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## Handouts

Presentation notes and supplemental packet "Equal Access to Education" are found at [www.vipsight.org](http://www.vipsight.org)

Contact me: [krwa@verizon.net](mailto:krwa@verizon.net)

## Fantastic Resource!

- NOAH CARE Project: Create Albinism Resource for Education
- <http://iep.albinism.org/>

**Webinar Focus:** IEP's are complex and due to time, we will cover the basics of:

- Basic Advocacy
- Referral and Eligibility
- Assessments
- Accommodations
- Placement and Service Delivery

## Essential Priorities

- Safety
- Documentation and communication
- Proactive advocacy

## Safety First!

Above all other needs, child's safety should be addressed first and foremost

- Typical school safety needs
- Environment
- Physical
- Emotional
- Privacy
- Electronic

## Essential Terminology

- VI: visual impairment
- Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments (TSVI)
  - Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI), Teacher of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TBVI)
  - **Previous titles:** Vision teacher or vision itinerant
- Orientation and Mobility: O&M

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## **Parent and Guardian Participation**

- Most essential and important!
  - You know your child best
  - You are your child's best advocate
- Limitations of advocating appropriately
  - Want to participate more in child's education, but may not know language of the field
  - Nervous or reluctant to ask questions
- Impact
  - Carry-over from school to home
  - Increase in meeting student's needs appropriately

## **Essential Information about Your Child**

- Make a portfolio of your child's work
  - Include pictures
  - Make notes of what your child had difficulty with visually or what was easier for him/her to see
  - Transition portfolio for older students
- Developmental notes:
  - Keep track of when your child meets milestones for the first time and when they are permanent
    - Walking
- What materials work for your child, type of lined paper, writing utensils, braille devices, etc.

## **Essential: Referral Process**

- Refer early!
  - Early intervention
  - School
  - Moving to new schools
  - Transition
  - When you suspect your child has another area of need
- Necessary Documentation
  - Eye report from ophthalmologist or optometrist
  - Reports from other health care or service providers with diagnosis and/or summary of needs and services
  - Your own comments and summary child's functioning/needs
  - Document (in writing) which assessments you request

## **Category and Definition**

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- IDEA: § 300.8 Child with a disability.
  - 13. Visual Impairment Including Blindness: an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance.  
Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1401(3); 1401(30))
  - Fatigue, glare, depth perception, etc.

## Assessments

- Key to forming IEP's are documentation and assessments
  - Goal writing, accommodations
- Assessments can be:
  - Informal, formal
  - Observational, checklists, records
  - Standardized with limitations
  - Non-standard

## Essential: Assessment Procedures: Typical assessments for students with visual impairments

- Functional Vision Assessment (FVA/FVE)
  - Considerations for multiple factors affecting vision beyond acuity
- Learning Media Assessment (LMA)
  - Includes adaptations for large print/magnifying devices, electronic adaptations, in addition to mode of literacy
- Expanded Core Curriculum\*
  - Assistive technology
  - Orientation and Mobility

## VI Assessments must be Comprehensive!

- Education is dynamic, uses variety of technologies, teaching aids and environments
- Ongoing evaluation is necessary

## Expanded Core Curriculum

Core Curriculum: Academic subjects for all students

### Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC):

- Compensatory or functional academic skills, including communication modes
- Orientation and mobility
- Social interaction skills
- Independent living skills
- Recreation and leisure skills

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- Career education
- Use of assistive technology
- Sensory efficiency skills
- Self determination skills

## Other Assessments

- Developmental, educational, psychological
- Assessments have limitations for students with visual impairments
- TVI must consult when tests are administered by a service provider without credentials in visual impairment
- Disclaimer statements are made about test validity for this population

## Identifying Other Needs

- The presence of a visual impairment does not mean a student will definitely have or be exempt from having another disability
- Other disabilities can be more substantial than a visual impairment
- Vision is often blamed for difficulties student may have that are really caused by another disability
- Students with visual impairments may be diagnosed with other conditions the child really does not have
  - Is the student's vision accommodated appropriately?
  - Is the student proficient using the accommodations?

## Key Phrases and Terminology

- Review all assessment data to determine any inconsistencies
- **Independent Educational Evaluation: IEE**
  - "an evaluation conducted by a qualified examiner who is not employed by the public agency responsible for the education of the child in question."
  - Parents may provide documentation from a qualified professional for the school to consider
  - Parents may request an IEE be paid for by the schools; must follow specific protocol
- **Predetermination:** a student's placement, services or other plan details are decided outside of IEP meeting and without parent input.
- **Addendum:** At any time you can request a change to your child's IEP or service plan.

