

Appendix (I): VISUAL IMPAIRMENT (VI).

I. Definitions.

A child with a visual impairment is one whose vision, even with correction, adversely impacts a child's educational performance. [34 C.F.R. § 300.8(c)(13)] Examples are children whose visual impairments may result from congenital defects, eye diseases, or injuries to the eye.

The term includes both visual impairment and blindness as follows:

1. Blind refers to a child whose visual acuity is 20/200 or less in the better eye after correction or who has a limitation in the field of vision that subtends an angle of 20 degrees. Some children who are legally blind have useful vision and may read print.
2. Visually impaired refers to a child whose visual acuity falls within the range of 20/70 to 20/200 in the better eye after correction or who have a limitation in the field of vision that adversely impacts educational progress.
 - a. Progressive visual disorders: Children, whose current visual acuity is greater than 20/70, but who have a medically indicated expectation of visual deterioration may be considered for vision impaired eligibility based on documentation of the visual deterioration from the child's optometrist or ophthalmologist.

II. Eligibility and Placement.

1. A current (within one year) eye examination report shall be completed and signed by the ophthalmologist or optometrist who examined the child.
 - a. A report from a neurologist in lieu of the optometrist/ophthalmologist report is acceptable for students who have blindness due to a cortical vision impairment.
2. A clinical low vision evaluation shall be completed by a low vision optometrist for children who are not totally blind;
 - a. if the student is under the age of 8 and/or has a severe cognitive and/or physical disability that would make the use of low vision aids unfeasible, a functional vision evaluation may be used instead of a low vision evaluation to establish eligibility.
 - i. The low vision evaluation should be completed by age 10 for children who do not have one during eligibility determination prior to age 8 unless other circumstances apply.
 - ii. The low vision evaluation is often difficult to schedule within the 60-day timeline, therefore, if children meet all other eligibility requirements, the eligibility report shall document the date of the scheduled upcoming low vision evaluation and the team may proceed with the eligibility decision.
 - iii. Once the low vision evaluation has occurred the eligibility information shall be updated, and as appropriate, the IEP.
 1. The low vision evaluation must occur within 120 days of receipt of parental consent to evaluate to determine eligibility for visual impairment.
3. A comprehensive education evaluation shall be administered to determine present levels of functioning. The impact of the visual impairment on the child's educational performance shall be considered for eligibility.
 - a. Educational assessments may include cognitive levels, academic achievement, and reading ability.
 - i. Educational assessments related to vision must be completed by a teacher certified in the area of visual impairments.
 - b. In some cases, comprehensive psychological evaluations may be indicated and must be completed by appropriately certified personnel.

4. Braille instruction is always considered critical to appropriate education for a child who is blind. Children identified with visual impairments shall be evaluated to determine the need for braille skills. The evaluation will include the present and future needs for braille instruction or the use of braille. For children for whom braille instruction and use is indicated, the individualized education program (IEP) shall include the following:
 - a. Results obtained from the evaluation conducted for the purpose of determining the need for Braille skills;
 - b. How instruction in braille will be implemented as the primary mode for learning through integration with other classroom activities;
 - c. Date on which braille instruction will commence;
 - d. The length of the period of instruction and the frequency and duration of each instructional session; and
 - e. The level of competency in braille reading and writing to be achieved by the end of the period and the objective assessment measures to be used.
 - f. For those children for whom braille instruction is not indicated, the IEP shall include a statement with supporting documentation that indicate the absences of braille instruction will not impair the child's ability to read and write effectively.
5. This rule shall become effective March 31, 2010.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-152; 20-2-240.

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