



# Information UPDATE

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/John T. Benson, State Superintendent/125 S. Webster St./P.O. Box 7841/ Madison, WI 53707-7841

**BULLETIN NO. 01.01**

**January 2001**

**TO:** District Administrators, CESA Administrators, CCDEB Administrators,  
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services, and Other Interested Parties

**FROM:** Mike J. Thompson, Assistant Superintendent  
Division for Learning Support: Equity and Advocacy

**SUBJECT:** *Educating Blind and Visually Impaired Students; Policy Guidance*

In May 1998 Information Update Bulletin #98.04 was issued, titled "Policy Guidance Regarding the Provision of Appropriate Education Services to children who are Blind or Visually Impaired and the National Agenda for the Education of Children and Youth with Visual Impairments, including those with Multiple Disabilities." This bulletin enclosed Memorandum 96-4, issued in November 1995, from the United States Department of Education. On June 8, 2000, the U.S. Department of Education issued an update of this document, as part of the *Federal Register/Vol. 65, No. 111*, titled *Educating Blind and Visually Impaired Students; Policy Guidance* in order to reflect the statutory provisions added by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) amendments of 1997. The intent of this bulletin is to alert you to the new policy guidance document and highlight changes.

The policy guidance addresses important areas that were clarified by Congress in its reauthorization of IDEA 1997 regarding public agencies' responsibilities in educating students who are blind and visually impaired. It addresses the requirements regarding instruction in Braille. Also, it adds orientation and mobility as a "related service." Assistive technology also is given a special emphasis.

Acknowledging that the children who receive special education and related services due to blindness or visual impairments are an extremely diverse population, the policy guidance gives background information and examples of the variety of needs of these students.

We urge you to read this document and share it with others who have an interest in the education of children who are blind or visually impaired. You can access this document at the following internet location: <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/FedRegister/other/2000-2/060800a.pdf>.

If you have questions or need to have a paper copy of the document, please call Samantha Hoffman, DPI Education Consultant in the Area of Visual Impairment, at (608) 266-3522.

This information update can be accessed through the Internet:

**<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/een/bulindex.html>**