## Plan Development

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Plans:

IFSP – Individualized Family Service Plan

IEP – Individualized Education Program

ISP – Individualized Service Plan

504 Plan

## Setting Priorities and Goals

- Students are under intense academic pressure; set reasonable goals and expectations
- Is your child making progress?
- What is your child's personal best?

## Types of Service Delivery

- Considerations for The Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Inclusion
- Monitor Consult
- Special education service in general education:
  - Intermittent basis
  - Regular, scheduled basis
- Special education service in the special education setting:
  - Intermittent basis
  - Regular, scheduled basis
- Resource services, self-contained settings
- Self-contained school (school for the blind)
- Natural settings: early intervention

## Advocating for Accommodations

- Define appropriate accommodations
  - Benefits, limitations and **need for training**
- Technology: **include training if necessary**
  - Document when it is/not necessary
- Low vision aids
- Large print: define

## Advocating for Accommodations

### Benefits and limitations

- Extended time
- Obtaining assignments a head of time
- Shortened assignments
- Assistants

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- Testing Accommodations
  - Make sure they are well-defined, such as extended time, on the IEP so state and national testing accommodations can be used

## **Advocating for Accommodations**

- Understanding curricula
  - SOL's and POS
  - Read these before IEP and advocate for curriculum materials and adaptations
  - Ask for classroom materials, books before IEP so you will know if they need adaptations
  - Take materials home and have your child look through them
  - Familiarize child with materials, quota fund devices before school so they are comfortable
  - Consider limitations for accommodations: assistant, etc
- Advocating for materials
  - Quota Funds: large print and tactile teaching devices for curriculum

## **Literacy**

- Literacy
  - Braille literacy takes planning, pre-literacy intervention; make sure to plan a head!
  - Books must be ordered early for large print and braille
- Extended School Year: ESY
  - Plan ahead!
  - Communicate early with your child's teacher if this is necessary for your child

## **Orientation and Mobility O&M**

- Safety considerations
- O&M service may begin in early childhood and be addressed as the student progresses
- Low vision considerations
  - Basic travel
  - Familiarization techniques
  - Locating destinations, school bus, using clues and landmarks
  - Street crossing strategies
  - White cane, dog guide

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- Using public transit
  - Referrals for para-transit or reduced fare programs

## **Essential Communication**

- Teachers and schools: Write a letter outlining your child's vision, strength needs, recommendations and advice
  - Notify the principal, teachers, specialists of your child's visual impairment before the school year begins
  - Ask for permission to walk through school/playground before school year begins
  - Stay in contact over summer to check progress on environmental adaptations, such as contrast strips on steps

## **Essential Communication Cont'd**

- Make an appointment with teachers to discuss your child's vision impairment
  - As you child grows, he/she should be responsible for conducting these meetings, emailing teachers and advocating for own needs
- Always be proactive and forward thinking in your efforts and communication
- Know how and where to report a problem
- Using special education advocates

## **Communicating with your Child and Peers About the VI**

- Training parent volunteers and community helpers
- "Different eyes"
  - Celebrate uniqueness
  - Avoid terms like "bad eyes" or "poor eyesight"
  - Dancing eyes for Nystagmus
- Suggestions for talking to classes about your child's vision impairment

## **Essential Documentation**

- Keep records of whom you talk to and about what topics
  - Send an email thanking the person for their time and noting the items discussed and who is responsible for doing what
- Document requests for assessments, meetings, etc
- Consider documenting when materials have not been received in a timely manner or were not adapted or accommodated appropriately

## **Documentation**

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- At the school open house, note if accommodations are present, if not, provide a friendly reminder
- Document if accommodations are not received throughout the year on a regular basis, especially if it affects your child's academics or ability to pass a class

### Example

\_\_\_ Assignment was provided in enough time for adaptation

\_\_\_ Assignment is in font style and size my child can read

\_\_\_ Assignment is in high contrast

\_\_\_ Assignment is not visually cluttered

\_\_\_ Student had access to designated accommodations for assignment

    Slant board

    Dark pen/pencil

    Large computer monitor

    Desk copy of board notes

### **Conclusion**

Children with albinism have unlimited potential and unlimited possibilities!