

IPVI INSIGHTS

Connecting & Supporting Families Whose Children are Visually Impaired, Including Those with Additional Disabilities

**November
2014**



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Lyle Stauder, President

This month we have a great activity planned. It is the **PLAY FOR ALL** and it's for IPVI and Lighthouse families on Saturday, November 8, 2014 at the Chicago Children's Museum at Navy Pier, 700 E. Grand Ave., Suite 127, Chicago, IL 60611. It runs at 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for pre-registered families so call Mary Zabelski at the Lighthouse at 312-997-3675. There's free admission for Chicago Lighthouse & IPVI Families and a free shuttle from the Lighthouse to the Pier for the first 50 people only. Otherwise you'll have to find parking downtown and that costs approximately \$28.

So call in and register as soon as possible. We hope your family has a wonderful time.

Have a great month and enjoy this month's *Insights*.



FROM FAMILYCONNECT

Paving the Way to Independence for Grade Schoolers

As we continue down our path to independence it is time to explore activities for families with children who are in the Grade School (<http://www.familyconnect.org/info/browse-by-age/grade-schoolers/12>) age group. In the Transition to Independence

(<http://www.familyconnect.org/info/browse-by-age/grade-schoolers/transition-to-independence-grade-schoolers/123>)

section, we have 10 new articles that are listed below. This is important information that will assist families in understanding what they can do to increase their child's independence skills and career awareness. We are focusing on employment to celebrate National Disability Employment Awareness month. We are receiving comments that these articles are both informative and helpful, so please follow the links and let us know if you like the information.

- [Your Visually Impaired Child Can Advocate for Her Own Needs](#)
- [Clothing Choices and Care for Visually Impaired Grade School Children](#)
- [Helping Your Blind Child Learn in the Community](#)
- [Exposing Visually Impaired Children to Group Work](#)
- [Nonverbal Communication Skills for Children Who are Blind](#)
- [Helping Your Visually Impaired Child Craft a Functional Disability Statement](#)
- [Problem Solving Skills for Grade Schoolers with Visual Impairments](#)
- [Self-Care Skill for Children Who are Blind](#)
- [Team Sports as a Tool for Building Job Awareness in Children Who are Blind](#)
- [Volunteer Work as a Child's Preparation for Employment](#)

We would like to thank the May and Stanley Smith charitable trust for providing the funding for this project. Watch for announcements through October for the entire series. Not signed up yet? We welcome everyone to enroll in FamilyConnect so you can then receive important announcements by e-mail, track your favorite blog and keep up with conversations on the message boards.

Continued on Page 23

Inside This Issue:

IPVI President Announcement/Bowling	1
From Family Connect	2
Paving the Way to Independence...	2
Ms. Vic's Volleys	3
Making Sense	5
Play for All - Lighthouse/IPVI Families	6
IPVI's MBJ Scholarship Fund	7
USCCF Grant Brochure	8
TCL "Clean Out Your Closet!"	10
FFB Presents: Talk to the Expert	11
Help for Santa's Helpers: Toy Suggestions	12
Family Connect Website (Continued)	19
IEP and Plan 504: What's the Difference...	19
Advocating for My Child Who is Blind	23
Laundry Lesson Learned	24
How is Eddie Connected to the Rest of His Family	25
IEP Preppers	26
FRCD Workshops	27
The 12th Annual Summit for Youth with Disabilities	27
UNDERSTOOD: NCLD	28
APH News	28
Helpful Hashtags	28
Parenting With a Visual Impairment:...	29
APH Fall Harvest Sale	30
Johansen Farms and Children's Zoo	30
AER Education Brief	31
The Eye Specialists Center	32
IPVI Board of Directors	33
IPVI Membership Dues	34
IPVI Calendar of Events	35



MS. VIC'S VOLLEYS

Victoria Juskie, IPVI Treasurer

VOLLEY I

No new members have joined our organization this month.

VOLLEY II

Each month I write to you and try to remember to mix it up. So this month instead of talking "ad nauseam" about my growing children, I want to talk to the new parents out there who have just been told their child is visually impaired or blind. This information can be molded to fit any medical condition your family is faced with as well, but we are going to start at this position. News like this creates cold and shocking times that hit you so hard they are like uppercuts to the solar plexus.

My best advice here is first to take a deep breath or two. Because you're reading this, you know that you've connected to a group of parents whose sole reason for being here is to help others. Each of us gives our time and effort to let you know you're not alone. Not being alone is one of the first ways to start the healing process for the emotional upheaval you've just experienced. You have to talk to someone besides the doctors and therapists. Hopefully, you've got family and friends to emotionally support you. If not, there are experienced people with whom IPVI can help you get connected.

Asking questions of a seasoned parent whose child who is blind or has low vision might result in answers that must be shared. So I am going to start off with this one that I received:

Question: I just got the news, so what do I do first after I've caught my breath?

Answer: I would say that you're off to a good start. You're thinking now and not just reacting. Part of getting your head around this situation is to understand what you're up against. So get some answers. By the time your child gets to school, you'll be an expert on his/her condition. You'll become an educator to the teachers and outsiders. Note also that this answer will refer only to one strategy of becoming organized and educated on your child's condition(s). It is not an end-all answer since each child and family are different.

So after it's determined what your child has, ask your doctor for a written document stating your child's diagnosis explicitly. It will have a great deal of medical terms. Then ask the doctor to tell it to you in terms you can understand and write that down as well. Then you can give this shortened version to the family members, friends, therapists, and teachers who are going to become members of your child's success team.

Also ask questions about the prognosis of your child's condition and what to expect when typical scenarios like this occur with this type of condition. This part is difficult because they usually give you worse case scenarios and those can be very hard to swallow. However, what it also does is provide you insight into what you can work on to counter-act the low/no vision issues. Knowledge is power at this point of the process so gather all you can. What the doctors tell you are usually benchmarks that your child may exceed if this early intervention approach is taken.

Also, since we live in a time where the Internet helps fuel our knowledge base quickly, you can also research and obtain definitions of the condition your child has as well and attach it to the medical diagnosis. This helped us a great deal when school started because we had to break the ice with a lot of teachers who had never taught a class with a low vision student.

We provided this sheet that let them know what we knew in a simplified manner together with tips on how best to work with our son.

Then, keep your information in a format that is accessible. I am going old school on this for purposes of retaining documents in an orderly fashion. After you have the original made, feel free to computer scan the contents but it's important to retain the originals.

Begin with a 2 to 3-inch three-ring binder using dividers.

Tab 1. Chronological journal

This document establishes a time line and includes a journal of dates, times, names, titles, offices, hospitals, street addresses, phone and fax numbers, email addresses, and a Comments section etc. of people you've met along this journey. If you're computer savvy, type it. If not, just use a spiral bound notebook and write a note for each visit or contact. Staple or tape in business cards to help you stay organized in this binder. If the power goes out, you can still refer to it. If English is not your first language, this can help you identify all the various people helping you more readily as well as help your translator.

Tab 2. Medical

Keep a copy of your baby's birth certificate and social security number here as well as copies of the diagnosis and any other medical reports and prognosis.

Tab 3. Therapies

This tab collects the information about who is going to work with your child. It may include sub tabs of:

- Vision
- Speech
- Fine Motor
- Gross Motor
- Other Medical therapies (dependent upon the

child's possible other conditions)
Cane Mobility

Keep a separate tab for each and include the time of expected therapy duration and what types occurred by whom.

This avoids re-doing additional reviews of the child in the future once you document that certain tasks have been mastered and accomplished by your child. Log in those dates in these areas. When your baby is very young, these therapy sessions teach the parents how to work with the child during the week and then you return to the therapist to see how the child progressed now that you've been working with him or her. You can write your notes from the instructions you're given here also as well as keep notations about how your child is responding to different stimuli. I also videotaped some of the parental teaching sessions with the therapists so that we could refer to them to ensure we doing the exercises as instructed. This allowed us to listen during the training and not have to take as many notes. We could review the tape later and then make additional notations.

Tab 4. Vision

This tab organizes the different types of eye specialists you may be seeing, i.e. an ophthalmologist or cornea, glaucoma, surgical, cancer or other specialists.

Tab 5. Early Intervention

If you receive services from places like the Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind, FRCD, Easter Seals, your county's special needs bureau, etc. keep these documents under separate tabs as well. There are different levels of service you may be receiving and this helps keep them orderly.

