



Vision Referral Process

The process for referring a student for special education Eligibility under the category of Visual Impairment, including Blindness, or determining if a student already eligible for special education needs Vision Services requires an eye exam from an optometrist or ophthalmologist before a Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) is conducted.

When should a referral for a Vision Evaluation be made?

- A child has seen an eye doctor who has sent information to the parent or school stating the child has a Visual Impairment that could impact his/her ability to access their education.
- The child has seen an eye doctor who has stated that the child has an acuity, with correction, that is greater than 20/70, field loss, has light perception only, totally blind, or a prognosis that is poor (student will lose their vision gradually over time or all at once in the future).

What reasons (in isolation) are not appropriate for a referral for a Vision Evaluation?

- Student cannot read
- Student moves their head in a different way
- Student doesn't appear to be looking at their materials and being attentive in class
- Student has vision in only one eye (if the other eye is good, they are not eligible)
- Student wears glasses
- Student is going through eligibility and the team feels that just getting all of the assessments on the list is a good idea

How does the referral process work?

1. Parent/Guardian, a school nurse, teacher, or other school personnel have concerns about a child's vision. The school **MUST** receive a **CURRENT** eye report from the child's optometrist or ophthalmologist (current= less than one year). A school screening is not adequate. The team's opinion is not adequate. This step is critical. *If no report is available, the school must work with the parent to obtain an appointment with the optometrist or ophthalmologist before moving forward.*

2. If a student has a diagnosis of Cortical Vision Impairment (CVI), a neurologist report is sufficient.
3. Once the eye report is obtained, the Vision Teacher can review it to see if the information provided by the child's doctor warrants the need for further evaluation. (Depending on how referrals are handled in a particular school division, this information may be considered at a Child Study or Referral Meeting and a team decision is made regarding the need for further evaluation.)
4. A request for a Functional Vision Assessment is made.

What is a Functional Vision Assessment?

A Functional Vision Assessment (FVA) is conducted by a Vision Teacher and is used to determine how a child uses his/her vision in school and if their vision diagnosis has a negative impact on his/her education. The FVA can assist in identifying ways to assist the student in improving his/her visual functioning in the educational environment. This assessment, along with the other assessment components, drive the Eligibility Team decision regarding the student's Eligibility as a student who is Blind or Visually Impaired and the need for Vision Services. This assessment can take 1-2 hours minimum. It can also be a very lengthy process depending on several factors (examples: student's age, health, attendance, environment, academic level, cooperation, etc.)

Other Vision Assessments that may be needed following a FVA:

- Learning Media Assessment: determines what materials a student needs to best access the curriculum.
- Orientation and Mobility Assessment: determines how a student moves around their environment and how their vision affects this.
- Low Vision Evaluation: done with a doctor, outside of school, to determine if the child requires low vision or magnification devices to assist them.

For more information, contact the Piedmont Regional Education Program Vision Team at (434) 975-9400.