



## Institute for Families : Choosing Quality Child Care

### **If my child has a visual impairment or is blind, will he/she need to go to a “special” preschool?**

This is a common question that is asked by parents who have just been told that their child has a medical diagnosis that may impact their vision. There are many decisions that parents face when it comes to the health and well – being of their child. Selecting a quality child care program is one that raises a lot of questions for most parents.

A child with vision loss has the same preschool opportunities as his sighted peers. For young children, much of their learning is acquired through play, hands on activities that allow them to explore, and social interactions with other children and adults. At this stage of development, learning will be facilitated through hands on activities, which makes the preschool setting a wonderful environment for children with visual impairments as well as for those with sight.

There are many child care settings that are available to families:

- Family Child Care Homes
- Child Care Centers
- Federally Funded Child Care Programs like, Early Head Start and Head Start

### **Guidelines in Choosing a Quality Child Care Setting**

It’s important to plan ahead. Finding a program that fits the need of your child and family may take some time and thought. Once you have narrowed down your selection, scheduling a visit to each site is essential. Here are some important areas you will want to look for in a child care program:

- Small group sizes and adult-to-child ratios encourage the best opportunities for a child’s development. Always verify the adult-to-child ratio based on licensing in your state.

- Overall safety of toys, and playground equipment.
- Program site is conducive to meet the needs of a child with a visual impairment.
- Caregivers or teachers who have experience and education in early childhood development.
- Opportunities for teachers to expand their skills by attending conferences and workshops.
- A team of teachers and caregivers who are flexible and willing to make adaptations or accommodations if necessary for a child with a visual impairment.
- Opportunities for parents to participate in the classroom, and to have meaningful involvement in the program.
- Age appropriate activities that encourage opportunities for children to learn through play. Developmental activities that encourage language, social skills, large and gross motor awareness, and cognitive development.