Tab 6. School

The State of Illinois steps in at 36 months to

help children with issues like these. Having your book kept up to date will provide them with valuable insight as to what next is needed to assist your child. It may be here that Braille training is begun. Braille is important so your child becomes literate. If one can read, one can learn. If one learns, one can become a successful, independent adult. I recommend you as a parent learn enough Braille so you can proof your child's homework just as you would proof any other child's.

Tab 7. **Social Accomplishments**

Log into your binder activities you had your child attend because these show how you've introduced different types of stimulus to your child's environment and gives you a place to note what works and what doesn't from a day-to-day format. For example, remind your child not to eye poke or rock as these are symptoms of boredom. If you give your child different toys and patterns to look at or touch, these help expand the brain's processing of various items. It lets him/her know they are lots of things in the world to learn about. We just have to provide your child that knowledge in a different format.

So my tip of the day is to create a binder like this to help you along the way. You can print out whatever you need from the computer as well to place into these tabs so as to fill in the particulars of your child based on his/her needs. It's a customized package that will greatly help when your child is reaching each of the next milestones required to be successful. Remember, you're their first and life-long teacher, so give your children the best chance to succeed by pro-acting and not re-acting to what's occurring. Remember also that you should treat your child as you would any other.

Then with the Grace of the Lord, you can help your child achieve all the same things for which others strive. Then maybe you can be

taking a few more breaths along the way in order to keep up with your growing, wonderful bundle of joy. Good luck.



MAKING SENSE

Christian Record Services for the Blind: Christian Record Services for the Blind offers free services to those who are legally blind including braille, large print, and audio versions of subscription magazines and bibles. Full-Vision books that combine braille and print enable parents with vision loss to help their children learn to read, and children with vision loss to read to their parents. The organization also offers camps for children and adults with vision loss, offers college scholarship assistance and provides materials for veterans. To learn more call 402-488-0981 or visit www.christianrecord.org.

Learn to Use a Mac with Voiceover: This new book by Janet Ingber is available through National Braille Press for \$20. The book is a step-by-step guide explaining how to use Voiceover, describing the keyboard layout, covering surfing the web and much more. The book is designed for anyone who is considering purchasing a Mac or is making the switch from Windows. To purchase, visit www.nbp.org or call 800-548-7323.

Reprinted from MAKING SENSE, November 2014, Second Sense, Beyond vision loss, 65 East Wacker Place, Suite 1010, Chicago, IL 60601, 312-236-8569, www.second-sense.org.



PLAY FOR ALL

LIGHTHOUSE/IPVI FAMILIES

What: A morning of fun for everyone

Where: Chicago Children's Museum at Navy Pier
700 E. Grand Ave., Suite 127
Chicago, IL 60611

When: Saturday, November 8, 2014

Time: Pre-registered families 9:00am - 1:00pm
General public 10:00am - 1:00pm

To register or for more information contact:

Mary Zabelski at the Lighthouse 312-997-3675

Pre-registration includes:

Free admission for Chicago Lighthouse & IPVI Families

Free shuttle from the Chicago Lighthouse to Navy Pier

(first 50 people only!!!)



IPVI's Matthew Benedict Juskie Scholarship Fund

For students who are blind or visually impaired

Any individual intending to continue his/her education at a college, university or trade school and is interested in being considered for the MBSJF, must meet the following criteria: Illinois resident, blind or visually impaired, undergraduate or graduate student, and an IPVI member.

The candidate's application is processed free of charge. The student must mail or fax a written request to receive a copy of the application from IPVI. Then the student must complete the MBSJF Application Form, provide 3 completed Reference Forms, submit medical records or a letter from the vision specialist confirming the condition, and mail them to IPVI. The applicant may attach a 1-page resume of clubs, offices held, or any other pertinent information concerning his/her activity record.

The IPVI Board of Directors will review all scholarship applications and select the winners. IPVI reserves the right to announce such awards in its newsletters and marketing materials.

The MBSJF is funded completely from tax-deductible donations from individuals, companies and corporations who support IPVI's goals. Any individuals or groups wishing to donate to this fund, please forward your tax-deductible donations to IPVI. Thank you for your continued support of IPVI.



To request a scholarship application, please contact the Scholarship Program Coordinator, Vicki Juskie at: 815-464-6162 or vajuskie@aol.com

The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation – enhancing the lives of families in need, one child at a time...



The UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation (UHCCF) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides medical grants to help children gain access to health-related services not covered, or not fully covered, by their parents' commercial health insurance plan. Families can receive up to \$5,000 annually per child (\$10,000 lifetime maximum per child), and do not need to have insurance through UnitedHealthcare to be eligible.

UHCCF was founded in 1999. Since 2007, UHCCF has awarded more than 6,500 grants valued at over \$20M to children and their families across the United States. UHCCF's funding is provided by contributions from individuals, corporations and UnitedHealth Group employees.

To apply, donate or learn more, please visit www.UHCCF.org.



MN017-W400

P.O. Box 41

Minneapolis, MN 55440-0041

1-855-MY-UHCCF (1-855-698-4223)



<http://www.uhccf.org>



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facebook.com/uhccf



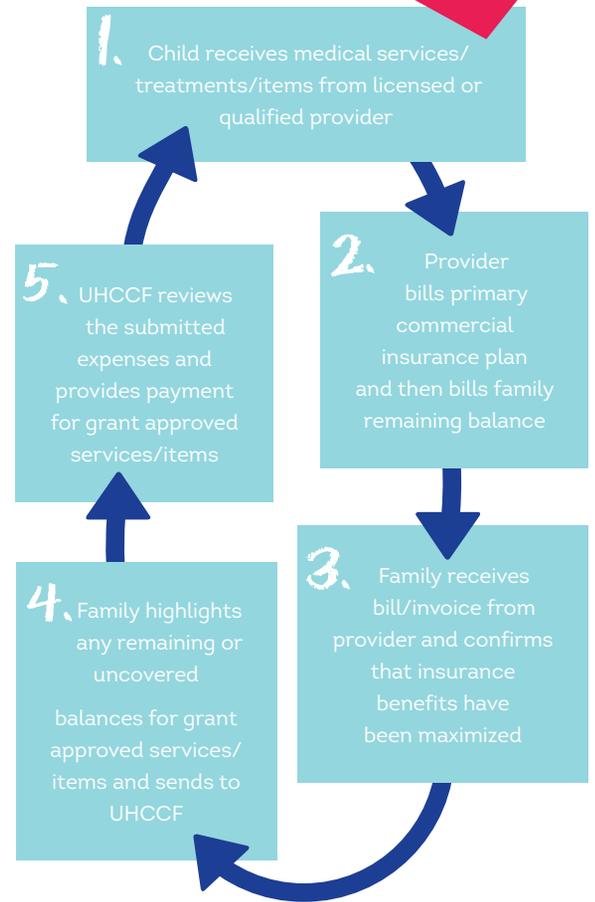
Isaac
Maumee, OH

DO YOU KNOW A CHILD WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM A MEDICAL GRANT?

Answer "YES" to all four questions listed inside and the child may be eligible to receive up to \$10,000* in medical grants from the UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation!

DO YOU HAVE OR KNOW OF A CHILD WHO COULD BENEFIT FROM A MEDICAL GRANT?

How the grant reimbursement process works, once approved.



If you can answer "YES" to all four questions below, the child may be eligible to receive up to \$10,000* in medical grants from the UnitedHealthcare Children's Foundation!

- Is the child sixteen or younger, living in the United States, and facing a health-related challenge?
- Is the child currently covered by a commercial health insurance plan?
- Does the commercial health insurance plan cover only a portion or none of their necessary treatment, services or equipment?
- Does the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) currently meet the following Adjusted Gross Income levels (as reported on last year's IRS 1040)?

* \$10,000 maximum lifetime grant allowance per child.

Family Size	Adjusted Gross Income
2	\$50,000 or less
3	\$75,000 or less
4	\$100,000 or less
5 or more	\$125,000 or less

Note: Eligibility and coverage criteria is subject to change. For a full listing of current eligibility requirements and coverage exclusions, please visit www.uhccf.org.

What can the medical grant cover?

Qualifying families can receive up to \$5,000 annually, per child (\$10,000* lifetime max) to help pay for medical services and equipment such as physical, occupational and speech therapies, counseling services, surgeries, prescription medications, wheelchairs, orthotics, eyeglasses and hearing aids.



for People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT



There is no better time to clean out your closet!

