

FACTS ABOUT CHILDREN'S VISION:



UNDETECTED AND UNTREATED VISION PROBLEMS IMPACT HOW CHILDREN SEE THEIR WORLD

Checks on vision should be part of routine health care throughout childhood. Discussion of vision screening results, eye examination diagnoses, and vision concerns should be included in all well-child visits.

Annual visits to eye doctors (ophthalmologists and optometrists) and eyeglasses (including replacements if needed) are covered by Mass Health insurance. Private insurance plans provide benefits for eye exams, though not always for eyeglasses.

No child needs to be without vision care due to lack of finances. For assistance programs please visit our website.

- 1) *Childhood vision disorders are common: 1 in 17 preschoolers, and 1 in 4 school-aged children will require vision treatment.*
- 2) *Children may not complain they find it hard to see, because they do not know what normal vision is. Childhood vision conditions may not be noticeable by an adult. Vision screenings and eye examinations are the only way for parents and others to understand how well a child sees.*
- 3) *Many Massachusetts children do not have their vision condition treated throughout childhood, even after not passing a vision screening. Most childhood vision conditions are treatable. Unnecessary and permanent adult vision loss can occur simply because the child's vision disorder was not identified or treated during childhood.*
- 4) *Ensuring a child visits the eye doctor if they did not pass a vision screening, and following the eye doctor's prescribed treatment plan, including sharing the results with the child's school, will give children a better chance for healthy development and school success.*
- 5) *Children born prematurely, those diagnosed with neurodevelopmental delay, and those with special health care needs, should receive an eye exam by an eye doctor before entering Kindergarten.*

YOU CAN HELP:

Join our Facebook CVMA Parent Advocacy Group to learn more.

VISION AND LEARNING: MAKING THE CONNECTION



**Sometimes, seeing the world
through the eyes of a child
isn't easy... ask about vision.**



**Children's Vision
Massachusetts**

Open Eyes. Open Doors.

www.childrevisionsmassachusetts.org

Our Vision is that all children have the opportunity to develop and maintain their best possible vision.

ABOUT THE COALITION (CVMA):

Children's Vision Massachusetts is a volunteer coalition representing optometry, ophthalmology, nursing, pediatrics, public health, education and families with organizational affiliations including Boston Children's Hospital; Boston Medical Center; New England College of Optometry; Massachusetts Departments of Public Health, Early Education & Care; Community Catalyst; and Head Start.

CVMA's mission is to build a statewide, systematic approach to vision care for children which is universal, comprehensive, cost effective, collaborative, multidisciplinary, dynamic, sustainable, and evidence-based.

In 2004, the Massachusetts Legislature took steps to address gaps in the pediatric eye care delivery system with the passage and enactment of Chapter 181 of the Acts of 2004, An Act Relative to Eye Examinations for Children.

CVMA has embarked on research projects, educational programs, legislative action, collaborative efforts with partners, and developed resources in many languages. Our work has highlighted that significant disparities in awareness, access to, and utilization of pediatric eye care still exist. These gaps are especially severe for minority populations, and children living in low income communities, urban areas, western Massachusetts, and in the Cape and Islands.

THE CHALLENGE:

Vision in young children represents a profound intersection between early development and learning success, with that of good health and wellness. Healthy sight plays a role in long-term outcomes, including reducing poverty, improving reading readiness, increasing graduation rates, and fostering positive social relationships.

Research shows infants and preschoolers with untreated vision disorders may experience impaired parental bonding, delay in reaching motor and cognitive milestones, reduced social development, delayed language, and slower acquisition of early learning skills.

Between 2,000 and 3,000 Massachusetts infants and toddlers per year are at risk of developing Amblyopia (lazy eye), a condition that can be effectively treated, often just with eyeglasses, but only in a child's early years. Today Amblyopia remains the leading cause of blindness in adults under 45 years of age.

Early detection and treatment are therefore critical for best outcomes. But signs of vision problems in children may be subtle and misinterpreted as possible learning or developmental delays. A vision problem is not always the case, but ruling out vision as a cause or contributor before other program interventions are made, saves money and valuable time.

THE SOLUTION:

Assuring optimal vision for all children is solvable. We need to work together to close **significant gaps in awareness, resources, and access to vision care** across current MA systems.

A robust public health system will ensure these critical steps are taken and followed through:

- *Use of evidence-based vision screening techniques system-wide*
- *Time-sensitive action (an eye doctor appointment) when the child does not pass a vision screening*
- *Incorporation of childhood vision knowledge into training programs of professional personnel interacting daily with children*
- *A statewide data collection system for case management and surveillance, a public awareness campaign and targeted outreach*

By building a public health system with these components in place, every child can enjoy a lifetime of healthy vision and learning.

Please join us.

FREE RESOURCES:

Children's Vision Massachusetts:

www.childrevisionsmassachusetts.org

The National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health: <https://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org>

Join us on Social Media:

www.facebook.com/ChildrensVisionMassachusetts

<https://twitter.com/CVMA2016>

www.linkedin.com/in/children-s-vision-massachusetts

www.instagram.com/childrens_vision_ma/