

# **CLINICAL LOW VISION EVALUATIONS FOR SCHOOL AGED STUDENTS IN GEORGIA**

**Directions:** The Georgia Rules for Special Education, adopted by the State Board of Education on June 14, 2007, specify the types of evaluations that must be conducted before eligibility for visual impairments can be established. Based on these rules, a low vision evaluation (LVE) is required prior to determining initial eligibility for visual impairments. A LVE is conducted by an optometrist who has specialized training in low vision devices and services. This is in addition to the regular eye examination by an ophthalmologist or optometrist, not in place of the regular eye examination. The purpose of the LVE is to determine if optical, non-optical, and/or electronic devices will improve a student's visual functioning at near point and/or at distance for a variety of educational activities and to provide access to the curriculum. The low vision evaluation is a specialized evaluation that looks at giving the student the greatest visual ability possible through the use of low vision aids and devices.

In certain limited circumstances, the IEP team may determine that a Functional Vision Evaluation (FVE) is more appropriate and meaningful than a Low Vision Evaluation (LVE) and can be conducted in lieu of the LVE when establishing eligibility. These circumstances include:

- The student is under the age of 8.
- The student has a severe cognitive or physical disability, or multiple disabilities that would make the use of low vision devices unfeasible.

When a LVE is not completed due to the above circumstances, the rationale for using a FVE in lieu of a low vision evaluation should be documented in the eligibility report. Once eligibility has been determined, the IEP team may request a LVE at any time to identify the needs of the student. If the decision was made to delay the LVE due to the student's age, the evaluation should be completed by the time that the student is 10 unless other factors apply such as severe cognitive or physical disability.

In an effort to create a minimum standard for low vision evaluations for school aged children in the State of Georgia, the Georgia Department of Education has developed the following model form for reporting the results of a Clinical Low Vision Evaluation (LVE) for educational purposes. Items with an asterisk( \*)beside them are considered the minimum components of a Clinical Low Vision Evaluation for educational purposes. Certainly more components can and should be assessed at the Low Vision Optometrist's discretion, based upon the student's ocular diagnosis, clinical observations of the student, and reported concerns during the Low Vision Evaluation. Please note that while a refractive evaluation may occur during the LVE, **local school systems are not responsible for the purchase of individually prescribed spectacles unless the IEP team determines that they are educationally necessary upon review of these recommendations.** It is strongly recommended that the student be accompanied to the LVE by a parent and the teacher of the visually impaired if at all possible. The Georgia Department of Education has also developed a pre-clinic screening form to be completed by the teacher of the visually impaired in collaboration with the student and parents to provide pertinent information to the low vision optometrist prior to the LVE. The pre clinic screening form is attached.

This model low vision evaluation form was developed by the Georgia Department of Education to assist medical personnel conducting low vision evaluations (LVE's) with a format to report information needed by local school systems from a LVE for vision impaired eligibility and educational planning purposes. These forms may be reproduced as needed by low vision clinics and educational personnel.