



A DIVISION OF MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR  
THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED, INC.

# Miami Lighthouse Academy Blind Babies Program Children's Programs

Mara Gonzalez, Academy Director

Michael Berger, Teacher of the Visually Impaired

# Miami Lighthouse Academy

- ▶ *APPLE Gold Seal Accredited*
  - ▶ Exceeds Florida licensing standards
  - ▶ Accredited for high-quality care
  - ▶ Only 20-22% of eligible Florida childcare programs earn this designation
- ▶ *HighScope Curriculum*
  - ▶ First vision rehabilitation educational institution in the U.S. to implement the international HighScope Curriculum
  - ▶ First fully inclusive model applying HighScope with blind learners
- ▶ *Conscious Discipline*
  - ▶ Evidence-based, trauma-informed SEL program
  - ▶ Focus on emotional regulation & classroom management
- ▶ *M-DCPS Partner*
- ▶ *ELC Partner: Offer Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) & School Readiness (SR)*
- ▶ *University of Miami Research Study*
  - ▶ Teacher-child emotional & behavioral support scored above national CLASS averages
  - ▶ CLASS is an industry-standard classroom assessment tool

# About Miami Lighthouse Academy

- ▶ Inclusive learning model: Birth-2 (B2) & Pre-K classrooms
- ▶ Specialized K-3 programs; expanding to 4th grade in 2026-2027
- ▶ Provides early intervention services throughout Miami-Dade County
- ▶ Small class sizes; Approximately 5:1 student-teacher ratio
- ▶ Co-teaching model includes:
  - ▶ Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVIs)
  - ▶ Florida-certified general education teachers
  - ▶ Teacher assistants
- ▶ Focus on specialized and inclusive instruction

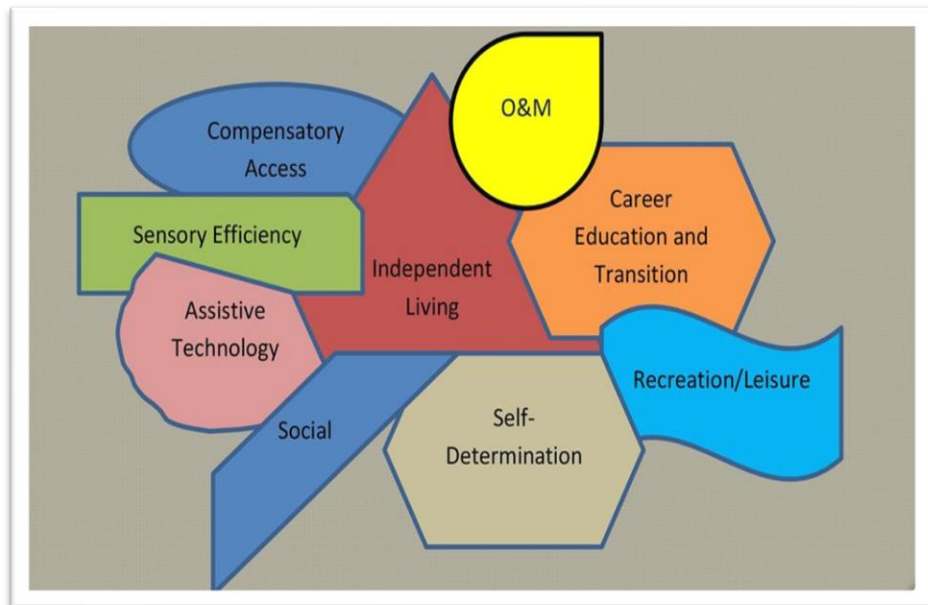


# What Does Miami Lighthouse Academy Offer?

- FL Certified General Education Teacher & ITDS
- Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)
- Orientation & Mobility Specialist (O&M)
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Speech/Language Pathologist
- Transportation (upon availability)
- Music Therapy
- Extended Care (has a fee)
- Free breakfast, lunch & afternoon snack (for those who qualify)
- Summer Program (7 weeks)
- Blind Soccer



- Utilize an Expanded Core Curriculum to teach additional skills needed to students who are visually impaired.
- Assistive technology, career education, compensatory skills, independent living skills, orientation and mobility, recreation and leisure, sensory efficiency, self determination skills, and social skills.



