



Preparing Highly Qualified Personnel to Serve Children with Visual Impairment

Overview of Project

Initially funded in the fall of 2008 by the U.S. Department of Education, the chief mission of the Preparing Highly Qualified Personnel to Serve Children with Visual Impairment Grant is to significantly increase the number of highly qualified, certified teachers of students with visual impairments in South Carolina. The situation in South Carolina is especially critical as an estimated 50 percent of certified teachers of students with visual impairments are expected to retire within the next three to five years.

The grant will be administered over a four-year period, and the majority of the total grant funding will be devoted to underwriting course tuition, fees, and textbook costs for qualified individuals to obtain their master's degree in visual impairment or complete coursework necessary for add-on certification in visual impairment. This is the absolute priority of the grant as financial need, rather than lack of interest, is a significant factor regarding the current shortage of qualified teachers of students with visual impairments. The grant will also provide new braillewriters, updated assistive technology, statewide professional development opportunities and mentoring for new teachers of students with visual impairments.

Funding

As the Master's in Visual Impairment Program is a two-year model that allows teachers to continue work full-time if desired, full-time enrollment is considered to be two courses for the fall term, two courses for the spring term, and three courses during the summer sessions. Qualified candidates enrolled in the Master's in Visual Impairment Program may receive \$7,500

per year in VI Grant funds, up to a maximum of \$15,000. Qualified candidates enrolled in courses necessary for certification may receive up to a maximum of \$7,500.

Contact Information

For more information about the grant or how to apply, contact Dr. Tina Herzberg at therzberg@uscupstate.edu or 864-503-5572.

How to Qualify for the Grant if Seeking Master's Degree in Visual Impairment

- Complete the Preparing Highly Qualified Personnel to Serve Children with Visual Impairment Grant application.
- Successfully complete the application process for the Master's degree in Visual Impairment by submitting the following items to the Admissions Office:
 - A completed degree-seeking application and an application fee
 - Two letters of recommendation
 - Official transcripts that indicate you hold an undergraduate degree with a minimum GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale
 - A copy of your temporary, professional or initial teacher certificate
 - Documentation that you made a minimum score of 400 on both the verbal and quantitative sections of the Graduate Records Examination or a minimum score of 390 on the Miller Analogy Test
- Submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the Federal processor
- Personally interview with a member of the faculty of the School of Education.
- Commit, by signing an AGREEMENT TO SERVE, to teach for two years as a teacher of students with visual impairments for each year of tuition assistance or repay the assistance received.

How to Qualify for the Grant if Seeking Add-On Certification in Visual Impairment

- Complete the Preparing Highly Qualified Personnel to Serve Children with Visual Impairment Grant application.
- Submit official transcripts that indicate you hold an undergraduate degree with a minimum GPA of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.
- Successfully complete the application process for the add-on certification program by submitting the following items to the Admissions Office:
 - A completed nondegree-seeking application and an application fee
 - A copy of your temporary, professional or initial teacher certificate
- Submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the Federal processor
- Submit a copy of the evaluation of your certification file for adding certification in visual impairment from the South Carolina Department of Education
- Commit, by signing an AGREEMENT TO SERVE, to teach for two years as a teacher of students with visual impairments for each year of tuition assistance or repay the assistance received.