or this decision. How is that done? What is that based on? And after we talked about it the group felt like what was currently out there really wasn’t meeting the needs of this problem. So that’s how we decided to get together and start creating the VISSIT.

And after we came up with many iterations of the scale, we piloted the different versions with the TVIs in Texas, we changed it, and we revised it over and over. One of the most interesting things was when we first got together as a group we were just trying to define what the Expanded Core Curriculum was and what goes into each of those areas. We were really surprised that we all kind of saw that differently as well. So that was a major step, just defining what those areas were going to be and how we were going to be weight them. But we did do that. And then we came up with a pilot and field trials of the revised version.

And then in June of 2013 we had a retreat -- with the subcommittee. And at that point, we felt that we had a final version that we were actually ready to put into a study. And so the next step was that we got IRB approval from Texas Tech University and Stephen F. Austin State University, since we had two universities represented on the subcommittee. And then we started participant selection. I will describe in a minute those studies that were done in Texas and the effectiveness of it so I won’t go into that right now. I just wanted to give you the process and the history.

We did an initial validation study that was in Texas with TVIs, and it was from September 2013 to March 2014. And then this past year, starting in last January, we did a broader validation study on a national basis and that went until May of 2015. And we have that data that we’ve been starting to analyze and look at and hopefully we’ll get to that soon, but we’ve all been so busy we haven’t had time to really go through it, particularly the qualitative data, but I will be sharing some of the preliminary findings today.

One of the things that came out of the feedback we got is that people wanted things kind of all in one spot, how were we going to distribute it, and those kinds of things. And Texas school for the Blind and Visually Impaired was kind enough to provide space on their website for us. So there is a page dedicated to the VISSIT and I want to walk you through that right now so you know it is there and can go and look at it.

[Host is bringing up VISSIT website: <http://www.tsbvi.edu/vissit> ]

Here is the webpage of the VISSIT on the TSBVI website. I will just click on a few links but we won’t spend a lot of time on it because you can go and explore it yourself. Basically there is an introduction page that gives the history, and goes through how it came about and how it’s based on the ECC, et cetera. And then, there is an overview page that breaks down how the scale is laid out and how it is scored and how the weighting and factors that we used in it were considered. I will show you an example in a minute and explain that. Let me go back to the front page. You can actually look at the instructions for completing this scale on this website. We have another webinar, that some people at TSBVI did with me, I think we did this about a year ago, about how to use it.

You can actually get the scale for free, right here on this website. You can download it with instructions as a PDF. You can download it as a Word document. And there was a request recently to have a VISSIT without the instructions, the first couple of times you use it, I suggest reading the instructions. But after you are used to it and know how to use it, people were saying they just wanted the scale itself so they can save it on their own computers or mobile devices and have a record of how they filled it out for each student. So, you can just “save as” and do it for each student on your computer. So that’s what the one without instructions are for, but don’t download that one to start with because you won’t know what you are doing.

There is also frequently asked questions. And we will go through some of those today. But they are right here in case you would like to look at them yourself. There are sample VISSIT completed forms with some sample students, and we will go through one of those today as well. And then you also have references.

That is the webpage, and after the webinar, feels free to go online and look at that. You will be able to get a copy of the VISSIT pdf. The nice thing about the pdfs is they are electronic. You can just add up all of the scores, it does it automatically and you don’t have to hand-do it. Some people like a paper copy, that’s why we have the word document there, but most people are happy just doing it with the electronic copy. You put the numbers in and it adds it up for you. Before we do that, I want to pull up the PDF. I want to show you the scale itself, just part of it. You all can do that for me.

That’s the cover page. We’ll skip the instructions right now, I just want to get to the actual scale and show you. This is what each page looks like of the VISSIT, and basically at the top it says “type of TVI service,” and then you have two columns. One is “direct instruction from the TVI,” and one is “educational team support/collaboration.” You are going to come out with two different numbers and two different scores. And the numbers that you use have to be either zero, for no need at this time, one for low need, occasional support, and maintenance of skills. Four, medium need, need’s skills but a lower priority for generalization and fluency development. Seven is high need priority, complete mastery of introduced skills. And then if you gave someone a ten, that means it’s an intense need and it’s a priority regarding the acquisition of new skills. So, under direct instruction, you have to mark each box. You shouldn’t skip, you need to put something under each box, either 0,1,4,7, or 10. Can you put other numbers? No, because the scoring is based on using these particular numbers. It will not even let you put in a three or a six or something so you have to use those particular numbers. You have to decide based on what you know about the student. And I’ll say it here and I’ll probably say it a couple of time but you don’t just go and start filling out the VISSIT, you have to have gone and done a thorough evaluation in all areas of the ECC. So that’s kind of a prerequisite, it’s based on good evaluation data. That can include observations, tools, and interviews with teachers, family, and student. Or any other evaluation instrument you want to use, but you have to do that prior to filing it out because you don’t know what the student need is otherwise.

