

A JOURNEY ON A BUSY HIGHWAY

This packet will provide you with resources and information for moving ahead along the road to your child's future. The professionals and parents writing this packet will help you to know you are not alone. Knowledge is power. **You are the most important person in your child's life.** This is a resource for possibilities and the result of many caring people wanting to share their journey on this path.

*"When I gave birth to my first child and was told he could not see and had many other health issues, I felt shock, disbelief and a sensation of being completely overwhelmed. I had at least a thousand questions that I couldn't put into words and I did not know how I could possibly live up to my child's needs. How could I be not only a good parent but a knowledgeable one? Who could I turn to for help? Where do I start? I learned there are others who have walked this path and that there are resources for support. **You will too.**"*
From Judith, parent of Edward.

This packet is designed to help you on your journey with your child. The road signs will help guide you through the fact sheets.



Early Development



Roles and Responsibilities



Importance of Early Intervention/IFSP/Parent Perspectives



Navigating the Special Education System



Definitions of Blindness



Reaching Out Raising a Child with a Visual Impairment: "Myths and Realities"



Gathering Medical History/Medical and Clinical Perspectives



Resources:

- Milestones for Blind or Visually Impaired
- SSI for Children



Early Development

Early development and learning rely on the visual system for input. As babies begin to interact with people and objects around them, the visual information they gather takes on meaning. Children with visual impairment do not have this complete and continuous source of information and knowledge because what they learn by looking is limited by how much they can see. Supplemental learning for children with vision loss is necessary to help fill the gap between what a child is learning through limited vision and what they need to learn from additional sensory experiences.

Purposeful, hands-on experiences which incorporate tactile information and sensory input form the basis of learning for children who do not have functional vision and are important for all children regardless of their level of vision loss.

For children with impaired but functional vision, it is important to help them learn to use their remaining vision in support of concept and overall development.

As a parent, this means your child who is visually impaired will learn about the world in different and unique ways in order to meet his/her needs. Getting connected to a professional who understands how vision affects development is a critical first step toward assessment of his

developmental needs. Designing individualized intervention strategies will be the next step. Your instinctive parenting skills and the intimate knowledge you have of your child will help you to recognize learning opportunities in everyday activities. Encouraging your child to take an active part in daily experiences will reinforce the most meaningful learning in the most natural environment.

"What really counts in life is the quiet meeting of every difficulty with the determination to get out of it all the good there is" Helen Keller

RESOURCES

Everyday Activities to Promote Visual Efficiency A Handbook for Working with Young Children With Visual Impairments.
Rona Shaw, Ellen Thef, AFB Press

Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, *Basic Assumptions*, 2007

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BIRTH TO FIVE VISION NETWORK
birthtofivevision.org