

## **Vision Program:**

# **Infants & Toddlers**

# **Birth to 3 Years Old**

## **NMSBVI Outreach Services**

### **The NMSBVI Mission:**

NMSBVI, an innovative leader and unifying entity in the field of educating students birth-high school who are blind or visually impaired, will identify and ensure quality education through collaborative relationships with students, families, and local/state/national partners to provide outstanding advocacy, training, resources, and support services, thus ensuring that all students who are blind or visually impaired will become independent, productive members of their communities.

NMSBVI prides itself in offering a continuum of free services for children throughout each stage of growth and development. The NMSBVI Family-Infant-Toddler program serves children who are visually impaired and their families in their homes and communities as well as children considered to be at risk of possibly receiving a visual impairment diagnosis. In serving “at risk” children, NMSBVI is able to support families to confirm visual conditions and clarify diagnosis issues. Consequently, many of New Mexico’s visually impaired children are identified at a very young age so that services may be offered early in their development; thus helping children to maximize their potential.

### **Eligibility**

NMSBVI Family-Infant-Toddler Program for children birth to three years old provides statewide services free to families of young children who have a diagnosed visual impairment; or who are considered to be at risk for visual impairment.

### **Referrals**

Anyone can make a referral. Most referrals to the NMSBVI F.I.T. program come from family members who are worried about their child; from early intervention agency providers with knowledge about a child who may need vision support services; and from the medical community. Referrals can be made for any child between the ages of birth and three years old:

- Who has been diagnosed with a visual impairment;
- Who has an established condition that places them at risk for a visual impairment. Established conditions can include but are not limited to prematurity, many different

- syndromes, a family history of visual impairment, or traumatic events such as oxygen deprivation, meningitis, or shaken baby syndrome;
- Whose family or team is concerned about some aspect of the child's vision; or
- Whose results on the New Mexico Vision Screening Tool indicate the need for referral.

### **What to Expect After Making a Referral**

Within 48 hours of receiving a referral, a developmental vision specialist from NMSBVI will contact the family. An initial evaluation will be completed and eligibility will be determined. In conjunction with the family and the child's team, if recommended, services will be outlined on a child's IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan.)

### **Available Services**

Services are available state-wide and are free to families with a child in need of services. Services for children before the age of three are unique. Family involvement is strongly encouraged, services are provided in the natural environment of the family home and/or community settings. NMSBVI's developmental vision specialists are trained as teachers of the visually impaired and/or as orientation and mobility specialists. NMSBVI's services do not replace, but supplement, other specialized services in the community. Services available to children before the age of three include:

- Functional Vision Evaluations to determine the need for services.
- Consultation/participation in developmental assessments with EI agencies.
- Learning Media Assessments to determine both the sensory channels a child prefers for learning and to establish the need for Braille instruction.
- Consultation with the family and/or community service providers, therapists, etc.
- Direct services to the child & family, including services from a developmental vision specialist and/or an orientation and mobility specialist.
- Developmental intervention strategies to support the development of visual/compensatory visual skills.
- Information about blindness / visual impairment.
- Referral & resource information for families.
- Participation in IFSP & other team meetings.
- Transition support from ages birth to three into preschool programs.
- Support for parents, including the support needed to find a pediatric ophthalmologist for a diagnosis.
- Training for child-specific teams, as well as for organizations seeking additional knowledge about vision and its impact on development.

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