Federal Quota Program Guidelines

Eligibility

Students must meet one of the following categories as outlined by the Act to Promote the Education of the Blind:

- Meets the Definition of Blindness (MDB) - a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction (using the Snellen chart) or a visual field of 20 degrees or less;
- Functions at the Definition of Blindness (FDB) - when visual function meets the definition of blindness as determined by an eye-care specialist (ophthalmologist or optometrist) or other medical doctor such as a neurologist. Students in this category manifest visual characteristics often found in conditions referred to as neurological, cortical, or cerebral visual impairment (e.g., brain injury or dysfunction).
- IDEA definition of a student with a visual impairment (IDEA) - qualify under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) definition of blindness: an impairment in vision, that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance (34 CFR §300.8(c)(13))
- Be enrolled in a formally organized public or private nonprofit educational program of less than college level including
    - students who are deafblind
    - students with multiple disabilities who are legally blind
    - students enrolled in regular education or special education programs
    - students in public, private and parochial schools

There is no chronological age limit for eligibility. The federal law limits registration to persons working at less than college level but places no restrictions on the ages of eligible students.

The eye report requirement has been waived for the 2026 registration. The educational program remains responsible for utilizing all available data, including any available eye report or doctor note, to determine if a student qualifies under MDB, FDB or IDEA.

Definition of Required Information and Reporting Codes

Be sure to use the student's legal name for registration.

Name of pupil: Report each student's full name in this order: last name then first name (e.g., Doe John). Do not report the middle initial. Do not submit a name with only the initial of the student's first name. Do not use punctuation marks.

Date of birth: Give the student's date of birth in numbers in this sequence: month, day, year (e.g., 01/02/2012)

The district or agency providing more than 50% of the special services is who would register the student for Federal Quota

Eligibility of Infants/Birth to Age Three

An eligible infant must meet the following requirements:

- Born on or before Jan. 5, 2026.
- Enrolled in a formally organized program (i.e., Help Me Grow Early Intervention, Early Head Start, or attending a licensed early care and education program), regularly scheduled educational or training program.
- Have a written education plan. An individualized family service plan (IFSP) or any other written plan may be used.
- Must meet the classification of "Functions at the Definition of Blindness" (FDB), "Meets the Definition of Blindness" (MDB), or the "IDEA definition of a student with a visual impairment" (IDEA). An infant can be registered with a note from their pediatrician or any eye care specialist stating the infant meets the definition of blindness since an actual acuity is impossible to obtain at this age.

Eligibility of Preschool Children

An eligible preschool student must meet the following requirements:

- Enrolled in a formally organized program (for example, Head Start or Preschool Special Education being provided by a licensed early childhood provider).
- Have a written education plan (i.e., Individualized Education Program, Individualized Family Service Plan).
- Must meet the classification of "Functions at the Definition of Blindness" (FDB), "Meets the Definition of Blindness" (MDB) or the "IDEA definition of a student with a visual impairment" (IDEA) as defined for the 2026 Federal Quota Census. To determine this, the education team needs to consider all available data, such as previous eye reports, functional vision assessments, current performance and medical documentation.

Eligibility of School Age Students

An eligible school age student must meet the following requirements:

- Be enrolled with the registering school or agency on the first Monday of January.
- Have a written education plan (i.e., Individualized Education Program).
- Must meet the classification of "Functions at the Definition of Blindness" (FDB), "Meets the Definition of Blindness" (MDB) or the "IDEA definition of a student with a visual impairment" (IDEA) as defined for the 2026 Federal Quota Census. To determine this, the education team needs to consider all available data, such as previous eye reports, functional vision assessments, current performance and medical documentation.

Eligibility of Homebound Students and Home-Schooled Students

An eligible homebound or home-schooled student must meet the following requirements:

- Be enrolled in a formally organized program or a district approved home school program.
- Have a written education plan (i.e., Individualized Education Program, Individualized Family Service Plan).
- Must meet the classification of "Functions at the Definition of Blindness" (FDB), "Meets the Definition of Blindness" (MDB) or the "IDEA definition of a student with a visual impairment" (IDEA) as defined for the 2026 Federal Quota Census. To determine this, the education team needs to consider all available data, such as previous eye reports, functional vision assessments, current performance, and medical documentation.

Eligibility of Adults

An eligible adult student must meet the following requirements:

- 22 years of age or older.
- Enrolled in vocational or rehabilitation programs who have received a minimum of 120 hours of documented instruction in the previous calendar year.
- Must meet the classification of "Functions at the Definition of Blindness" (FDB) or "Meets the Definition of Blindness" (MDB) as defined for the 2026 Federal Quota Census. To determine this, the education team needs to consider all available data, such as previous eye reports, functional vision assessments, current performance, and medical documentation.

Please note:
- Adult students with previous college experience but are not currently enrolled in college are eligible for registration.
- Social and leisure programs do not qualify as instruction; however, student practice to develop skills can be included in instructional hours.