The
RealReal



Thank
you
for
your
support!

We are thrilled to announce our partnership with The RealReal, an online luxury consignment store, for our Flair fundraiser!

The Chicago Lighthouse will receive 70% profit of all items we sell on TheRealReal.com

[Women's Luxury Designer List](#)

[Men's Luxury Designer List](#)

[Jewelry Luxury Designer List](#)

For more information or to arrange to have your items be picked up, please call:

Sammi Grant

Sammi.Grant@chicagolighthouse.org

312-666-1331 x 3136

**We request that all items either be dropped off, or have a scheduled pickup by
October 15th.*



AMD and Other Retinal Diseases

Talk to the Expert!

Timothy J. Schoen, B.S., M.S., Ph.D.

Director, Constituent Communications
Foundation Fighting Blindness

Join us for this FREE meeting!

November 2, 2014

2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

Alexian Brothers Medical Ctr.

Kennedy Conference Ctr. - 800 Biesterfield Road - Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

The Chicago Chapter is proud to present an exceptional program you won't want to miss. Speaker Dr. Timothy Schoen has a wealth of scientific knowledge and expertise in retinal degenerative disease. Dr. Schoen joined The Foundation Fighting Blindness as Director of Grants and Awards in February, 1997 and was responsible for managing a \$10 million research program that provided funding for more than 150 individual grants at 55 prominent institutions. He has been involved with encouraging biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to enter into partnerships with the newly formed FFB Clinical Research Institute (CRI), a support organization of The Foundation Fighting Blindness.

Prior to joining FFB, he was employed by the National Eye Institute as a research biologist in the Laboratory of Retinal Cell and Molecular Biology where his major area of interest involved the identification and cloning of candidate genes for degenerative retinal disease. He is the co-author of more than 20 scientific publications and has been an invited speaker at numerous scientific and public health education-related meetings. He has received multiple awards throughout his career, including the Love of Sight Humanity Award (2005), FFB Achievement Award (2004), and the NIH Merit Award (1995).

Dr. Schoen's discussion on AMD will be enhanced by a very special guest, an AMD Patient Ambassador who will speak on their disease from a personal perspective discussing disease progression and maintaining eye health. You will have the unique opportunity to tap into Dr. Schoen's expertise on AMD and various retinal diseases including RP, Stargardt, Usher syndrome during the personal question and answer session. This is a great opportunity to ask questions, learn about retinal disease, and connect with others experiencing vision loss. Family and friends are welcome and encouraged to attend.

REGISTER TODAY!

Contact Mary Ann Subleski at (866) 762-7330
or MSubleski@FightBlindness.org





Alysia Rue, VIPS Louisville Developmental Interventionist

Toys to stimulate your child do not have to be bought at a store but can also be found around your home. For example, a cardboard box may seem like trash or something to recycle, but it has many uses to engage your child. A box with a lid makes a fun game of hide-and-seek with toys. Hide your child's favorite toy inside for her to uncover.

Boxes may also be used as blocks to stack, knock down, or as nesting toys. Several boxes might be tied together to create a long train for your child to pull around. You might also cut out pictures from magazines or newspapers and glue them on each side of the box; you can use them to point to as a way to facilitate communication between you and your child.



Small to medium size boxes might also be a great way to store other toys or place objects with different textures for your child to discover. A small narrow slot can be cut out for your child to place "mail" in the mailbox. A larger box might also be a great hiding spot or fort in which your child can feel comfortable and secure. Feel free to paint and decorate

the box with your child. These are just a few suggestions of the many possible ways a box can be used as a toy. So remember, save your boxes!

Paige Maynard, VIPS Louisville KidsTown Pre-school Teacher/Developmental Interventionist

If you're like me, you get just as much joy out of gift giving as you do gift getting! It makes me even happier when I give a handmade gift. I love transforming ordinary materials into unique and personalized presents for my pals. Unfortunately, sometimes holiday busyness keeps me from crafting.

Good news! I have some handmade gift ideas for your child that won't take you from now until Santa Claus comes to put together!

If your child is learning to use his hands to explore and isn't ready to reach outside his body yet, a texture bib may be a great choice. First, you'll need a large bib. If you can't find one large enough, you can convert a hand towel into a bib with some craft glue and ribbon. Just glue two strips of ribbon to two corners of the towel, and, "Voila!" instant bib! Once you have a bib, start looking for items with interesting textures and temperatures. Some examples are small blocks of wood (watch for splinters!), soft cotton, bubble wrap, Mylar, lace, sandpaper, corduroy, leather, part of a bath loofa, or anything else you think your child may find interesting. Both your home and the remnant section of the craft store are great places to look. Glue each texture in a different place on the bib. Let dry, and you're finished!

The texture bib helps your child develop tactile discrimination skills, understand language (when you talk about the textures and where they are found in your home), express language (what child won't coo with excitement when he finds his favorite texture on this toy?), and develop directionality (as he learns where each texture is located). I would estimate its cost at \$15 or less, and it takes less than one day to create. ***This bib should never be used without supervision. Items tied around your child's neck can cause suffocation***

If your child is learning to look at pictures, you can create your own visually appropriate board book online. Take pictures of your child's favorite objects, by placing them on solid contrasting backgrounds. You can also take pictures of members of your family standing in front of a solid and contrasting wall. You could even write your own story and take photos of your own visually appropriate artwork. Your DI/TVI would love to consult with you on what may be most appropriate for your child! Upload your pictures to <http://www.pintsizeproductions.com/boardbook-baby-html> or <https://pinholepress.com/products/mini-book-of-names-faces-85-1-0-01/> to create your child's one of a kind gift. This picture book can foster many skills, including developing visual memory and learning visual scanning. Coupled with low vision tools like a magnifier or closed circuit television (CCTV), your book can teach even more! Creating your own book costs between \$25 and \$30, and takes about three hours to finish.



If your child loves to be in the kitchen or you want to encourage more daily living skills, consider putting together a cooking set for him or her.

Purchase a cookie jar or other tall container from a department store. Fill it with real cooking utensils, such as a mixing spoon, whisk, measuring spoons, spatula, cookie cutter and an apron (be sure no items have points which may hurt your child). Real tools encourage independence and can make it logistically easier for you to allow her to help, since they will be kept in one place. When you cook, encourage your child to use her special utensils to help you. Encourage her to locate their container and to take them out to look for what she needs to use. Your child's cooking set helps her develop skills across all domains of development. For example, she will understand container play when she takes the tools out of the container and puts them back. She will develop receptive language skills as you describe what you are doing and what you want her to do while she is helping you. She will be developing motor skills as she walks to the kitchen to help you cook, engages her core when stirring a bowl, and learns to use her hands to grasp the tools. The

cost of this gift ranges from about \$5-25, and only takes about 20 minutes to put together.

**Annie Hughes, Teacher of the Visually Impaired/
Developmental Interventionist for VIPS
Bloomington**

For very little ones, I think that the Lamaze Soft Chime Garden™ is a wonderful choice. Each flower makes a soft chime sound, and it is easily activated and teaches cause and effect. Though it is harder to find in retail stores, it is easily found online at Amazon or Google for about \$25.

For older children, head to Target for a fun toy called the B. Woofer Hound Dog Guitar™. The settings are; "acoustic, electric, and howl," and there are strings to strum and buttons to push for music. It is shaped like a puppy dog (hence the howl setting), and can be yours for \$22.99.

Another toy for children who are around 2 years and older developmentally is the Battat Sound Puzzle Box™. I purchased mine online for under \$20, including shipping. It is a 3-shape sorter, and as each piece falls into its slot it makes a fun sound that reinforces getting the shapes into the slots and "letting go." They are available online from sources such as Google, Sears, Amazon, and Yoyo.com.



For a stocking stuffer from, I like the 3 little musical duos from B.™ Jamboree. One little set is the twister hand drum and the elephant ocarina, another is the set of "shaka-shaka" giraffe maracas, and the third set, for those who are ready for a whistle, is the antelope slide whistle and the warbly hornbill water whistle. (Earplugs are not included...HoHoHo!) These can be found at Target.

**Ashley Emmons, VIPS Louisville KidsTown
Preschool Teacher/O&M Specialist**

My toy recommendation this year is Just Kidz Electronic Music Mat™ (\$15 at Kmart) or Mickey's Music Mat™ (\$18.89-\$24.79 on Amazon.com). These

music mats are great tools to use with children to work on sound localization skills, as well as body and spatial awareness.

