

**Module: Assessment of Infants and Toddlers With
Visual Impairments**

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Module Overview

Appropriate and meaningful assessment of young children with visual impairments is a complex process that must be individualized for each child. The purpose of this module is to provide the basic knowledge and skills that are required to plan and conduct appropriate assessments for young children with visual impairments. The four sessions for this module are listed below.

1. Legal Basis and Overview of Recommended Practices
2. Multimethod Assessment: Process and Planning
3. Areas of Assessment
4. Writing Reports and Planning Interventions

Session 1: Legal Basis and Overview of Recommended Practices

Introduction

The assessment of young children is guided by both legal mandates and professional recommended practices. Part C of *The Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004* (IDEA, 2004) provides guidelines for determining eligibility for early intervention and for the individualized family service plan (IFSP). IFSP requirements for planning and implementing early intervention, and for monitoring progress, help early interventionists comply with IDEA 2004. These provisions influence assessment of infants and toddlers with visual impairments and link assessment to intervention and progress monitoring through the IFSP.

In addition to legal mandates, the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has provided recommended practices for the provision of services for young children with disabilities (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005). Included in these recommended practices are strategies for providing authentic and appropriate assessments within the context of family-centered practices.

Established in 2003 through the Office of Special Education Projects, United States Department of Education, the Early Childhood Outcomes Center (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/index.cfm>) identified outcomes for children with disabilities and their families that should also be considered during assessment and intervention planning. Finally, because of the unique needs of infants and toddlers with visual impairments, professionals must be knowledgeable about recommended practices for assessment from the field of visual impairment/blindness. Therefore, professionals must be knowledgeable about the legal mandates that influence the assessment of young children with visual impairments and recommended practices in order to provide appropriate services to young children with visual impairments and their families.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. describe provisions for the IFSP process from IDEA 2004 that guide assessment and intervention planning, implementation, and progress monitoring for young children with visual impairments.
2. identify and describe the functions of assessment, including identification of disabilities, eligibility determination, intervention planning, and progress monitoring and their relevance for young children with visual impairments.
3. describe the three child outcomes and five family outcomes for intervention and education for young children with disabilities identified by the Early Childhood Outcomes Center and describe their relevance to young children with visual impairments.
4. identify and describe recommended practices for assessment of young children as outlined by the Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children, and describe their relevance for young children with visual impairments. Discuss issues associated with recommended practices in assessment, such as validity, reliability, standardization, and norm- and criterion referenced measures.
5. describe the importance of collaborating with families to assure acceptability of assessment and of using converging information from multiple disciplines, measures, and informants in the assessment of young children with visual impairments.
6. describe the importance of equity and authenticity in assessment of young children with visual impairments.
7. describe the importance of congruence, sensitivity, and utility in the assessment of young children with visual impairments.

Session 2: Multimethod Assessment: Process and Planning

Introduction

In this module, we conceptualize assessment in four steps: 1) planning and preparation for assessment, 2) conducting assessments, 3) using assessment results to plan intervention, and 4) using assessment to monitor progress. In Session 2, we focus on the first of these steps, planning and preparation. To adequately plan and prepare for assessment, professionals should a) review records; b) complete interviews with families, caregivers, and other service providers; c) observe children informally; d) select assessment tools and procedures; e) adapt tools and procedures to meet the individual needs of children, and f) determine the logistics of the assessment.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. describe an assessment process for young children with visual impairments that includes initial planning (reviewing records; interviewing families, caregivers, and other service providers; observing children; selecting assessment tools and procedures; adapting tools and procedures; and determining logistics); conducting assessments (completing family and child measures); using results to plan intervention; and monitoring progress.
2. discuss the rationale for reviewing records from physicians and other agencies as an initial step in planning assessments for young children with visual impairments.
3. describe the importance of, and strategies for, interviewing families and professionals and observing children to plan efficient and effective assessments.
4. discuss strategies for selecting appropriate assessment tools based on recommended practices for assessment of young children with visual impairments.
5. describe potential assessment adaptations for infants and toddlers with visual impairments.
6. discuss considerations related to the logistics (location, time, schedule) of assessment for young children with visual impairments.

Session 3: Areas of Assessment

Introduction

Assessments of infants and toddlers with disabilities are typically used to identify, plan, implement, and monitor interventions. Because early intervention is individualized to meet the unique needs of infants and toddlers and their families, a wide range of assessment tools, strategies and resources may be used. Although TVIs are often

asked to recommend the best assessment tool for infants and toddlers with visual impairments, there is no single “best” assessment tool. Rather, professionals and families should carefully and thoughtfully choose from a variety of assessment tools and resources that are most appropriate for the purpose of the assessment. Potential areas of assessment, assessment tools, and strategies are described in this session.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. describe assessment of families’ concerns, resources, and priorities and its importance for facilitating optimal development of young children with visual impairments.
2. describe strategies for observational assessments.
3. discuss the rationale, strategies, and resources for completing sensory assessments of young children with visual impairments.
4. define learning style and describe components of learning style that should be assessed in young children with visual impairments.
5. identify and describe developmental assessments that may be useful for young children with visual impairments.
6. describe functional behavior assessments and other assessments of behavior for young children with visual impairments.
7. identify and describe specialized assessments for young children with visual impairments, including emergent literacy, compensatory skills, biobehavioral states, and developmentally appropriate orientation and mobility.

Session 4: Writing Reports and Planning Interventions

Introduction

Assessment provides the basis for intervention planning, implementation, and monitoring. Therefore, assessment results should be synthesized and presented to family members and caregivers in easily understandable, usable written assessment reports. Assessment reports should summarize background information, the purpose of the assessment, the results of the assessment, and any recommendations from the team based on the results. Reports should be written following all assessments, as well as when children are transitioning out of early intervention services. The intervention team, including family members and caregivers, should be able to use information in assessment reports to identify priorities and functional outcomes and develop strategies for implementing interventions that build on child and family strengths.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. identify critical components of assessment reports for intervention planning and describe special considerations for describing assessments in written form.
2. describe guidelines for collaborating with families and other team members to prepare intervention plans.
3. describe the process of using assessment results to develop goals and outcomes that address family priorities and concerns and that promote optimal child development.
4. describe guidelines for selecting and implementing interventions.
5. describe the purposes of, guidelines for, and approaches to progress monitoring.