

Criteria for the Identification of Students with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

Middlesex County Public Schools is committed to providing appropriate special education services to students who have been identified as visually impaired, including blindness. In order to accurately identify and appropriately serve students with a visual impairment, Middlesex County Public Schools' Office of Special Education has established criteria to be used by the eligibility committees for the purpose of decision-making.

Definition

Regulations Governing Special Education Programs For Children With Disabilities in Virginia (2009), defines a “**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.”

Assessments:

If the student is suspected of having a visual impairment, including blindness, then assessments should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Classroom Educational Documentation – Written report from classroom teacher(s) describing the child’s level of academic, developmental, social, or adaptive functioning including strengths, weaknesses, and other factors which affect educational performance.
- Psychological – Written report from a qualified school psychologist or other qualified professional based on the use of a battery of appropriate instruments which may assess cognition, emotionality, processing performance, adaptive skills, and social skills.
- Educational – Written report describing current educational performance/achievement and identifying instructional strengths and weaknesses in academic skills and processing performance.
- Developmental (ages 2-5) – (when appropriate) Written report of an assessment of how the child functions in the major areas of physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, and/or adaptive development.
- Sociocultural – Written report from a qualified visiting teacher or school social worker based on the use of information collected through social appraisal instruments which will include background and social/adaptive behavior in the home, school, and community.
- Hearing Screening – Written report to assess the child’s hearing.

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- Visual examination – Written report from a licensed ophthalmologist or optometrist describing the visual impairment.
- Observation – Written report of the child’s academic performance and behavior in the child’s learning environment (including the general education classroom setting) to document the child’s academic performance and behavior in the areas of difficulty. NOTE: This observation should take place in a class where perceived weaknesses are indicated. *In case of a child less than school age or out of school, a group member shall observe the child in an environment appropriate for a child of that age.
- Functional Vision Evaluation - Written report from a certified teacher of the visually impaired, which includes a review of medical information, formal and/or informal tests of visual functioning and the determination of the implications of the visual impairment on the educational and curricular needs of the child.

Eligibility Criteria:

The following criteria must be met when determining a student eligible for services for students with a visual impairment, including blindness:

1. The child’s age falls within 2-21 years of age, inclusive.
2. An ophthalmologist or optometrist finds at least one of the following:
 - a. Central visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye after conventional correction.
 - b. Reduced visual field to 70 degrees or less in the better eye.
 - c. Other ocular pathologies that are permanent and irremediable.
 - d. Cortical visual impairment.
 - e. A degenerative condition that is likely to result in a significant loss of vision in the future.
3. One or more of the four primary classifications of visual impairments listed below exist and are documented:
 - a. Legal Blindness: visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction or peripheral field vision is no greater than 20 degrees in the better eye.
 - b. Functional Blindness: a visual impairment which prevents a student from using print medium for reading, thereby requiring the use of Braille, recorded materials, and other adaptive aids.
 - c. Partial Sighted/Low Vision: a visual impairment of 20/70-20/200 which is still severe following correction, but visual functioning may

- be increased with the use of optical or non-optical aids and environmental aids or modifications.
- d. A diagnosed congenital or progressively deteriorating eye condition such as cataract, retinitis pigmentosa, juvenile diabetes, optic atrophy or nystagmus, which result in an adverse impact on functional vision.
4. The functional vision evaluation indicates that there is an adverse affect on the student's academic performance in school. If the child is preschool aged, there must be an adverse affect on the child's development in comparison with his/her peers.
 - a. Academic achievement,
 - b. Test performance data,
 - c. Performance on supplementary educational testing, and
 - d. Information gathered from interviews with teachers, school personnel, parents, outside agency personnel and the students concerning:
 - Child's use of vision,
 - Performance on task requiring the use of vision compared to task, not requiring the use of vision,
 - Student interaction with peers,
 - Student self concept and emotional adjustment/social interaction.
 5. The child's visual deficiencies are not primarily the result of attention or psychological processing deficits.
 6. The student requires instruction to address identified deficit areas that cannot reasonably be provided solely through regular education.