CVI refers to a brain condition, not an eye condition and results from damage to the visual systems in the brain that deal with processing and integrating visual information. CVI can be a temporary or permanent impairment and can range from severe visual impairment to total blindness. Because CVI is a neurological impairment, vision is more severely reduced than can be explained by an eye exam.

Cortical visual impairment (CVI) is a neurological disorder, which results in unique visual responses to people, educational materials, and to the environment. When students with these visual/behavioral characteristics are shown to have loss of acuity or judged by their performance to be visually impaired, they are considered to have CVI.

Education Purposes

Treatment

Currently, there is no precise treatment for CVI, and many rehabilitative measures are unproven. Clearly, there is a great need for additional research on treatment and management of this common and complex disorder.

Four Major Causes

- Asphyxia
- Brain maldevelopment
- Head injury
- Infection
Unique Visual/Behavior Characteristics of CVI

- Normal or minimally abnormal eye exam (CVI may co-exist with optic nerve atrophy, hypoplasia or dysplasia and ROP.)
- Difficulty with visual novelty (The individual prefers to look at old objects, not new, and lacks visual curiosity.)
- Visually attends in near space only
- Difficulties with visual complexity/crowding (Individual performs best when one sensory input is presented at a time, when the surrounding environment lacks clutter, and the object being presented is simple.)
- Non-purposeful gaze/light gazing behaviors
- Distinct color preference (Preferences are predominantly red and yellow, but could be any color.)
- Visual field deficits (It is not so much the severity of the field loss, but where the field loss is located.)
- Visual latency (The individual's visual responses are slow, often delayed.)
- Attraction to movement, especially rapid movements.
- Absent or atypical visual reflexive responses (The individual fails to blink at threatening motions.)
- Atypical visual motor behaviors (Look and touch occur as separate functions, e.g., child looks, turns head away from item, then reaches for it.)
- Inefficient, highly variable visual sense