



**National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
FY 2012 Issue Brief**

FY 2012 Funding Request

Prevent Blindness America respectfully calls upon Congress to support the Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health (the Center) within the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in developing a public health infrastructure to promote and ensure a continuum of vision and eye care for children.

Need

According to the CDC, more than 12.1 million school-age children have some form of vision problem, yet only one in three children in America have received eye care services before the age of six. The NEI reports that the most prevalent and significant vision disorders of preschool children are amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (crossed eyes), and significant refractive error, all of which can be identified and addressed early if children are screened for possible problems and receive adequate follow-up vision care.

The National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health

MCHB, housed within HRSA, serves a critical role in promoting vision health for children across the age continuum, and does so through the Center.

The Center, administered by Prevent Blindness America, is designed to support the development of public health infrastructure to promote and ensure a comprehensive, multi-tiered continuum of vision care and eye health for young children. The Center is committed to conducting this work through strong partnerships, sound science, and targeted policy initiatives.

The Center focuses its efforts on achieving the following three core objectives:

- Provide national leadership in the development of best practices and guidelines for public health infrastructure, national vision screening guidelines, and statewide strategies that ensure early detection, vision screening, and a continuum of vision and eye health care for children;
- Determine mechanisms for advancing state-based performance improvement systems, screening guidelines, and a mechanism for uniform data collection and reporting; and
- Collaborate with states to develop and implement statewide strategies for vision screening, establish quality improvement strategies, and determine mechanisms for the improvement of data systems and reporting of children's vision and eye health services.

The Center is designed to serve as a central resource for health promotion and leadership development. It also serves as a resource for education and training with respect to children's vision and eye health for public and private entities throughout the United States.

The Center has established a National Expert Panel comprised of experts in ophthalmology, optometry, pediatrics, public health, academia, and others who have a stake in the field of children's vision. Members of the National Expert Panel provide recommendations toward the establishment of national guidelines for quality improvement strategies, vision screening and developing a continuum of children's vision and eye health. In addition, they serve as advisors to the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health as it pursues its goals and objectives.