

**Materials Resource Unit
Services for Students with
Visual Impairments
- Policy -**

Definitions

- 1) In this policy,
 - a) "*student*" means an individual who is enrolled in a school, or required under Section 8 of the Alberta School Act to attend school.
 - b) "*visually impaired*" means a student who, as determined by a qualified specialist in the field of education for the visually impaired, is unable to benefit from standard printed resources because of a visual dysfunction, as opposed to a learning disability, even after corrective measures have been prescribed and employed.
 - c) "*school*" means a structured learning environment through which an education program is offered to a student as defined under Section 1 of the Alberta School Act.
 - d) "*essential*" means those services/resources for students who are visually impaired that are not affordable, or are not easily accessible elsewhere by the school.
 - e) "*copyright authorization*" means permission has been obtained or exists in order to produce and loan the alternate format resource.
 - f) "*Canadian Association of Educational Resource Centres for Alternate Format Materials (CAER)*" means members of this association who provide a coordinating educational service for their region or province.

Background

- 2) The type and availability of appropriate learning resources directly contributes to the literacy growth of students who are visually impaired. Therefore, in 1971, Alberta Education established the Materials Resource Centre for the Visually Impaired (MRC) to provide alternate format resources (e.g. Braille, audiotape and large print) and specialized equipment to schools for those students. Currently the MRC is administered as and known as the Materials Resource Unit for the Visually Impaired (MRU), a unit within the Learning Resources Centre (LRC) of Alberta Education.

Mandate

- 3) Alberta Education, through the MRU, loans to Alberta schools:
 - a) essential alternate format resources in Braille, audiotape, large print and computer files; and
 - b) essential kits, specialized equipment and professional resources for use by their eligible pre-school to Grade 12 students who are visually impaired in order that these students make the most effective use of their educational opportunities.

Eligibility Criteria for Service

- 4) In order to be eligible for MRU services, a student is required to be assessed and registered by a qualified specialist in the field of education for the visually impaired.

Role of the MRU

- 5) Alberta Education, through MRU:
 - a) provides essential services to Alberta schools with students who are visually impaired provided these students have been registered with the MRU by a qualified specialist in the field of education for the visually impaired;
 - b) within budgetary constraints and when resources are available, provides alternate format resources, specialized equipment, kits and professional resources to Alberta school personnel such as teachers, teacher aides, programme assistants or consultants who work directly with students who are visually impaired;
 - c) provides schools with information on MRU services, resources and equipment, as well as information and referrals to other services and resources provided by other government departments, agencies and centres, etc.;
 - d) provides services to schools on behalf of students who are visually impaired within the province of Alberta as its first priority. As part of a Council of Ministers of Education, Canada sharing of resources initiative, Alberta Education is committed to the sharing of resources interprovincially and therefore the MRU loans alternate format resources, when available, to members of the Canadian Association of Educational Resource Centres for Alternate Format Materials (CAER) as a second priority;
 - e) within budgetary constraints, acquires and/or produces for loan alternate format resources;
 - f) is responsible to pay for postage, courier or other shipping costs to deliver resources and equipment to Alberta schools.

Loaning of Resources

- 6) Alberta Education, through the MRU, loans resources to Alberta schools:
 - a) for the current school year. Resources in high demand, such as kits, videotapes, professional resources, leisure reading/school library resources, novel studies and others are loaned for one month, after which time they are subject to recall at the discretion of the MRU;
 - b) based on availability. Budgetary constraints may limit the loaning of two or more copies of the same or similar resource to a school or student.

Loaning of Specialized Equipment

- 7) Alberta Education, through the MRU, loans specialized equipment to Alberta schools
 - a) for the current school year. Equipment may be recalled at the discretion of the MRU;
 - b) based on availability. Budgetary constraints may limit the loaning of two or more pieces of the same or similar equipment to a school or student;
 - c) on a contractual basis. The contract covers the terms of the loan and requires that schools assume financial responsibility for the MRU equipment on loan, while in the school, being used by the student and in transit back to the MRU.