And then in the other column, it’s educational team support and collaboration. You have to use the same numbers, 0,1,4,7, and 10 and it will describe what that means. Whether the family or another member of the team will need more or less support from you, the TVI.

And then in the left column, the ECC skill areas are listed. And you’ll notice that the compensatory has several breakdowns. It has literacy instruction, organization and study skills, and communication modes, access to core curriculum and concept development. That’s because, we as a group felt that in the first round, we didn’t have it broken out that much. And we were realizing that compensatory skills are one area that takes a lot of time. If you are teaching things like braille and Nemeth and communication skills and concept development, sometimes those take a lot of time so those were broken out and weighted a little bit more heavily. And the same scoring is on each page. So I’m just going to go through this.

Assistive technology is broken down because that was a more heavily weighted one. Then you move into electronic devices, computer access, and low-tech devices. Each one of the items in the ECC area has a brief description with examples of what might be considered under that. And you can see they say, et cetera because it is not all inclusive, it just gives you an idea of what we decided was under that ECC area and how we broke it down, and as you all know there are certain things like optical devices that could fall under AT or sensory efficiency or other areas so there are a lot of times that there is an overlap in these areas. But we broke them out to the best of our understanding and what we came to an agreement on.

Then you have social interaction skills, independent living, career education, sensory efficiency, rec and leisure. And the O&M is an ECC area but this is specifically is O&M support from the TVI so it’s including collaborating with O&M specialists and it includes basic skills, guide technique, sound levels, and orientation. So it’s really-you’re not saying what the O&M needs are you’re really saying what the O&M support from the TVI would need to be for a particular student. And then self-determination.

If you look at the bottom, you’ll see that there are column subtotals. And each page, if you use the electronic form, you’ll get a page total at the bottom of each page and then that will pop down into the column subtotals. A would be for the direct and B would be the education team support. So after we came up with these areas we realized that there’s a couple of factors, that warrant some additional possible weighting, and they have nothing to do with student need per se based on the ECC. So you wouldn’t get this initially from an evaluation. One of those contributing factors is transition. We define that as a transition to a new environment. It may be home to preschool, or elementary to middle school, or middle school to high school, or to high school to leaving to an adult post-secondary opportunity. Any of those transitions sometimes require more time when you are acclimating to the new setting or the new situation. In that particular case, you would have the potential to add ten extra points if the child is going through a transition for any particular reason. That could be both direct and educational team support.

And the other contributing factor is medical status or condition. On that when you can actually increase ten points to your total weighting. Or you can subtract ten points. And the reason we included that is a contributing factor that wouldn’t necessarily show up in a student need. The student might need services but cannot receive them. For example a student who is maybe very medically fragile or they have a seizure disorder and it does not allow them to come to school or receive services at that particular time. So you might want to take off the ten points. On the other hand someone who was maybe injured in an accident and had a sudden loss of vision, that might be a reason you would want to increase services at that time, so then you would add the ten points.

And the other contributing factor area is something we called the additional areas of family support, the AAFS table. It’s using the 0,1,4,7, and 10 rating from no need to intense need. And these are things like; There is a need for consistency of educational concepts across school and home settings. Maybe you’re setting up a communication system or routines or independent living skills at school , that need to be supported at home so you would need to give more support to that particular family at this time. Things like connecting families to outside agencies and support. You might accompany them to a medical visit or there might be cultural or language differences that require more of your time. Or let’s say you are working in a home with an infant, there might be some strategies needed to support family members in bonding and interactions with their child.

