

Understanding and Supporting Students with Cortical Visual Impairment

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Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing & Deaf-Blind
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8:30am – 3:30pm

Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) is the leading cause of visual impairment in children in the western hemisphere. As many of the children/youth who have CVI do not present with additional ocular impairments, they often receive normal results on clinical vision exams, because the damage resulting in abnormal vision is not in the structures of the eyes, but in the connection between the eyes and the brain. Children with CVI present with unique visual behavioral characteristics, across a range of visual functioning and adaptive needs. Due to the nature of this neurologically-based visual impairment, children/youth with CVI can achieve significant progress in visual functioning – given the appropriate supports and meaningful interventions. These sessions provide content based on the CVI Range approach to functional vision assessment and educational interventions developed by Dr. Roman-Lantzy.

Session 1: 8:30-10:30 (with 15 min break)

Title: Cortical Visual Impairment: An Introduction to Characteristics, Phases, and Assessment

Description: This session will provide an overview of CVI, with a focus on understanding and identifying the 10 unique visual behavioral Characteristics and 3 Phases of CVI. Participants will gain both technical and practical knowledge and skills to support the range of students with CVI, as well as meaningful and personalized experiences in considering the development of AAC to support their students. This session is appropriate for both beginners and professionals with prior training in CVI (as it will address current information and up-to-date best practices), and will include hands-on activities in observing and understanding characteristic visual behaviors of students with CVI.

Objectives: Participants will increase their knowledge and skills in:

- Identifying unique behavioral characteristics associated with CVI (SP.24.j)
- Describing the features of each of the CVI characteristics (SP.24.k)
- Describing the degree or level of CVI in terms of the 3 phases of CVI (SP.24.m)
- Designing appropriate interventions and environmental adaptations for individuals with CVI (SP.24.w)

Session 2: 10:45 – 12pm

Title: Cortical Visual Impairment: Focus on Alternative & Augmentative Communication

Abstract: One of the greatest areas of need in professional development is in addressing the unique adaptations and strategies necessary to support the implementation of student-centered, accessible forms of AAC, both aided and unaided, for students with CVI. This session will provide an intensive focus on specific considerations for alternative and augmentative communication systems for students with CVI. Participants will be introduced to a tool for planning AAC to meet their students' unique needs and preferences, and hands-on activities to apply this information to best practice with their students.

Objectives: Participants will increase their knowledge and skills in:

- Identifying unique behavioral characteristics associated with Cortical Visual Impairment and implications for access to AAC.
- Utilizing and understanding the practical implications of the CVI Range Assessment to determine appropriateness of AAC interventions.
- Designing student-centered visual and tactile adaptations to aided and unaided AAC specific to supporting students in Phase I, II and III of CVI.

Lunch – 12pm – 1pm

Session 3: 1pm -3:30pm (with 15 min break)

Title: Cortical Visual Impairment: Focus on Educational Program Development, Curriculum Adaptations and Functional Routines

Abstract: This session will focus on practical methods and approaches for using the results of CVI Range assessment to adapt and design educational programs for a diverse population of students across the Phases of CVI. Areas of specific focus will include IEP development (Present Levels of Performance, Management Needs/Accommodations & Adaptations), curriculum adaptations for literacy and numeracy, and child-centered approaches for planning functional routines. This session will include hands-on activities in planning activities, goals and adaptations, and developing student-centered CVI Schedules.

Objectives: Participants will increase their knowledge and skills in:

- Designing appropriate interventions and environmental adaptations for individuals with CVI (SP.24.w)
- Developing academic and functional outcomes or goals/objectives based on the child's/student's identified strengths and needs (SP.02.d)
- Developing child-centered tools for planning Present Levels of Performance, Management Needs/Accommodations, and guiding implementation of the IEP to meet the unique needs of students with CVI.

Chris Russell Bio:

Chris Russell is the Project Coordinator for the New York Deaf-Blind Collaborative, and has experience as a classroom teacher and Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) working with children who have visual impairments and additional disabilities including deaf-blindness. Chris specializes in severe and multiple disabilities including deaf-blindness, cortical visual impairment, curriculum adaptations for children with visual impairments and additional disabilities, and instructional strategies supporting communication development for children with pre-symbolic communication. He has the Perkins-Roman CVI Range Endorsement, and conducts training in CVI Characteristics, Phases, Assessment and Intervention across NY state for professionals and families.