

Cortical Visual Impairment



Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a decreased visual response due to a neurological problem affecting the visual parts of the brain.
CVI is the #1 cause of visual impairment in children and children benefit from early intervention.

Why are early referrals necessary for children with CVI?

- Intervention for CVI is most effective when it is early. When a child is younger, their brain is better at “rewiring” itself. With intervention, the child’s brain may build pathways for vision around the affected areas to improve visual processing.
- With the right CVI intervention strategies, children will learn to use their vision in a meaningful way.

Visual behaviors commonly associated with CVI:

- Staring at lights (lamps, cellphone backlight, overhead lighting)
- Not consistently looking at toys
- Limited eye contact or looking at familiar faces
- Takes extra time to look at objects presented
- Not showing visual interest in objects and people even if in close proximity
- Looking away when reaching and touching
- Looking away when listening
- Difficulty finding objects on busy backgrounds - i.e., patterned playmats, clothing
- Better vision when viewing moving objects compared to stationary objects
- Better visual response for near objects vs distant objects
- May ignore objects presented in certain visual fields



A child may have CVI when:

1. They are **not** demonstrating typical visual development
2. An ocular eye exam does not explain their lack of visual response
3. There is a history of a neurological issue even if brain-imaging studies appear normal

If you have a patient with CVI aged birth to school age, please refer for service.

The Ontario Blind-Low Vision Early Intervention program is available **free of charge** for families with children who have a visual impairment from **birth until school entry**. The program provides support in family homes and community settings.

Please use our online referral form found at
[Kidsinclusive.ca/services-and-programs/how-to-refer](https://kidsinclusive.ca/services-and-programs/how-to-refer)
1-855-544-3400 ext. 2078

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