

**State of Illinois**  
Rod R. Blagojevich, Governor

**Department of Human Services**  
Carol L. Adams, Ph.D., Secretary



# **SUPPORTING FAMILIES:**



**AN ILLINOIS RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES  
OF YOUNG CHILDREN WHO HAVE A VISION  
IMPAIRMENT**

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO JAVED PHOTOGRAPHY FOR DONATING THE COVER PHOTOGRAPH.  
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**WHEN VISION LOSS IS FIRST DIAGNOSED** parents often report feelings of shock. These feelings later turn to disbelief, grief, and anger. As time passes, families begin to search for help. We can get many questions answered from the Internet. But, local information and resources are hard to find. Use this booklet to help you find those people and resources that will bring the support you need on a daily, personal level.

## ***MEETING MY CHILD'S NEEDS***

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You may be feeling a sense of alarm. You may wonder how your child will learn basic information without the help of his vision. How will he learn to use a spoon, tie his shoe or even walk? While these questions are valid, they are manageable. Children

with little or no vision can learn to accomplish almost any task you can imagine. As their parent, you will be their primary teacher. But, there are avenues of support available to you.



## FINDING SUPPORT

A child should be seen and treated by an eye doctor right away.

Some problems, if left untreated, can have negative long-term effects on a child's vision. Prompt

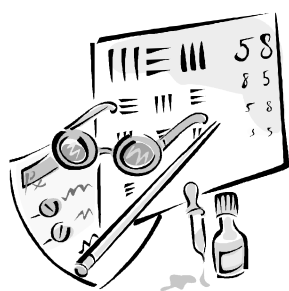
attention to eye problems may increase the speed and effectiveness of treatment. The **Division of Specialized Care for Children** (DSCC) can help families find and pay for services from an eye doctor. For qualifying families, DSCC will pay for appointments related to diagnosis. They can also help pay for medical treatment of some visual conditions. Contact DSCC at 800-322-3722 to find out if you qualify. Visit them on the web at [www.uic.edu/hsc/dsc](http://www.uic.edu/hsc/dsc).

When a child has a diagnosed visual impairment, he is at high risk for delays. But, research has shown that we can decrease or avoid these delays. We must provide young children with the proper play



opportunities. Families of children with a visual impairment can receive help through the **Illinois Early Intervention System** (EI). A number of different services and therapies are available. These services are usually provided in your home. To find out more, contact your local **Child and Family Connections** agency. Their location information can be found on page 14 of this booklet. **Service Guidelines: Blind and Visually Impaired** explains the steps taken to begin services for families. You can see a copy of these guidelines at [www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc](http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc). If your child is over 3 years old contact your local school district for service information.

## **FINDING THE SPECIALISTS**



Optometrists and Ophthalmologists are medical professionals who diagnose and treat visual conditions. An **Optometrist** prescribes glasses or low vision aids. They also provide vision therapy when needed. **Vision therapy** consists of specific activities and therapy to help coordinate the muscles of the eye. An

**ophthalmologist** is a surgical doctor who diagnoses and treats pathological conditions of the eye such as glaucoma, cataracts, and retinal diseases.

A **Developmental Therapist Vision** (DTV) and a **Developmental Therapist Orientation and Mobility** (DTO&M) are the educational professionals who attend to developmental delays caused by a lack of vision. The DTV will help a child learn about his environment. The DTV will teach the child how he can use his remaining vision and other senses to learn and interact with his world. A DTO&M works to help a child orient in his environment and move safely within that space. To learn more or to obtain help in finding one of these specialists in your area contact Hearing and Vision Connections at 217/479-4318 (V/TTY). Visit HVC on the web at [www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc](http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc).



## **MEETING MY NEEDS AS A PARENT**

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As a parent, you are your child's best support, advocate, and teacher. You will be the single biggest influence in his life. What an incredible responsibility and privilege! We look to past experiences to develop our own sense of what to do as a parent. We read books and magazines to learn the newest advice on parenting. But, when your child has a visual loss, parenting models and information become harder to find. In most situations we parent our child the same whether he has vision or not. But, sometimes we want ideas from others that have children who are blind or visually impaired. Chances are great that you don't know any other family who



has a child with a vision loss. In fact, you may not know anyone who is blind or visually impaired other than your child. Illinois is a state with many helpful resources available.

