



WISCONSIN BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY GUIDANCE FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

The Birth to 3 Program is committed to children who are under the age of three with developmental delays and disabilities and their families. We value the family's primary relationship with their child and work in partnership with the family. We work to enhance the child's development and support the family's knowledge, skills and abilities as they interact with and raise their child.

Children, with a physician-diagnosed visual condition in which there is significant reduced acuity or field restrictions or ocular or cortical impairment, meet the criteria for eligibility in Wisconsin's Birth to 3 Program as a "Child with a Visual Impairment." An ophthalmologist, optometrist or sometimes a neurologist diagnoses a visual condition causing, or known to cause, a delay. The above conditions mean that a child's visual functioning significantly and adversely affects developmental growth and/or access to the environment or environmental information. Common, permanent irremediable ocular pathologies, including albinism, optic nerve hypoplasia, and cortical visual impairment, have an impact on developmental growth because of implications associated with these diagnoses. **Children diagnosed with a visual delay, such as "delayed visual maturation," do not meet the criteria for a diagnosed condition and are evaluated for eligibility based on documentation of a developmental delay.**

Scientific evidence regarding the long-term developmental consequences of vision loss in infants and toddlers indicates that any degree or configuration of permanent vision loss after correction with glasses or contacts is likely to result in a developmental delay. Therefore, a child diagnosed as blind/visually impaired is eligible for the Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program and does not need to demonstrate a developmental delay.

When a county Birth to 3 Program receives a referral for a child diagnosed with a permanent vision loss, the early intervention (EI) team convenes to review the diagnosis, confirm eligibility and ensure that assessment information is available for convening the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team meeting. The EI team includes: parents, the service coordinator, qualified personnel from at least two different disciplines in areas of suspected need, and at least one member with expertise in the assessment of typical and atypical development and program planning.*

Following the determination of eligibility, the IFSP team meets to develop the IFSP. The team includes: the parents, other family members requested by the parent, the service coordinator, an advocate (if requested by the parent), at least one of the qualified personnel who took part in the evaluation and assessment of the child, at least one professional with expertise in assessment of both typical and atypical development and expertise in child development and program planning, and appropriate service providers.**

For children who are blind and visually impaired, the EI and IFSP teams should include a member who understands the developmental and learning impact of vision loss and provides appropriate assessments, strategies, materials and resources for families. For a child who is blind or visually impaired, a Wisconsin licensed teacher of the blind and visually impaired is qualified to participate in the determination of eligibility and the development of the IFSP. Intervention strategies should address the visual and non-visual needs of the child. Resources, services and supports are individually established for each child based on the outcomes determined by the IFSP team. A licensed teacher of the blind/visually impaired, in collaboration with other professionals such as certified orientation and mobility specialists, ophthalmologists or optometrists may then be involved for further assessments, intervention strategies, materials, and resources.

Reference: Early Intervention Services For Children From Birth To Age 3 With Developmental Needs, Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter DHS 90.

*Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 90.08

**Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 90.10