So you have a choice here to add additional points in these areas. And that would automatically go up here in box H, and that wouldn’t be affecting direct service, it would only be under team support because it’s about families. So that could give you additional weighting. And then you’re going to come up with a score in D for direct services, a score in me for collaborative consultation service. And then you are going to have both of those numbers, the first one is recommended service minutes, direct service time. It’s going to automatically pop into this column of box D from the direct service column. If you use the electronic one it will just go right into the range, and so the score on the rubric would be between something and something and that would equal a range of suggested time between a certain numbers of minutes. And then over on the right, wherever your number popped up, you would say what you recommend. And we do it all in minutes per week, that’s how it’s expressed. You would write that down below, and how that’s distributed is up to you as a professional. If it turns out to be 30 minutes, three times per week, it would equal 90 minutes per week. One hour per month, could be fifteen minutes per week. So however you want to break that out, you’ll write that there in terms of your recommended service.

And then there is a spot below, let’s say that you come up with a certain amount of service and the IEP team—because it’s always an IEP team decision, as a TVI you are just really making a recommendation to the team—but if they decide the recommended service time according to the VISSIT doesn’t match what this particular student needs at this particular time, then there’s a discrepancy. You have a place to write why that is, and it might be something like, why the child cannot be taken out of class because of academic requirements or even though they do have many ECC needs, the team is deciding that that’s not what we are going to focus on as much so we’re going to change the amount of time. Or it might be a child that is so medically fragile that they cannot receive as much service as they need. Then you would put that in here. So there’s still a degree of professional judgement that gives you that out. And you do the same thing for the collaborative consultation. You will get that score from the box on educational team support, will pop into this particular scoring scale and then you’ll do the same thing.

That is basically how the VISSIT works. I want to answer some frequently asked questions that I commonly get. They are either on your mind or not, but there will be some time to ask your own questions later on. Back to the PowerPoint, one question that I get is: “Can the VISSIT be used on all the students in my caseload including those with multiple impairments and/or those with deafblindness? How about infants” And the answer to that, yes. The VISSIT was designed to determine the appropriate type and amount of service for all students with visual impairments on the TVI caseload.

So we decided not to have a separate scale for students with multiple impairments, because where do you draw that line. And our thought process in this was, it doesn’t really matter what the other factors are because a need is a need. A student could have any degree of vision, can be any age, and have any amount of multiple impairments and you would still want to evaluate the ECC if they have a visual impairment and come up with where their needs and priorities are. So it shouldn’t matter and we’ve had this tool now in two different studies used with all different types of students so I really feel that it is not an issue and it can be used with all types of students.

Is the VISSIT to be used as a caseload analysis? And I’ve kind of referenced this previously, but the answer is, no. It is not a caseload analysis tool but it can be used as part of a process to determine appropriate caseload size because you have to start with the needs of the student and that’s what should be considered when you are deciding how many students you can manage during the 37 or 38 hour week. The VISSIT does take into account issues related to the workload, as I mentioned such as lesson planning, travel, and material prep. It is used as part of the process but it’s not going to be the way to do that. That is going to be in step two after you do the VISSIT on all of your students and hopefully that will help in that process.

Another question is, can professionals who are not teachers of students with visual impairments fill out the VISSIT? And the answer is no. The VISSIT must be completed by a TVI who has a vision-specific knowledge to quantify the levels of service intensity. It is a discipline specific tool and the TVI would be the one to complete it. You would of course be getting evaluation data from other team members but you would be the one who actually completes it.

And another question was, how often should VISSIT be completed, or when might I complete the VISSIT? The VISSIT should be completed prior to any determination of service type and amount. It should be completed prior to any IEP or IFSP meeting, so that the TVI can have data to determine and support recommended type and amount of services for students. And that in fact is how it is being used by people who are already using this tool.

It should be completed prior to any determination of service. It should be completed prior to any IEP. This is how it is being used with those who are already using this tool. So at least annually you are going to be re-looking at whether the current service delivery type and amount is correct and if not, that would be the time to make changes based on the new evaluation data that you have. Now you don’t have to do a complete full re-evaluation until every three years for students with an IEP, not true for IFSP, that’s every year. For students with an IEP or school-age students, then I still think it’s important to re-look at it annually but you could certainly do a more thorough evaluation and re-look at priorities every three years. And it really should be included in the student’s records if it’s the way you are determining that data.

Some other questions we are going to talk about are: How do I rate the intensity of the student need? Do I have to complete evaluations to complete the VISSIT? And I just kind of answered that. Current evaluation areas of data in the ECC would need to adequately be done to complete the VISSIT including the LMA, observations, stakeholder interviews, et cetera.

