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**HRSA and AAP Award Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children
Program Grant to Prevent Blindness America, Children’s Vision
Massachusetts Coalition for Sight-Saving Project**

***- Funds will support the new “Healthy Eyes Healthy
Futures Massachusetts” Project -***

CHICAGO (Sept. 17, 2013) – Prevent Blindness America, the nation’s oldest non-profit eye health and safety organization, and the Children’s Vision Massachusetts coalition, are pleased to announce that they have been awarded a five-year grant totaling \$235,000 from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program to support children’s vision programming. The Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program is a collaborative effort between the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Maternal Child Health Bureau that distributes grants to promote community planning and problem solving at the local level.

Vision impairments are common conditions among young children, affecting 5 to 10 percent of all preschool-aged children.ⁱ In fact, only one in six children in the United States has ever received eye care services before their sixth birthday, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). If not detected and treated early, vision impairment could affect all aspects of life, negatively impacting a child’s ability to learn, athletic performance, and self-esteem. A leading preschool vision screening study notes that vision screening is critical to the welfare of our children and can have an impact not only on vision and eye health but also on social development and productivity.ⁱⁱ

To address this need, the groups will use the Healthy Tomorrows Partnership for Children Program grant to fund the “Healthy Eyes Healthy Futures Massachusetts” project. The goal of the collaborative effort is to identify and address vision problems in young children that may lead to developmental delay. In addition, the groups aim to elevate the role of vision health in existing developmental assessment and parent education efforts, specifically in the communities of Boston and Springfield, Mass.

As part of Healthy Eyes Healthy Futures Massachusetts, Prevent Blindness America and the Children’s Vision Massachusetts Coalition have outlined the steps that will be taken to complete the program, including:

- Convene a committee to review current developmental assessment tools and identify questions, procedures, and guidance for the integration of new vision questions.
- Develop messaging to be integrated into Reach Out and Read programs to help parents of all cultures better understand vision development, and the importance of assessing vision and correcting vision conditions to prepare young children for reading/school readiness.
- Work with the Massachusetts Departments of Public Health and Early Education and Care to develop messaging and identify resources that can be used to create a network of early education and school health professionals to support healthy eye development and care in high-risk young children.

“We want to thank HRSA and the AAP for their substantial support of our sight-saving programs and hope these new projects will help us better serve our communities. We hope this new pilot program will serve as model to help us work towards eliminating preventable blindness across the country,” said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness America.

For more information on the Healthy Eyes Healthy Futures Massachusetts program, general children’s eye health or Prevent Blindness America, please call 1-800-331-2020 or visit www.preventblindness.org.

About Prevent Blindness America

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates and regional offices, Prevent Blindness America is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

About Children’s Vision Massachusetts

In 2009, Massachusetts was selected by Prevent Blindness America to be one of five pilot states of the National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health to participate in an award from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau. This led to the establishment of **Children’s Vision Massachusetts**, a forty-five member coalition made up of parents, optometrists, ophthalmologists, nurses, pediatricians, public health professionals, family physicians, and advocates from twenty-three health, education and advocacy organizations across the state. The coalition is in the process of implementing a

statewide plan designed to improve comprehensive vision care for children in Massachusetts.

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ⁱ Calonge N. Screening for visual impairment in children younger than age 5 years: Recommendation statement. *Ann Fam Med*. 2004;2:263-266.

ⁱⁱ Hartmann EE, Bradford GE, Chaplin PK, Johnson T, Kemper AR, Kim S, Marsh-Tootle W; Project universal preschool vision screening: a demonstration project. *Pediatrics*. 2006;117:226-237.