



WELCOME!

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments! Our team of professionals looks forward to working with you and your child. It is our hope that together we can help your child develop and grow as well as provide the support you may need to address your concerns.

We ask that you take the time to review this handbook so that you are aware of the policies and procedures that we have in place for the benefit of the children and families we serve. If, after reading it, you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to talk with anyone on our staff.

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OUR HISTORY

The Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments is a nonprofit agency established in 1951 by a group of St. Louis alumnae of the Delta Gamma sorority. Through the years, the Center has grown and changed, but the focus has remained constant – to provide quality services to children who are blind or visually impaired and their families. It is our vision that the children we serve achieve their full potential, have strong relationships with family and friends, and equal opportunities to participate, contribute and lead joyful lives. The Delta Gamma Center is licensed by the Missouri Department of Mental Health, meets the Better Business Bureau's 20 standards for nonprofits, and meets the quality standards for many public and private grants.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments is to help children who are blind or visually impaired reach their full potential through family-centered, specialized services and community support.

OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

We believe --

- In the potential of children who are blind or visually impaired.
- Collaboration with families and family empowerment is essential to the successful development of each child who is blind or visually impaired.
- Education and support is vital for children who are blind or visually impaired, their families, and the community.
- Specialized services by highly qualified staff are necessary to address the unique learning needs of children who are blind or visually impaired.
- Community education can enhance understanding of visual impairments and increase community acceptance and inclusion.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

The staff at the Delta Gamma Center values the working relationship we develop with parents like you. We recognize that you are the most important person in your child's life and that supporting you is the best way to support your child. We realize, therefore, that it is critical for us to work as a team so we ask you to:

- Do your best to be available for all scheduled appointments and to call us in advance if you do need cancel any visits.
- Provide information and feedback to team members regarding your concerns, priorities, and the services you receive.

DELTA GAMMA CENTER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Delta Gamma Center offers a wide range of highly specialized educational, therapy and support services for eligible children and their families. Services focus on the individual needs and concerns of each child and family. We strive to provide services that help develop strengths, skills and hope for the future.

Eligibility: In order to be eligible for services, a child must have a qualifying diagnosed visual impairment or significant difficulty with visual function that has been verified by a physician. Delta Gamma Center staff will travel up to 50 miles from the Center to provide individual services. If families live beyond the 50-mile radius, our staff will try to help them locate services closer to their homes. If there are no other options, families have the option of meeting staff at a location within the 50-mile radius.

EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Many of the services provided are for children under the age of three and their families. Staff go where the child is - usually in the home or in childcare. We teach parents and caregivers simple ways to work on their child's goals throughout the routines of their day. We also answer questions, share resources, and provide supports to help you as you parent your child with a visual impairment. Parents and caregivers of children receiving these services are expected to participate in all sessions with staff so that you can get ideas about what you can do to help your child learn.

Our professional staff includes teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, occupational, physical and speech therapists, and a family support specialist. Staff have experience and training in working with children with visual impairments. The type and frequency of services provided depend upon each child's needs and each family's concerns.

Services to children in this age range include:

- **Functional Vision Assessment:** Your child's first visit from one of the teachers will likely be for a functional vision assessment. During this visit, the teacher will work with and observe your child in an effort to learn more about what your child sees, how he/she uses his/her vision during play and daily activities, and how your child uses his/her other senses to learn about the world. The teacher will make recommendations based on this assessment and will provide you with a report.
- **Educational Services:** Teachers provide ongoing visits to children in their homes, childcare facilities or other community locations. They work with parents and caregivers to teach children to use the vision they have and to use their other senses to develop and learn.
- **Orientation and Mobility Services:** As a child begins to move and walk, orientation and mobility specialists are available to conduct evaluations and provide services. Their role is to teach children to understand where they are in space and to move safely from place to place.
- **Occupational Therapy Services:** Occupational therapists are available to address children's individual needs in the areas of feeding and self-help skills, their ability to process a variety of sensory information – like sound and touch, and the use of their hands and small muscles.
- **Physical Therapy Services:** A physical therapist addresses children's ability to use bigger muscle groups to perform skills like sitting, crawling, standing and walking. They can also assist with specialized positioning equipment.
- **Speech and Language Therapy Services:** A speech and language pathologist is available to address feeding skills, a child's ability to communicate, and to understand the communication of others.

- **Low Vision Evaluation:** This is an assessment by an optometrist to provide information about how and what a child can see. Recommendations about environmental modifications and magnification are made as appropriate. For more information about low vision evaluations, talk with your child's vision teacher.

