

# **Interpreting Low Vision Reports: A Guide for Supporting Individuals with Combined Hearing and Vision Loss**

This resource is designed for professionals supporting individuals who are DeafBlind. Understanding a low vision report is essential for identifying how a person uses their remaining vision and what accommodations or tools will best meet their needs. By breaking down key components like visual acuity, field of vision, and contrast sensitivity, this guide equips you to interpret reports effectively and apply practical strategies to improve access, mobility, and communication for DeafBlind individuals

## Key Components of Low Vision Report

### Visual Acuity

**Definition**: Measures how clearly a person can see at a standard distance (20 feet). **Example**: 20/20, 20/200, 20/400

* **20/20**: Normal vision.
* **20/200**: Legally blind (sees at 20 feet what a person with normal vision sees at 200 feet).
* **The larger the second number, the worse the visual clarity.**

**Why It Matters**: Helps determine whether the individual can read print, recognize faces, or navigate visually.

### Field of Vision

**Definition**: The total area a person can see while focusing straight ahead.

* **Normal**: ~180 degrees horizontally.
* **Conditions**:
  + **Reduced Peripheral Vision (Tunnel Vision)**: Limited side, upper and lower vision, common in retinitis pigmentosa.
  + **Central Vision Loss**: Blurry or missing central sight, common in macular degeneration.

**Why It Matters**: Field loss impacts mobility, scanning ability, visually accessing sign language and reading.

### Contrast Sensitivity

**Definition**: The ability to distinguish objects from their background.

* **Example**: Difficulty seeing white text on a light gray background or low-light environments.

**Why It Matters**: Affects daily tasks like reading, detecting curbs, or identifying objects.

### Light Sensitivity and Glare

**Definition**: Some individuals may struggle with bright lights, glare, or transitioning between light and dark environments.

**Why It Matters**: Impacts comfort in certain lighting conditions (e.g., need for sunglasses or tinted lenses).

### Color Vision

**Definition**: Ability to identify and differentiate colors.

* **Example**: Difficulty distinguishing red from green or blue from yellow.

**Why It Matters**: Important for tasks like reading color-coded materials or recognizing traffic lights.

### Preferred Reading Medium/Font Size

**Definition**: Recommendations for text accessibility (e.g., large print, braille, digital magnification).

* **Example**: 18-point Arial font, screen magnification software.

**Why It Matters**: Ensures materials are accessible for reading and learning.

## Recommendations and Accommodations

Look for suggested tools and strategies that help the individual access their environment:

* **Low Vision Devices**: Magnifiers, CCTVs, screen magnification or screen reader software.
* **Glare Control**: Tinted lenses, hats.
* **Lighting**: Task lighting or reduced glare environments.

## Tips for Supporting the Individual

* **Ask about Preferences**: Each person may use different tools or strategies to maximize vision.
* **Adjust the Environment**: Good lighting, high contrast, and organized spaces help.
* **Incorporate Assistive Technology**: Apps, screen readers, or screen enhancement and magnification software
* **Be Patient**: Vision loss varies, so allow time for tasks and adjustments.

## Unique Considerations when Working with Individuals with a Combined Hearing and Vision Loss

* **Communication Impact**: Limited visual access may affect the ability to use visual sign language, read lips, or see text. Adjustments to font size, lighting, and distance are critical.
* **Mobility and Orientation**: Reduced visual acuity or field of vision can impact navigation. Pairing strategies like tactile maps or guided orientation with hearing accommodations may be necessary.
* **Contrast Sensitivity**: Difficulty distinguishing objects or text in low-contrast environments can affect daily tasks. High-contrast materials and tactile cues may offer greater support.
* **Lighting and Glare**: Understanding the person’s light sensitivity or need for bright, even lighting helps optimize visual access without causing discomfort.
* **Hearing Integration**: Use the low vision information alongside hearing reports to understand how combined sensory loss impacts the individual’s ability to gather information.

## Conclusion:

By considering these factors, professionals can create an accessible environment that enhances communication, mobility, and independence for individuals with combined hearing and vision loss