**CVI Assessment Area - People (7:44)**

ILSE WILLEMS: Hello, my name is Ilse Willems. I'm a CVI project coordinator at the CVI center at Perkins. In this video, we'll be talking about access to people. What does access to people entail? It includes the ability to make and maintain eye contact, understanding facial expressions, understanding someone's mood, their level of interest, all of those non-verbal cues and information that you can receive by looking at someone's face, taking in the details of someone's face, and recognizing those around us.

In this photograph, you'll see a boy with CVI. His dad is right next to him, their faces are really close, just a few inches apart, and they're not talking they're looking right into each other's eyes. What the research says. What do we already know about access to people for individuals to CVI? We know that it can be difficult for them to visually process faces which includes, again, establishing and/or maintaining eye contact, recognizing those around them, identifying emotions and mood of those around them, and identifying gender.

What's the impact of access to people? For individuals with CVI, it can be difficult to visually tend to faces and make eye contact. They can use non facial visual attributes, such as someone's height and posture to identify those around them. They might use some facial visual attributes, such as knowing that someone wears glasses, the color of their hair, the length of their hair, details like that to help them know who's around them. And they can also use compensatory cues, such as someone's touch, their smell, being able to recognize footsteps to identify those around them.

Access to people requires ongoing assessment. We know that for individuals with CVI, their ability to make and maintain eye contact, recognize those around them can change over time. So you want to continue to evaluate this.

In this photograph, there's a student who is pointing to something on a black slant board. She's doing some work in her classroom. Her teacher is sitting to her left, and the student is turned bit towards her teacher with her face. But it's difficult to tell if she's really making eye contact.

Individuals with CVI can have difficulty making eye contact. They might make eye contact only with very familiar people, and they may demonstrate a looking through gaze, instead of clear eye to eye contact. In this photograph, there's a little girl in a pink motorized wheelchair. And her TVI is sitting right in front of her at eye level. And their faces are pretty close. The TVI isn't talking, and they seem to be looking right at each other.

Some individuals with CVI can have trouble recognizing people and thus, of course, it's hard for them to know who's around them at any time. They can have trouble interpreting facial expressions or understanding facial cues, which can, of course, have social implications. And they can have difficulty identifying familiar people in photographs.

In this picture, here, there's a girl with CVI. She's in a pink stroller. She's on the beach. And her two cousins are standing next to her, one on each side. One of her cousins is looking right at her face. The individual CVI doesn't appear to be making eye contact with her cousin, but she certainly looks very happy.

Let's talk a bit more about those social implications that can happen. It's difficult for an individual with CVI to find a specific person, especially at a distance or in a crowd. They might not know who's sitting next to them, what that person is doing, or how that person is feeling.

In this photograph, there is a classroom. There's lots of students sitting around a table, and the teacher is standing at the front of the classroom. So if there's an individual with CVI in this class, it might be hard for them to know exactly who's sitting next to them, who's sitting across the table, what his peers are doing, how they're feeling. Again, just being able to know who's around them, and all those social cues, such as understanding facial expressions, can be really difficult. They may be missing out on a lot of that information.

Here's an example of a greeting. In this photograph, we have that same little girl who was in a pink motorized wheelchair earlier with her same TVI. Again, the TVI is at eye level. Their faces are pretty close together, which makes it easier for the student. The TVI also has both her hands up in a high five motion. It appears in the photograph that the student is looking more towards her TVI's hands than her face, might be visually easier for this student. Again, the teacher is very close to her. And the teacher is not talking, which is another thing that might make it easier for the student to look towards her teacher's face when she's ready.

Like always, we like to include a couple of quotes from individuals with CVI. Nai is an adult with CVI, and she said, "Prosopagnosia is not only the inability to recognize faces, it can also involve experiencing faces as twisted and contorted. Trying to look at people made it impossible for me to pay attention to what they were saying. If I really wanted to hear them, I had to tune them out visually."

This is true for a lot of our students with CVI. It can be easier for them to tend to faces when someone isn't talking at the same time. So sometimes a student might make eye contact with you, and then once you start talking, you might notice that they're turning away. This way they don't have to multitask listening and looking at you at the same time, might be easier for them to utilize one sentence at a time.

Here's another quote. This is from a mom of a child with CVI. And she said, "My son thinks I'm trying to be funny when I'm upset. He's not able to see my facial expressions and body language to show that my tone of voice means I'm sad or upset. We have to do a lot of direct teaching around emotions and feelings." So again, if for an individual with CVI who is unable to clearly attend to faces and understand facial expressions, they can have a lot of social implications. They might not realize how mom or how their peers are feeling which again, can make it really difficult for them. So trying to teach them about emotions and, perhaps, teaching them other compensatory cues, such as a tone of voice, someone's posture, how loud someone is talking, that might give them some clues as to how somebody is feeling.

And our last quote is again, from a mom of a child of CVI. She stated, "My son won't recognize me when I pick him up at school unless I say something, move, and/or he's within two feet of me. Sometimes at home he doesn't realize I'm in the room and calls out for me even though I'm just a few feet away. " For a lot of our students with CVI, it can be difficult for them, again, to know who's around them, especially if someone's at a distance or there's a lot of people around them, can make it even harder for them to realize who's there.

If you'd like more information on access to people, here's the current research and literature on this topic. As always, every child will see these teachable. And every child has a right to a meaningful and accessible education. If you'd like more information on access to people or any of the other visual behaviors associated with CVI, please check out cvinow.org.