Children’s vision: why we need a better SYSTEM, not just better screening!

Kira Baldonado, Director, National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health
At Prevent Blindness

Presentation Objectives

1. Understanding the role for healthy vision in young children
2. Review the present system for children’s vision in the U.S.
3. Overview of the National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health
4. Approaches to an improved vision health system
5. NCVEH Education and Partnerships
6. Key resources for improving children’s vision

Key messages for improving children’s vision

NHSA Parent Conference and Family Engagement Institute
December 10, 2013
Healthy vision in children contributes to:

- Improved school readiness
- Ability to learn
- Child’s self-esteem and confidence
- Athletic ability
- Improved behavior
National Health Interview Survey data (NHIS 2008) suggest that only about 40% of children under the age of 5 years receive some form of vision screening or testing prior to the age of 5 years. Rates of amblyopia (1% to 2.6% depending upon race/ethnicity and geographic location), "reflect the natural frequency of pathology in the absence of effective surveillance and intervention." Research has shown that children aged 3 to <10 years with diagnosed amblyopia can significantly improve vision with timely treatment. Strabismus has been associated with reduced quality of life, negative social bias and reduced educational opportunities in children, increasing the importance of improving children's vision screening and follow up to care.

Barriers to a Successful Vision System

- Variation in screening methods
- Variations in pass/refer thresholds
- Little to no communication between providers
- Duplication of screening efforts
- Independently held databases
- Variations in requirements for training/certification
- Changes in laws and policy from state to state
- No baseline or measure of improvement
- Poor accountability
- Parents' distrust/lack of understanding
- Expenses in screening, eye care and treatment

Conclusions

- Visual impairments in children are a constant, whereas our national approach to this common childhood disability is not.
- There are numerous governmental agencies, not-for-profits and professional associations that provide valuable services and good intentions for children's vision, but our present system is fragmented and often hindered by competing policies and lack of coordination.
A strong and prosperous society flourishes when there is commitment to the care, health and education of the youngest children.

“One or two programs working in isolation from each other, no matter how well intended, will not provide most children with the assistance they need to meet all of the milestones of child development.”

**National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness America**

The National Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health was established in 2009 at Prevent Blindness with support from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau to create a public health infrastructure that will promote a comprehensive, multi-tiered continuum of vision care and eye health for young children.

- **Mission:**
  To Improve the Systems that Support Children’s Vision through Strong Partnerships, Sound Science, and Targeted Public Policy

- **Vision:**
  Develop a full continuum of care for young children by: identifying vision conditions in children early, linking them to appropriate care, and ensuring they receive the care they need.

---

**Current Approach to Children’s Vision Screening and Surveillance**

- All Children aged 36 to <72 months completing at least one valid vision screening in a primary care, public health or school/community setting with appropriate follow up or received a comprehensive eye exam.
- All children referred on screening receive an exam and treatment by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

**New Approach to Children’s Vision Screening and Surveillance**

- All Children aged 36 to <72 months completing at least one valid vision screening in a primary care, public health or school/community setting with appropriate follow up or received a comprehensive eye exam.
- All children referred on screening receive an exam and treatment by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

---

**Activities of the Center**

- Improving vision screening coverage
- Establishing national protocols and surveillance approaches
- Developing vision screening programs and protocols
- Providing technical assistance, education and resources

---

**Vision at the Center**

All children aged 36 to <72 months completed at least one vision screening in a medical or community setting and received a comprehensive eye exam.

All children referred on screening received an exam and treatment by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

---

**Children with Vision Problems**

- Children aged 36 to <72 months completing at least one vision screening and treatment by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.
- Children referred on screening received an exam and treatment by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.
NATIONAL EXPERT PANEL: 2009 to 2013

Work groups developed recommendations
1) Performance Measures
2) Vision Screening
3) Data Collection and Reporting

Goal: The National Expert Panel is
- Publishing journal articles and supporting documents outlining performance measures and model practices
- Promoting integrated data systems focusing on best practices, closing gaps in reporting mechanisms, and supporting current trends in HIT
- Developing national recommendations for vision screening of preschool aged children.

Center Advisory Committee

The Center is guided by leading experts in the fields of ophthalmology, optometry, pediatrics, research, public health and other related fields through the Advisory Committee.

COMMITTEE LEADERSHIP:
• M. Kathleen Murphy, DNP, RN, FNP-BC (Chair)
• Jean Romany, MD, MPH (Vice-Chair)

MEMBERS:
• Laura Andrikos, PhD, RN
• Martha Dewey Bergren, DNS, RN, NCSN, FNASN, FASHA
• Richard T. Bunner, MA
• Mary Louie Collins, MD
• Susan Cohn, OD, MS
• Lynne Devlin, Ph.D., OD
• Alejandra de Alba Compannaro, MD, MPH
• Holly K. Graunw, MA
• E. Eugene Hirtzmann, Ph.D.
• Karen Huyser, MPH
• Amy K. Huldrick, MD
• Alan R. Kemper, MD, MPH, MS
• Steven J. Lichtenstein, M.D., F.A.A.P., F.A.A.O., F.A.A.C.
• Kay Nottingham Chaplin, Ed.D
• Mary Marshall, OD, MS
• Wanda Montalvo, RN, MSN, ANP
• Bruce Moore, OD
• Nicole Pretzl
• Michael K. Repka, MD
• David K. Wallace, MD, MPH

RESOURCES & PARTNERSHIPS
Our approach for a better vision system

- Building partnerships and collaborations
- Providing expert technical assistance
- Improving data collection, analysis and dissemination
- Identifying and advancing needed policy development
- Encouraging discussion at a state and national level
- Empowering families as advocates
- Reaching high-risk populations in a culturally appropriate manner
- Developing tools and educational resources

The essential key elements for success

- Uniform planning
- Surveillance
- Coordination and collaboration
- Screening infrastructure
- Training
- Technical advisory processes
- Laws and regulations
- Public and professional education and awareness
- Sustained funding

The work of the Center for Children’s Vision and Eye Health

- Addressing and eliminating common frustrations that are inherent to preschool vision screening
- Establishes a protocol that decreases duplication of efforts and increases communication between providers
- Empowers the vision screeners and families for better vision health in their children
- Supports vision screening efforts with technical assistance, resources, education, and awareness.
The Year of Children’s Vision Initiative

- **Goal:** to provide national guidance to staff of Head Start Centers and other early childhood educators to standardize approaches to vision screening, improve follow-up for eye care for children who fail the vision screening, provide family friendly educational information and consult with some of the nation’s leading pediatric eye care providers to ensure best practices.

- **Website:** [http://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org/year-childrens-vision](http://nationalcenter.preventblindness.org/year-childrens-vision)

- **Resources:** Conference presentations/exhibits, webinars, fact sheets, podcasts, eye health curricula, family resources, eye care assistance

Any questions?

Thank You!

Kira Baldonado kibaldonado@preventblindness.org