Mary Lesousky, VIPS Louisville Developmental Interventionist/TVI

One of my favorite toys is Playschool Busy Gear™. This toy is easily activated by pressing the red button at the bottom of the toy. When activated the colorful gears spin around with light and music. The lights and music of the toy encourage visual attention to the action of the toy. The gears can be removed and replaced on the lighted posts. On the newer version of the toy several of the gears have knobs on them that give little hands something to grasp to remove the gears. This toy can be found in most toy stores for about \$25.

Mitch Dahmke, Family Support Specialist, KY School for the Blind

WonderBaby.org, a project funded by the Perkins School for the Blind in Boston, MA, is a website devoted to resources for families with blind children. The section called Ivan's Favorite Toys is filled with wonderful gift ideas. The rest of this online resource is equally delightful and helpful!

Also, the following companies sell items useful for older children and adults who have visual challenges. Some send annual catalogs and offer online ordering while the first is an actual store. On-site "pick-up" can be arranged for items available at APH.

- See the World – A store located at 1832 Frankfort Ave., Louisville 40206, across the street from the American Printing House for the Blind and the KY School for the Blind, (502-447-2458
- American Printing House for the Blind (APH), 1805 Frankfort • Ave., Louisville, 40206, (800-223-1839), www.shopaph.org.

Angie Paisley, VIPS Louisville KidsTown Pre-school Teacher

Sensory Water Beads provide a tactile sensory experience that is out of the ordinary. Beads change water into colorful, shiny, gel-like balls. \$8.99 www.sensoryuniversity.com.

Digiflex Pediatric Hand Exercisor™ is a great tool for improving fine motor skills and hand strength. It also serves an excellent hand fidget. \$29.99 www.sensoryuniversity.com.

An oldie, but goodie, and a great stocking stuffer -- But Out Bob™! Squeezing Bob's eyes "out of his head" offers enough resistance to greatly improve grasp and fine motor skills. \$7.99 www.sensoryuniversity.com.

Matman™! This is from our Handwriting Without Tears Curriculum™ used in the classroom. This is a researched-based curriculum that is extremely effective in teaching readiness in writing, letter and number recognition, preschool math and literacy skills. All of the children love this, and would love to be able to use it at home. You will need "Wood Pieces Set for Capital Letters" (\$32.50), and the "Get Set for School Sing-a-Long" (\$13.75) CD. The Matman song is on this CD along with other songs we sing, or you could find the Matman song on youtube. Matman is put together using the song. Examples of other uses for the wooden pieces: creating and identifying shapes, letters, numbers, etc. There is also a HWT's app for \$5.00. <http://www.hwtears.com>.



Staci Maynard, VIPS Louisville PAL & Twos Teacher/Developmental Interventionist

I have been researching about e-readers. I have some thoughts, though not really any conclusions. Hopefully, gift-givers will be able to figure out which to purchase based on the following information combined with knowledge of your child.

- When talking to TVIs, they prefer the i-Pad because of its ability to enlarge print. However, it is one of the more expensive options and the most likely to be used for purposes contrary to the gift-givers desire.
- The LeapPad™ is an acceptable option, though still expensive. I could not find out if it has adjustable print size, but it should still be okay

since it is designed for small children and also has audio options.

- ▶ However, I have read that the apps are expensive. Thus, if the givers could add a few additional apps than what the reader comes with, it could be of more benefit to the child.
- ▶ If he/she wants to get a tablet, I would recommend that the purchaser buy the Leap-Pad 2 Power Learning Tablet™ which costs \$10-20 more than the next lower model but which has more apps and comes with a rechargeable battery.
- There are other options for pre-reading and writing skills that aren't tablets and aren't as fancy. However, they could be good choices depending on what exactly the buyer's objective is.
 - ▶ The LeapFrog Scribble and Write Tablet™ is around \$22. It allows the child to practice writing letters. The machine can judge the accuracy of the formation. However, it mainly focuses on letters and writing skills not words or reading.
 - ▶ The LeapFrog Leap Reader Reading and Writing System™ sells for around \$40-50 not including books. It is supposed to teach reading and writing together and has gotten good reviews.
 - ▶ The LeapFrog TAG Reading System™ costs around \$45 not including books. It focuses more on phonics, vocabulary, & reading comprehension.
 - ▶ For around \$15-20, you can purchase a set of 6 books that will work with the Reading and Writing System and with TAG. There are other books available from LeapFrog for these systems as well.

- Even age appropriate books with large print and bold pictures would be a great gift. There may be some possibilities on the Lakeshore or the Seedlings websites.



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Toys for Blind Children

Shared by Amber Bobnar

Kids like to play, no matter what their level of abilities.



If your child is blind or disabled it may seem a bit harder to choose the perfect toys, but really all you need to do is think about what your child enjoys and use a little common sense.

Below are some tips on how to pick out the best toys for your blind child. Once you know what you're looking for, you can check out some of our favorite toys for babies, toddlers, and some of our favorite Holiday gifts.

Tips to Help You Choose the Best Toys

1. **Safety First:** Blind babies tend to mouth their toys longer than sighted babies so take this into consideration when choosing toys for your child. Sometimes the age restrictions on a toy may not apply to your baby, so be careful.
2. **Simple is Best:** Sometimes the best toys are ones that are very simple. Ivan's favorite toys are his ring, his stacking cups, and his wooden pegs. These are easy for him to manipulate and they are great educational toys. Of course, the simple toys are also the hardest to find!
3. **Think Beyond the Visual:** Naturally you'll want to look for toys that make sound, offer interesting textures, or even produce soothing smells. Try to find toys that will entice your child's other senses. If your child does have limited vision, choose high-contrast toys or toys with lights. As far as sounds go, instruments are always a winner!
4. **Beware of Representations:** Dolls, stuffed ani-

mals, trucks, and other toys that represent other real-life objects can be confusing to a blind child. Be sure to explain that the toy is not a truck, but a toy truck. Don't expect your blind child to play with these toys right away. For example, a little blind girl may take awhile (if ever) to cuddle her plastic "baby" doll because she can't see that it's supposed to represent a baby.

5. **Is it Too Loud?** Maybe it's just me, but most toys are way too loud these days. It's as if toy manufacturers *want* our kids to grow up hearing impaired! Besides looking for quieter toys when shopping, you can also mute loud toys by placing scotch tape or even duct tape over the toy's speaker. If the tape mutes the toy too much, try poking a hole or two through the tape until you find the perfect volume.
6. **Enhance Motor Skills:** Many blind children are delayed in gross and fine motor skills. When choosing a toy for your child, try to find something that will encourage them to move in new ways. Do they have to twist or roll to get to the toy? Does it require fine motor hand manipulation? Find toys that can increase your child's skills but aren't too advanced. You don't want to frustrate your little one!
7. **Price:** Don't pay too much for a toy. For one thing, you never know how long your child is really going to be interested in it. Also, if the toy seems really beneficial (but really expensive) you may be able to get a charity, like your local Lion's Club, to cover part or all of the cost. Finally, ask your Early Intervention Program if they have the toy on hand. You may be able to borrow the same toy or something similar through their program.

The Best Christmas Toys for Blind Children

The Holiday Season is upon us again. You've started writing your Christmas list but this year you want to get something really nice for that special child on your list.

Maybe it's your son, your granddaughter, a niece, or a cousin. Either way, you know that their vision impairment makes choosing toys a bit more difficult (though certainly not impossible). You want to find a toy that will be both accessible and fun!



Well, we've got you covered!

We've collected *The Best Toys for Blind Kids* and list them by age group or type of toy. You're sure to find the perfect gift this year!

Toys for Babies

Chicco Musical Roller

Rollers are GREAT therapeutic toys! Have your child sit straddling the roller or lay over the roller while playing with a toy on the floor. Because it's inflatable, the roller allows you to continue your home therapy program while travelling. Plus the music is a nice bonus!

Playskool Listen-Up Rounds

These balls are a great way to introduce new textures and sounds to your baby. Plus they are easy to hold and fun to throw!

Hasbro Playskool Lullaby Gloworm

Our son loves this Gloworm. It has a soft body and plastic face (he likes the contrast in textures) and plays very nice and soothing songs. It's a great way to calm him down.

Vtech Move & Crawl Ball

This self-rolling ball encourages your child to move! The ball plays music, animal sounds, and teaches numbers and shapes. It also lights up nicely for children with light perception. Try playing with it in a dark room!

