

The following slides provide guidance on the eligibility category, definition, and criteria for “child with a visual impairment, including blindness” in Colorado public schools.

These slides may also be found within the Comprehensive Overview Training PowerPoint, which provides guidance on every eligibility category.

If these slides are used as a self-standing training tool, it is recommended that they be supplemented with the posted slides specific to the HB11-1277 Overview, which can be found at: [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/Training\\_ECEAEligibility.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/Training_ECEAEligibility.asp)

The HB11-1277 Overview slides will detail the history and timelines of implementation of the new eligibility categories, definitions, and criteria.

# Together We Can

## Vision

**All students in Colorado will become educated and productive citizens capable of succeeding in a globally competitive workforce.**

## Mission

**The mission of CDE is to shape, support, and safeguard a statewide education system that prepares all students for success in a globally competitive world.**

## Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

- The following slides have been vetted internally within the Colorado Department of Education for training purposes of the definition and eligibility criteria for Visual Impairment, Including Blindness.
- If you make any changes to these slides, please acknowledge that they are different from this vetted product and may no longer represent the viewpoint of the CDE.

## Eligibility Checklist for Visual Impairment, Including Blindness

- It is recommended that the following training slides be used in conjunction with the Eligibility Checklist for a Child with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness, which can be found at:

[http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/IEP\\_Forms.asp](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/IEP_Forms.asp)

**VISUAL IMPAIRMENT,  
INCLUDING BLINDNESS**

**Visual Impairment, Including Blindness**  
**(formerly Vision Disability)**

**Tanni Anthony**      **[anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:anthony_t@cde.state.co.us)**  
**(303) 866-6681**

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If there are any questions about the definition and eligibility criteria for Visual Impairment, including Blindness, please be in contact with Tanni Anthony at [anthony\\_t@cde.state.co.us](mailto:anthony_t@cde.state.co.us) or (303) 866-6681.

If there are any questions about whether a specific child meets the established criteria for Visual Impairment, Including Blindness, please be in contact with the administrative unit's Special Education Director.

2.08 (11) A child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness shall have a deficiency in visual acuity and/or visual field and/or visual functioning where, even with the use of lenses or corrective devices, he/she is prevented from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

2.08 (11) (a) A determination that a child is an eligible child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness shall be based upon one or more of the following:

2.08 (11) (a) (i) Visual acuity of no better than 20/70 in the better eye after correction;

2.08 (11) (a) (ii) Visual field restriction to 20 degrees or less; and/or

2.08 (11) (a) (iii) A physical condition of visual system which cannot be medically corrected and, as such, affects visual functioning

The next two slides include the exact wording of a Child with a Visual Impairment, including Blindness eligibility criteria that are in the current *Rules for the Administration of the Exceptional Children's Educational Act 1 CCR 301-8*

to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed. These criteria are reserved for special situations such as, but not restricted to cortical visual impairment and/or a progressive visual loss where field and/or acuity deficits alone may not meet the aforementioned criteria.

2.08 (11) (b) As a result of the Visual Impairment, Including Blindness, as set out above, the child requires specialized instruction, which may include special aids, materials, and equipment, for learning, literacy, activities of daily living, social interaction, self advocacy, and, as needed, orientation and mobility.

2.08 (11) (c) The term “Visual Impairment, Including Blindness” does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual perceptual and/or visual motor difficulties.

▪ **2.08 (11) (a)** A determination that a child is an eligible child with a Visual Impairment, Including Blindness shall be based *upon one or more of the following*:

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Visual Acuity</b>                             | • No better than 20/70 in the better eye after correction.  |
| <b>Visual Field</b>                              | • Restriction to 20 degrees or less.  |
| <b>A Physical Condition of the Visual System</b> | • Cannot be medically corrected and, affects visual functioning to the extent that specially designed instruction is needed. Special situation examples: Cortical Visual Impairment or progressive vision loss. |

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The above conditions must be diagnosed and quantified by an eye care specialist (ophthalmologist or optometrist).

There is no school professional who can dilate a child's eyes to determine (a) the cause of a vision loss and (b) whether the vision loss can be treated successfully with prescriptive lenses, surgery, and/or other types of medical intervention.

A school nurse and a certified teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) are trained to read a clinic eye evaluation report.

An individual who conducts vision screening can only determine if a child PASSES or FAILS a vision screening conducted in the school environment. When a vision screening is failed, the next step is to seek further evaluation.