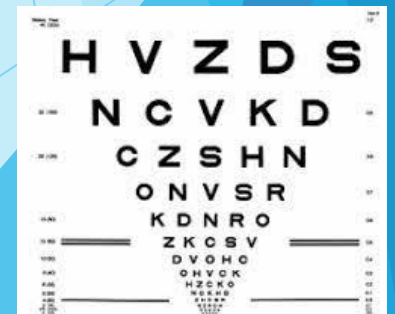
# Implementing Accommodations

- Identify at an early stage what accommodations are needed for the child.
- Preferential seating depending on eye condition.
- Utilizing special equipment (braille, canes, screen readers, etc)
- Extended time to complete activities.
- Provide more manipulatives than a typical classroom.
- Reduce visual clutter to decrease complexity in the classroom.
- Provide a small classroom size at an early age to provide the time and resources needed for the child's development.

# How do students qualify to attend Miami Lighthouse Academy?

Students who are visually impaired must have a qualifying visual diagnosis of:

- 20/70 visual acuity or worse
- A peripheral field loss
- A neurological visual impairment impacting their ability to see such as Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI)
- A document (form 1665) provided by Miami-Dade County Public School in which the child's Ophthalmologist qualifies them for services meeting the benchmarks noted above.



# Why is early intervention important?

- ▶ Helps children overcome challenges related to visual impairment or blindness
- ▶ Supports developmental growth:
  - ▶ Children with visual impairments may reach milestones more slowly
  - ▶ Vision loss can limit access to:
    - ▶ Environmental information
    - ▶ Social cues
    - ▶ Incidental learning
- ▶ Early intervention team provides:
  - ▶ Family resources & support
  - ▶ Specialized learning experiences
  - ▶ Expert guidance
- ▶ Ongoing assessments help:
  - ▶ Identify student needs early
  - ▶ Determine appropriate services & supports
  - ▶ Support transition into educational settings



# Blind Babies Program (BBP)

- Early intervention and parent education for children, birth - 6 years old
- Home and center-based visitations
- Supports families, empowers parents, and encourages blind & visually impaired children's readiness to learn
- Weekly playgroups at our state-of-the-art facility where learning is fostered through active play
- This program has no cost to parents as it is funded by Division of Blind Services of Florida(DBS), and The Children Trust (TCT).

## **Home Visitation Program:**

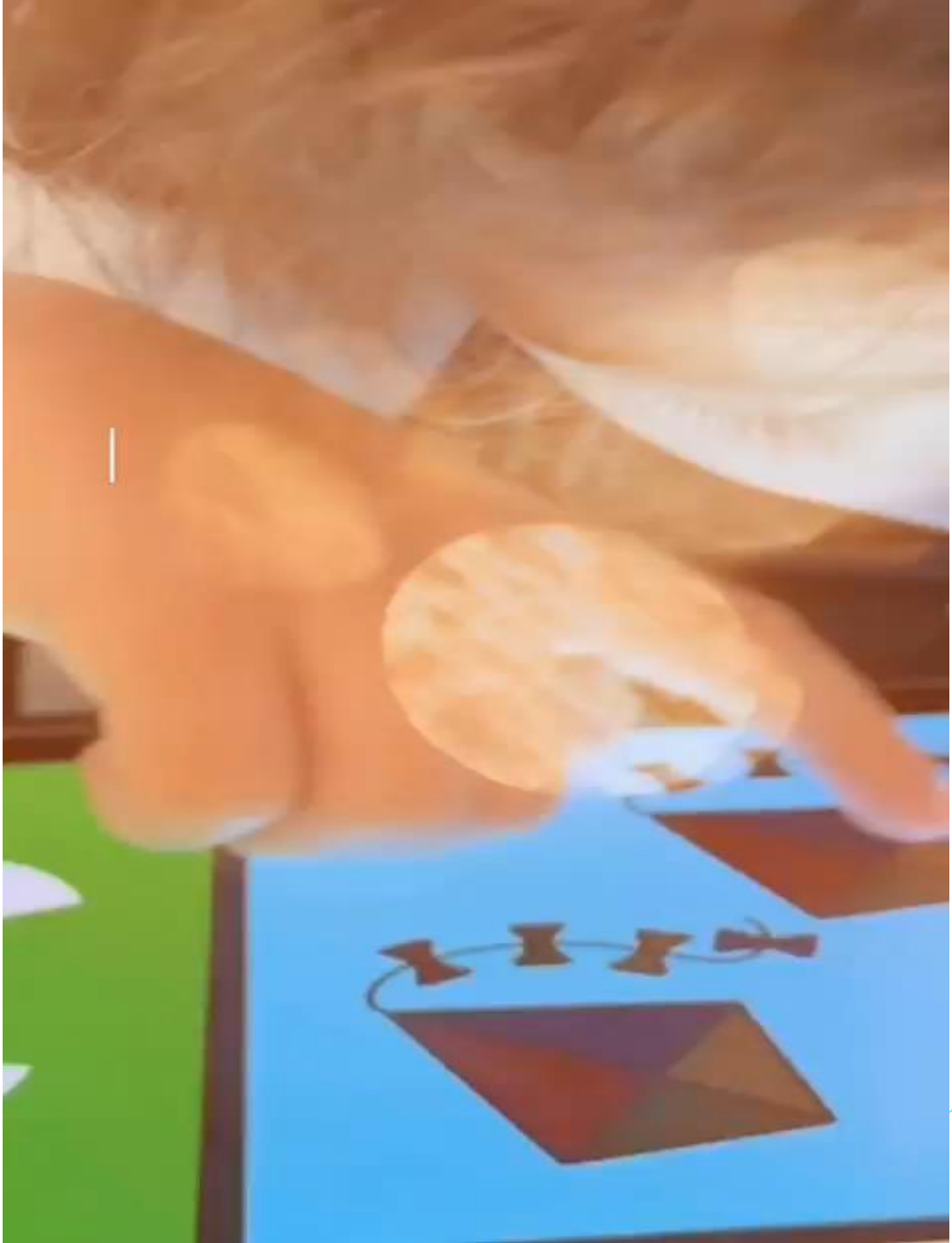
- Through the implementation of Parents as Teachers, an evidence-based early intervention home visitation model, MLH through the Blind Babies Program supports families, enables strong community building, and supports blind children's readiness to learn.

