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Children's Eye Health Position Statement

Prevent Blindness America recommends a continuum of eye care for children to include both vision screening and comprehensive eye examinations. All children, even those with no signs of trouble, should have their eyes checked at regular intervals. Any child who experiences vision problems or shows symptoms of eye trouble should receive a comprehensive eye examination by an optometrist or an ophthalmologist.

Prevent Blindness America and other organizations often perform vision screenings for children at schools, daycare centers, and other settings. While vision screenings and eye examinations are complementary approaches to assessing the eye problems of a child, a screening is used to identify a child at risk for vision problems and does not replace a comprehensive examination performed by an eye doctor.

A comprehensive eye examination includes an evaluation of the refractive state, dilated fundus examination, visual acuity, ocular alignment, binocularity, and color vision testing, where appropriate.

Suggested timetables for children's eye health, based on key children's health organizations are:

- Newborn infants should have their eyes checked while still in the hospital nursery. This examination in the nursery should be for general eye health and include a red reflex test. This examination can help detect several congenital eye problems, some of which can be very serious and permanently threaten vision.
- During regular well baby exams, from birth to 2 years of age, pediatricians should use history and a vision evaluation to see if vision problems exist. Beginning at well child exams at age 3 and continuing through 10 years of age, vision screenings should be performed assessing visual acuity and ocular alignment.
- If a child fails a vision screening or there is any concern of an eye or vision problem the child should be referred for a comprehensive professional eye examination. This combination of primary care physician eye examinations and vision screenings with referral for a comprehensive professional eye examination are the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Ophthalmology, and the American

Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus. The American Optometric Association supports primary care physician evaluations and regularly scheduled vision screenings, but also recommends that a comprehensive professional eye examination be performed by an eye doctor at age 6 months, 3 years and 5 years for all children.

Prevent Blindness America's voluntary expert panels continually review new scientific information and make appropriate recommendations.

Approval

This statement was approved by the Prevent Blindness America board of directors on March 7, 2004.

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness America 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 America touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening 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, divisions and chapters, it's committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call 1-800-331-2020 or visit us on the web at www.preventblindness.org.

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