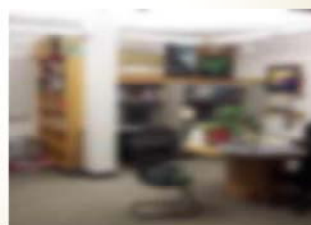
A certified teacher of students with visual impairment (TVI) is trained to complete a Functional Vision Assessment. This assessment is designed to complement the results of an eye care specialist's findings. The TVI cannot diagnosis blindness or visual impairment. The Functional Vision Assessment is to determine the functional implications of the child's visual impairment and what strategies, including specially designed instruction and equipment, may assist the student to maximize visual performance.

The certified teacher of students with visual impairments will also complete a Learning Media Assessment to determine the student's learning and literacy modalities. This assessment will be one tool that will assist with detailing the need for specially designed instruction.



## Visual Acuity of = or < than 20/70 In The Better Eye After Correction

- “*Better* eye after correction” through prescription lenses
- Legal Blindness: 20/200 or worse.
- Low vision begins at 20/70.
- Caution: eye doctors will “push for best acuity” and may not always address comfort threshold acuity, which is our hour-to-hour best vision.



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Only an eye care specialist can determine whether a child has a refractive error (nearsighted, farsighted, or has astigmatism) or another ocular-based reason for blurred vision. Only an eye care specialist can determine whether a child will benefit from prescriptive lenses (glasses or contact lenses).

If a child can be corrected to 20/60 or better vision in one eye after correction (glasses / contact lenses), he or she would not qualify as a child with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness.

If one eye is 20/70 or worse, but the other eye is better than this designation, the child would not qualify as a child with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness.

While legal blindness requires a visual acuity in the best corrected eye of 20/200 or worse, to be eligible as a child with a Visual Impairment, including Blindness may have a visual acuity in the best corrected eye of 20/70 or worse.

## Visual Field Restriction to 20 Degrees or Less



- Visual field loss is most often associated with specific retinal, optic nerve, or brain-related conditions.
- Visual field loss may or may not be concomitant with visual acuity deficits. Field loss may involve one, some, or all quadrants of one's visual field.

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Normal visual field extends to about 180 degrees. Field loss restricted to 20 degrees or less is rare and usually associated with conditions such as retinitis pigmentosa.

Certain eye conditions or neurological impairments may have an associated field loss. In these situations, the vision loss may also be accompanied by reduced visual acuity.

Field loss by itself often does not meet the eligibility threshold of Visual Impairment, including Blindness. For example, a child with cerebral palsy who has visual scotomas (areas of depressed vision in the visual field), but visual acuity in the best corrected eye of 20/60 or better would not qualify as a child with a visual impairment, including blindness.

## Other Qualifying Visual Conditions

- Such conditions cannot be (always) medically corrected or readily quantified by acuity / field loss (or meet the established criteria). Visual function affected as to require specially designed instruction
- Most common condition: Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)
- Progressive Visual Loss (e.g., retinal or central nervous system (CNS) degeneration conditions)

## Cortical Visual Impairment

- A temporary or permanent visual impairment caused by the disturbance of the posterior visual pathways and/or the occipital lobes of the brain. The degree of vision impairment can range from severe visual impairment to total blindness. The degree of neurological damage and visual impairment depends upon the time of onset, as well as the location and intensity of the insult. It is a condition that indicates that the visual systems of the brain do not consistently understand or interpret what the eyes see.
- The major causes of CVI are tied to neurological insults to the child prenatally, during birth, or postnatally.

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Cortical Visual Impairment is the leading cause of pediatric visual impairment in the United States and Europe.

The major causes of CVI are asphyxia, perinatal hypoxia ischemia ("hypoxia": a lack of sufficient oxygen in the body cells or blood; "ischemia": not enough blood supply to the brain), developmental brain defects, head injury, hydrocephalus, and infections of the central nervous system, such as meningitis, and encephalitis.

The diagnosis of CVI must be made by medical personnel. It may be made exclusively by an eye care specialist or it may be made in consultation with a neurologist or family physician. There must be evidence of abnormal visual functioning and a documented history of neurological compromise. The hallmark features of CVI are noted in the next slide.

## Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)

### Unique visual/behavioral characteristics of CVI:

- Normal or minimally abnormal eye exam (unless there is also an ocular problem)
- Difficulty with visual novelty (prefers to look at familiar items)
- Visually attends in near space only
- Difficulties with visual complexity/crowding
- Non-purposeful gaze/light gazing behaviors
- Distinct color preference(s)
- Visual field deficits
- Visual latency visual responses are slow, often delayed.
- Attraction to movement, especially rapid movements.
- Absent or atypical visual reflexive responses (absent or poor blink reflex)
- Atypical visual motor behaviors (gaze aversion / then reach for visual target)
- Inefficient, highly variable visual sense

The listed features can be found in both medical and educational literature. A child with cortical visual impairment may have several of these characteristics. A TVI trained in functional vision assessment specific to the features of CVI can quantify the characteristics present in the child. A TVI, however, cannot diagnose cortical visual impairment.

