A DTV is NOT a Vision Therapist

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MISCONCEPTION:

Sometimes, DTVs are mistakenly called Vision Therapists rather than Developmental Therapists for Vision. A DTV is actually a Teacher for the Visually Impaired credentialed to work in the Illinois Early Intervention Services System.

Vision Therapist: The term Vision Therapy refers to something specific in the vision community and it is not what DTVs are trained or credentialed to provide. The term Vision Therapy refers to services provided by a doctor and describes specific clinical procedures that are primarily provided by optometrists with a focus on a number of different visual problems. These problems could include inadequate accommodative or convergence ability, amblyopia, eye fixation inaccuracies, binocular coordination problems and combinations of the previous particularly in relation to their interference with visual reading and learning. Visual perceptual problems are also tested, analyzed, and treated when appropriate.

Developmental Therapist for Vision: A DTV is not a Vision Therapist and does not provide Vision Therapy. Instead, a DTV focuses on infant and toddler development. Most people can easily imagine the difficulties in learning that might result from growing up with a vision loss. But many parents, early intervention providers, optometrists, and ophthalmologists are unaware of the existence of the educational services that a DTV is trained to provide.
A RESULT OF THE MISCONCEPTION:

The misconception that DTVs are providing Vision Therapy services has a negative impact on children and their families.

First, some optometrists and ophthalmologists may be reluctant to refer children for early intervention services, even when a child has a diagnosed visual impairment. DTVs are not trained to provide Vision Therapy services, and when an eye doctor misunderstands that this is the service that DTVs provide – then the doctor may encourage parents not to pursue early intervention DTV services. While Vision Therapy services are most often recommended for school-aged children for eye muscle imbalance and focusing problems.

Second, when an optometrist or an ophthalmologist examines a child and determines a course of action related to a child’s vision loss that does not include Vision Therapy services – that doctor may misunderstand the DTV’s role and be upset to learn that the family’s early intervention team is considering adding a DTV to the child’s services. When, in fact, educational services related to vision loss are a reasonable accommodation for the child with low vision.

Third, families may receive conflicting information. Their early intervention team may encourage them to pursue DTV services (sometimes misnamed vision therapy) while their eye doctor may discourage DTV services (under the perception that vision therapy is being suggested). These parents are asked to make difficult decisions about their child in the midst or very confusing and conflicting information.

Fourth, when confusion about the role of DTVs exists, DTVs may have difficulty obtaining necessary information from the child’s eye doctor. Since DTVs are not doctors, they rely on information from the doctor’s examination to learn the extent of a child’s visual loss and the long-term ramifications of the diagnosis. For example, if a child has a field loss as seen through an ophthalmologist’s internal eye exam, the DTV needs this information. It will dramatically impact the way in which information is presented to the child so that he can learn about his world and function safely within it. When DTVs, with parents’ permission, request information from the doctor, the doctor may be reluctant to provide the information to the non-medical person whom they mistakenly perceive as trying to provide a service they are not legally allowed to provide...that being the DTV.

Please, do not use the term Vision Therapist when referring to a DTV. A Developmental Therapist for Vision, is the trained specialist who provides for the developmental needs of children with diagnosed visual impairments as part of the Illinois Early Intervention Services System.