

Visual Impairment and Blindness Fact Sheet



Signs of a visual impairment

- *Eyes that don't move together when following an object*
- *Crossed eyes, eyes that turn out or in, or flutter*
- *Eyes that bulge, dance, or bounce in rapid movements*
- *Repeated shutting or covering of one eye*
- *Frequent squinting, blinking, eye rubbing, or face crunching, especially if no bright light present*
- *Avoiding tasks that require good vision*
- *Sitting too close to the TV or holding toys too close*
- *Unusual degree of clumsiness*

If any of these symptoms are present, have your child's eyes examined by an eye professional. Early detection and treatment are very important.

Visual Impairments in Children

Being able to see gives us tremendous access to learning about the world around us. When a child has a visual impairment, it is cause for immediate attention. When vision loss goes undetected, children are delayed in developing a wide range of skills. While they can do virtually all the activities that sighted children can, they often need to learn to do them in a different way. Central to their learning will be touching, listening, smelling, tasting, moving, and using whatever vision they do have.

Definition of Intellectual Disability under IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), defines visual impairment (including blindness) as...

An impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

[34 Code of Federal Regulations §300.8(c)(13)].

Visual Impairments and School

Children with visual impairments need to learn the same subjects and academic skills as their sighted peers, although they will probably do so in an adapted way. They must also learn an expanded set of skills that are distinctly vision-related, including learning how to:

- Move about safely and independently, which is known as orientation and mobility (O&M)
- Use assistive technologies designed for children with visual impairments
- Use any residual vision they have effectively and efficiently
- Read and write in Braille, if determined appropriate

Adaptations to the environment where the child lives, works, or plays may be needed.

Hands are a primary information-gathering tool for children with visual impairments. So are the senses of smell, touch, hearing, and taste. Sensory learning is so powerful for children with visual impairments.

Adapted from NICHY (2011)