## **Playgroups:**

- Miami Lighthouse offers weekly playgroups at our state-of-the-art facility. Playgroups foster learning through active play and support social emotional, physical, cognitive, and sociolinguistic needs of blind or visually impaired children. Through a family-centered approach, families come together weekly resulting in a strong emotional support network for parents and caregivers.

## **Parent Support Groups:**

- Each quarter, the BBP provides supportive services for families on various topics based on a family needs assessment. Support groups include meet and greet, available community resources and how to access them.



## Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services)

- Our Pre-ETS program services blind & visually impaired individuals ages 14-22. The program provides the opportunity to develop skills to enter the work force or post-secondary education.



## Music Program

- Miami Lighthouse is the only organization in the nation offering an all-inclusive music, audio instruction & youth development program for the blind & visually impaired. The program services individuals from 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> grades year-round & in 6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade during a 7-week program in the Summer.



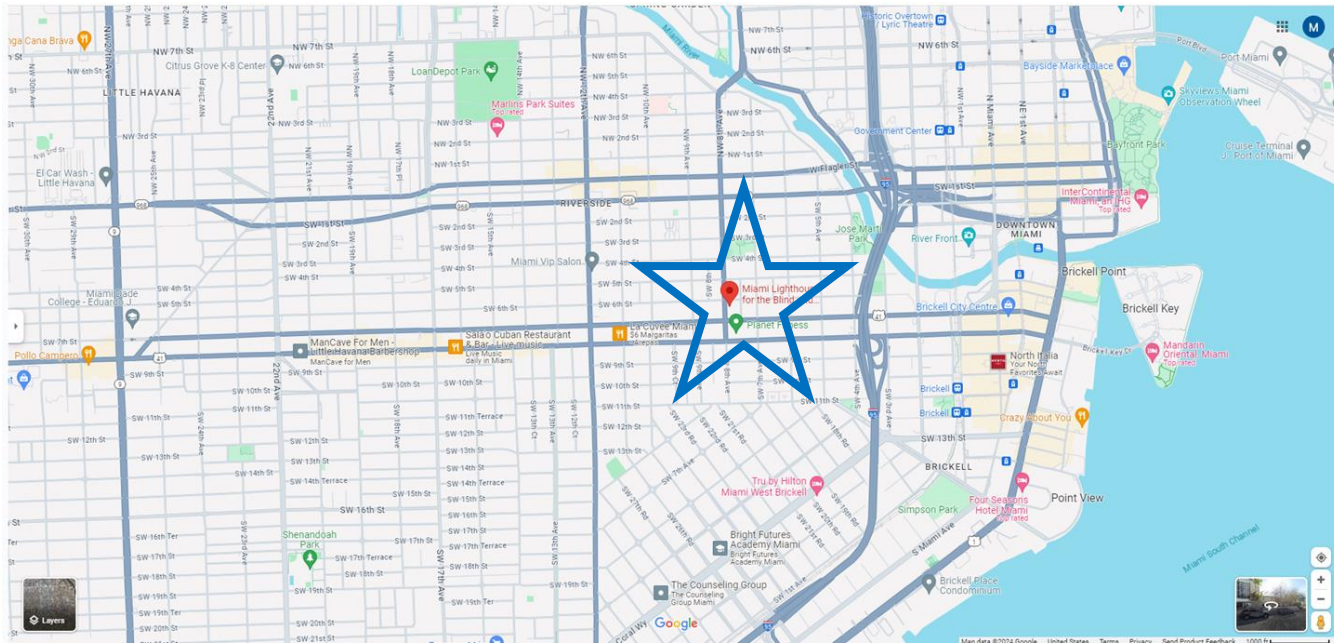
# What is a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI)?