Another question I’ve gotten is: how time-consuming is the VISSIT? What we have found from both studies is that the initial use is about 30 minutes per student. Then people said that after they understood how it worked and had gotten used to it and started using the electronic version, it was only taking about fifteen to twenty minutes per student to complete it if you have all of your data with you.

Another question is: Why were additional contributing factors not included in the contributing factors section? The reason is that those factors were already taken into account in the VISSIT by weighting the different areas so if a student has a particular need you don’t have to say what their vision is, you just have to say they have a need in that area. And you don’t have to say that they have other disabilities. So things like age of on-set, behavioral concerns, cognitive level affected those other disabilities, you don’t really need to add or subtract in the weighting for those because the scoring system for both the direct and collaborative consultation will already reflect the individual student characteristics. So you don’t need to break those out other than the ones that we mentioned which were transition or medical issues or family support.

Another question I get is, how can I use VISSIT to better serve the students on my caseload? The way you do that is by using the VISSIT to provide quantifiable data that helps determine the appropriate type and amount of service. And that can be shared with others on the team when you make those recommendations.

Should the value of intensity reflect the services I am currently providing? And the answer to that is no. The VISSIT should be used for future recommendations, not as a way to justify the service you are already giving. Now if it comes out the same, which in fact oftentimes it does, that’s what we found in our two studies is that often it is comparable, then that is fine. But you don’t want to be filling it out in order to justify giving less service, which is typically what it is, than a student really needs.

What if the VISSIT indicates the need of more service time that I am currently able to provide? This is another question and kind of a scary question because people have big caseloads and they’re worried they are going to end up with way more minutes per week with all of their students than they could possibly have, based on this tool. My answer is if you have completed the VISSIT, you’ve prioritized student needs for an annual IEP recommendation and you still have a problem meeting the scheduling needs of your caseload then I think that it is probably time to meet with your administrator and to review the results of the VISSIT with your administrator. And look at the needs of all of your students. And you might consider conducting a caseload or workload analysis with this being part of it to get a complete picture of what your work week looks like. And, it may turn out that your particular school district, or co-op, or whatever situation you work in is going to need to look at additional staff in order to meet the needs of your students. That’s not the intent of the VISSIT but it certainly is a potential outcome and one that I strongly support because we shouldn’t be making caseload and time decisions just based on what time we have to fit things into our schedule. It really should be about student need. And that’s the beauty of the VISSIT is, is that it helps you focus on that so that you can have enough time to meet the needs of all of your students.

Another question is what if my student has a high need in one skill area but someone other than the TVI is providing the service? The VISSIT is only to be used for determining the TVI services, this could be your direct or collaborative consultation but there are often other team members for example, let’s say a special ed classroom and that special ed teacher, or that teaching assistant, or that paraeducator isn’t responsible for certain independent living skills or things like that, that you don’t really have to do, other than perhaps consult on that, it’s not really part of your role, then you’ve already set up a system, they’re working, then that would not be included on the VISSIT, it’s really only the things that the TVI is actually doing. So that would not be accounted for on this tool.

And the last question, what if my student has so many needs that it might take more than a year to address them all? So each IEP should be designed to meet identified measurable goals and objectives so recommendations for TVI service should similarly address annual student achievement, but the IEP team committee has to come up with priorities so that program can be focused and progress can be seen. If you are working on too many areas at once, you are probably going to dilute the progress that particular students can have. So it has to be—ECC areas have to be prioritized for a particular year and that’s usually something that the IEP does with the recommendations from the TVI.