## **FINDING OTHER PARENTS**

**Illinois Parents of the Visually Impaired (IPVI)** is a very active parent group. They produce a monthly newsletter and have regularly scheduled outings. Parents have the chance to get to know one another. IPVI also develops an incredible resource guide.



This guide is made available to their members each year. For more information, contact by phone at 877/411-4784 or visit the web at [www.ipvi.org](http://www.ipvi.org).

The **Parent Infant Institute (PII)** is another great way to meet other parents. This three-day event is held at the **Illinois School for the Visually Impaired** each

June. Families attend at no cost. Parents attend workshops to learn about vision loss. Children



receive developmental evaluations. But, parents say that the greatest benefit is meeting other parents. Contact

**the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired** at 217/479-4400 for more information. Visit them on the web at [www.isvi.net](http://www.isvi.net).

## **EDUCATION AND INFORMATION**

Start with your child's **Developmental Therapist Vision (DTV)** when you are looking for information. A DTV has broad experience with children of all ages with visual loss. He/She can answer questions about your child's visual loss. He/She can bring you books and resources related to your questions. If there are other families in your area whose members are blind or visually impaired, your DTV probably knows them and can introduce you. If you need help finding a

DTV in your area, call Hearing and Vision Connections at 217/497-4324.



Many families around the world have benefited from the free services available through the **Hadley School for the Blind**. Illinois is proud to be the home of this incredible organization. Hadley offers in-depth courses on a variety of topics. They have a track of classes specifically designed for new parents. Family members

can take these classes at their own pace from home. Find out more about the Hadley School for the Blind by calling them at 800/323-4238. Visit them on the web at [www.hadley-school.org](http://www.hadley-school.org).

**Hearing and Vision Connections** (HVC) is funded through the Bureau of Early Intervention. One of HVC's main goals is to provide families with information related to vision loss. HVC offers a variety of resources. Some of these resources include a quarterly



newsletter, vision kits and this booklet. HVC is available to answer specific questions related to children with vision loss. They offer free statewide training. Contact Hearing and Vision Connections at 217/479-4318 (V/TTY). Visit them on the web at [www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc](http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc).

As was mentioned earlier, the **Parent Infant Institute** (PII) is a great place for parents to gather information. Parents obtain intensive information about a variety of topics including visual impairments and blindness, the early intervention system, transition, and vision services in the school systems. The PII is offered each June. It is totally free for families. Contact **the Illinois School for the Visually Impaired** at 217/479-4400 for more information. Visit them on the web at [www.isvi.net](http://www.isvi.net).



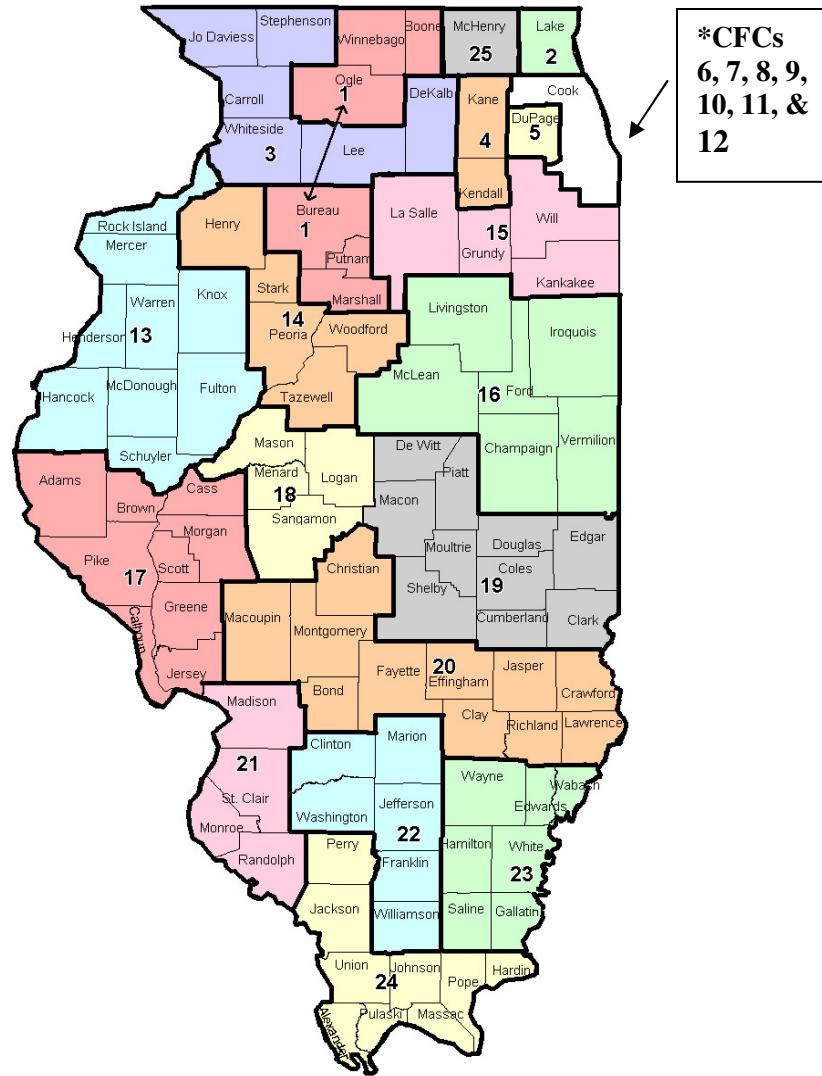
The **Illinois Early Childhood Intervention Clearinghouse** is a lending library. It is open to all Illinois residents. It has a vast array of books, periodicals, videos, and pamphlets related to vision loss and other topics. The

