

Children's Vision Massachusetts Story Bank

Prepared by *Brianne Bostian, MPH Candidate, Boston University School of Public Health*



When Glenn Focht was in elementary school, he always had to sit in the front row of the classroom in order to see what the teacher wrote on the board. When he failed a vision test in school, he was not surprised.

Glenn came from a family with limited financial resources and he knew his parents would not be able to afford glasses for him. He sold eggs from his chickens and worked on a paper route in order to raise enough money to pay for an eye exam and buy his own glasses. As Glenn states, it was not that his parents were neglectful, but, as with many families today, their situation was difficult at the time. By eighth grade, he had saved enough money and was able to pay for a comprehensive eye exam and purchase his own eyeglasses.

Today, Dr. Focht is the Chief Medical Officer of the Pediatric Physicians' Organization at Boston Children's Hospital (PPOC). The PPOC is a pediatric practice network of more than 200 member pediatricians who care for over 300,000 infants, children, adolescents and young adults throughout Eastern Massachusetts. He knows firsthand that there are many families with financial barriers to vision exams and eyeglasses and is a proponent for including basic vision benefits in insurance plans, as MassHealth does. Dr. Focht states that adequate vision care makes growing up safer for children and helps with successful development, including academic development.

"I think for both teachers and health care providers, understanding that one of the hidden reasons a child isn't performing in school could be an uncorrected vision problem is critical. There are kids whose vision issues are subtle but still preventing them from being able to see." Including vision as an avenue to explore when kids are falling behind developmentally or academically is an important message that Dr. Focht wants to convey. Vision problems are easily missed, and kids may not understand they have a problem if they have seen with impaired vision their entire lives.

As Chief Medical Officer of the PPOC, Dr. Focht is committed to reducing rates of preventable vision loss. He knows of many cases where vision screening in pediatric care identified serious problems that could have led to permanent vision loss if left undetected or untreated. His personal and professional experience makes him a strong advocate for supporting systems that ensure comprehensive vision care for all children.



Children's Vision
Massachusetts

Open Eyes. Open Doors.

For more information: ChildrensVisionMassachusetts.org