

Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Vision, Hearing, and Spinal Screening Program (VHSS)

External Instructor Policy and Procedures

Policy

VHSS identifies children with vision and hearing disorders and abnormal spinal curvatures. This includes children who attend any:

- public school;
- private school;
- parochial school;
- denominational school;
- Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) licensed child care center; or
- DFPS licensed child care home.

Our mission is early identification of problems for early intervention. VHSS trains and certifies vision, hearing, and spinal screeners. VHSS may also certify external (non-DSHS) instructors to train screeners. Certified external instructors may train and certify screeners. External instructors may be certified as needed to provide adequate training opportunities statewide. Priority is given to instructors that would train staff who screen children in the facilities listed above.

External instructors should provide the same quality training as VHSS program staff. Thus, VHSS limits the number of external instructors to provide adequate oversight.

Procedures

Application and Selection

External instructor qualifications:

1. Must have a current DSHS screening certificate for the relevant type of screening. They must also have experience performing screenings under that certificate.
2. Must provide adequate justification that their area needs an external instructor.

3. Must be a licensed professional such as a registered nurse or a professional within the field they want to be a screening instructor. The applicable Texas license must be current and in good standing under Texas law.
4. Must conduct screener trainings at least once a year. External instructors who do not conduct a training in over two years must recertify.

The VHSS Program Manager may approve instructors at their discretion.

Application instructions:

Request an application by email from vhssprogram@dshs.texas.gov. Submit the completed application to vhssprogram@dshs.texas.gov for processing. VHSS reviews the application and replies by email with approval or denial.

VHSS can answer questions about the instructor process and application. Email vhssprogram@dshs.texas.gov or call 512-776-7420.

Instructor Training and Certification

Instructor trainees receive education that builds upon their screening certification. They review Texas screening laws and learn training techniques. Trainees also learn how to set up and conduct trainings and how to certify their trainees. ***Instructors or facilities may not charge any kind of fees for their training activities.***

VHSS external instructor certificates are valid for five years from the date it was issued. External instructor recertification requires successful completion of a VHSS-approved instructor training refresher course. Instructors must complete refresher training during the fifth year of certification. If they do not, they will have to repeat the basic training.

Conducting Trainings

External instructors must use training materials obtained from VHSS.

Instructors must cover all materials provided in their entirety without exception. Short cuts are not permitted. Basic vision or hearing training should take each an approximate time of five to six hours when done properly. Failure to follow these requirements may result in revocation of your instructor status.

Class should be **limited to 15 attendees per training** to allow adequate time for each attendee's practicum portion.

VHSS must approve proposed screener training sessions. The instructor must notify VHSS of the proposed training 15 working days in advance. The instructor must provide all information VHSS requires.

External instructors in good standing may also teach screener recertification courses. Screener recertification courses are subject to the same requirements as initial screening courses.

External instructors have 14 days after a training to submit the following items to VHSS:

- Attendance sheets;
- Course evaluations;
- Tear-off parts of the VHSS provisional certification cards; and
- Photoscreening certificates (if applicable).

Mail the original documents to the program at -

Vision, Hearing and Spinal Screening Program,
Department of State Health Services
Mail Code 1818, P.O. Box 149347
Austin, Texas 78714-9347

The instructor should maintain a copy for their records. VHSS will mail trainees their official screener certificates after receiving complete documentation.

Compliance Monitoring

External instructors must adhere to all state rules, regulations, and processes. VHSS may conduct compliance visits and random monitoring to assess instructors. Failure to follow all rules and expectations may result in disciplinary action. This may include suspension or revocation of instructor certification. The program will send a notice to the affected individual as part of any such action. Refer to [VHSS Rules](#) for more information on this process and instructions on how to proceed with a rebuttal.

Additional Information

To learn more about vision and hearing screening statute and rules, refer to Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 36 for the [statute](#) and Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 37, Subchapter C for the [rules](#).

To learn more about spinal screening statute and rules, refer to Texas Health and Safety Code, Chapter 37 for the [statute](#) and Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 37, Subchapter G for the [rules](#).

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the Texas Department of State Health Services Vision, Hearing, and Spinal Screening Program Policy and Procedures for External Instructors.

By signing and dating below I have agreed to adhere to the Policy.

Signature

Date