Additional Registration Information

- Students *cannot* be registered by two different schools or agencies.
- The following student groups may not be eligible:
  - Students of Armed Services Personnel
    - The Department of Defense Education Agency (DOD-EA) is responsible for meeting the educational needs of military base school students who would otherwise be eligible for federal quota funds.
    - The DOD-EA is allowed to use the National Instructional Materials Access Center (NIMAC).
  - Students residing on reservations who receive funding from the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)
    - The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) is responsible for meeting the educational needs of students in reservation schools who would otherwise be registered for federal quota funds.
    - The BIE has not coordinated with the NIMAC. For more information, contact nimac@aph.org.

Parent Permission

Each infant, preschool, or school-aged student is required to have a permission form signed by the parent (one time only) to be registered in the Federal Quota program. If a student is an adult (18 or older) and his or her own guardian, you do not have to get parent permission. If the student is an adult and has a guardian, a parent permission form needs to be completed. In these cases, if the student is subject to FERPA and IDEA, the student will need to provide permission for release of personally identifiable information (PII). These forms will need to be on file at the educational program.

Parent Permission forms are available in: Albanian, Arabic, Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Nepali, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Urdu.

Student Grade Placement and Reporting Codes

Please carefully review the chart of student placement categories, being certain the placement reported accurately reflects each student's placement. Report the grade placement for each student grade as of the current census year as of the first Monday in January using the appropriate code shown. Only these codes will be accepted. Note: Students who exceed school-age as determined by respective state law must be registered as an adult student (Reporting Code "AD").

Grade Placement Categories and Reporting Codes for Adult Students - Record student's grade as of current census year as of the first Monday in January

- IP – Infants: Children birth to three served by infant programs.
- PS – Preschool Students: Children of preschool age served by preschool programs.
- KG – Kindergarten Students: Children enrolled in kindergarten classes.
- 01…11– Students of School-age: Determined by state law, in regular academic

grades through 11; please indicate grade placement by indicating grade as of first Monday of January.
- 12+ – Students who are continuing to receive special education services under IDEA until the student turns age 22.
- AD – Adult Students: Students aged 22 and above by the first Monday in January must be coded as adults.

Primary Instructional Language of Learner

- English (EN)
- Spanish (SP)
- Other (OT) - Language other than English and Spanish

Reading Medium Codes

Primary Reading Medium (PRM) - The primary reading medium is to be reported for each eligible student using the following reporting codes. Only these codes will be accepted.
- A – Auditory: Students use a reader or auditory materials to some extent.
- B – Braille: Students primarily using braille in their studies.
- PRE – Pre-reader: Students working on or toward a readiness level; infants, preschoolers, or older students with reading potential.
- S – Symbolic: Student that access printed materials with tangible two- or three-dimensional symbols
- V – Visual: Students use print to some extent.

Secondary Reading Medium (SRM) - In addition to listing a primary reading medium, please check students' secondary reading medium so that a more accurate profile of student literacy can be tracked.
- A – Auditory: Students use a reader or auditory materials to some extent.
- B – Braille: Students primarily using braille in their studies.
- NA – Not Applicable: Nonreaders, prereaders, or students with no additional reading media
- V – Visual: Students use print to some extent.

Other Reading Medium (ORM)
- A – Auditory: Students use a reader or auditory materials to some extent.
- B – Braille: Students primarily using braille in their studies.
- NA – Not Applicable: Nonreaders, prereaders, or students with no additional reading media
- V – Visual: Students use print to some extent.

Online Federal Quota Census Registration Procedures

All submissions of student information are secure through our online web portal to protect student identity.

District or community school Superintendent/School Leader or their Designee will need to:

1. Log on to the AT&AEM Center Federal Quota Census Registration at https://ohioaem.ataem.org.
2. Use your email to sign in.
   a. If your email does not work, click on "Need an account."
   b. The AT&AEM Center will approve new users. An email will be sent upon approval with your login information.
   c. The district/community school superintendent/school leader can also appoint a designee to have access to registration. To appoint a designee, contact fqaemsupport@ataem.org.
3. Click on your district/school to update students for the 2026 Census. If district/community school superintendent/school leader or designee do not see their district(s)/school(s) or need to change the district(s)/schools(s) they serve, contact fqaemsupport@ataem.org for assistance.
4. Update student information and add additional eligible students to your account. Additional students to review:
   • Students who have moved into the district within the last year; and
   • Students who have a change in their visual acuity

There are 4 phases of registration submission:

1. **Incomplete:** District/community school superintendent/school leader or designee will update student information and submit for review by the AT&AEM Center. If you have no legally blind students, no approval is needed, and you can move directly to electronically sign and submit.

2. **Pending Review:** The AT&AEM Center will review your submission.
   i. If rejected, the user will receive an email to log back in to correct.
   ii. If approved, only the district/community school or school leader superintendent will receive an email stating "ready for signature."

3. **Ready for Signature:** Only the district/community school superintendent or school leader can log onto the web portal registration to electronically sign the final student census. Once signed, print to retain a copy of signed census registration (This step must be completed before clicking submit). This copy should remain on file in the school district/school. Click the submit button by the last Friday in February. The district/community school superintendent or school leader will receive a confirmation message stating, "signature submitted successfully."

4. **Completed:** District/school registration is now complete.

If you have questions about this process, please contact the AT&AEM Center via the fqaemsupport@ataem.org email