Lamaze Eddie the Elephant Tunes

Guess what? Eddie's trunk is really a musical instrument! Press buttons to play tunes or play with Eddie's crinkly hands and feet. This toy also offers a

variety of textures and patterns.

Toys for Toddlers & Younger Kids

Vtech Rhyme & Discover Book

Turn the page to hear a silly giggle and familiar nursery rhymes. This book laughs, sings, and lights up. Teach fine motor skills with page turning and other fun knobs and buttons. Add braille with a Braille Labeler for a complete early literacy experience!

Sesame Street & Arthur DVD's

Most Sesame Street and Arthur DVD's come enhanced with descriptive video, so even if your child can't see the screen, they can still hear Elmo's voice, sing along with the songs, and hear a man's voice describing important actions. We like the movie *Elmo Visits the Doctor* because our son needs to go the doctor so often. This video helps explain who doctors are and how they help you.

Prince Lionheart Wheely Bug

This is our big ticket item on our Christmas list this year!

This scooter is great for teaching balance and since there are no pedals, you can just focus on scooting around and moving, rather than the added coordination of getting your feet up on the pedals. Ivan also loves that the body of this scooter is soft and there are "antennas" to play with, too!

Leapfrog Learn & Groove Radio

Our son loves his Learn & Groove Radio. The buttons are easy to push and the pages easy to turn. The radio plays thirty songs introducing new vocabulary. It's small and compact: like a beginning MP3 player for little ones!

Sing-Along CD Player

Ivan loves music so getting him his own CD player seemed like a no-brainer, but we were surprised to see how much he really enjoyed holding and control-

ling his own music. The buttons on this CD player are easy to push and each is differentiated by a raised symbol so they're a snap to find. I also really like that you can lock the volume so that the music doesn't get too loud.

Sensory Toys

Touch, Feel, & Match Tactile Board

This is a great game for all kids. Each peg has a unique texture and is matched with a hole with the same texture. Great matching game but also a good way to explore textures. Ask your child to "find the scratchy peg" or "find the soft peg." Our son loves his tactile board.

Little Tikes Discover Sounds Hammer

This hammer makes all sorts of silly sounds each time you bang it. It's a great sound toy and also a great way to teach your child about cause and effect.

Wikki Stix

More sticky fun to help your child with sensitivity issues! Plus Wikki Stix are a great way to create raised-line tactile art.

You can also use Wikki Stix to "underline" sentences in your child's braille books.

Moon Sand

Another neat tactile sensation, but not quite as sticky as play-doh. Moon Sand is almost grainy but keeps its shape very nicely. The best part about Moon Sand is that it doesn't dry out!

Crayola Beginnings Color Me a Song

This is a really neat scribble toy that plays music as your child draws. If your child has low vision, the music can be extra incentive and if your child has no vision, the music can be the primary feedback. Either way, this toy encourages kids to scribble whether they can see their drawing or not, and scribbling is both fun and a great fine motor activity.

Toys for Older Kids



SweetPea3 MP3 Player

This MP3 player is designed for young children, which means that it has a very simple interface and is very easy to use. This also means that it is entirely accessible for blind kids. With just three buttons to learn, your child will have no trouble playing music with the SweetPea3. The casing is durable and can handle being roughed up, the sound has a hidden parent control if you want to make sure your child doesn't play the music too loud, and it can be used with or without head phones. The SweetPea3 can carry up to 1GB of music (about 16 hours of play).

Pioneer Ex Metal Detector

A fun game for the beach or just out in the backyard, this metal detector will turn your child into a treasure hunter (as long as they think bottle caps, coins, and old screws are treasure). The detector is easy to use and features a "three-tone audio target identification" so you can hear if you're getting close to an object.

Talking Solar System

This is a nice tactile educational toy. The planets revolve around the sun and the unit talks to you, naming each of the planets. Requires 4 AA batteries.

Leap Frog Turbo Twist Math

For grades 1-6, the Turbo Twist Math is fun, fast-paced, educational... and totally accessible! The game talks to you and asks you to answer math questions. As you answer correctly, the questions get harder. The numbers are raised and easy to feel and the games easy to learn.

Birdsong Identifier

This is actually a great toy for kids of all ages. Just pop the sound card into the small and compact Identifier then press the buttons. You'll hear real recordings of birds from all over the country. You can purchase extra cards with birds in your region and learn to identify the bird songs you hear in your yard all year round. Have you ever heard of birding by ear? You don't need to see birds to know they're around and identifying a bird by it's song is both fun and educational!

Video Games

Nintendo Wii Console

You may be surprised to find out that the Nintendo Wii actually does have quite a few games that are accessible for blind and visually impaired kids. The ground breaking idea behind the Wii is that it encourages you to get up and move, making your body and movements a key component to the game. Games like Wii Sports (which comes packaged with the console) and Wii Fit are easy to play with no vision. Wii Music is also a good choice as it allows you to choose your instruments and compose your own music.

7-128 Software

This company specializes in educational video games for blind and visually impaired children. Their software works with both Windows and Macs. Check out their PizzaGames for blind toddlers!

Reprinted from the website of



Please look up Toys for Blind Children in your search box on your computer and it will take you to many sites with more information for gifts.



Continued from Page 2 - Family Connect Website

IEP and 504 Plan: What's the Difference, and Which Is Most Appropriate for my Child?



As children with visual impairments progress through school, parents and administrators meet regularly to review the child's progress and set new goals. Sometimes, especially for older students, questions arise as to whether special education services are still necessary—especially if the student is doing well as long as basic accommodations like braille, large print, and/or assistive technology are in place. In some cases, a Section 504 plan is discussed as an alternative to special education.

The following sections help to compare/contrast special education services and the **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)** with the protections provided under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Note that individual states and school districts may have additional policies or guidance in place with respect to how they administer IEPs and 504 plans; the following information is based upon federal law.

What Laws Provide for IEPs and 504 Plans and Who Oversees the Laws?

IEP

The **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** amended 2004, overseen by U.S. Department of Education: Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

504 Plan

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, overseen by U.S. Department of Education: Office of Civil Rights

Note: because of the way that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is written, virtually any violation of Section 504 is also a violation of the ADA.

What Is the Purpose of the Law?

IEP

- a) "to ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment and independent living;

- b) to ensure that the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected by supporting system improvement activities; coordinated research and personnel preparation; coordinated technical assistance, dissemination, and support; and technology development and media services"

Source: 20 U.S.C. § 1400(d)

504 Plan

"No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

Source: Section 504, 29 U.S.C. §794

Who Is Protected?

IEP

Children birth through 21 with disabilities in one of the eligible categories whose disability adversely affects their educational performance

504 Plan

People with disabilities throughout their lives, in any type of school, employment, health/welfare program, or social service

People Who Qualify for a 504 Plan:

- have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- have a record of such an impairment; or
- are regarded as having such an impairment.

Note: students who qualify for IEPs are always considered students with disabilities and, therefore, are automatically protected under Section 504, even if they are not designated as having a 504 plan. Since IDEA guarantees more student and parent rights and protections than 504, students with IEPs are rarely involved in challenges or disputes with respect to Section 504. Students who qualify only under 504 are students with disabilities who, with reasonable modifications, are able to meet all of the program's requirements.

What Is the Evaluation Process?

IEP

Yes. Students receive a full individualized evaluation as part of qualifying for special education services and are entitled to subsequent evaluations at least every three years.

504 Plan

Yes. "Schools are required to 'establish standards and procedures' for the evaluation and placement of students who, because of disability, need or are believed to need special education or

related services, before taking any action with respect to the initial placement in a regular or special education program and any subsequent significant change in placement." (http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/504_IDEA_Rosenfeld.html). Some form of documentation of compliance with this process is required; however, timelines and procedures for conducting evaluations and notifying parents are not dictated by the law.

Is There a Written Educational Plan for the Student?

IEP

Yes. A multidisciplinary team, including the student's parent/guardian, must develop a written Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Schools are bound by law to implement the contents of the IEP.

504 Plan

Schools are bound by law not to discriminate against the student based upon his/her disability; however, the plan for protecting the student's rights can be less formal and does not necessarily have to be in writing. Although many school districts do provide written plans for the accommodations/modifications a student will receive, Section 504 does not require a written "504 Plan" document for the student.

How Are Parents/Guardians Involved?

