

NOVEMBER 2013 BSS Presentation History

History

The Blindness Skills Specialist (BSS) Program was established by a Missouri Statute in 1999. The Bill was first introduced and read January 14, 1999. Public hearing 2/9/1999 and given public review and then amendments added. By 5/11/1999 it was reported as truly agreed and passed. Signed by the Governor 7/13/1999.

To see the full law go to: <http://dese.mo.gov/se/btf/hb401summary.html>

SUMMARY OF HOUSE BILL 401

Requires an annual report from DESE to the State Legislature about the literacy of blind and visually impaired children; requires DESE and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind to develop a joint referral system; creates the Blindness Skills Specialist Fund; requires school districts to give preference in purchasing textbook materials to textbook vendors that make materials available in Braille, or an electronic format approved by DESE; requires that every infant born in MO shall be screened for hearing loss, and establishes the Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Committee; requires that health insurance companies provide coverage for the Newborn Hearing Screening, Rescreening, Audiological Assessment, and Followup, and Initial Amplification.

The statute outlines 8 job duties of the blindness skills specialist. The job duties outlined within the statute can be summarized in three categories: (1) Professional Development; (2) Technical Assistance and (3) Resource and referrals. The target audience for this service includes classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, special educators, related service providers, administrators, and families who serve eligible students under the Missouri State Plan.

TIMELINE

1. House Bill 401 Signed by Governor: July 13, 1999
2. BTF Meeting –Bylaws established March 2000
3. Literacy Study – required each year. On DESE site: 2008-2012
4. John Heskett – study of services for students in MO 2005
5. Pilot Demonstration Project: 2000 Blindness Skills Specialist: Awarded to Missouri State University. Dr. Chris Craig was the project manager. Calvin Churchwell – part-time Blindness Skills Specialist.
GOAL: Identify eligible students, determine regional needs and identify entities serving students who were blind or visually impaired.
6. Missouri State University – Awarded Blindness Skills Specialist Funding for first full time BSS position. Julie Anderson-Ituarte 2001-2003.
GOAL Discussions:
 - Provide professional development with emphasis on high expectations for academics, assist schools with programming and placement for students with

- VI, and provide technical assistance with emphasis on braille, abacus, tactile graphics, and nemeth code.
- Develop an informational web site
 - Consider webinars or other electronic formats
 - Develop Tip Sheets or Bulletins similar to (CISE) center for innovations in special education
7. BSS funding awarded to SEMO: Pam Arbeiter June 2002- July 2004. Jennifer Coy: August 2004 - July 2008
 8. BSS at MSU – Aundrayah Shermer in position 2003 to present. Added a 9th goal to her scope of work the position to interface with the teacher prep efforts in the area of O&M (Not VI). This change was one of the reasons MSU obtained the \$750,000 OSEP Personnel Prep grant. The grant, Project Diverse (2005-2009), trained 35 teachers in VI and O&M.
 9. BSS funding awarded to Truman State: Anthony Blades: 2004 – current.
 10. BSS funding awarded to Columbia University of MO: 2006 to 2012.
 11. Additional BSS searches conducted in: Possibly KC, Columbia, SEMO, Rolla and St. Louis.
 12. In 2013, MSU awarded a 2nd BSS position. Julie Anderson-Ituarte accepted

Current Information:

1. MSB and the BSS positions collaborate to assist schools in providing services for children who are blind or visually impaired.
2. August 2013: BSS and MSB Outreach met to discuss roles, identify geographic boundaries and possibilities for future collaboration efforts and meetings.
3. Divided the state into 3 regions: (see list of counties)
 - MSB covers eastern part of the state and down to the boot hill.
 - Truman state covers the northern part of the state and reaches down to Columbia.
 - MSU reaches to KC, Joplin, Cabool, Fort Leonard wood and Jefferson City.

Boundaries are considered soft to ensure that schools are not denied services if needed. The state is large, and there are only a few traveling state outreach providers to meet the needs. MSB and BSS will meet periodically to collaborate about service needs.

List of counties

Missouri School for the Blind (MSB)

Bollinger; Butler; Cape Girardeau; Carter; Crawford; Dent; Dunklin; Franklin;
Gasconade; Iron; Jefferson; Lincoln; Madison; Maries; Mississippi; Montgomery; New
Madrid; Oregon; Osage; Pemiscot; Perry; Phelps; Reynolds; Ripley; Scott; Shannon; St.
Charles; St. Francois; St. Louis; St. Genevieve; Stoddard; Warren; Washington; Wayne

Truman State:

Adair; Andrew; Atchison; Audrain; Boone; Buchanan; Caldwell; Callaway; Chariton;
Clark; Clinton; Daviess; DeKalb; Gentry; Grundy; Harrison; Holt; Howard; Knox; Lewis;
Linn; Livingston; Macon; Marion; Mercer; Monroe; Nodaway; Pike; Putnam; Ralls;
Randolph; Schuyler; Scotland; Shelby; Sullivan; Worth

Missouri State University (MSU)

Barry; Barton; Bates; Benton; Camden; Carroll; Cass; Cedar; Christian; Clay; Cole;
Cooper; Dade; Dallas; Douglas; Greene; Henry; Hickory; Howell; Jackson; Jasper;
Johnson; Laclede; Lafayette; Lawrence; McDonald; Miller; Moniteau; Morgan; Newton;
Ozark; Pettis; Platte; Polk; Pulaski; Ray; Saline; St. Clair; Stone; Taney; Texas; Vernon;
Webster; Wright