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

The Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments provides a variety of family support services for families and their children, from birth through high school graduation. Because each child and family is unique, we encourage families to choose among the services that will best meet their needs and address their concerns. Among these programs and services are:

- **Individual Family Support:** We welcome the opportunity to make individual visits with you to answer your questions, help you with challenges, help you access resources in the community, empower you to interact more effectively with professionals in your child's life and/or provide short-term counseling.
- **Family Support Groups:** Throughout the year, a variety of opportunities are offered for families to meet and network, learn about topics of interest, and have fun.
 - **Buddy Builders** is a class for children up to age three and their parents or caregivers. The classes are generally offered the first two Wednesday mornings of the month from September through May and the first Wednesday morning of the month during the summer. Parents attend the classes with their children and engage in music and other fun activities that are adapted for children with visual impairments. On the first Wednesday of each month, parents leave their children in the care of our staff and volunteers for an hour to attend a parent meeting.
 - **Parent Universities** are educational meetings for parents and/or caregivers on specific topics. The topics vary depending on the interests of families. They may include meetings about common eye conditions, medical conditions, behavior, and/or school services. We welcome ideas for topics from families we serve.
 - **Family Activities** Periodically, fun family activities are offered at the Center or in the community. Activities are chosen and accommodations are made so that all children can participate and have fun. Brothers and sisters are welcome to attend these activities, too.
- **Loan Libraries:** Parents can borrow toys and books from our loan libraries. There are books for parents about raising a child with visual impairments and books for young children with braille and print. Our volunteers can also add braille to your favorite baby books upon request. A limited number of braille books for older children are also available on loan. For more information, talk with your child's vision teacher.
- **Parent-to-Parent** connections are made between parents of young children or parents facing a new challenge and trained, experienced parents. If you think it would be helpful for you to talk with someone who has faced similar challenges, we will make every effort to help you make that connection. Talk with your vision teacher or contact the Center to make this request.

GROUP RECREATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORT, GRADS

The Center hosts support and recreation meetings for children with visual impairments, aged 3 through high school completion. The groups work on goals in the areas of social skills and friendships, increased independence and increased participation in the community. They offer participants

opportunities for peer support and a chance to try a variety of fun activities at the Center and in the community. Group members are also introduced to positive role models. On-going groups meet monthly from September through May. Explorers have opportunities to participate in special activities in the summer; Challengers and Chat and Party groups participate in exciting summer challenge trips. The groups include:

- **Explorers** for children ages three through five
- **Challengers I and Challengers II** for children ages six through 14
- **Chat and Party** for children ages 14 years through high school completion

Other groups meet at different times throughout the year to focus on specific activities. These include:

- **Tandem Adventurers:** Enjoy the thrill of the wind - join the Tandem cycling team! This seasonal group enjoys two-hour rides weekly from April thru September. Tandem bikes and trained captains are paired with riders (over 10 years old).
- **Spinning:** A challenging mind and body experience in a group setting (over 10 yrs). Led by a certified trainer, music is used to motivate each ride through a variety of speed and resistance challenges. This off-season activity keeps you in shape for tandem cycling in the spring.
- **Trekker Adventurers:** Have a nature deficit disorder? Get outside with this monthly hiking club for youth 7-18 years old. Join the Trekkers for six hikes in the St. Charles, Missouri area. Each adventure will vary in challenge, yet appeal to all. Hikers will fall in love with being outside!
- **Weight Lifting:** Be stronger than your strongest excuse! This seven-week program will allow individuals to achieve personal fitness goals with certified trainers. Participants age 14-18 will learn how to properly use gym equipment through individual and group instruction.
- **Experience the Arts – Music:** Bring music to life by discovering your passion through this program! Offerings are available for beginners through those who have already mastered an instrument.

For more information about our programs and services, see our website, www.dgckids.org or contact us at 314-776-1300 or info@dgckids.org

PROGRAM POLICIES

Enrollment for Services:

- **Early intervention, infants – age two:** To receive services, a family must enroll in their state's early intervention program – First Steps in Missouri or Child and Family Connections in Illinois. Then an assessment will be scheduled. If, after the assessment, staff feel the child would benefit from services, the service coordinator will schedule an Individual Family Service Plan meeting, or IFSP. At that meeting, parents and service providers will make decisions about services.
- **Family Support Services, infants – high school completion:** These services are available to all families enrolled in early intervention as well as any family of children who have not yet completed high school.

- **GRADS, ages three – high school completion:** These services are available to children who are eligible for vision services at school or have a qualifying visual impairment. Children must also meet specific readiness indicators. In addition to the required paperwork, parents and children must meet with GRADS staff as a part of the enrollment process.

