

Glossary of Common Terms Related to Visual Impairment

Adventitious Blindness - This term refers to individuals who are blinded after the age of five or six.

Braille - A reading system which provides an alternative to reading and writing print. The Braille cell consists of six dots arranged into two columns. Combinations of one to six dots are used to form the letters and symbols.

Grade I Braille - Braille transcription uses the alphabet only. Grade I Braille is rarely used except in teaching adventitiously blind people as a beginning step or if they wish only to write notes to themselves.

Grade II Braille - Grade II Braille is the standard system in use. It uses the alphabet plus a system of common letter and common word contractions. The contractions are formed using letters plus symbols. This is an attempt to save space and time in writing and reading.

Jumbo Braille - A larger Braille cell is used in teaching Braille as a writing system by adventitiously blind people who have limited tactile sensitivity. Normally jumbo Braille is used with Grade I Braille only, as it is not intended to be a quick reading system comparable to print, but is intended mostly for self-generating notes and/or the lower levels of Braille teaching.

Central Visual Field – Includes inner 30 degrees of vision and central fixation. The area that can be seen without moving the head or eyes corresponding to an area within 30 feet of the fixation point.

Congenital Blindness - Blindness at birth or up to age six.

Depth Perception - The blending of slightly dissimilar images from the two eyes from the perception of depth and solidity of objects and their relative position in space without such cues as shadow, and overlapping. The visual ability to perceive the world in 3 dimensions and the distance of an object.

Field of Vision - Entire area that can be seen without shifting the gaze, i.e., without moving the head or eyes.

Free Matter for the Blind - Mailing Privilege - Braille, tape and large print (minimum 14 point) materials may be sent through the post office free to or from blind persons. "Free Matter for the Blind" should be plainly written where postage would otherwise go. Included in the FREE MATTER classification are materials for print handicapped people, including Braille paper, recording tape and books to be transcribed. Free matter travels as third class mail and packages may not exceed 12 pounds.

Laser - Surgical tool using an intense beam of light energy to weld rips and holes, to seal hemorrhaging and to destroy new vessels.

Legal Blindness - (1) Central visual acuity of not more than 20/200 in the best eye with corrective lenses. (2) A visual field less than an angle of 20 degrees. The legally blind individual sees at a distance of 20 feet what someone with normal (20/20) vision can see at 200 feet. A visual field of 20 degrees is like looking down the barrel of a gun; there is no side vision. "Legal Blindness" does not mean "total" blindness. With use of the many available aids, persons who are "legally blind" can often function very well.

Blindness: The World Health Organization defines "blindness" as "having a significant visual handicap but also having a significant usable residual vision."

"Visual disorder", "Visual impairment", "Visual disability" and "Visual handicap" are frequently used interchangeable, albeit perhaps, inaccurately. In fact, they represent different dimensions of vision or visual performance.

A **"visual disorder"** is any deviation from the normal structure and/or function of the eye or parts of the eye.

A **"visual impairment"** is a disorder interfering with the functioning of the eye or parts of the eyes.

When loss of vision results in the lack, loss, or education of an individual's ability to perform certain tasks, it is a "**disability**." (Note that "impairment" refers to basic functions performed by a part of the body; "disability" refers to tasks performed by a person.)

A "**handicap**" puts an individual at a perceived or actual disadvantage with respect to societal expectations.

Low Vision - A permanent reduction in vision that is not correctable with medication, surgery, laser, or glasses.

Low Vision Aids - Optical devices useful to persons with a vision impairment that is not successfully corrected by the usual prescription lenses. These aids may include magnifying glasses, monocular and binocular scopes, special lighting, etc.

Low Vision Clinic - A clinic staffed by optometric specialists to help people with low vision make the most of their remaining sight through the use of non-medical aids and appliances.

Mobility - How a person travels, i.e., with cane, dog, guide, volunteer assistant. Instruction for traveling safely as a visually impaired or blind person is provided by the New Hampshire Association for the Blind.

National Library Service - The Library of Congress, Division for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, located in Washington, D. C., sponsor production of reading matter of a leisure time nature (as opposed to textbooks) for inclusion in the regional libraries. Materials are available both in recorded form and in Braille.

Night Blindness - Condition in which sight is good by day but deficient at night and in any faint light.

Oculist – Either an ophthalmologist or an optometrist.

Ophthalmologist – A Medical Doctor, who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of defects and diseases of the eye, performs needed surgeries and prescribes glasses.

Optician – Makes and sells glasses prescribed by an ophthalmologist or optometrist.

Opticians do not prescribe glasses.

Optometrist – A licensed, non-medical practitioner who measures refractive errors and irregularities in the size and shape of the eyeball or in the surface of the cornea.

Peripheral Vision - Vision which is on the outer edges, i.e., side and above and below.

Print Impaired/Print Handicapped - Unable to read normal size print with regular corrective lenses.

S.S.I. - Supplementary Security Income is a federally and state supported program of financial assistance to elderly, blind and disabled persons, administered by the Social Security Administration.

20/20 - This is a way of stating the visual acuity is normal. Literally it means that at 20 feet a person sees the letter of determined size on the examination chart (Snelling Chart). The larger the bottom number of the fraction, the more blurred the vision. 20/200 marks the limit below which a person is considered legally blind.

Talking Books - Recorded books and magazines available through the Library of Congress free of charge to any person with a physical disability that prevents use of regular printed materials. This includes persons with disabilities that prevent them from holding a book or magazine. Information on eligibility is available from the State Library in Concord.