

# Pennsylvania's Approach to the National Agenda for Children and Youths With Visual Impairments, Deafblindness, and Visual and Multiple Disabilities

## Goal 1

### Referral

Students with visual impairments, deafblindness, and visual and multiple disabilities and their families will be referred to an appropriate education program within 30 days of identification of a suspected visual impairment. Teachers of students with visual impairments and orientation and mobility (O&M) specialists will provide appropriate quality services.

When a child has a suspected visual impairment, whether in infancy or as a teenager, it is important that the child's eye condition be examined by a medical and/or eye care professional. If a visual impairment is diagnosed, the child should be immediately

referred to appropriate educational services. Developmental and educational services for children with visual impairments, deafblindness, and visual and multiple disabilities are most effective when the need is identified early and services are established quickly.

### Communication and Collaboration

It is essential for eye care professionals, families, and service providers to work together in order for the child to receive appropriate services in a timely manner. The following information can help facilitate communication and collaboration among these individuals.

Information to **ask** eye care professionals:

- What is the child's eye condition? (diagnosis/Dx)
- What caused the eye problem? (etiology)
- Will my child's eye condition change? (stability status)
- What part of the eye or brain is involved? (location)
- How much can my child see? (visual acuity, both near and distance/size of object)
- Will eye glasses or contact lenses help?
- Will low vision rehabilitation or vision enhancement devices help?

- Will an eye report be made available in order to communicate the results with all team members?

Information to **share** with eye care professionals:

- Eye condition, if known
- Results of previous eye exams (when conducted and by whom)
- Any other diagnosis (e.g., CP, ADHD, Autism)
- Current medications and drug allergies
- Reason for referral (what signs and symptoms have been noted)
- Neurological findings (including radiology summary from CT or MRI studies, if appropriate)
- Current services provided, frequency of services, and who is providing the services (i.e., teacher of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialist, occupational therapist, physical therapist)

## Referral Information

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A child who has been diagnosed by an eye care professional as blind or visually impaired, or who you suspect may be blind or visually impaired, may qualify for specialized educational services at no cost.

If the child is under 3 years of age, contact the local Mental Health/Mental Retardation (MH/MR) office or the CONNECT Early Intervention Helpline at 800-692-7288. The CONNECT helpline assists families in locating resources and provides information regarding child development for children age birth to 5. In addition,

CONNECT can assist parents in making a direct link to their county early intervention program or their local preschool early intervention program. Children from birth to age 5 who have special needs due to development delays and disabilities are eligible to receive early intervention services.

If the child is between the ages of 3 and 21 years old, contact the local school district. To qualify for services, the child must have an identified disability and a need for specially-designed instruction.

## Yearly Vision Screenings and Evaluations

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After a child has been diagnosed as blind or visually impaired, yearly vision screenings and evaluations need to be completed. With some eye conditions, vision can fluctuate or even deteriorate or the health of the eye can be

affected. Yearly screenings and eye examinations will detect changes in a child's visual functioning and give them a better opportunity to develop educationally, socially, emotionally, and physically.

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For more information about the National Agenda, go to [www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/](http://www.tsbvi.edu/agenda/).

For more information about PANA, go to [www.panationalagenda.com](http://www.panationalagenda.com) or contact the Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network: 200 Anderson Road, King of Prussia, PA 19046, (610-265-7231 or 800-441-3215).