

## **IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**For more information:**

Prevent Blindness

Sarah Hecker

(312) 363-6035

shecker@PreventBlindness.org

## **Prevent Blindness Declares August as Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month to Educate Parents, Professionals, and Government Leaders on the Importance of Healthy Vision for Kids**

***- Prevent Blindness Provides Opportunities for Awareness and Action in Support of New Legislation to Provide Much-needed Funding for Children’s Vision Programs in the United States -***

**CHICAGO (July 30, 2024)-** [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation’s leading volunteer eye health and safety nonprofit organization, has once again declared August as Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month. The goal is to educate parents, caregivers, professionals and policy makers on the important role vision and eye health plays in a child’s development, learning ability, and social engagement. Prevent Blindness offers free materials on children’s vision issues, such as [myopia](#) (nearsightedness) and [amblyopia](#) (lazy eye), provides information on access to eye care, and encourages individuals to advocate for federal funding for state and community children’s eye health programs.

A new report authored by volunteer researchers and staff of the [National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness \(NCCVEH\)](#), titled “[Association of Sociodemographic Characteristics with Pediatric Vision Screening and Eye Care: An Analysis of the 2021 National Survey of Children’s Health](#)” in *Ophthalmology*, found that only 53 percent of U.S. children received a vision screening in 2021. This disparity is even more pronounced among children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Without early detection and treatment, uncorrected vision disorders can impair healthy development, interfere with learning, and even lead to permanent vision loss. However, vision screening and regular eye care can help detect and treat potentially irreversible vision impairment. Visual functioning is a strong predictor of academic performance in school-age children.

In recognition of Children’s Eye Health and Safety Month, Prevent Blindness offers free resources including fact sheets, social media graphics, [toolkits](#), videos and webpages on a variety of topics on children’s vision from infancy through adolescence. The NCCVEH, now celebrating its 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, [provides resources](#) on getting your child ready for school, taking a child to an eye doctor, preparing your child for wearing glasses or contact lenses, tips for preventing eye injuries, and much more.

Prevent Blindness also recently launched the new “[Retinopathy of Prematurity \(ROP\) Education and Support Program](#),” as part of the first-ever ROP Awareness Week.

Retinopathy of Prematurity is a condition caused by abnormal development of retinal blood vessels, occurring as a complication of preterm birth and/or low birth weight. Prevent Blindness offers free [fact sheets](#) and [social media graphics](#) in English and Spanish, a dedicated webpage, and a [comprehensive new video series](#), featuring parents of children with ROP, ROP patients, a pediatric ophthalmologist, psychologist, ROP nurse, and family support organizations. The program is supported by funding from [Regeneron](#).

According to a [study from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), between 2001 and 2017 the number of people under age 20 living with type 1 diabetes increased by 45 percent, and the number living with type 2 diabetes increased by 95 percent. For teens and young adults, Prevent Blindness offers the new “[Diabetes + The Eyes: Vision Health in Youth](#)” website and fact sheet in English and Spanish. This resource provides detailed information on what parents and care partners need to know to help youth with diabetes protect their eye health. The resources were developed with support from [UnitedHealthcare](#).

Additionally, the Prevent Blindness [Focus on Eye Health Expert Series](#) has free episodes dedicated to children’s vision and eye health topics including:

- “[Children’s Vision and Eye Health](#),” with R.V. Paul Chan, MD, MSC, MBA, FACS, Head, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, The John H. Panton Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine, and Director, Pediatric Retina and Retinopathy of Prematurity Service, Illinois Eye and Ear, UI Health. Dr. Chan is also a volunteer member of the [Prevent Blindness Board of Directors](#).
- Through a partnership with Delta Gamma, “[Children's Vision and Parent Advocacy](#),” featuring Lauren C. Ditta, MD, Pediatric Neuro-Ophthalmologist at Le Bonheur Children’s Hospital and Associate Professor of Ophthalmology and Pediatrics at Hamilton Eye Institute, University of Tennessee Health Science Center, and Delta Gamma alumna.
- “[Partnering with School Nurses for Children's Vision and Eye Health](#),” with Donna Mazyck, MS, RN, NCSN, CAE, FNASN, former Executive Director of the National Association of School Nurses (NASN).

Also available online is the recent “[Emerging Eye Health Issues in Young Children](#)” webinar from the Office of Head Start’s National Center for Health, Behavioral Health and Safety. Expert speakers included Donna Fishman, director of the NCCVEH; Elise B. Ciner, OD, FAAO, Pennsylvania College of Optometry at Salus University; and Fuensanta A. Vera-Diaz, PhD, OD, Associate Professor of Optometry, New England College of Optometry, and volunteer on the Prevent Blindness Scientific Committee, who provided information on myopia prevention.

In order to promote early detection, care, and treatment for children’s vision, Prevent Blindness strongly encourages support of the newly introduced [Early Detection of Vision Impairments for Children \(EDVI\) Act](#). The EDVI Act is

landmark, bipartisan legislation that seeks to establish the first ever federal program for children's vision which will provide grants for states and communities to improve children's vision and eye health through coordinated systems of care, co-sponsored by [Congressional Vision Caucus \(CVC\)](#) co-chairs, U.S. Representative Gus Bilirakis (FL-12) and U.S. Representative Marc Veasey (TX-33). The [EDVI Act is currently endorsed](#) by more than 80 state and national organizations. Constituents are invited to contact their government representatives by visiting: [Advocacy.PreventBlindness.org/prevent-blindness-legislative-action-center/#/](https://Advocacy.PreventBlindness.org/prevent-blindness-legislative-action-center/#/)

State-by-state snapshots on children's vision screening requirements, as well as percentage of children screened, and percentage of children who have received eye examinations, are also available at: [Advocacy.PreventBlindness.org/edvi-childrens-vision-your-state/](https://Advocacy.PreventBlindness.org/edvi-childrens-vision-your-state/).

“Back in 1908, Prevent Blindness began as an organization dedicated to eradicating blindness in newborns. More than a century later, we continue to promote children's vision and eye health through public education and by advocating for support of programs that provide access to eyecare,” said Jeff Todd, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. “We encourage everyone to join us in this mission, and find out how to help us put our kids on the path to a lifetime of healthy vision.”

For general information on children's eye health and safety, visit [PreventBlindness.org/your-childs-sight/](https://PreventBlindness.org/your-childs-sight/). For information on the NCCVEH and its variety of programs, visit [NationalCenter.PreventBlindness.org/](https://NationalCenter.PreventBlindness.org/). Vision care financial assistance resources in English and Spanish may also be found at: [PreventBlindness.org/vision-care-financial-assistance-information/](https://PreventBlindness.org/vision-care-financial-assistance-information/).

### **About Prevent Blindness**

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness 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 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, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, visit us at [PreventBlindness.org](https://PreventBlindness.org), and follow us on [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

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