Production Priorities for Alternate Format Resources

- 8) The MRU produces alternate format resources in its three production units: the Braille, Audio, and Large Print Production Services.
 - a) Resources unavailable from other sources are produced within budgetary constraints according to the following priorities:
 - Priority 1** - Alberta Education diploma examinations and achievement tests in Braille and in audiotape;
 - Priority 2** - Alberta Education curriculum resources that have "Basic" status in the Resources Catalogue;
 - Priority 3** - Alberta Education curriculum resources that have "Support" status in the Resources Catalogue;
 - Priority 4** - Other resources authorized by schools, or teacher prepared resources where the student will be severely disadvantaged if the resources are not available, or where no other support services are available at the required level;
 - Priority 5** - Other resources deemed appropriate for addition to the MRU collection at the discretion of the MRU manager.
 - b) The MRU may deny or delay a production request, may offer a substitution or offer other alternate formats:
 - i) where the MRU's production capacity dictates;
 - ii) if materials received for production are deemed to be incomplete, in draft form, or compilations from other published resources;
 - iii) if the submitted print text is in poor physical condition;
 - iv) if the school does not provide the number of print texts required for production;
 - v) if MRU staff determine that the title is not suitable for alternate format production.

Ordering Procedures for New Titles

- 9) For titles not listed in the MRU Catalogue, designated school contact personnel are required to submit requests for alternate format resources a minimum of four months prior to anticipated use, together with required copies of the original printed text edition, which are in good physical condition in order to facilitate interlibrary loan, purchase or production. The MRU attempts to meet student timelines so that resources obtained from other sources, or segments of each title in production, are available at the beginning of the school year or semester. The original printed text will be returned to schools after the MRU has produced the title in alternate format or after the title has been acquired through purchasing or through interlibrary loan. Due to the production process, the original printed text may not be returned to schools in the original condition in which it was submitted.

Braille Production Standards

- 10) Braille transcription is done according to *English Braille American Edition, 1994; Braille Formats: Principles of Print to Braille Transcription, 1997; The Nemeth Braille Code for Mathematics and Science Notation, 1972 Revision; Braille Code for Chemical Notation 1997; Computer Braille Code, 1987; Report of Tactile Graphics Sub-Committee Part II: Interim Measures, 1996; Guidelines for Mathematical Diagrams, 1983; Foreign Languages (Code of Braille Textbook Formats and Techniques, 1977)*, in addition to updates agreed to by the Braille Authority of North America and the Canadian Braille Authority, and according to the procedures outlined in the *MRU Braille Service Procedures Manual*.

Audio Production Standards

- 11) Sound recordings are produced according to the National Braille Association *Tape Recording Manual*, the Library of Congress National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped *The Art and Science of Audio Book Production*, the American Foundation for the Blind *Tape Recording Books for the Blind*, the Canadian National Institute for the *Blind From Print to Audio: Preparing a Book for Recording* and the *MRU Audio Service Procedures Manual*.

Large Print Production Standards

- 12) Textbooks are enlarged according to the National Association for the Visually Handicapped *Standards and Criteria for Large Print Publications* and the *MRU Large Print Procedures Manual*.

Library Unit Standards and Procedures

13)The Library Service adheres to the *Anglo American Cataloguing Rules; Library of Congress Subject Headings, Library of Congress Classification System, MARC Coding and the Guidelines for Reporting Machine-Readable Accessions to the National Library's Union Catalogue*, and follows procedures in the MRU Library Service Procedures Manual and the annual *Summer Workflow Document*.

Other Services

14)The MRU provides other additional services such as:

- a) inservices and tours for school personnel, registered students and their parents or guardians;
- b) participation in workshops, conferences and conventions;
- c) a service to preschool children from age 2 ½, that is, at the time preschool children are eligible to receive Program Unit Funding (PUF) if the child has been registered with the MRU.

Resource Maintenance

15)The MRU withdraws resources deemed to be outdated, inaccurate or not reflective of the current curriculum.

Repair and Maintenance of Specialized Equipment

16)The MRU repairs and maintains the equipment in its inventory and withdraws those items which are outdated and/or where repair becomes uneconomical.

Responsibilities of Alberta Schools

17)Schools are responsible:

- a) for the care and safekeeping of resources and equipment borrowed from the MRU, and for their return in the original protective packaging;
- b) to pay postage, courier or other shipping costs to return resources and equipment to the MRU;
- c) for the return of alternate format resources and equipment when the student has finished using them, when they are no longer required, or when a recall notice has been sent;
- d) to accept the contractual arrangements covering the terms of the loan for the specialized equipment, assuming financial responsibility for the MRU equipment on loan, while in the school, being used by the student and in transit back to the MRU;
- e) to ensure that students do not mark or write in any way in resources unless it is clearly labeled "Consumable."

Copyright

18) Canadian copyright law:

- a) allows the MRU to produce in Braille and audio those resources published in Canada, and through international copyright agreements, titles published elsewhere in the world. A supplementary agreement between Alberta Education and ACCESS COPYRIGHT allows the MRU to produce Canadian resources in large print;
- b) precludes further copying of alternate format resources by schools.