

# WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY VISION INITIATIVE FOR CHILDREN'S PRESCHOOL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM



**Our vision:** All preschoolers will receive effective, timely vision screening and eye care.

**Our Mission:** To increase the understanding of early childhood eye disease and opportunities for effective, timely preschool vision screening and eye care.

## What is the Vision Initiative for Children?

- The Vision Initiative for Children (VIC), an outreach program of the West Virginia University Eye Institute, partners with primary care physicians, school nurses, Head Start, and members of the early care and education communities to screen the vision of preschoolers throughout West Virginia and neighboring states.
- Through VIC's preschool vision screening partnership model:
  - VIC provides screening partners with knowledge, skills, and a vision screening test that can be administered quickly, inexpensively, and effectively.
  - Partners screen vision of preschoolers in their communities.
  - VIC provides follow-up support for partner screeners and parents/caregivers of children who do not pass vision screening.

## Why is VIC teaching individuals how to screen vision of preschoolers?

- An unnecessarily high prevalence of permanent vision loss exists in young children as a result of common, treatable, yet often undiagnosed, pediatric eye disorders, such as amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (crossed eyes), and abnormal refractive errors (severe farsightedness, nearsightedness, or astigmatism).
  - Up to 5 percent to 10 percent of children have undetected vision disorders that can lead to permanent vision loss if these vision disorders are not detected and treated early, preferably before age 5.
- Results of national studies, as well as a VIC statewide study and experience, suggest that older, traditional, preschool vision screening can be challenging and, consequently does not routinely occur.
  - When screening does occur, screeners often use tests and procedures that are inappropriate for children ages 3, 4, and 5.
- Healthy People 2010—the health agenda for the United States—includes a vision objective for increasing the proportion of preschool children aged 3 to 5 that receive a vision screening.

## What does VIC's Preschool Vision Screening Program include?

- An interactive, hands-on workshop with follow-up support that adheres to adult learning characteristics.
- Vision screening materials, including the Lea Symbols Flipchart, a modified and validated version of a pediatric eye chart used at the WVU Eye Institute, which is easier and faster for screeners to administer in the field.
- On-site vision screening environment assessment.

## What are VIC's Successes?

- In 2001, VIC was 1 of 5 national demonstration sites in the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau/National Eye Institute Task Force's Project Universal Preschool Vision Screening study regarding recommended vision screening tests.
- In 2006, VIC was also selected by the American Association of Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus to serve as a site for its Project See By Three, a national demonstration site for teaching pediatricians to implement vision screening practices in their offices.
- Overall, VIC has provided more than 180 workshops and partnered with nearly 1,600 individuals, representing School Nurses, Student Nurses, and Nurses in medical practices; Physicians; Head Start; Early Head Start; Preschool Special Needs Teachers; WV Birth to Three; Family Resource Networks; Starting Points; Early Childhood College Students; Child Care Personnel; Parents as Teachers; and Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.
- Since 2001, nearly 30,000 children have received vision screening and about 1200 preschoolers with vision-threatening disorders have been detected and treated as a result of VIC's vision screening model.

## Who funds VIC?

- VIC public healthcare program activities do not generate income sufficient for the program to independently support itself. It is dependent on grant support to expand and grow. VIC's funding sources to date include the Claude Worthington Benedum Foundation, the Sisters of St. Joseph Charitable Fund, the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation, the Beckley Area Foundation, and the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources. As grants expire, other funding opportunities become important to further the success of the program and to further reduce the healthcare, educational and long-term disability impact that undetected and untreated eye disease has on children in West Virginia. **Your support is always welcome!**

## VISION INITIATIVE FOR CHILDREN

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