I want to go through the initial validation study in Texas and then the national study. For the one in Texas we had 38 people who responded and consented to participate. The way we did this one was that we wanted seasoned TVIs who were perceived by experts in the field to be the ones who initially gave us feedback on this tool and used it first. So we had people who were certified, working in an itinerant position, they had completed the entire university TVI training program. They had passed both exams, we have state exams in braille and visual impairment in Texas, and they had passed those. And they were considered high quality teachers by the experts who had nominated them. They may have served as a mentor, they may go to professional development activities, they may have received awards for effective teaching, or they had been observed to be an expert. And that is who participated. We ended up with 25 actual participants and they came from eleven different regions in the state. They were each to fill out at least one actual VISSIT and some filled out multiple ones, so we ended up with 81 actual VISSITs being completed and returned. And then once they used them on at least one student and sent them back, then we sent an electronic survey where we gathered the validation data and we started that process from getting feedback on them, also we needed to revise the directions if there was anything unclear or those kinds of questions. So the survey was seventeen questions with both quantitative and qualitative responses and data analysis occurred in the spring of 2014. And that particular study actually—I’ll share a couple of highlights and we will talk about where it just got published. One of the questions that we asked this group was, did your VISSIT results directly translate into the type and amount of service you recommended for your student? And the data shows that even for seasoned TVIs, who supposedly understand how to determine service time, student need service time recommendations are not based on solely student need but sometimes on those caseload issues that we talked about. If you look at this, the majority -- mostly translated into a comparable amount of service that was recommended.

Another question we asked was, do you feel you would use the VISSIT in the future for determining the type and amount of service you recommend for students? And 96% of the participants in the Texas study did say that they would use it again for determining the type and amount of service, so that supports a high degree of satisfaction by its users. One person said he would use the VISSIT in the future and another said he would use the VISSIT but would prefer to use the Michigan. And that’s the one that people were more familiar with.

The next question I want to look at is, do you feel that VISSIT is a better tool to use for determining the type and amount of service than other available tools or methods that you are currently using? And as you can see, out of the participants that answered this question, 78% said that they thought the VISSIT was better tool than what is being used currently. And five said they did not think The VISSIT was better and those five said that they would be using the Michigan.

And looking at the validity and reliability of the VISSIT, I just wanted to point out that the results of the initial study did indicate that the current version of the VISSIT is moderately valid and reliable. And is supported certain aspects of validity, but not all of them because of the small size that we had used in the study. But the results of the study did support social and consequential validity and internal consistency and reliability of the VISSIT. And if you want to see the details of this study, it just got published this month, actually in the Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. Pogrund, Darst, & Munro, that’s the initial validation study for this scale. And it will be published in the November/December 2015 Critical Issues edition of JVIB.

One of the things that did come out of this study was the recommendation to have an electronic version and some clarity in the directions and those suggestions were taken care of. After we did that we felt, we wanted to get further use and feedback on the tool because we wanted to have a higher level of validity and reliability which we’re working on that now. But the national validation study was sent out—emails were sent out in January of 2015 all over the country to state departments of education, schools for the blind, and outreach directors and any other visual impairment email list we could possibly distribute requests for participation in the study because we wanted to further validate the VISSIT for a larger audience. We had 259 TVIs from 33 states and one from Canada who indicated their interest in trying out the VISSIT, and then of course everyone is interested until it gets down to the end of the semester when you have to use it and return it, so out of the 259, we had 90 who returned at least one VISSIT that they had completed on a student and again we had some that returned multiple ones. We wanted to make sure they gave it back because it was important to know that they really did use it and that’s why we required that and we lost some of our participants with that, so I think a lot of people did use it but they did not take the time to send it in.

So the ones that did send it back were sent a survey link to complete regarding their use and opinions about the VISSIT as a tool to determine type and amount of service. And out of the 90, who returned the scale, 86 surveys were started and 77 were completed. And here is the preliminary results on that. It was used in urban, suburban, and rural service delivery areas. It was used with students from nine months old to 20 years old—we got some demographic information back on the students from the TVI who used it. It was used with students who were totally blind, with a low vision, and those with CVI. It was used with students with a wide range of multiple impairments, intellectual disability being the highest. They marked all of the different disabilities that the students had that they used it on. It was used with students who were braille readers, print readers, and dual media users, tactile and object symbol users, large print users, and auditory learners—so there was a wide range of students so I felt pretty confident that it was representative of our general population.

One question that we asked was, overall was the VISSIT easy to use? And as you can see HERE, the majority of the people, 47% said it was completely easy to use. And 42% said it was mostly easy to use. So 89% combined, thought it was pretty easy to use.

We asked, did the results of the VISSIT match your professional judgment regarding student need & recommended type and amount of service? And 87% said it was either mostly or completely matched their professional judgement, and this is a little bit higher than we found in the Texas study but we had more participants and that helps.

