



Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Early Intervention Program

Serving York, Durham,
Haliburton, Kawartha &
Pine Ridge (HKPR) Regions

FACT SHEET



Nearly 85% of a child's early learning occurs through vision. Children who are born with (or acquire in early childhood) blindness or low vision are at greater risk for developmental delays and communicative disorders. With access to the **Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Early Intervention Program**, families with children who are blind or have low vision are given the resources they need to support the healthy development of their child in the first years of life from birth until they enter Grade 1.



Markham Stouffville Hospital has received funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services under the Best Start Strategy to offer these services across York, Durham, Haliburton, Kawartha and Pine Ridge regions. The Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Early Intervention Program builds on the existing resources in our community. Partnerships have been developed with CNIB, the Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children, infant development and early intervention services as well as the network of paediatric ophthalmologists, optometrists, and physicians across the Region.



How to Refer

If you live in the region and have concerns about your child's vision, please contact us.

- Parents, guardians, family physicians, optometrists or ophthalmologists and other professionals can refer to the Program by calling the Central Intake Line at **1-888-703-KIDS(5437)** (and selecting #2 from the menu options).
- A referral form can be downloaded from our website: **www.beyond-words.org** and can be faxed to **905-762-2099**.
- Children need an ophthalmologist's referral prior to admission to services; however, we can assist in obtaining a referral if you do not already have one and can provide supports in the interim.



Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Early Intervention Program

Intake: 1-888-703-KIDS(5437)

www.beyond-words.org

Fax: 905.762.2099



Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Early Intervention Program

What does the Program offer?

We are committed to making sure that your child is receiving the best services possible and have designed a program to do exactly that. The Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Early Intervention Program is based on four activities critical to the healthy development of children with blindness or low vision, including:

Family Support Services: Family Support Workers trained in understanding visual impairment support families through the diagnostic process, and prepare them for decision-making and support for their infants and children. Services include grief counselling, assisting with coping and family adjustment, service coordination and access to resources in order to be better able to meet the needs of their child. Services are provided by Markham Stouffville Hospital (York Region), Grandview Children's Centre (Durham Region), and Five Counties Children's Centre (Haliburton, Kawartha, and Pine Ridge Regions).

Early Intervention Services: Early Childhood Vision Consultants from CNIB or the Ontario Foundation for Visually Impaired Children provide in-home service delivery focusing on helping parents support the development of their child. Based on on-going functional sensory assessments of the child, families will be given instruction and experience in daily living activities that will enhance cognitive, communicative, social, emotional and physical development of the child. The Early Childhood Vision Consultant will arrange for a consultation from an Orientation and Mobility Specialist and other professionals as appropriate.

Child Care Consultation: Early Childhood Vision Consultants consult to child care providers to help them understand and respond to the needs of children living with visually impairment who are integrating into early learning and child care settings.

Public Awareness and Professional/ Parent Education Strategy: The Tri-Regional Blind – Low Vision Program is working closely with the Ministry to develop a strategy to inform parents and the local community about visual disorders, understanding their child's diagnosis, the signs and symptoms to watch for, and the services available to support them. The Program provides the opportunity for families to meet other families to share experiences as well as personal resources.

You should continue to monitor your child's development

It is important to monitor your child's visual development, since early identification of a problem can sometimes eliminate or decrease the risk of long-term complications. If you notice that your child has any of the following symptoms, talk to you doctor immediately:

- ▮ swollen or encrusted eyelids
- ▮ bumps, sores or styes on or around the eyelids
- ▮ drooping eyelids
- ▮ does not make eye contact with you by three months of age
- ▮ does not watch or follow an object with the eyes by three months
- ▮ haziness or whitish appearance inside the pupil
- ▮ frequent "wiggling," "drifting," or "jerky" eye movements
- ▮ misalignment between the eyes (eye turns or crossing of eyes)
- ▮ lack of coordinated eye movements
- ▮ drifting of one eye when looking at objects
- ▮ turning or tilting of the head when looking at objects
- ▮ squinting, closing or covering of one eye when looking at objects
- ▮ excessive tearing when not crying
- ▮ excessive blinking or squinting
- ▮ excessive rubbing or touching of the eyes
- ▮ avoidance of or sensitivity to bright lights

From the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services' brochure: "Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention Program." Published in July 2007.

Offering services in partnership with

