



Guidelines for Visually Impaired Services

What services are offered for visually impaired students in Lapeer County?

- A visually impaired student who qualifies for special education under visual impairment will receive services from a Teacher Consultant for the Visually Impaired (VI). The amount of service offered depends on the severity of the student's visual impairment.

How does one qualify as visually impaired?

1. A visual impairment shall be determined through the manifestation of both of the following:
 - (a) A visual impairment which, even with correction, interferes with development or adversely affects educational performance. Visual impairment includes both partial sight and blindness.
 - (b) One or more of the following:
 - A central visual acuity for near or far point vision of 20/70 or less in the better eye after routine refractive correction.
 - A peripheral field of vision restricted to not more than 20 degrees.
 - A diagnosed progressively deteriorating eye condition.
2. A determination of impairment shall be based upon a comprehensive evaluation by a multidisciplinary evaluation team, which shall include an ophthalmologist or optometrist.
3. If a student cannot be tested accurately for acuity, then functional visual assessments conducted by a teacher certified in visual impairment may be used in addition to medical evaluation for determination of impairment.
4. For students with visual impairment who have a visual acuity of 20/200 or less after routine refractive correction, or who have a peripheral field of vision restricted to not more than 20 degrees, an evaluation by an orientation and mobility specialist shall be conducted. The orientation and mobility specialist shall also include in the report a set of recommended procedures to be used by a mobility specialist or a teacher of students with visual impairment in conducting orientation and mobility training activities.

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

Student may:

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

*Difficulty processing information or poor handwriting doesn't qualify a student as visually impaired.

How does one access service?

1. If a child fails a school vision test, the school will recommend a visit to the family eye doctor.
2. **AFTER** an eye exam has been done and a copy of the eye report received, the VI Consultant at the Lapeer County Intermediate School District (LCISD) should be contacted to discuss the student's needs.
3. If additional assessment is recommended a referral form (for initial evaluations) and a Review of Existing Evaluation Data (REED) form will need to be completed. These forms will be given to the local special education department for dissemination.
4. Once the VI Consultant receives the form(s), he/she will have 30 school days to complete further assessments, compile a report to describe test results, send a copy of report to parent(s) and Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) and participate in the MET/IEP team meeting(s) to discuss eligibility.

What the LEA can expect from the VI Consultant:

1. One-on-one instruction to assist toward completion of the student's IEP goals and objectives.
2. One-on-one instruction to help reinforce what is being taught in the general education classroom.
3. A resource for:
 - ✓ assistive technology
 - ✓ additional needed materials such as Braille, large print books and/or audio tapes
 - ✓ assistance with accommodations
 - ✓ classroom teachers who may have questions regarding the VI student.

What the VI Consultant expects from the LEA:

1. Necessary accommodations will be provided to the student on a daily basis, i.e.
 - ✓ Position of the student's seat in the classroom
 - ✓ Use of verbal cues when writing on the board or overhead
 - ✓ Enlargement of worksheets or notes
 - ✓ Test read orally or acceptance of oral answers to essay questions
 - ✓ Encouragement/reinforcement given to student to use the adaptive equipment such as CCTV's and magnifiers
1. Recognition that the student's teacher is the primary teacher and VI Consultant is *extra* support for the student.

VI Services

- Provide the student with adaptive equipment and individualized instruction to help them succeed academically with their educational curriculum and in the educational environment
- Help students to become more independent in their environments with daily living skills and orientation and mobility

Possible types of VI Services

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

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

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 child's condition stable?
4. Will surgery help my child's vision?
5. Are there any restrictions on my child's activities?
6. Will glasses or contacts help?
7. Will low vision aides help?
8. Are my child's eyes sensitive to light?

For Teachers

What teachers should know about the VI student:

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

Why do doctors assess vision?

- To understand how a child uses vision to gather information
- To share information with family and others 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