We also asked, do you feel you would use the VISSIT in the future for determining the type and amount of service you recommend for your students? And 93.3% said yes they would use it in the future, which is a good sign that they liked it. And some of the comments I want to share and then we’re going to go through a sample of the VISSIT on one of the students.

[comments]

“I will use this with all of my students. It is an invaluable tool that provides information that an IEP committee can easily understand.”

“After I completed the VISSIT, the four of us TVIs in my district completed a VISSIT on each of our students. We as a department are hoping to use the VISSIT as data to show our need for more staff.”

“We also realized that we can take the information from each ECC area and see where the intense needs are in order to choose what assessment areas to focus on using the EVALS kit.”

“I found the tool very useful. It helped me reflect with more objectivity. It helped assure me I was looking at the whole child and his needs for TVI service.”

“I plan to use the VISSIT from here on as my primary tool for determining and justifying service times. I especially like that direct and consultative services are separated and given individual consideration.”

[Porgund] Then we asked, do you feel the VISSIT is a better tool to use for determining the type and amount of service than using available tools or methods you’re currently using?

And we had, -- let me see. These are other comments. “I found the tool very useful it helped me reflect more objectivity. It helped assure me I was looking at the whole child when determining his needs for TVI service.” “I plan to use the VISSIT from here on as my primary tool for determining and justifying service times. I especially like that, oh, we already said that. Sorry.

In asking, do you feel that the VISSIT is a better tool to use for determining the type and amount of service than other available tools or methods? 86% said yes, 14% said no, they preferred using the Michigan.

Recent and next steps for the VISSIT. The electronic version has been completed. A website for accessing the electronic and paper versions has been developed. Continuing evaluation of VISSIT and data analysis to gather more information about the various aspects of the validity and reliability of the tool. Just so you know our subcommittee is moving on and we are now working on an O&M VISSIT, and that is in development. We are at the stage of coming up with the scoring on that. We’ve found out that it is a little different than the “I” because of being a related service, the ranges are different. So, we’re working on that.

What I would like to do before we move into the closing end questions is to look at a sample student, Bud. We are going to assume that we’ve already done a great evaluation on Bud and that we know a lot about him. So let’s just walk through this so you can see how it is actually filled out. I believe we're going to put up the word document; you should have that one I think as well. Where is the word document? Okay.

We are going to talk about Bud. He is an eighth grade student, who attends all general education classes. His visual diagnosis is oculocutaneous albinism, with acuity of 20/20 in both eyes. Bud is very social and has friends however he does encounter bullying. Bud feels this is related to his physical appearance of his white hair and very light skin. And according to his Expanded Core Curriculum evaluation, his strengths are in social skills, recreation leisure, independent living skills, and career education. His needs in ECC include the areas of assistive technology and iPad use for access to documents and distance targets. Compensatory skills, specifically access to small print and learning to use audio materials to compensate for visual fatigue and taking notes on his iPad. Self-advocacy, letting adults know what his visual accommodations are, and sensory efficiency, using methods to improve his visual functioning at school and home settings. Whereas Bud reads on grade-level, his reading speed is decreased when reading large print books which he prefers not to use, and homework documents. Bud would benefit from activities which include optical devices designed to increase reading speed and fluency so he will be able to maintain the pace required in his classrooms to access regular print more efficiently. In addition to his needs stated previously, Bud is transitioning to new high school and will require orientation to his new campus and support to prepare a portfolio to share with his teachers to explain ideology and recommendations. So if you look at what we know about Bud, this is how his TVI would fill this out. His literacy and instruction, doesn’t really have a big need right now. He has a medium need for both direct and collaborative support. He needs some help directly for organizing, and organizational skills and managing his materials. Not so much for his team. He doesn’t have any needs in communication, that is mostly for people with multiple impairments, that might need that area.

And his totals added: eight and five, they just cumulatively add up as you go. His access to core curriculum, he did have a medium need there, for direct service because he was having trouble with his writing and having trouble accessing things in the classroom because of his visual impairment. He did not have a high need for team support there. He didn’t need concept development because he is great in that area. He did need some help with assistive technology, a medium need, because he needed to learn to use the iPad and how to use that for notetaking and using it in the classroom. As well as working with his teachers in how they are going to allow him to implement that. So those totals came up there. Computer access, he’s pretty computer literate, that was pretty much a low need. Low tech devices, that was referring to optical devices, he does need to learn to use optical devices so that is a medium need.