IEP

IDEA includes specific provisions to protect the rights of the parents of children with disabilities. Parents/guardians must be invited to IEP meetings, receive prior written notice of meetings, and be afforded many due process rights should they wish to file a complaint or disagree with the school district's recommendations.

504 Plan

Parents/guardians must be notified that a 504 plan has been developed for their student. Schools must have a system of procedural safeguards including an impartial hearing and review procedure. Annual meetings are not required and school districts are not required by law to invite parents to meetings about student placement, accommodations, or modifications.

Can a Student Receive Accommodations (Such as Braille or Large Print) and Modifications (Such as Reduced Assignments) Not Available to Other Students Without Disabilities, if Necessary?

IEP

Yes.

504 Plan

Yes.

Can a Student Receive Special Education Services (Such as From a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments, or TVI)?

IEP

Yes.

504 Plan

Generally no.

Will a 504 Plan Guarantee That My Child Is Fully Included?

Neither status as a "Special Education" or a "504" student should legally determine an educational placement. Special education is not a specific place or placement. Both IDEA and Section 504 protect students' rights to education in the least restrictive environment. With an IEP, parents are involved in all of the multidisciplinary team meetings and can challenge school district's placement decisions through due process. Under 504, parents are not required to be invited to discussions of the most appropriate placement for a child, although parents do have due process rights and can file complaints. (Individual school districts may choose to follow procedures for 504 Plans which are more similar to those required by IDEA, but specific procedures are not specified by Section 504).

So What About My Successful Child With Visual Impairments?

Will an IEP hold her back? Will 504 prepare her for the "Real World"?

Accommodations and other protections afforded by Section 504 are more similar to the protections which young adults can expect under the Americans with Disabilities Act (in college, employment, etc.). However, note that one of the purposes of IDEA special education programming is to prepare students for further education, employment, and independent living. This is a key role of the **TVI** and the **Expanded Core Curriculum for students with visual impairments**, which are a part of special education students with visual impairments who have IEPs. Under 504, students are not guaranteed any transition meetings or supports for learning to independently manage disability-specific accommodations that they might need in the workplace or for independent living. The protections in place under a 504 plan may not provide frequent and thorough monitoring and evaluation, especially **assistive technology evaluation and training**, although students with visual impairment often benefit from individualized consideration of the most appropriate access technologies. Students and parents should be aware of this important limitation when considering moving to a 504 Plan.

Resources:

Durheim, M. (2010). A parent's guide to Section 504 in public schools. Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/legal-rights/868-section-504.gs?page=all>

Howey, P. (2012). Ask the advocate: Key differences between Section 504 and IDEA. Retrieved from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/howey/504.idea.htm>

Rosenfeld, S. J. (n.d.). Section 504 and IDEA 97 compared. Retrieved from http://www.wrightslaw.com/advoc/articles/504_IDEA_Rosenfeld.html Skalski, A. K., and Stanek, J. (2010). Section 504: A guide for parents and educators. Helping Children at Home and School III, 1–5. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/families/documents/35-1_S8-35_section_504.pdf

Wright, P., and Wright, P. (2008). Key differences between Section 504, the ADA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Retrieved from <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.summ.rights.htm>

Advocating for My Child Who is Blind

By Emily Coleman, Posted 9/28/2014

I'm not a very confrontational person. Before I directly accuse somebody of something, or announce a grievance, I try to consider all sides. I don't like jumping to conclusions, and I generally think people act with good intentions.

Over the nine plus years Eddie has been in my life, there have been many times when I needed to stand up for him because he couldn't do it for himself. Sometimes, I rose to the occasion. Other times, I'll admit, I decided to play things safe. Safe as in not ruffling feathers...not being a crazy mom...and not being "that parent" which we all try to avoid.

I've sat in meetings at school, and wanted to cry, or shout, or both. I've sat in doctor's offices and wanted to ask another question, and another, and even more, but chose not to because I felt like I was asking too much. Most of the time, when I silently vote to keep calm waters, I regret it.

Because I know that I can be meek at times when I shouldn't be, I often have advocates (friends or family) with me in meetings...and well-prepare myself for the meetings I attend alone. People who know me, might not realize that I'm not always a strong advocate for my son...but, honestly, it's exhausting being that person all the time. That part of me...the "strong advocate" tends to save herself for the days it really counts.

When those days come, it feels really great to be strong. Last week, I took Eddie for some routine lab work, which included a blood-draw. The technicians tried twice to find a vein, and were unsuccessful. In the past, I've let techs try again, or let them find somebody else that may have more training with a kid like mine.

This time, in my gut, I knew that we were done with that hospital on that day. I simply wasn't going to let them poke Eddie again; because I wasn't confident they could get it done with another try. So, I stood up, took Eddie's hand, asked for his lab slip back, and told them we were going somewhere else.

I wasn't rude...or sharp...or even sassy. I was simply decisive, and it felt great. Standing up for him always feels good, and it makes me want to do it more often. I immediately thought about some wrongs I wanted to right, and when it comes to Eddie, there is always some kind of battle to be won.



Self-advocacy is extremely important for kids who are blind. However, parents have to learn how to be advocates, too. It isn't always easy, and it makes me uncomfortable at times. I don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, but that can't stop me from being there for Eddie. If I ask, "What is right for Eddie?" and that answer requires action...I have to be strong enough to do what needs to be done.

Laundry Lesson Learned

By Emily Coleman, Posted 10/7/2014

As I've written before, I try to get my son involved in chores around the house. Lately while doing laundry, Eddie will show up and sort-of simply hover. While he is lingering I may say, "Eddie, do you want to help fold some clothes?" The response is often, "No." I then might say, "Eddie, do you want to take these towels downstairs?" Again, I hear a definitive, "No."

So, he continues to stand there, attentive to the task, but not wanting to jump right in. Since I can tell he is curious, I talk about what I'm doing, and describe what I'm taking in and out of the washer and dryer. I know that he has to learn how to do laundry someday, and I might as well start explaining what it's all about now.

Although I encourage and sometimes make him help out, I never really know how much he is learning, or what information is sticking. Surprisingly, there is a laundry lesson that has been learned. When Eddie demonstrated his skills, his Dad and I were shocked and laughing hysterically.



From the kitchen table where we were sitting, we could see the washer and dryer. We watched as Eddie slowly entered the laundry room, and as he came across a shirt of mine drying on a hanger. He picked it up, and deliberately removed the shirt. Next, he walked over to the washing machine, and got to work.

He opened the door, threw my shirt in, and shut the door (with part of my shirt still hanging out as you can see in this photo). He pushed a few buttons, and then walked away with the evidence of the hanger still in hand. Evidence that he had indeed confiscated my shirt...and also evidence that he certainly can help with laundry.

His Dad and I thought this was so funny, and immediately were proud of him for his learned and mostly executed new skill. I don't think he'll be sorting darks and lights anytime soon...but even I gave that up years ago. What I do think, is

that he is one step closer to being an independent adult.

How is Eddie Connected to the Rest of His Family?

By Emily Coleman, Posted 10/11/2014

Yesterday, James and I went to a family support conference for children who are developmentally delayed. Due to Eddie having Autism in addition to being blind, this conference definitely spoke to us. Most of the event was considering Eddie's future, which can be difficult for anyone raising a special needs child. The concept that stuck out the most in all we heard was the idea that, "Individuals live within the context of their family."

Eddie has a lot of unique things about him. First, he's blind, and none of us are. Second, he has little verbal communication skills, and my daughters talk ALL the time. Third, he prefers to be alone without much interest in the rest of us, which makes us all think of him in a separate context. When I think about what makes up Eddie, I think about him as in individual, but he really is part of a bigger picture...he's part of our family.

When recently talking to his teacher of the visually impaired, and wondering if we do enough at home with Eddie, she pointed out that our daughters were doing just fine, and why would we think Eddie wasn't getting what he needed? Her comment struck me as odd, because my first thought was, "What do his sisters have to do with him?" Looking back, she already sees him within the context of our family, and attributes much of who he is, with who we are.

I'm trying to wrap my brain around a description of him that is seen through the lens of our family. I'm not sure why this is so difficult, but it certainly isn't easy. However, to think about his future, we have to think about him as part of all of us. We live within a family, and a community, and Eddie's future cannot be determined in isolation.



I'm not sure where to start, other than with the basics...simple character traits that remind me he is part of us and we are part of him. For example, he loves to sing and dance...and so does James. He loves to listen to music...and even when I was carrying him he was exposed to Norah Jones via speakers on my tummy.

