A Vision for the Future: Designing an Evidence-Based, Universal Approach to Ensure Children’s Vision and Eye Health

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Children’s Vision & Eye Health

• Ensuring healthy vision in very young children promotes healthy development and an improved ability to learn
The Critical Need for Early Identification and Treatment

Development of Vision Infancy, 0-3 years
Lea Hyvärinen et al., 2014.
Effect of Supported Accommodation
Challenges

• Vision problems are present in 1 in every 20 preschool-age children in the U.S.
• Only 1 in 5 children screened by the age of 5
Challenges

• Currently, there is no uniform approach for:
  – funding vision and eye care for children,
  – screening procedures,
  – frequency of screening,
  – referral criteria,
  – follow-up methods, and
  – data collection
National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health

• Goal: *Create a public health infrastructure that promotes a comprehensive system of vision care and eye health for all young children through:*
  
  – Identifying and eliminating barriers to eye care
  – Establishing and implementing system improvements to reduce duplication of services & improve communication among providers
  – Providing resources to vision screeners, providers, and families
  – Supporting national efforts for children’s vision and eye health
What We Know: Children’s Vision & Long Term Health

- Undiagnosed and untreated amblyopia has a detrimental impact on development leading to long term impacts
  - self-esteem, physical ability, learning
- Early vision problems can impair pre-reading skills and may predispose to early learning problems
- Cumulative costs savings and improved quality of life with early intervention, when most readily treatable and relatively inexpensive
Recommendations from the National Expert Panel: Children 36 months to <72 Months

• The recommendations are published in the January 2015 issue of *Optometry and Vision* and focus on
  – Recommended Practices; Proposed Data Systems; Proposed Data Definitions

• Vision Health Systems for Preschool Age-Children website hosted by NCCVEH:
  http://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org/new-recommendations-vision-health-systems
Recommendations from the National Expert Panel

• All children 36-72 months should be screened annually (Best Practice)
  – At least once between 3rd and 6th birthdays (Minimum Standard)

• Vision screening requires training and certification of personnel with recertification every 3-5 years

• Vision screening programs must use adequate space, equipment, and supplies
Recommendations from the National Expert Panel

- Screening results must be communicated to:
  - Parents
  - Medical home/primary care provider
  - School
  - State agency

- Referral to ophthalmologist or optometrist when indicated

- Establishment of a robust data system that:
  - Is integrated with other health data
  - Accepts data from educational, community, public health settings, primary care and eye care
  - Is monitored for system performance
NCCVEH Empowering Key Stakeholder Groups to Ensure Early Detection and Treatment

- Evidence-based vision screening practices and improved follow-up to eye care
- Integrated data systems to improve surveillance
- State and national-level performance measures to track program accountability
Thank you!