



**National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health  
Maternal and Child Health Bureau  
Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 Issue Brief**

**FY 2013 Funding Request**

**Prevent Blindness America respectfully calls upon Congress to support the Maternal and Child Health Bureau's (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.**

**Background**

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 National Eye Institute 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.

Visual impairments in children are a constant, whereas the current approach to address this common childhood disability is not. Research finds that there are numerous governmental agencies, not-for-profits and professional associations that provide valuable services and good intentions, but the existing national approach is disjointed, fragmented and often hindered by competing policies and lack of collaboration.

**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 a coordinated 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 has established a National Expert Panel comprised of experts in ophthalmology, optometry, pediatrics, public health, childcare, academia, family advocacy, and others who have a stake in the field of children's vision. Members of the National Expert Panel provide recommendations toward 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.

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

- Provide national leadership in dissemination of best practices, infrastructure development, professional education, and national vision screening guidelines that ensure a continuum of vision and eye health care for children;
- Advance state-based performance improvement systems, screening guidelines, and a mechanism for uniform data collection and reporting; and
- Provide technical assistance to states in the implementation of strategies for vision screening, establishing quality improvement measures, and improving mechanisms for surveillance.