



### IDEA: Categories of Disabilities -- Visual Impairment

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines **Visual Impairment** as:

an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child’s educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

#### What is a Visual Impairment?

Visual impairment is the consequence of an eye condition or disorder. The eye has different parts that work together to create our ability to see. When a part of the eye doesn’t work right or communicate well with the brain, vision is impaired. Because there are many different causes of visual impairment, the **degree** of impairment can range from mild to severe. The degree of impairment will depend on: the eye condition that the child has; what aspect of the visual system is affected; and how much correction is possible through glasses, contacts, medicine, or surgery.

The following terms are used in the educational context to describe students with visual impairments. They are defined as follows:

- **Partially sighted** indicates some type of visual problem has resulted in a need for special education;
- **Low vision** generally refers to a severe visual impairment. It applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses.
- **Legally blind** indicates a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point); and
- **Totally blind** students learn via braille or other non-visual media.

#### What are the signs of a Visual Impairment?

Some of the most common signs that a child may have a visual impairment are: eyes that don’t move together, crossed eyes, eyes that bulge, dance or bounce in rapid rhythmic movements, pupils that are unequal in size or appear white, repeated shutting or covering of one eye, unusual degree of clumsiness, and frequent squinting, blinking, eye-rubbing, or face crunching.

*This information is not meant to diagnose any child and should not take the place of consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.*



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**Where to call for a free evaluation from the state depends on your child’s age:**

#### Under Three (3) Years Old

Contact SoonerStart Early Intervention Services at 405-521-3351

<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/2013%20Referral%20Guide%20back.pdf>

#### Three (3) Years Old and Older

Contact your local public school system.

[www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory](http://www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory)

*Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call your local elementary school and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.*

If you’re not sure who to contact, call the **Oklahoma Parents Center** toll-free at 877-553-4332 and we can help you!

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Source:

*Visual Impairment, Oklahoma State Department of Education.*

*Visual Impairment, including Blindness , Parent Center Hub*