- Trained and certified to instruct students who are blind or have low vision, including those with additional disabilities.
- Provide specialized instruction in essential skills that support student participation in educational settings, such as inclusion or reverse mainstream programs.)
- Central member of a child's educational team
- Serve students ages birth-21
- The Miami Lighthouse Academy has 4 certified TVI's providing services to students with a visual impairment.



# Where Are We Located?

➤ 601 SW 8<sup>th</sup> Ave Miami, FL 33130



# Informational Flyers



A DIVISION OF MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED, INC.

## MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE ACADEMY



Miami Lighthouse Academy is an APPLE Gold Seal accredited school offering an inclusive early learners' program serving children ages 1-4 including a VPK program. Students who are visually impaired and sighted share a supportive and engaging classroom environment utilizing Conscious Discipline and the HighScope Curriculum. Our Early Elementary, grades Kindergarten-3<sup>rd</sup> grade, serves children who are blind & visually impaired. Our classes are designed to support the cognitive, emotional, and social development of every child.

### REGISTER NOW

- ✓ Scored in the **Top 95% District-wide** on state testing!
- ✓ FL Certified Teachers
- ✓ FL Certified Teachers of the Visually Impaired
- ✓ Free Breakfast, Lunch, & Snack\*
- ✓ School Readiness Voucher Accepted\*
- ✓ After School Care\*
- ✓ Free Transportation\*

**FREE VPK**

For More Information Contact:

**786-362-7483**

601 SW 8th Avenue Miami, FL 33130  
[www.MiamiLighthouseAcademy.org](http://www.MiamiLighthouseAcademy.org)



\*upon availability & for those who qualify



## MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE *Early Intervention* SUMMER CAMP

**7:30AM-3:30PM**

**June 15<sup>th</sup>- July 31<sup>st</sup>**

**\*Weekly Themes**

**\*Water Days**

**\*In-House  
Field Trips**



**Free  
Transportation  
(upon availability)**

**Ages 1-4**



**786-362-7483 601 SW 8<sup>th</sup> Ave Miami, FL 33130**

## MAKE A REFERRAL TO MIAMI LIGHTHOUSE



Scan Me  
For Medical Referrals

### PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

Miami Lighthouse offers life-changing programs for children of all ages who have a vision impairment in order to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive. For questions about our children's services call Chief Program Officer Carol Brady-Simmons at 786-362-7480.

#### Early Intervention Blind Babies Program

Birth to age five, the Blind Babies Program promotes early development in children who are blind or visually impaired in their natural environment with special emphasis on vision skills to minimize developmental delays. Through the implementation of Parents as Teachers, and evidence-based early intervention home visitation model the BBP supports families and fosters strong community connections.

#### Miami Lighthouse Academy

Our Academy features small classes, certified teachers, related service therapies and the latest assistive technology to support students with vision impairments. For children ages one through four, we offer an inclusive early learning program with a VPK option. We also offer specialized classes for kindergarten through third grade designed for children who have a vision impairment. Classes are tailored to the unique cognitive, emotional, and social growth needs of the student. Academics align with Miami-Dade County Public Schools curricula and Florida Standards.

#### Pre-Employment Transition Services

This program provides young people 14 to 22 the opportunity to develop skills to enter the work force or post-secondary education. The program teaches students assistive technology, job readiness, career exploration, orientation and mobility, self-advocacy and activities of daily living.

#### Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Collaborative Center

In partnership with UM- BPEI, we are conducting a groundbreaking study on CVI, the leading cause of childhood blindness. Children ages 4-18 may qualify to participate. With early diagnosis and intervention, children with CVI can significantly improve functional vision. For infants and children, our CVI Center offers assessment and educational planning, post-diagnosis CVI-specific functional vision assessment (CVI Range Assessment), sensory balance learning media profile, and educational planning and recommendations for instructional intervention that address the child's unique learning needs to maximize the child's opportunity to access his or her academic materials and fulfill their educational potential.

#### Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program

The mission of our Florida Heiken Children's Vision Program is to prevent blindness and provide comprehensive eye health/vision exams and prescription eyeglasses at no cost to financially disadvantaged students in grades Pre-K through 12. These services are offered at no cost statewide, either on-site at schools via four mobile eye clinics or by our network of over 1,000 participating optometrists.

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### PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS

To inquire about adult services call Senior Case Manager Betty Chavarria at 786-362-7445.

#### Vocational Rehabilitation

This program is for clients that are either working or want to go back to work. The program provides comprehensive training in self-help skills, computer/adaptive technology and job readiness. Other services provided through the program include orientation and mobility, low vision services, and personal and home management. Clients also receive high-quality training in adaptive computer access using auditory screen reading and large print magnification devices as well as Braille reading/writing and the use of electronic book readers and electronic Personal Digital Assistance access.

#### Job Readiness

Miami Lighthouse helps a person who is blind or visually impaired analyze individual skills and interests to assist in the search for employment. Increasing one's personal independence allows for greater opportunities in the work environment.

#### Job Placement

Unemployed blind or visually impaired candidates who are seeking employment complete our Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program. The goal is to enable them to obtain or continue employment and educational activities as full participants in the community. During training clients learn computer skills adapted to their vision impairment.

#### Computer and Technology Training

Growing advances in technology allow a visually impaired person to lead a more independent life; therefore, it is necessary to have the proper training to learn and, in many cases, re-learn computer skills. We teach clients to use computers with speech or large print access that offer blind and visually impaired individuals an avenue for further employment and education. Learning to use computers with speech or large print access offers an avenue for further employment and education.

#### Personal Management

The goal of Personal Management is to instruct people of all ages to remain independent. Training includes home skills, kitchen safety, money identification, organizing one's home and personal affairs, and other tasks that need to be done differently due to vision impairment.

#### Independent Living

This program is for individuals who are not employed and intend to remain in their homes. These clients can receive orientation and mobility training, personal management instruction, basic computer training, and to participate in our social group activities, receive low vision services, and counseling services.

#### Orientation and Mobility (O&M)

O&M teaches individuals with visual impairments to travel safely, confidently and independently in their environment and develop the necessary skills to safely navigate in a variety of indoor and outdoor areas.

#### Senior Group Health and Activities Program (SGA)

The primary goal of the SGA is to facilitate independence and enhance socialization skills for visually impaired older adults through arts and crafts, social activities, and health monitoring groups, offering professional vision rehabilitation along with health-related services. Daily activities are designed to enhance motor skills, promote social interaction, and maximize functional independence.

#### Fitness

Fitness and wellness activities include exercise, field trips to local parks and areas of interest, blind soccer, and weekly Wing Chun sessions—a form of martial arts that enhances balance, coordination, and self-confidence.

#### Low Vision Services and Lighthouse Shop

Low Vision Services assist clients in utilizing their remaining useful vision to stay independent by teaching them how to manage tasks of daily living despite their vision loss. Clients receive a functional vision assessment from our low vision optometrist who works with our occupational/low vision therapist and licensed dispensing optician to prescribe assistive devices. Training on devices and advice on improving the home environment are given on site and in the home. To contact Low Vision Services, call 784-362-7514. Our [LighthouseShop.org](http://LighthouseShop.org) offers a variety of products including the latest in assistive technology devices, solar shields, healthcare products and much more. For questions about our Low Vision Services call John Garcia, Manager of Community Engagement, at 786-362-7479.



## For Referrals:

- Charelis Hernandez
  - 786-362-7481
  - [chernandez2@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:chernandez2@miamilighthouse.org)
  
- Karla Padilla
  - 786-362-7483
  - [kpadilla@miamilighthouse.org](mailto:kpadilla@miamilighthouse.org)



# Web & Social Media Information



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➤ @themiamilighthouse



➤ <https://www.facebook.com/themiamilighthouse>