For more information and enrollment forms, visit our website at www.dgckids.org, or contact us at (314) 776-1300 or info@dgckids.org

Cancellations: Services may be cancelled when driving is hazardous due to inclement weather. Announcements of closings will be made on television on KMOV Channel 4, Fox Channel 2, KSDK Channel 5, and Facebook. Closings will also be announced on the Center’s event hotline, (314) 776-1300, extension 6. For cancellation of individual services, staff will attempt to contact families personally as well.

Illness: For the safety of our staff and the other children we serve, we ask that you cancel services, including classes and home visits, if your child has a fever, any infectious or communicable disease, is vomiting or has severe diarrhea. He or she should be symptom-free for 24 hours before receiving service.

If your child has a chronic contagious condition, we will consult with his/her physician before making a decision regarding any risk to the health and safety of others.

If your child has been exposed to a contagious disease while attending a group activity or event, you will be notified and given pertinent information.

Cancellations, Missed Visits, and Termination of Services: In order to provide optimal services, consistent attendance is important. While every effort will be made to accommodate each family’s needs and schedule, the Center reserves the right to terminate a service due to poor attendance. If **early intervention services** are routinely cancelled (attendance is under 75% over a two month period), we will talk with you about changes in services so that they are more realistic for you and your child.

For children enrolled in the **GRADS program**, we reserve the right to limit the participation on summer trips based on inconsistent attendance.

Restriction or termination of services requires a review by the Executive Director at a minimum, and must meet one of the following criteria:

- Change in child’s eligibility for services.
- The safety of the child or other children is at substantial risk.
- Poor attendance, as specified above.

Medication Administration: The Delta Gamma Center does not have a physician or a nurse on staff. Parents are required to administer medication to their children when they are present. When parents are not present, a staff member who has medication administration certification (or medical professional, if present), will be responsible for administering it.

A physician’s order and parent consent form is required before any prescription or nonprescription medication can be administered. Prescription medication must be part of the physician’s current medication regime for the child and the medication container must have a pharmacy label which includes the child’s name, date the prescription was filled, dosage, route, frequency of administration, and expiration date. All nonprescription medicine shall be in the original packaging and shall be labeled with the child’s name.

Medication will be maintained in a locked container at all times, except while being administered. Medication reactions will be reported to the parent or guardian, the Executive Director, and the prescribing physician. Emergency measures will be taken as needed.

Medical Emergencies: Any child participating in a Delta Gamma Center event without his/her parent present must have a signed emergency release form on file dated within the previous twelve months. In a minor emergency, if possible, arrangements for emergency treatment will be discussed with the parent/guardian. In a serious or life threatening emergency, the staff responsible will call 911. If a child is transported by ambulance to an emergency room, the lead staff member will accompany the child to the hospital. After medical assistance has been secured, every effort will be made to contact the parent/guardian.

Diastat Administration Procedure:

From time to time, clients may present epilepsy that is resistant to control by drug or other therapy. In order to protect the health and well-being of children in our care, 911 will be called so they can make an assessment of the child's medical stability when Diastat is administered by individuals who are not medically trained.

Diastat is a gel preparation of diazepam for rectal administration in the treatment of cluster seizures or prolonged seizures in the patient who has refractory epilepsy. The dose will be prescribed by the treating physician, based on age and weight of the child. When to give during a seizure should be decided by the treating physician and available in the child's file.

Diastat shall only be administered by staff or volunteers who are designated to do so and in accordance with the physician's order in the client file. Those designated staff or volunteers shall complete Diastat training, unless he/she is a medically trained person with related experience, and with the capability to make an assessment as to the child's medical stability.

If the person administering Diastat **is not** a medically trained person qualified to make an assessment as to whether the child is stable, a call shall be placed to 911 after administration of Diastat. If the person administering Diastat **is** a medically trained person, he/she can complete an assessment on the child after administration of the Diastat.

After administration of Diastat, parents should be contacted and informed of the situation, including whether a call has been placed to 911. If they are onsite, parents can make their own assessment regarding their child's stability & further medical follow up necessary.

Discipline: The discipline policies are designed to encourage positive behavior and to ensure the safety and security of all who receive Delta Gamma Center services and/or participate in Center-sponsored events or activities.

- Positive reinforcement, in the form of verbal praise and attention, is used to encourage appropriate behavior in classes and at all events.
- Minor misbehavior, that is not disruptive or threatening to the child or to others, is redirected or handled appropriately by the group leader.
- Behavior that is disruptive and/or threatening to a child or others is considered a behavioral incident and is addressed immediately. In such a situation, a group leader may temporarily exclude the child from group activities for the appropriate number of minutes for the child's age and developmental level (a general rule of one minute per year of age).
- In an emergency, when a child continues to be disruptive, he/she may need to be removed from the class or activity to a quiet place, in the company of a staff person or parent, for up to 15 minutes or until he/she regains composure. Such incidents shall be discussed with parents and documented on an incident report that is placed in the child's file. When a child requires time-

out to regain composure, a behavior plan must be put into place that specifies how and under what conditions this may be used and which staff persons are authorized to implement the plan.

