



OREGON OPTOMETRIC PHYSICIANS ASSOCIATION

Oregon's Authority on Primary Eye and Vision Care

The New Children's Vision Law in Oregon

Approved by the Oregon Legislature in 2013, HB 3000 establishes the Oregon Children's Vision Law to help ensure that children entering school can see clearly and comfortably.

Who is affected?

- Children 7 years old or younger who are starting a public education program

What is needed?

- Certification of a vision screening or eye examination, plus glasses or other treatment, if needed
-- OR --
- Note from the parent or guardian that certification was submitted to a prior school
-- OR --
- Statement from the parent or guardian that the screening or examination is contrary to the religious beliefs of the student, parent or guardian

When?

- The law goes into effect in July 2014
- Certification or exemption notice must be turned in no later than 120 days after starting school

Why do kids need their eyes checked?

- 25% of Oregon's 2nd and 4th graders have undetected vision problems (www.childrevisionsfoundation.org)
- Amblyopia (lazy eye) is the most common cause of vision loss in one eye in children, and treatment is most effective when detected early
- Vision problems impact learning

Where can a child get checked?

- Oregon Optometrist
- Oregon Ophthalmologist
- Health Care Practitioner following State Board of Education rules
- School nurse, school employee or vision screener designated by Department of Education and following the rules of the State Board of Education

How much does it cost families?

Annual eye examinations and treatment for children are included in both private and public health insurance plans in Oregon (some plans may have deductibles or copayments). While most families will have insurance to cover the cost, or most of the cost, of an eye examination and treatment, visual screenings will be available and are offered at low or no cost by schools and non-profit organizations such as the Lions Clubs. Check with your local eye care provider for details.

How can families get help if they can't afford eye care?

These organizations may be able to help

- The Eye Care for Every Child Program by the Oregon Foundation for Vision Awareness: www.ofva.org
- KEX Kids Fund by the Oregon Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation
- VSP Sight for Students Vouchers
- Local Lions Clubs
- Vision USA through Optometry Cares – the AOA Foundation: www.aoafoundation.org

How are public schools supposed to implement this law?

- Collect the certification or note from the parent or guardian
- File any certifications and any results of a vision screening known by the education provider in each student's vision record
- Give information about the eye examination or vision screenings, and any subsequent referral information, to the parent or guardian of each student
- Attendance cannot be prohibited if the student fails to meet the requirement but report cards may be withheld, or similar actions

A message from the Oregon Optometric Physicians Association:

Oregon is now one of the few states that recognize the strong relationship between classroom performance and visual skills. In 2013 Governor Kitzhaber signed into law HB 3000. With the passage of HB 3000, public school students are required to have a vision screening or eye examination to encourage the identification of those who do not have the visual skills necessary for the demands of a classroom. It is important for parents, teachers, and administrators to make sure that vision screenings are effective and to understand the differences between a vision screening and a comprehensive vision exam.

A Clearer Definition of Good Vision

Classroom success is based on many interconnected, complex, factors including environment, cognition, and experiential influences. Some of the most important, but often neglected factors are good vision and visual skills. Good vision goes beyond clear sight measured at distance and includes the ability to accurately acquire and process information received through the eyes. In fact, a person can have normal sight with healthy eyes, yet experience difficulty with visual fixation (eye movement skills), focus (able to change from near to far) or fusion (using both eyes together as a team) - those basic visual performance skills necessary for acquiring information from the page or screen.

Getting the Whole View of Eye Examinations

While Oregon's new state law allows the parent to choose between a vision screening and a comprehensive children's (student) eye examination, two points need to be considered:

- The law does not establish minimum standards for the vision screening. Unfortunately, most visual screenings do not evaluate the skills that visual science has established as necessary, including fixation, focus, and fusion. A good example of a screening protocol that does address these important skills is the Children's Vision Foundation (CVF) screening protocol. (www.childrensvisionfoundation.org) There is a difference between a vision screening and a comprehensive children's eye examination. Most of us are familiar with the vision screenings at the DMV and would not mistake the DMV vision screening with a comprehensive eye examination. Vision screenings, whether a DMV or school screening, are designed to identify the possibility of a visual problem, whereas a comprehensive eye examination is diagnostic in nature.
- In addition, a comprehensive eye examination provides the practitioner with important eye health information.

As an organization of eye care professionals, we applaud the effort that leaders of our state have taken in recognizing the impact that undetected vision problems can have upon classroom performance. Whatever testing method is chosen, screening or comprehensive eye examination, we strongly recommend that the critical classroom performance skills (fixation, focus, and fusion) always be checked. We always encourage parents to find out more about the role that vision plays in learning and performance.