



CHILDREN'S & WOMEN'S HEALTH  
CENTRE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



## THE VISUAL IMPAIRMENT PROGRAM

### What is the Visual Impairment Program?

The Visual Impairment Program (VIP) is an assessment, diagnostic, and treatment planning service for children who have a suspected or known loss of vision.

Our goal is to provide a range of services to support children and their families, as well as their community professionals.

The range of services may include multidisciplinary assessments, community team conferencing, and community outreach.

### Who is the Visual Impairment Team?

The VIP team members are all specialized in vision loss. The team includes a developmental pediatrician, a nurse clinician, ophthalmologist, psychologist, physiotherapist, audiologist, speech-language pathologist, and vision consultants.

The assessment appointments will be tailored to your child's individual needs. Other health care professionals and diagnostic tests may be included.

### Why are specialized services important?

Visual impairment can significantly impact all areas of a child's development. Vision loss can affect social and emotional well-being and the ability to learn new skills and to learn about the world.

Timely assessment to determine the diagnosis and extent of the vision loss is important so that you may access the help that your child may need.

"Children with a visual impairment or who are blind have special developmental needs and must be exposed to a rich and appropriately stimulating environment to reach their full potential."

James E. Jan, MD, FRCP (C)  
Founder of the  
Visual Impairment Program

### What services are provided?

The VIP offers assessment, education, and community outreach.

### Assessment

You will meet each member of your child's team so that information can be shared. This may be done through conversation with you, observation of your child, and/or more formal testing. When the appointments are completed, your team will meet with you and your family to discuss the assessments, provide information, and to develop a program plan. With your permission, community professionals who work with your child are welcome to participate.

Written reports are sent to you and to those you have identified as being involved with your child. Your written consent is required to release these reports.

### Education

All VIP team members are available to provide education on visual impairment and related issues. Using research results, information is updated regularly and can be provided through workshops or printed resources.

### Community Outreach

Following your child's VIP team assessments, a vision consultant will provide follow-up education specific to your child's vision diagnosis. Community workshops may be provided. The focus of the community outreach component is on children from birth to kindergarten.

The VIP contracts some orientation and mobility instruction through the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB). Once a child begins school, families have access to this instruction through the school system.

### How to refer to the Visual Impairment Program

Referral to the VIP can be made by either your child's doctor, pediatrician, or ophthalmologist. To initiate a new or follow-up referral, the doctor must address or fax a written referral to:

The Visual Impairment Program  
Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children  
3644 Slocan Street  
Vancouver, BC V5M 3E8  
ATTN: Health Records  
or  
Fax: 604-453-8305

Urgent diagnostic referrals are processed immediately.

The Visual Impairment Program team members can be contacted by telephone at 604-453-8300.