

Collaborative Solutions for Expanding Eye Care Access in Special Populations

As part the 2026 Prevent Blindness Focus on Eye Health Webinar Series, this roundtable discussion shared practical strategies and actionable ideas for building and strengthening partnerships to advance eye care access for foster youth, immigrant and refugee populations, and Tribal communities. Panelists included **Kristine Fortin, MD, MPH**, Attending Physician, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine; **Julie Le, OD, MBA**, Chief of Specialty Services (Eye Care), Lowell Community Health Center; and **Lori McCoy**, Director, Global Outreach, John A Moran Eye Center.

KEY TAKEAWAYS



1. Understand unique barriers.

Foster youth, immigrant and refugee populations, and Tribal communities each face distinct challenges that can limit access to eye care.



2. Build trust through partnerships.

Collaborate with trusted community organizations, meet people where they are, and engage local stakeholders in program design.



3. Bring care closer to patients.

School-based clinics, mobile services, telehealth, and community outreach can reduce barriers to care.



4. Support the whole person.

Pair vision care with transportation, insurance navigation, case management, culturally responsive communication, and patient choice.



5. Create sustainable programs.

Collect data, diversify funding, build local capacity, and develop strong referral networks to ensure long-term success.

ADVICE FROM OUR PANELISTS



Lori McCoy:

"Be flexible and create sustainable programs that help communities help themselves—work yourself out of a job."



Julie Le:

"Be patient and maintain active relationships—it can take years to build these programs, so keep going and stay persistent."



Kristen Fortin:

"Awareness is key—when you understand the special healthcare needs and life-changing impact of vision care, you'll make it happen."