



Assessment of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired




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Psychologist Responsibilities


- Possess knowledge of psychological and sociological aspects of blindness.
- Possess knowledge of performance implications of blindness.
- Use assessment instruments appropriate for the blind.
- Assess intellectual, psychosocial, adaptive behavior, and social/emotional skills.
- Provide group, individual, and family counseling.

Adapted from *Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students* (CDE, 2000).




Developmental Impact

- May affect early motor milestones.
- Normal language development is expected.
- Academic development may require special materials.
 - Large print, magnifying aids, closed-circuit TV, books on tape.
- Social development may need to be encouraged.
 - The blind child may feel isolated and tends to withdraw.



Pre-Assessment Considerations


- Understand the Vision Loss
 - Type and Degree (corrected)
 - Review/Request a Functional Vision Assessment.
 - The learning potential of many visually impaired students can be assessed using traditional techniques (with minor adaptations, e.g., enlarged materials).
 - Make sure vision has been recently assessed and if helpful glasses are worn/visual aids are used!



Pre-Assessment Considerations


- Understand the Vision Loss
 - Type and Degree (corrected)
 - Partially sighted
 - Low vision
 - Legally blind
 - Totally blind

Source: NICHCY Disability Fact Sheet – No. 13




Pre-Assessment Considerations

- Understand the Vision Loss
 - Etiology
 - May suggest the presence of other handicaps (e.g., birth trauma is also associated with learning disabilities).
 - Systemic conditions (e.g., hypertension, cerebrovascular, vitamin A deficiency)
 - Specific eye conditions (e.g. Macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, myopia, Retinitis Pigmentosa, eye injuries, tumors)




Pre-Assessment Considerations

- Use modifications suggested by the functional vision assessment.
 - As indicated adjust lighting.
 - Allow child to use (and adjust) visual aids.
- Use standardized procedures when appropriate.
 - If low vision is suspected to be affecting performance, then modify administration.
 - e.g., re-administer with stimulus items enlarged.
 - Always note such modifications (practice effect may influence performance).
- Budget more time for these assessments
 - When done well they are much more involved.
 - Seeing contributes to fatigue and will require frequent breaks.




School Record Review

- Vision screening results.
- School attendance history.
- Prior assessment data.
- Academic performance.
- Family information.




During Testing

- Explain what is being done.
 - e.g., putting away/taking out test materials.
- Account for fatigue.
- Use spoken language to reinforce non-verbal cues.




Observations

- Will help in determining
 - needed test accommodations.
 - typical behavior/performance.
 - learning strengths and weaknesses.




Assessment Tools

- Use standardized procedures when appropriate.
- Use tests designed for visually impaired.
- Modify existing measures.
- Employ verbal tests.
- Unless tests are known to be valid for this population, always consider the possibility that scores may be underestimated.
- If possible avoid timed tests as they tend to penalize the blind student.
 - Large print and magnifying devices take longer to use.




Intelligence Testing

- If a child has useable vision for schoolwork, then use traditional procedures.
- If test failures are suspected to be related to low vision, then accommodate.
 - Failures following appropriate modifications can be attributed to ability.
- Wechsler Verbal Scales
 - Special cards with raised drawings may be needed on arithmetic.
- Columbia Mental Maturity Scale
 - Large figures.
- Pictorial Test of Intelligence
 - Stimulus cards are dark outline drawings.
 - Easel presentation assists scanning.




Social & Emotional

- An essential element of all assessments.
 - Questionnaires and Checklists.
 - Projective Techniques.
 - Parent Interview Scales.
 - Adaptive behavior.
 - Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scale
 - Many items require vision and as a result blind children may be penalized.




Resources

- Program Guidelines for Students who are Visually Impaired (Rev. Edition). (CDE, 1997).
 - On reserve in the Reserve Book Room.
- California School for the Blind (California School for the Blind, Outreach Services, 500 Walnut Avenue, Fremont, CA 94536, 510-794-3800 extension 210)
 - The *Professional Resource Center* is available to the public. This center serves as a concentrated resource library for people researching an issue regarding visual impairments. Everything from current regulations to a parent network can be found in this center.
 - *Assessment Services* are available to visually impaired, deaf-blind and visually impaired/multi-handicap students in public school programs throughout the school year. Referrals are made by local school districts, county offices of education, and Special Education Local Plan Areas.



Resources

- American Foundation for the Blind
 - <http://www.afb.org/>
- National Eye Institute
 - <http://www.nei.nih.gov/>
- JAMA
 - <http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/reprint/290/15/2088>
- MedlinePlus
 - <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/visionimpairmentandblindness.html>
- NICHY Fact Sheet - Visual Impairments
 - <http://www.nichcy.org/pubs/factshe/fs13txt.htm>



Next Week

- Read Thomas & Grimes, Chapter 97
- Recommended Reading
 - Thomas & Grimes Chapters 57, 92, & CDE (1992).
- Severe Physical Handicaps group project/lecture due

