

Low Vision Services: Working with Your Child's School

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This information sheet has been prepared for parents who wish to speak with teachers and school administrators about securing low vision services for their children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

If your child has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) (ages 3 - 21), his or her school will provide:

- access to the general education curriculum
- accommodations
- special education and related services
- assistive technology services

Low vision services apply to these provisions. They should be, but are not always available through IDEA. They include:

- a clinical low vision evaluation
- the purchase of optical and/or electronic devices, and
- instruction in the use of the devices

The following information explains how low vision services may be linked to the provisions of IDEA.

Clinical low vision evaluations These evaluations are conducted by ophthalmologists or optometrists with a low vision specialty and are considered a "related service." Under IDEA, there are two related service provisions that apply to this evaluation. 1) a *medical evaluation* to improve a child's functioning within special education, and 2) an *assistive technology evaluation*. For a child with low vision, one part of a clinical low vision evaluation is to determine if optical and/or electronic devices will assist your child in school and at home.

Purchase of Assistive Technologies (devices). Under IDEA schools purchase devices that will improve your child's functioning in school. Once a device is included on an IEP the school becomes responsible for purchase and maintenance of the device. If a child needs a device for homework, and it cannot be transported home, a duplicate device may be purchased by the school.

Instruction in the Use of Optical and/or Electronic Devices IDEA also provides for instruction in the use of assistive devices. For optical and/or electronic devices that will be used in classrooms and within your child's school, your child's TVI will provide this instruction. This instruction includes the use of handheld, spectacle mounted, and electronic devices for seeing at near (e.g., books) and at a distance (e.g., whiteboard). A certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS) will provide instruction for your child in the use of distance devices for such tasks as reading street signs and finding addresses. They are ready to help child to use his or her functional vision.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Please contact your child's school to request low vision services. For a copy of the IDEA law, see, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-108publ446/html/PLAW-108publ446.htm>