Doesn’t have any social interaction skill needs, he is doing great socially. He doesn’t have independent living skills or career ed skills at this point. Sensory efficiency that was a higher need to support. The team perhaps in helping him how to use his functional vision, but not so much with direct service. He does not have any recreational or leisure issues. And he doesn’t need O&M support from TVI, that’s a pretty low need. Self-determination he had a medium need because he does need to advocate for himself and talk to his teachers about what his needs are. And that’s both working with the student and the team on that. So, you can see that it came up with A: 27 points for direct, 21 points for educational team support. And because he is transitioning, into a new school, the TVI felt that those 10 extra points were going to be needed for transition reasons as he went into high school because it was going to take more of her time to work with the new teachers at the new school. No medical contributing factors and if you look at the additional areas of family support, they got a couple of low needs on working with that family and helping them connect to agencies. And facilitating family participation in special ed, helping him to maneuver the system. So it wasn’t very hard, but he did get the extra three points. And that came up with 27 direct, and 34 for collaborative consultation as the scores for what he got. And what this already does -- I am sorry -- it will automatically come down into the scoring sheet. And you can see where the 27 direct points went; 17-28 is 30-60 minutes per week. And this TVI decided to recommend 60 minutes a week, at 30 minutes twice per week for a total of 60 minutes. It did say in the comment down here, Bud transferred from another state where his service delivery was consult only. ECC evaluation in the new district reveals critical areas of needed instruction from a TVI. That said the VOI concerns for instruction have to do with accessing the core curriculum due to technology and methods and increasing reading speeds with optical devices. And then the score of 34-and it’s a different scoring tool, so he has to go into the right particular scoring sheet-this is for collaborative consultations and team support. 34 and the TVI recommended 15 minutes per week. And that was going to be provided at a rate of fifteen minutes per week this is to keep Bud’s parents and teachers informed of accommodations and bud’s use of technology. So, that’s basically how you fill out a VISSIT. It’s pretty simple and it does come up with a number that you can consider to recommend.

So, at this point, I know we’re near the end of it; we wanted to have some time to take your questions. So if we can have a few questions.

[Jay Morris] Thank you, Rona. We have a bunch of questions for you. As long as we are on the topic of Bud, the example there, one question I got from Terry. Why was there a ten in transition and planning only in the collaboration and not in the direct?

[Rona Porgund] Well, because I think in this particular case, and I don’t really know the student, his was an actual student, but we just got the information from another TVI. My guess would be that the student was very independent. And mobility wasn’t going to have to be oriented that much to the new school. it was just to show him where the classes were in that type of thing. I think the time of the TVI was going to be spent more meeting with all of his high school teachers as he transitioned from eighth to ninth grade. That’s really where the time was going to be in making sure they knew what his accommodations are and were willing to work with him using his equipment and things like that.

[Jay Morris] We have another comment. There is a suggestion that if the student is being bullied, as Bud was, due to his appearance for instance, that he will in fact have some social skills needs that will need to be addressed.

[Rona Porgund] Yeah, well I guess, like I said we just took one example from the TVI of a real-life situation. He had friends, he was socializing so you know you could have rated that the he certainly needed some work on social skills because of the bullying, so that’s a good point and I don’t know the answer about why that wasn’t included.

[Jay Morris] One question Danielle asked is, what ECC assessment do you recommend?

[Rona Porgund] Well, I do not have one particular. I know a lot of people in Texas use [Indiscernible] because it does have evaluations for each area of the ECC. I know there are a lot of checklists out there for the different areas of the ECC, there are different areas -- you can go to the educational services website which is out of Dallas. They have a dedicated page and they have a lot of screening tools and tips on how to strategize. And that’s a great resource that we use here in Texas.

[Jay Morris] Mary Anne asks, I have been told that the ECC is a “position paper” by a school system. How do we combat that philosophy?

[Rona Porgund] It is not really a position paper. I think they are talking about the national agenda, I guess that’s where it started. But actually in Texas, the way we combatted that was, we passed a law two years ago that requires all students with a visual impairment to be evaluated and instructed in all areas of the EEC where it is appropriate. And so we have teeth in it now and I encourage the states to do something similar if you’re having push back and resistance. And the argument is that it does fall under the functional behavioral requirements of IDEA, which is not a position paper, it is the law. All of the things that we have under the umbrella of the ECC fall under the non-academic parts that address the disability area that is in the federal law, IDEA. So it really is there, it’s just more implied. And that is the reason why in Texas we were getting pushback from administrators saying the same thing, “we do not have to do that, who says.” So it was our interpretation that it was in IDEA but by having a state law, it has been pretty cool actually. Now we have more people paying attention and listening. And realizing it does take time to address those specialized needs that are due to visual impairment.