- If behavior incidents occur with frequency (e.g. during five consecutive classes or events) a meeting with parents/guardians will be held to develop a behavior plan. The plan will be placed in the client's file.
- In cases where behavior is not improving, an outside consultant may be requested to evaluate the situation.

Under no circumstances are chemical restraints, mechanical restraints, or physical punishment used to address behaviors.

Classroom Hygiene: Consistent with licensure regulations, a variety of precautionary measures are taken in an effort to prevent the spread of disease. The classrooms are cleaned after each use and toys are cleaned with a disinfectant. During diaper changes, gloves are worn, diapers are changed in designated areas, and diapers are disposed of in covered containers. Universal precautions, such as hand washing, are required.

Transportation of Clients/Families: Staff does not transport clients and families.

Visitors: If you would like to bring visitors to group activities with you, please notify your child's teacher in order to avoid too many visitors in the room at one time. To protect the privacy of the families we serve, all visitors observing programming at the Center are required to complete and sign a confidentiality agreement.

Privacy Policy: The Delta Gamma Center adheres to the laws of privacy in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). For more information on the privacy of your child's records, please ask to see the Delta Gamma Center privacy policy.

Complaints: So that staff can meet the needs of families and children to the maximum extent possible, families are encouraged to voice their concerns to the appropriate staff, and make suggestions for other ways to better address their needs and the needs of their children. This includes, but is not limited to, concerns regarding program placement or any aspect of treatment or administrative matters. If the initial concern cannot be resolved with the staff person involved, the parent may discuss their concern with the Program Coordinator or Executive Director. The Executive Director will gather information from all parties and determine a resolution as quickly as possible, and within 14 days or less.

If satisfactory resolution is not achieved, parents/guardians have the opportunity to appeal the matter for a final review by the Vice Chair of Programs and Services on the Board of Directors, to be completed within 30 days.

To file a complaint regarding protected health information contact the Privacy Officer at the Center, 314-776-1300 or info@dgckids.org

Safety: While all of the above policies were created to assure the safety of all the children, the DGC has additional policies and procedures in place for child safety, including:

- A background screening is required on all staff and regular program volunteers, including a Missouri criminal record and child abuse/neglect check.
- Program staff are required to maintain first aid and CPR certification.
- As mandated by law, staff is required to report all suspected cases of abuse and neglect.

- An adequate child to staff ratio is maintained at all times; however in the unlikely event of an unforeseen, rare event, emergency procedures are in place to address issues such as a missing child, medical emergency, natural disaster, etc.
- The Center conducts fire and tornado drills.
- The Center maintains the hygiene standards consistent with the requirements of OSHA.

If satisfactory resolution is not achieved, parents/guardians have the opportunity to appeal the matter for a final review by the Vice Chair of Programs and Services on the Board of Directors, to be completed within 30 days.

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Children's and Families Rights

All children and families of the Delta Gamma Center for Children with Visual Impairments have the following rights:

- The right to receive services without regard to race, creed, sexual orientation or national origin;
- The right to expect services in accordance with high standards and in safe and sanitary conditions;
- The right to be treated with dignity and respect;
- The right to expect information shared to be kept confidential unless written consent is given to share it;
- The right to review any information in their child's records with staff upon request and to receive a copy of any information in their child's file that was written by Delta Gamma Center staff;
- The right to discuss any concerns openly with the staff;
- The right to withdraw from programming at any time;
- The right to apply the agency's grievance policy.

Opportunities to Support the Center

Because public funds may not apply to all services offered, or cover the full cost of services, other funds are important. A combination of other funds from public and private grants, local public funds, and agency-sponsored fundraising also support our services. We are also dependent upon large numbers of volunteers. While they are not required to do so, parents are always invited to give back to the Delta Gamma Center. Please check our newsletter or call the Development Director to inquire about ways you can help.

A Final Word...

After reading this Handbook, please do not hesitate to contact our staff with any questions or concerns. If you would like to receive a copy of the Delta Gamma Center Program Policies, please contact the office manager. We also ask that you complete and return the sign off sheet for our records.

It is more than our job, it is our privilege to work with you and your child! We are here to do what we can to assist you in meeting the challenges of raising your child and to celebrate with you as your child learns and grows.