

State Stories for Children's Vision and Eye Health

WISCONSIN: Blueprint for a Comprehensive and Aligned System for Screening and Assessment of Young Children

Background: Wisconsin currently has no state legislation requiring vision screening for children. Prevent Blindness Wisconsin is a leader in the state in providing vision screening as part of children's vision and eye health system of care. Prevent Blindness Wisconsin recognizes that state-led systems are imperative for children to receive vision screening and eye care through collaborative efforts between schools, early childhood education providers, and the health and public health sectors.

In 2010, The Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Committee (ECAC) took action to create systems so that Wisconsin would have better and more consistent information about young children at key developmental milestones for use in planning early childhood policies, programs, and services. The ECAC requested that the existing Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Healthy Children Committee expand its efforts and look at screening and assessment systems from the perspective of aligning existing practices and assuring a consistent approach and access.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$300,000 with 5% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government. For more information, please visit HRSA.gov.



Companion to *Children's
Vision and Eye Health:
A Snapshot of Current
National Issues, 2nd edition*,
which can be accessed at
[https://preventblindness.
org/wp-content/uploads
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WISCONSIN: Blueprint for a Comprehensive and Aligned System for Screening and Assessment of Young Children *(continued)*

Aim: Develop guidance on vision screening for young children and elevate the issue of children’s vision and eye health throughout the state.

Leadership and Expertise:

The Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Healthy Children Committee (the “Committee”) included both multi-agency and multi-disciplinary members that included:

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
- Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
- Wisconsin Department of Health Services
- Wisconsin Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics
- University of Wisconsin–Madison, Waisman Center

- Prevent Blindness Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Dental Association

Strategies:

The Committee developed a common set of principles to offer guidance in finding commonalities in screening and assessment processes across systems. The development of a set of common principles is essential to the implementation of cross-sector screening and assessment practices regardless of where young children spend their time or which programs and services they access. Examples of the principles include:

- The purpose of screening and assessment is to provide information about a child’s development and learning, as well as to inform decision-making.



WISCONSIN: Blueprint for a Comprehensive and Aligned System for Screening and Assessment of Young Children *(continued)*



- Screening and assessment are components of a comprehensive system of services, resources, and support for children and families.
- Screening and assessment activities occur naturally within the family's typical routine and experiences.
- Screening and assessment information provides a pathway to ensure access to equitable, high-quality resources to meet the needs of all young children and families.
- Parents and primary caregivers are partners in screening and assessment practices.
- Practitioners use screening and assessment tools as well as processes that are culturally responsive to individual child and family circumstances.

Successes:

- **Publication of Guiding Principles.** The Committee reviewed screening practices for young children (birth to age 8) with a special focus on children from birth to age 3 and published the first *Blueprint for a Comprehensive and Aligned System for Screening and Assessment of Young Children*³⁹ (Blueprint) in 2012. The Blueprint addresses vision screening protocols, the Wisconsin Mandate, the current status of vision screening in Wisconsin, and the actions recommended to address existing gaps. This set of common principles is essential to the implementation of cross-sector screening and assessment practices that apply

to child programs and services. The Blueprint is an important document given the lack of current laws related to children's vision screening and eye health. Since its publication, Wisconsin has seen progress toward building a common terminology and shared vision for an aligned and comprehensive system for screening and assessment of young children. Prevent Blindness uses this guidance in its training programs.

- **Fact Sheets.** To enhance integration of principles into practice, fact sheets were created for each area of screening and assessment listed on the fact sheet, *Critical Time Periods for Early Childhood Screening and Assessment: Visual Chart and Narrative*.
- **Ongoing Collaboration.** Annual meetings of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners Healthy Children Committee will continue to discuss screening updates and challenges for the Blueprint.