Clearinghouse also has an informative newsletter that is mailed to families each month. Contact the clearinghouse for a free copy of their bibliography on blindness and visual impairment. They will also help families find information on particular topics. Contact the clearinghouse at 800/852-4302. Visit them on the web at [www.eiclearinghouse.org](http://www.eiclearinghouse.org).

The **Service Guidelines: Blind and Visually Impaired** is a document available on the Hearing and Vision Connections website. Go to [www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc](http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc) and click on "Resources." This document will help you understand the process as your child enters Early Intervention in Illinois.

## Child and Family Connections (CFC) Offices

Please call the Health and Human Services Help line at 800/ 843-6154 for information regarding your local CFC.



**Division of Specialized Care for Children**

Central Administrative Office  
3135 Old Jacksonville Rd.  
Springfield IL 62704-6488  
Phone: 800-322-3722  
Fax: 217/558-0773  
[www.uic.edu/hsc/dscc](http://www.uic.edu/hsc/dscc)

**Hadley School for the Blind**

700 Elm Street  
Winnetka, IL 60093 - 2554  
Phone: 847/446 - 8111  
Fax: 847/446 - 9916  
800/323 - 4238  
[www.hadley-school.org](http://www.hadley-school.org)

**Hearing and Vision Connections**

125 Webster  
Jacksonville, IL 62650  
Phone: 217/479-4318  
Fax: 217/479-4328  
877/731-8184 V/TTY  
[www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc](http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc)

**Illinois Department of Human Services**

**Bureau of Early Intervention**

222 South College, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Springfield, IL 62704  
Phone: 217/782-1981  
Fax: 217/524-6248  
TDD/TTY: 217/558-6482  
Health and Human Services Helpline:  
800/843-6154  
[www.dhs.state.il.us/ei](http://www.dhs.state.il.us/ei)

**Illinois Parents of the Visually Impaired**

PO Box 7477  
Springfield, IL 62791  
Phone: 877/411-IPVI (4784)  
[ipvi@ipvi.org](mailto:ipvi@ipvi.org)  
[www.ipvi.org](http://www.ipvi.org)

**Illinois School for the Visually Impaired**

658 East State Street  
Jacksonville, IL 62650  
Phone: 217/479-4400  
Fax: 217/479-4412  
800/919-5617  
[www.isvi.net](http://www.isvi.net)

To order additional copies of this free booklet contact:

## **Hearing and Vision Connections**

125 Webster St.  
Jacksonville, IL 62650  
217/479-4318 (V/TTY)  
877/731-8184 (V/TTY)

Or download a copy from the web at:

[www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc](http://www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/hvc)

Special thanks to the many agencies and individuals that helped put this resource together.



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