When he was an infant I sang "American Pie" at least every day, and that still remains one of his favorites. He loves Dora the Explorer, because his sisters have both insisted it be run on repeat. He enjoys a long car ride, and hanging his hand out the window, because our family...and extended family...have always loved a road trip.

Although my list is still small, it is growing. I'm unsure what his future will hold, but I know that whatever decisions we make for Eddie will be because of all of us...and within the context of all of us. Eddie is a Coleman...not simply an "Eddie." He has extended family and friends that will always be a part of his life. His journey may never be simple, but I'm always more game for an

adventure. I'm guessing that because he is part of me and this family...he'll be up for an adventure, too.

IEP Preppers

By Emily Coleman, Posted 10/20/14

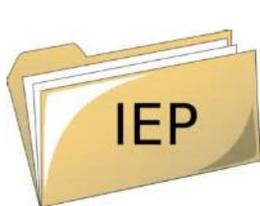
Maybe you've heard of the TV show, "Doomsday Preppers." It's about people preparing for the end of the world in some pretty interesting ways. Although I wouldn't consider Eddie's IEP anything close to a "doomsday" event, I'm learning it does take some preparation. This year, unlike years past, we decided to be IEP "Preppers" so we would know exactly what to expect and be ready for it.

First, we needed to gather our resources. We talked to family members, others we rely on, and outside therapists to get their opinions about what Eddie should be doing at school. Other parts of Eddie's "team" were doing the same thing...seeking consultations with "experts" to help guide their goal writing and decision making.

Second, Eddie's Dad and I sat down together and talked about what we'd like Eddie to be working on. What did we want for him ten years down the road? What does he need to be learning now to get there? What is fair to ask the school, and what should we be working on as his family? These were just a few of the many questions we thought about.

Third, we e-mailed all of the members of Eddie's team and asked them some very specific questions. We asked who would be writing what types of goals? Who would be giving instruction on those same goals? How often would progress be checked? Most importantly...If Eddie met the goals, what is the next step? Simply put, why is he learning what he's learning? What are you hoping for in the future?

By sending out that e-mail a week in advance, we had a chance to collaborate with his teachers and therapists before the actual meeting. Legally, we all should know that the IEP meeting is considered a DRAFT of the plan until signed and agreed upon by all parties. As parents, we have every right to discuss and change goals along with the team during the meeting. However, our goal was to be prepared this year, and not feel obligated to make decisions at the table.



Fourth, we brought in snacks to lighten the mood, and to make sure we had time to talk if needed without starving teachers and tired parents. The most important reason for the snacks was to let Eddie's team know we appreciate them. We may not always understand the educational programs, which is why we ask questions. That doesn't mean we are dissatisfied...we just simply care about Eddie and the future being laid out before him.

Even becoming an IEP "Prepper" didn't save our meeting from lasting almost two hours, but it sure made us feel better. Since we had contacted everyone before the meeting, we knew exactly what kind of goals we'd hear about, and little was left to speculation. I recommend every parent of a special needs child do a little prepping before their next IEP. They will not regret it.

REGISTER FOR YOUR FREE PARENT WORKSHOP TODAY!



Illinois State Board of Education

Gery J. Chico, Chairman
Dr. Christopher Koch, State Superintendent

Space is limited; registration is mandatory Please visit www.frcd.org or call 312-939-3513 for registration and workshop location.

**Six Principles of IDEA:
Special Education What You Need to Know**
Saturday, November 1, 10am-1pm

Navigating the IEP Process
Saturday, November 8, 10am-1pm

Skills for Effective Parent Advocacy
Saturday, November 15, 10am-1pm

**Especialista de Apoyo de IEP
Entrenamiento Parte 1**
Martes, Noviembre 18, 10am-12pm

**Reauthorization of IDEA: What Parents
Need to Know Part 1**
Friday, November 21, 12am-1pm

Transition: Making it in the Real World
Saturday, November 22, 10am-1pm

**Especialista de Apoyo de IEP
Entrenamiento Parte 1**
Martes, Noviembre 25, 10am-12pm

The Family Resource Center on Disabilities (FRCd) offers parents of children with disabilities birth to 21 years old, their help

ers, relatives, professionals, and interested community members no-cost training and workshops, telephone and e-mail assistance, and resources to help claim their role as the child's most effective and significant advocate.

You are invited to contact FRCd for information, resources, support and training. 1-312-939-3513 | info@frcd.org | www.frcd.org
20 East Jackson Blvd., Room 300
Chicago, IL 60604

**Family Resource Center
on Disabilities**

**The 12th Annual Summit for Youth with
Disabilities**

Presented by Mayor's Office for People with
Disabilities
Karen Tamley – Commissioner

**“Working Toward Your Future”
“Promising Practices–Measurable Outcomes”**

WHAT: This is a FREE Informational and Resource Event for Youth with Disabilities (14 and Over), especially targeting those receiving Social Security Benefits (SSI/SSDI). All Parents/Guardians, Educators, Vocational Professionals, and Service Providers are Welcome!

Meet and join the Chicago Concerned Parent Group!

WHEN: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2014
Registration/Breakfast: 8:30 a.m., Opening/Workshops: 9:30 a.m. until noon, Wrap-Up Session: 12:30 p.m.-1:30 p.m. for SSI/SSDI recipients and educational and recreational resources to promote independent living.

WHY: Gain Valuable Knowledge and Assistance regarding Employment, Special Work Incentives offered by SSA for SSI/SSDI recipients and educational and recreational resources to promote independent living.

WHERE: Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities Central West Field Office 2102 West Ogden Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60612

TO REGISTER: Contact 312/746-5743 (Voice) ◊ 312/746-5713 (TTY) ◊ 312/746-5787 or 312/746-5749 (Fax)

Requests for Reasonable Accommodations should be made by November 3, 2014



- ▶ Over 1,500 searchable articles, infographics, slideshows, quizzes, and videos, with more added every day
- ▶ State-of-the-art technology that allows you to experience the world through the eyes of children with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, ADHD and executive functioning issues
- ▶ Daily opportunities to connect with experts and get your questions answered
- ▶ A community of parents and experts, creating a safe place to ask and answer questions
- ▶ Tools to help navigate daily parenting challenges, find the technology that's right for your child, choose a school and more

Visit www.nclld.org for more information.



UNDERSTOOD: National Center for Learning Disabilities

UNDERSTOOD

The National Center for Learning Disabilities is due to launch a new online tool for parents:

Understood is part of a bold new plan to support parents of children with learning and attention issues. Through research and interviews with thousands of parents, we have learned a lot about what people need to help their kids thrive at home, at school and in life. We developed **Understood** with that in mind.

Here's just *some* of what you'll find on **Understood**:

- ▶ Personalized resources—all you have to do is tell us what's important to you and your child

APH NEWS

Social Media Spotlight

Helpful Hashtags

Do you tweet? Here are some helpful Twitter hashtags to use to stay connected to the blindness community. Search for these hashtags, or use them yourself to join the conversation!



1. **#visuallyimpaired** - Tweets specifically about visual impairments and blindness
2. **#blindness** - You will probably find this hashtag more useful than #blind, because a lot of people use #blind as a catch-all for phrases such as "blind as a bat," "blind to the truth," and, especially right now, TV's "The Voice" blind auditions.

3. **#braille** - Tweets from organizations, parents, students, and adults about braille literacy, DIY braille projects, braille resources, and current news.
4. **#UEB** - Stay up to date on the latest news involving Unified English Braille.
5. **#ally** - The most comprehensive hashtag for anyone looking for accessibility resources, news, events, and more. There are 11 letters between the a and y in "accessibility," hence the abbreviated hashtag. Some people prefer to spell it out, so searching **#accessibility** could also be helpful.

Use these hashtags, and follow **@APHfortheBlind** on Twitter!

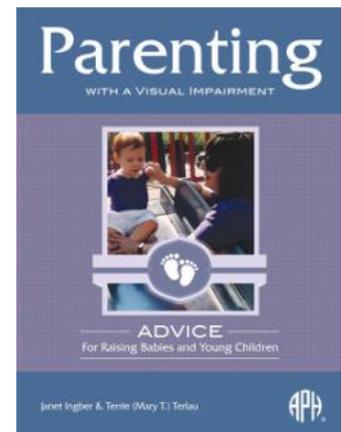
Parenting With a Visual Impairment: Advice for Raising Babies and Young Children

NEW! Large Print w/Audio CDs: [8-00100-00](#) -- \$79.00
COMING SOON! Braille w/Audio CDs -- \$TBA

This book plus audio CDs shares helpful tips, techniques, attitudes, and preparatory experiences from successful parents who are blind and visually impaired. The parents featured in the book each completed an extensive written questionnaire and a 90-minute phone interview about how they accomplished parenting tasks using non-visual techniques.

