

SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED IN FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Eligibility/Assessment

All elementary, middle, and high school sites serving students who are blind/vision impaired offer the same eligibility/assessment services to students.

Eligibility

The service providers for students who are Blind and Vision Impaired collaborate with other school personnel to determine if a student is having a short term vision problem or a disability due to vision impairment and whether the student may benefit from special education intervention. Consultation and/or direct instruction are provided to students who are eligible for special education based on vision impairment. This vision impairment must adversely affect the educational performance of the student. Vision impairment includes:

- Visual acuity of 20/70 or less in the better eye with best correction
- A severely restricted field of vision
- Visual, not visual perceptual difficulties, for whom significant modifications in the educational program have not been sufficient

Additionally, services are available on a consultation basis for students who have short-term vision issues that are not considered a vision disability.

If concerns about a student seem to be related to vision impairment, consider these questions:

1. Has the student received a vision screening (done by the nurse or clinic aide) at his/her school and what are the results?
2. Is the student already receiving special education services for another disability area?
3. Does the student wear glasses?
4. Has the student ever been evaluated by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist? (Call the parents or guardians to request this information.)
5. Is the student wearing a patch over one eye?
6. Is the student rubbing his/her eyes, squinting at the blackboard, or holding reading materials very close (within two inches) to his/her eyes?
7. Is the student falling down on the playground or walking into people or adults in the halls?
8. Is the student constantly losing his place on a page?

Contact Services for Blind and Vision Impaired:

1. With any questions regarding concerns about the nature of the student's vision issues.
2. When filling out a Multipurpose Referral Form (SS/SE-5) detailing the concerns regarding the student's vision issues.
3. When a Local Screening committee (LSC) makes the decision that the student's vision impairment may be adversely affecting the educational performance. A request for a "Functional Vision Assessment" is indicated on the "Notice and Consent" form (SS/SE-2), including details of your concerns regarding the student's vision issues written on the "Local Screening Committee Report" (SS/SE-14). The Functional Vision Assessment and a Learning Media Assessment are conducted by a teacher of the visually impaired (TVI) to help determine the educational impact of the student's vision impairment.
4. Consideration for special education eligibility based on a visual impairment requires documentation by medical examination and/or other qualified professional, otherwise known as an "eye report," within the past year. Evaluation by an appropriate doctor (ophthalmologist) is the responsibility of the parents. Obtain the eye report prior to the Functional Vision Assessment, so the TVI has the necessary background information regarding the educational implications of the etiology. Services for Blind and Vision Impaired will provide an eye report form, upon request, to be filled out by the eye doctor. A TVI should be invited to the Local Screening Committee to help read and interpret the information on the eye report.

Functional Vision Assessment

As a part of the referral and eligibility process for the Services for Blind and Vision Impairment, the local screening committee can request a functional vision assessment to determine:

- Eligibility/Reevaluation services as student with a visual impairment;
- Strengths and needs for IEP development and instruction.

The functional vision assessment provides information on the educational impact of the student's vision impairment, including near and distant visual functioning, optical aids, lighting considerations and visual fields.

A learning media assessment can be requested to assess the student's ability to access and use different learning media in reading and writing. This may include Braille, large print, optical aids, and auditory materials.

The functional vision/learning media assessment are used with other assessment tools, such as the eye report, psychological, socio-cultural, educational, and information from parents and teachers to determine Blind/Vision Impaired eligibility.