



Guidelines for Visually Impaired Services

What services are offered for a visually impaired student in Lapeer County?

- A Visually Impaired child who qualifies for Special Education under visual impairment will receive services from a Visually Impaired (VI) Consultant. The amount of service offered depends on the severity of the child's visual impairment.

How does one qualify as Visually Impaired?

1. The visually impaired shall be determined through both the following provisions:
 - a. A visual impairment which interferes with development or affects educational performance.
 - b. One or more of the following must apply:
 - Central visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye after correction
 - A peripheral field of vision restricted to not more than 20 degrees
 - A diagnosed progressively deteriorating eye condition
2. A determination of impairment must be based upon a comprehensive evaluation from an ophthalmologist.
3. A determination of impairment shouldn't be based on behaviors relating to environmental, cultural or economic differences.

Common signs of a vision problem (which may be corrected with glasses)

Child may:

- Be complaining of headaches when reading
- Squint when trying to read the board or overhead
- Tilt their head when reading to focus better
- Fail a school vision test
- Have rapid movement
- Be sensitive to light

(Difficulty processing information or poor handwriting doesn't qualify a student as visually impaired!)

How do you access service?

1. If a child fails a school vision test, you may want to recommend a visit to the family eye doctor.

2. **AFTER** an eye exam has been done and you've received a copy of the eye report, contact the VI Consultant at the Lapeer County Intermediate School District (LCISD) to discuss the student further. The VI consultant will then suggest whether further assessment needs to be done.
3. If more assessment is needed, you can then fill out a referral form for the student to be further tested.
4. When the VI Consultant receives the referral form, then they will complete further assessments. A report will be written after testing to describe test results and notify you if the child does/does not qualify for VI services. If the child does qualify, then an IEP will need to be set????????????????

What can LEA expect from the VI Consultant?

1. One-on-one instruction for students to work on set IEP goals and objectives.
2. One-on-one instruction to help reinforce what is being taught in the classroom.
3. To be used as a resource:
 - a. to find out different assistive technology that can be used in the general education classroom to help visually impaired students
 - b. to provide needed materials such as Braille or large print books or audio tapes for students
 - c. to inform teachers of what accommodations need to be made to meet the needs of the individual student
4. To answer questions that teachers may have in regarding their VI students

What the VI Consultant can expect from the LEA:

- To make the necessary accommodations for the students (for example):
 - Seat the child in the front of the classroom
 - Use verbal cues when writing on the board or overhead
 - Enlarge worksheets or notes
 - Read tests orally or except oral answers to essay questions
 - Reinforce the use of adaptive equipment such as CCTV's and magnifiers

- To recognize that you are the child's primary teacher and these accommodations need to be done on a daily basis. The VI Consultant is extra support for the child.

Types of Services

Direct

Primary contact is the student, small setting (separate from learning environment), adaptive equipment needed, regularly schedules sessions usually at least once a week.

Consultation

Primary contact is the teacher, consultation takes place in learning environment, suggestions are given to the teacher for adaptations for the student, sessions are scheduled as needed or on a monthly basis.

Monitoring

Primary contact is the student, visit takes place in learning environment, consultant makes sure the student is maintaining status to benefit from special education, sessions are intermittent depending on the needs of the students usually 2-3 times a year.

Results of VI Services

- Provides the student with adaptive equipment and individualized instruction to help them succeed academically in the general curriculum
- Helps students to become more independent in their daily living skills and orientation and mobility to survive in their environment

Common words used in the VI field

Ophthalmologist – a doctor who specializes in the diseases and defects of the eye

Optometrist – one who prescribes eyeglasses

Astigmatism – refractive error in the eye that prevents light from coming into focus on the retina

Depth Perception – the ability to perceive the solidity of objects and their position in space

Esotropia – inward deviation of the eye (cross-eyed)

Glaucoma – increase pressure inside the eyes caused by excess fluid in the front of the eye

Light perception – ability to distinguish light from dark

Nystagmus – rapid eye movement

Central visual acuity - ability of the eye to perceive objects in the direct line of vision

Field of vision – the entire area that can be seen without shifting gaze

Common VI Organizations or Services

Seedling Braille Books for Children - (800) 777-8552

Library of Michigan – (800) 992-9012

Leader Dogs f/t Blind – (888) 777-5332

Blue Water Center for Independent Living – (800) 527-2167

Commissions for the Blind (after high school services) – (810) 760-2030

Newspapers f/t Blind – (810) 762-3656

Michigan Parents of the Visually Impaired (989) 855-2430

For Parents

Questions to ask the eye doctor:

1. What is the cause of my child's vision problem?
2. Is the condition hereditary?
3. Is my children's condition stable?
4. Would any surgery help my child's vision?
5. Are there any restrictions on my child's activities?
6. Will glasses or contacts help, and if so, how much?
7. Will low vision aides help?
8. Are my child's eyes sensitive to light?

Why do doctors assess vision?

- To understand how a child uses vision to gather information
- To share information with family and other who work with the child
- To promote healthy development
- To help determine whether the child will learn more effectively through auditory, print or tactile media
- To evaluate the child's ability to move within their environment safely
- To determine whether a child is eligible for services

For Teachers

What teachers should know about their VI student:

- Whether the child's condition is congenital or acquired
 - if congenital, then developmental delays are usually present and the child has no awareness of everyday objects or concepts
 - if acquired, then the child has some knowledge of everyday objects, not as many developmental delays are present
- Overall general development of the child
- Visual function of the child
 - fixation on objects, contrast sensitivity, color visions, spatial awareness, eye-hand coordination, orientation in space
- Low vision devices available
 - magnifiers, increased lighting, tilted table, CCTV, auditory devices
- How the child communicates (eye contact, expressions, gestures, visual sign language, vocal language, tactile information)

