

Vision Impairment Among Children

FACT: About 1 in every 1,000 school-age children in metropolitan Atlanta has low vision or is legally blind, measured as visual acuity of 20/70 or worse in the better eye.

Not being able to see well alters how a child understands and functions in the world. Impaired vision can limit the range of experiences and the kinds of information a child is exposed to. That can affect a child's emotional, neurological, and physical development. Children with vision impairment often need special education and other services to help in their development. The average lifetime cost associated with vision impairment is about \$566,000 per person (in 2003 dollars).



CDC's Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities Surveillance Program (MADDSP) is one of the few programs in the world that actively tracks the number of children with vision impairment in a large, diverse metropolitan area over time.

MADDSP tracks the number of school-age children living in five counties of metro Atlanta who have vision impairment, cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities, hearing loss, and/or autism spectrum disorders. In 1996, an estimated 1.4 per 1,000 8-year-olds in metro Atlanta, or about 1 in 715, had vision impairment. In 2000, the prevalence was an estimated 1.2 per 1,000, or about 1 in 833, 8-year-olds. About one half (2000) to two thirds (1996) of children with vision impairment also had one or more other developmental disabilities tracked by MADDSP.

MADDSP also allows CDC and other researchers to do special studies to identify risk factors for these disabilities and to determine whether efforts to prevent disabilities have been effective.

Related CDC Activities

- The Metropolitan Atlanta Developmental Disabilities (MADDS) Follow-up Study of Young Adults followed a subset of children identified by the study who had vision impairment, hearing loss, intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, and/or epilepsy. The study assessed participants' current functioning and their transition to adulthood, as measured by employment, education after high school, and living arrangements. It also examined their mental and physical health and their lifestyles and behaviors.
- Using data from the National Health Interview Survey, researchers are examining health status and health care use among children with vision impairment.

To read more about CDC's publications related to vision impairment, visit www.cdc.gov/visionimpairment.

Promoting the health of
babies, children, and adults,
and enhancing the potential
for full, productive living.

1.888.232.5929
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd

Department of Health and Human Services