Often it is the report of these visual and/or behavioral characteristics, in association with a history of neurological insult, that will motivate a family to pursue an eye examination for their child. The eye care specialist may be able to verify some of these characteristics within an office exam visit, but will benefit from this history to help confirm the diagnosis of CVI.

## Progressive Visual Impairment

### Examples of Progressive Visual Impairments

- Glaucoma (congenital or later onset, secondary)
- Diabetic Retinopathy (tied to juvenile diabetes)
- Stargardt Disease (pediatric macular degeneration)
- Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Retinoschisis

Such visual conditions will lead to significant vision loss or blindness. The child may require specially designed instruction to prepare for the results of the progressive vision loss.

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There is a range of the age of onset and the speed of progression of eye conditions that result in deteriorating vision. When certain medical conditions have been diagnosed, the IEP team will want to address the child's current educational need and the expected educational need as vision is lost. Specially designed instruction may be needed to prepare the child for the results of the progressive vision loss.

## Vision Challenges That Do Not Qualify as VIB

- The term “Visual Impairment, Including Blindness” does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual perceptual and/or visual motor difficulties.
- Not included visual challenges associated with:
  - learning disability
  - strabismus / amblyopia / convergence insufficiency (unless accompanied by another visual complication that rises to the threshold of eligibility criteria)
- Conditions such as oculomotor apraxia do not automatically qualify a child as having a VIB. The child must meet the eligibility criteria for need for specially designed instruction.

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## Specially Designed Instruction

- “Specially Designed Instruction” *means adapting, as appropriate to the needs of an eligible child, the content, methodology or delivery of instruction* to address the *child's unique needs resulting from the disability* and *ensuring the child's access to the general curriculum* so that he or she can meet the educational standards that apply to all children within jurisdiction of the public agency. 34 CFR 300.39 (b)(3).
- It involves providing instruction that is different from that provided to children without disabilities, based upon the eligible child's unique needs.

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To qualify as a child with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness, there must be evidence that the child cannot receive reasonable educational benefit from general education without specially designed instruction.



## (VIB): The Child Cannot Receive REB from General Education

- Specially designed instruction may include instruction of the braille code(s), low vision device care and usage, social skills, activities of daily living, etc. This instruction may involve special aids, materials, and equipment (e.g., refreshable braille displays, braille notetakers, braille, tactile graphics, low vision devices, screen enlargement programs, video magnifiers, screen readers, reading stands, etc.)
- Specially designed instruction may include the Expanded Core Curriculum needs of students with visual impairment, including blindness
- Orientation & Mobility (specific related service to this population)

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### Reasonable Educational Benefit = REB

To qualify as a child with Visual Impairment, Including Blindness, there must be evidence that the child cannot receive reasonable educational benefit from general education without specially designed instruction. The specially designed instruction may involve training on the use of specialized equipment.

### The Expanded Core Curriculum

The Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is the body of knowledge and skills that are needed by students with visual impairments due to their unique disability-specific needs. Students with visual impairments need the expanded core curriculum in addition to the core academic curriculum of general education. The ECC should be used as a framework for assessing students, planning individual goals and providing instruction. The areas of the ECC include: (1) Compensatory or Functional Academic Skills, Including Communication Modes; (2) Orientation and Mobility; (3) Social Interaction Skills; (4) Independent Living Skills; (5) Recreation and Leisure Skills; (6) Career Education; (7) Assistive Technology; (8) Sensory Efficiency; and (9) Self-Determination

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services are a part of the Expanded Core Curriculum and a related service. As a related service, it is exclusive to children who are blind/visually impaired. Children with Visual Impairment, including Blindness may qualify for O&M, as well as other related services.

## In the Event of Deaf-Blindness

- If the child with Deaf-Blindness *does not meet the exact eligibility requirements for Visual Impairment, Including Blindness (VIB)*, but the combination of an existing vision loss and the documented hearing loss adversely affects the student's educational performance that will prevent the child from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education, *there is a box on the VIB eligibility checklist page for this situation.*

## To Be Eligible as VIB, the Child Must Meet All Three Conditions

1. There must be evidence of a vision impairment, including blindness, as quantified by visual acuity, visual field, and/or other functional vision loss, as documented by an appropriate medical professional (e.g., eye doctor).
2. The vision impairment, including blindness, must be significant enough that even with the use of lenses or corrective devices, educational performance is adversely affected.
3. The visual impairment, including blindness, must create a need for specially designed instruction.

# Thank You!

