

DISTANCE

Have you ever tried to get your child's attention from a distance? You might wave hello from the doorway and your child does not look your way.

Accessing visual information from a **distance** is part of what we call 'incidental learning', and children with a vision impairment, especially CVI, may struggle to see objects of people at a distance without visual support. A child with vision will watch a caregiver from across the room as they come close to pick them up, and because they have vision, they are able to anticipate the caregiver's movements and be ready. Or they may see the brightly colored McDonald's sign from a distance, and begin their literacy journey. The child with CVI with **little to no distance vision** may not have the capability to watch their caregiver from a distance nor see the McDonald's sign from the car, but they can learn to **improve their distance vision** with practice and support.

How can you help your child anticipate unexpected events that are happening nearby them? How can we use landmark cues to support accessing or the development of distance vision?

*Sophie is a child who was diagnosed with hydrocephalus, mild cerebral palsy and CVI. Visually she attends at **near space only** and relies on others to be near her for constant stimulation and interaction. Sometimes she can be jumpy when people **unexpectedly** walk by. She also appears to be unaware of her environment when she is taken to another room. Together with Sophie's mother, we came up with vision interventions to use in regards to her ability to develop distance vision. Sophie's mother agreed to try wearing bright clothing so that she may be able to see her from further away which could help her anticipate her close proximity and not be startled. Another idea is to utilize **high contrast pictures** or **visual cues in the environment** that would help again with visually locating objects at a distance so she could visually identify where she is at within the house. After beginning these interventions, Sophie started looking up more and scanning her environments as if to be searching for visual information. This opportunity to team with Sophie's mother in developing meaningful strategies for increasing her ability to use her distance vision has contributed greatly to Sophie's ability to utilize her potential to access 'incidental learning'.*

When we are intentional with our approach, interactions, and how we set up the environment for a child with CVI, we have an opportunity to increase the development of vision.

Distance Strategies within Daily Routines:

Waking Up:

- Wear a bright colored shirt, bandana, or some kind of clothing marker so that your child can see you coming and going from the doorway
- Consider using bright colored containers to hold materials for dressing and diapering so that your child can see them from a distance and as they get closer
- Consider hanging a few high contrast pictures in the room for environment identification

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Bed time:

- Consider using a night time lamp at night that can change colors and turn it on before you bring your child in the room, and when you do, pause just as you enter cueing your child to look for the lamp
- Dress your child in their pajamas near the containers or drawers that are bright in color and visually reference the containers from a distance
- Place a brightly colored paper square next to the child's door and see if they can find it as you walk down the hall.

Playtime/Floor time:

- Using familiar and favorite toys, place them close to the child, and then move them farther away. Encourage the child to move to the toys.
- When using a switch toy with the child, start with the toy next to the child's leg or hand. As they understand what the switch does, move the toy farther away.
- Notice if the child can visually locate you across the room without talking.
- Place brightly-colored texture squares on the floor, and slowly move them farther apart over time.

Mealtime:

- Prepare favorite foods or snacks at the counter and talk with your child about the sounds you are making. After, carry your child over to the counter and let them explore close up.
- Place favorite spoons or cups on the table with others and have them choose one—start with just 2, and build up to choosing from many.
- Wrap the highchair legs with shiny or brightly colored tape and encourage your child to move to the chair at mealtime.

Hanging out/Reading on laps:

- Play videos or TV shows with simple backgrounds and see if they can recognize familiar characters or actions from farther away.
- Have a child choose a book from 2, and then several over where the books are stored.
- Play hide and seek! Hide (partially) close by and first and then move farther away. The child can move toward you.

Outside:

- Roll brightly colored exercise balls across the yard at varying distances. Have the child look for them
- Play with bubbles and see how far they can follow individual ones
- Use a large toy airplane to see if your child can show you where it came back to the ground