REFERRALS

A referral may be made by a parent, teacher, or any service provider who suspects that a child may have a disability. The parent may initiate a referral to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team at their child's school requesting an evaluation if a parent suspects that their child may be eligible for special education and related services as a student with a disability of a Visual Impairment. The school will contact the Vision Program Instructional Specialist for involvement of the Vision Program in the IEP process.

Eligibility for special education and related services is determined by the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Team. The IEP Team, including the parent, will consider all existing information about the student (including input from parent, any available medical information, and educational/functional performance) and may request additional assessments. The IEP Team will then review all information during this evaluation process to determine if the student has an educational disability that requires specialized instruction.

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Vision Services

Vision Services is a special education service provided to blind or visually impaired students to teach disability-specific skills, sometimes referred to as the Expanded Core Curriculum. These skills include: compensatory skills (concept development, listening skills, organizational skills, study skills), technology skills, self-determination skills, visual efficiency skills, braille reading and writing instruction, daily living/self-help skills, career education, recreation and leisure skills, social skills, and orientation and mobility.

What does a TBVI do?

- Assist a family of a toddler with facilitating age-appropriate developmental skills
- Teach a student who is blind to read and write braille and use adaptive braille tools
- Teach a middle school student with low vision to use a magnifier
- Investigate possible career paths with a high school student who has low vision
- Teach a student with low vision how to download and use an accessible textbook on a tablet
- Teach students about their visual impairment, its impact, and how they can advocate for their needs.
- Collaborate with school staff to be sure students with visual impairments have access to all aspects of the curriculum.

VISION PROGRAM

The Vision Program in Prince George’s County Public Schools provides services to students, birth through 21, who are blind or have a visual impairment. Prince George’s County Public Schools has revised procedures for evaluating students for a Visual Impairment under the IDEA. A visual Impairment is an impairment in vision, which, even with correction, adversely affects a student’s educational performance and includes both partial sight and blindness. Any impairment in vision, regardless of severity, is covered, provided that such impairment, even with correction, adversely affects a student’s educational performance. Convergence insufficiency, and other binocular visual disorders, are not excluded from the definition of visual impairment.

SERVICES

The mission of the PGCPS Vision Program is to prepare and empower each student who has a visual impairment to achieve his/her maximum potential by providing the necessary disability-specific skills, materials, equipment, and accommodations to access the general education curriculum.

The Vision Program staff work collaboratively with the family, school, staff, and eye medical professionals in order to provide services, resources, materials, and equipment.

Orientation and Mobility

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) is a related service provided to blind or visually impaired students to teach systematic orientation and safe, independent movement for school, home, and community environments.

What does an O&M Specialist Do?

- Work with families/staff to facilitate independent and purposeful movement
- Teach spatial, positional, and environmental concepts
- Teach travel within school to navigate doorways, locate rooms, classes and landmarks within the building
- Teach travel within familiar and unfamiliar home/community environments including navigating residential areas, locating curb cuts, wheelchair ramps, crossing streets, shopping centers
- Teach skills in using remaining vision and low vision aids to enhance travel
- Teach use of a long, white cane or similar device for identification, safety, navigation
- Teach skills to use public transportation
- Teach use of technologies for navigation (GPS, phone apps, scheduling systems)
- Teach students to apply skills in real life environments (i.e., grocery store, Metro station, residential area, intersections)