

Children's Vision Facts & Statistics – Fall 2003

- Vision disorders are the number one childhood handicap. (American Optometric Association)
- An estimated 10 million children suffer from undetected vision problems. (National Parent Teacher Association)
- 18 million children will not have an eye examination by an eye doctor by the time they enter school. (American Optometric Association)
- Only 14% of children under age 5 have received a comprehensive eye exam. (United States Center for Health Statistics)
- One in four school-age children have vision problems. (Prevent Blindness America)
- 60% of students identified as problem learners have undetected vision problems. (American Optometric Association)
- Legislative action: In 2000, Kentucky became the first state requiring children to have a professional eye exam before entering school. This July, Ohio passed a law making exams mandatory for children with special needs. On a federal level, a bill was recently introduced in Congress, HR 2173, that would provide state health departments \$75 million to educate parents about children's vision problems, improve follow-up after failed screenings and help families afford professional exams.
- A study of Kentucky children receiving eye exams as required by state law showed that 1 in 7 children had an uncorrected vision problem. In addition, 3.4% and 2.4% of children were diagnosed with amblyopia ("lazy eye") and strabismus ("crossed eyes") respectively. (Study conducted by Drs. Joel Zaba and William Reynolds)
- Nearly 3.5 million children enter kindergarten each year. Extrapolating from the Kentucky research, approximately 500,000 of these children are likely starting school each year with a distinct disadvantage caused by a vision problem.
- Vision screenings were not attempted on more than 60% of the three-year-old children in pediatricians' offices. (American Academy of Pediatrics study)
- If the direct and indirect costs of a child's uncorrected vision problem are estimated at \$1,000 over his lifetime (\$15 per year), that translates to \$500 million a year for the half-million children starting school with an uncorrected vision problem. (The Vision Council of America)
- 58% of Americans are not aware of the importance of comprehensive eye examinations (as opposed to vision screenings) in detecting and diagnosing pediatric eye conditions. (The Vision Council of America)

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