Book Summarizes Parents' Responses

- Decided to have children
- Prepared to become parents
- Acquired information about pregnancy and childbirth
- Fed, diapered, and kept their newborns clean
- Read to, played with, and visually stimulated their infants
- Child proofed their homes and monitored their babies
- Managed fevers, medications, and medical care
- Taught colors, print letters & numbers, and drawing
- Monitored and kept their toddlers safe indoors and outdoors
- Traveled independently with their young children
- Dealt with reactions of medical care providers, family, and the public at large
- Handled attitudes of day-care staff, preschool teachers, and their child's friends



Features

- Provides family and Consumer Science students with visual impairments with information pertinent to their own lives as visually-impaired parents-to-be
- Helps transition students realize that their visual impairment should not stop them from including parenthood in their future plans
- Gives teachers an accurate picture of how blind adults take care of children so that teachers can impart this positive self-image to visually impaired students

- Gives adults who have lost vision tools to continue to care for their children
- Shows medical service, psychology, social work, counseling, protective service, and legal professionals how adults with visual impairments using alternate skill sets parent their children effectively
- Corrects the negative stereotypes about parents with visual impairments, which have, even in the 21st century, resulted in a newborn's removal from her parents solely because both parents were blind

Recommended ages: Middle School and up.

APH Fall Harvest Sale

Load up a world of savings on selected APH products with APH's Fall Harvest Sale 2014, October 1-December 31. As always, first come, first served.

www.aph.org/products/harvest.html



Johansen Farms and Children's Zoo

- Open Sept 13th – Oct 31st 9am -7 pm daily
- 710 W Boughton Rd, Bolingbrook Illinois 60440
- **Phone:** 630-759-8711



We welcome you to one of Chicago land's favorite pumpkin farm and children's zoo now celebrating our 32nd season. Pay one price for all activities—do them one time or a hundred times! Walk through our giant patch of over 25,000 pumpkins on your way to the children's zoo, where over 500 animals await you inside. Watch your child experience holding a baby chick, play with the goats, take a pony, train, or hayride. Fly down the two story air slides, wind through our corn maze! And, don't miss "All Fun, No Fright" for an exciting time for the entire family. Visit our concession stand for fresh hot apple cider donuts or our Pie House for freshly baked pie. Our gift shop is stocked with Halloween decorations, corn stalks, Indian corn, and straw bales. Soothe your sweet tooth with homemade fudge, jams, jellies, taffy apples, fresh apple cider and more. A trip to Johansen Farms has become an autumn tradition for so many families—we hope you'll make it an annual family event, too!

Go to http://chicagofun.com/home/fall/hay_rides.html to find more fall activities offered in several towns.



Watch hours of captivating speaker recordings on the AER Knowledge Center.

FEATURED SESSION

Inside and Outside of a Guide Dog



Click, treats, back-chaining and targeting. What on earth is happening in the field of guide dog training and handler instruction? Recent research and new knowledge of the domestic dog will continue to have dramatic influences on the field of guide dog instruction. Subsequently, this has direct effect on how guide dog handlers are being trained and what Orientation and Mobility instructors will be seeing from their clients who use guide dogs. "Inside and Outside of a Guide Dog" will shine a spotlight on the field of guide dogs. This 90-minute session will cover the ethos of the domestic dog, how dogs process information and why this is important knowledge today and into the future. O and M instructors will find this information invaluable.

<http://aerbvi.sclivelearningcenter.com/index.aspx>

Watch This Session for FREE!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Instructional Strategies for Consumers with Brain Injury

This presentation will address two major concerns:

- 1) accommodating consumers at rehabilitation facilities, and
- 2) instructional strategies from brain injury rehabilitation that may be useful in blindness rehabilitation.

MORE: Same website



Learn About a Treatment Option for Non-24-Hour Sleep-Wake Disorder

Learn about the chronic circadian rhythm disorder called Non-24-Hour Disorder that is very common in people who are totally blind

MORE: Same website



Lifelong Physical Activity and Fitness for Youth with Visual Impairments

Physically active lifestyles lead to quality of life. The purpose of this session is to discuss the promotion of physical activity among youth with visual impairments as they move from school to community.

MORE: Same website



Physicians

- Benjamin H Ticho, MD** - Pediatric ROP & Adult Ophthalmology
Jonathan S Buka, MD - Ophthalmology-Glaucoma & Lasik Surgeon
Alexander J Khammar, MD - Pediatric ROP Ophthalmology
Karl Ticho, MD – Ophthalmology
E. Michael Cassidy, MD - Ophthalmology
Roshni A Vasaiwala, MD – Cornea Specialist
Hassan A Shah, MD – Oculofacial Plastic, Orbital and Ophthalmic Surgery
Megan Allen, OD – Optometrist
Birva K Shah, OD – Optometrist

Visit our Locations

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600 Ravinia Ave., Orland Park, IL 60462
P: 708-873-0088 F: 708-873-5224

333 Chestnut Street, Suite 104, Hinsdale, IL 60521
P: 630-323-4202 F: 630-323-6588

7001 W Archer Ave., Chicago, IL 60638
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**THIS PUBLICATION IS SUPPORTED
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HILTON/PERKINS
PROGRAM AND (IN PART) FROM A
GRANT FROM THE FAMILY RE-
SOURCE CENTER ON DISABILITIES**



Join **IPVI** or renew your membership today!

The *Illinois Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments* is a state-wide, non-profit organization that enables parents to find information and resources for their children who are blind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities.

Your IPVI membership dues or generous contributions help to support all of our ongoing efforts:

- Regular communications which include: workshops, conferences, training seminars, legislative issues, organizational announcements, products, and advice about raising a child who is visually impaired.
- Offers several \$500 college scholarships each year.
- Publishes a resource catalog which includes anything and everything to do with visual impairment.
- Conducts training and support sessions where parents share experiences and ideas.
- Holds fun outings adapted for children with visual impairments at athletic, cultural, educational, and entertainment settings.
- Represents parents of children with visual impairments at conferences, public hearings, and on committees.

What does IPVI do?

- Promotes and provides information through meetings, correspondence, publications, etc., which will help parents meet the special needs of their children with visual impairments.
- Facilitates the sharing of experiences and concerns in order to provide emotional support and relief from feelings of isolation for parents and their families.
- Creates a climate of opportunity for children who are blind in the home, school, and society.
- Fosters communication and coordination of services among federal, state, and local agencies and organizations involved with providing services to people who are visually impaired.
- Advocates on a statewide level for services to children who are visually impaired and their families.
- Keeps members informed about current proposals and actions which impact on children with visual impairments and their families.

Check one:

Parent/Guardian Membership: \$15 per year.

Child(ren)'s Names: _____

Birthdate(s) of my visually impaired child(ren): _____

My child(ren)'s eye condition: _____

I give my permission to release my name to other parents.

Group/Agency Membership \$50 per year.

Extended Family/Friend Assoc. Membership \$15/year.

Medical Specialist \$50 per year.

Scholarship Fund \$10.00

Donation: \$ _____ (tax deductible)

New Membership

Renewal

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: (_____) - _____

Email: _____

Please enclose this form along with your payment by check to:

IPVI • P.O.Box 2947 • Naperville, IL 60567-2947

Have questions or need more information?

**Call us at
1-815-355-2098**

**Illinois Association for Parents of
Children with Visual Impairments**
P. O. Box 2947
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Please contact IPVI to see if you are
up-to-date on your dues at the
address on the left or
1-815-355-2098
Email: ipvi@ipvi.org
www.ipvi.org

IPVI CALENDAR

▶ 11/8 **PLAY FOR ALL - Lighthouse/IPVI Families**

Chicago



Please call
1-815-355-2098

for any questions, concerns,
or comments that IPVI can
help you with.

**Newsletter Deadline for
DECEMBER 2014 is NOVEMBER 15th**



**Check Out
www.ipvi.org**

Calendar of Events!
News and Updates!
Useful Links to Web Sites!
And more...