

EI Vision Services and Vision Therapy: What's the Difference?

EARLY INTERVENTION VISION SERVICES

Early intervention vision services provide education and strategies for caregivers of children (birth to age three) with blindness or visually impairment (B/VI). The goal is to help children with B/VI use all their senses to maximize overall development during their critical early years.

EI vision services are provided by Early Intervention Teachers of the Visually Impaired (EI-TVIs) who are licensed special educators with advanced degrees focused on children with B/VI.

EI-TVIs collaborate with parents, caregivers, and other early intervention providers to identify and address the specific goals and priorities defined on a child's Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs).

EI-TVI services are family-focused, strengths-based, and developmentally appropriate. Services are provided in homes and other natural environments, such as grocery stores, libraries, parks, and childcare centers.



Services include:

- Helping families understand their child's visual diagnosis and how blindness or visual impairment may affect their early learning and overall development (e.g., cognitive, social, emotional, physical).
- Assessing how children with B/VI use their senses (e.g., vision, hearing, and touch) for learning and play.
- Teaming with caregivers to identify and implement strategies designed to help children with B/VI understand and access the world around them.
- Teaching and modeling how children with B/VI learn through repetition and hands-on experiences and incorporating learning into everyday routines such as play, mealtime and bath time.

- Helping families adapt their home and other natural environments for access and safety related to their child's blindness or visual impairment.
- Supporting families during hospital visits and ophthalmology appointments.

VISION THERAPY

Vision therapy involves doctor supervised eye exercises intended to correct sensorimotor and/or visual-perceptual problems.

The goal is to train the brain to process visual information more efficiently by improving the ability to use both eyes together, treating eye deviations, and slowing the progression of nearsightedness.

Outcomes associated with vision therapy are achieved through therapeutic processes that require active engagement of a prescribing doctor, vision therapist and patient (or caregiver in the case of a child).

Vision therapy programs may include the use of lenses, prisms, filters, occluders, and computer programs. Other devices, such as balance boards and metronomes, may also be used.



Note, vision therapy is not an early intervention service supported by IDEA Part C; however, it may be covered by private insurance and/or Medicaid.

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	EI Vision Services	Vision Therapy
Diagnosed	Blindness, visual impairment, and other vision concerns	Vision problems, visual skills
Type of services	Education and coaching for caregivers	Supervised eye exercises with patient
Goals, objectives	Address parent-identified goals and priorities defined in IFSP	Correct visual processing problems and/or build visual skills
Age range	Birth to age 3	All ages
IDEA Part C service	Yes	No
Authorization	IFSP team	Doctor
Funding	No cost to families – expenses are covered by IDEA Part C	Private insurance, Medicaid, or out-of-pocket payments
Provider	Early Intervention Teacher of the Visually Impaired (EI-TV I)	Optometrist or Vision Therapist with doctor supervision
Service location(s)	Home and other natural environments	Doctor's office, home