[Jay Morris] What are your recommendations for sharing this information with what she terms as high maintenance parents and/or schools personnel, especially those that maintain that all students’ issues are simply due to their vision problems? She’s really looking at supporting justification when a TVI isn’t supporting these recommendations.

[Rona Porgund] What I am hearing is that this heard that you came in and recommended something and it was not well received. Especially when you bring in your evaluation data coupled with the VISSIT scores for recommendations. It seems to me -- administrators are paying more attention to this because everybody likes data, everybody likes something that is measurable. But it is still a lot of judgment that is involved. But it seems to be more quantifiable and that seems to be more palatable for people. Now if we increase the reliability and validity of this tool, that will help, I think. But I think at this point, you take that (VISSIT) in as part of your ammunition. What people are telling me is that administrators are receptive to this. And parents need to be part of the team decision anyway so if they are wanting more or less service than this is showing, you know, they need to be part of that total decision. I am a big parent advocate and I feel like, we think we always know what their children needs but they know best.

[Jay Morris] Monique asks, I have a few students who have been previously evaluated and have been recommended for a lot more hour than what’s indicated on the VISSIT – such as up to ten hours for instance. If a special ed teacher or occupational therapist or other teacher is providing support and instruction in an ECC area, does this necessarily mean it should be excluded from the VISSIT or with the TVI level with that the area with a one or four?

[Rona Porgund] Just because a student has a high need in the area of the ECC, if someone else is addressing that it should not be reflected on the VISSIT. It does not mean they don’t need additional intensity of service but it’s going to be coming from the other team members. But that’s not going to be reflected there, you’re not saying there is not a high need, its high need by the TVI to address. So that’s where you have to distinguish that. I think I answered that question, I’m not sure.

[Jay Morris] In terms of dual roles. What if you are both the TVI and the OMS, would you enter a zero in the O&M support for the TVI section?

[Rona Porgund] Probably, cuz you’re doin it. Yeah. And you have to wait for the O&M VISSIT and then you can have two sets of numbers per student, but yeah, yeah, that would make sense to me.

[Jay Morris] Question came up about training on administering the assessment. It says, Is there any training available or forthcoming?

[Rona Porgund] Well, there is another webinar that is probably pretty similar to this one um on the TSBVI VISSIT website. So, um you know I think that most people found that if they go through that, read the instructions on the website, and practice it on a couple of students, it is not that hard and they got it. Because it is pretty easy to use as you can see from some of the participant responses. So I think if you look at that webinar and you also carefully read those instructions a couple of times, you will have it down.

[Jay Morris] I know there are some other questions out there but I do want to mention, Tom Miller. He is saying, thank you to the Texas team for developing a truly useful tool to advance appropriate services. That was a nice comment.

[Rona Porgund] Thank you, Tom.

[Jay Morris] Let me see. I will give you one more question and we will wrap it up. Early on you touched upon the target groups for the VISSIT. How could this be used for infants and toddlers?

[Rona Porgund] We have used it on them. They have the same needs as any other student that has a visual impairment. They might be higher in areas like communication or independent living skills. Maybe they are not so high in career ed at that point but you know. I believe in following directions or taking turns. And all of those things roll over into both career ed and social interaction skills. So, I think it really works fine on infants. You know if something is not a need, maybe you know, they’re not really needing a lot of assistive technologies right now. Toddlers are now using iPads and all kind of things. And sensory efficiency and so really it applies to any age. I don’t think that you know, once you do the evaluation in the appropriate areas, that it’s appropriate and applicable to a young child. But these are things that we should be looking at early on. All the way through the student’s career. You may not work on all nine areas intensely but you would work on a lot of those areas but at a lower level of skill.

[Jay Morris] Thank-you so much for answering all of our questions We truly appreciate it. I want to thank all of our participants. I hope to -- you will join us in future webinars. And with that, have a great day. Thank you very much.

## [Event included -- [event concluded]