

# Frequently Asked Questions about the Children's Vision Bill

- 1. Will the screening by a pediatrician or other medical professional meet this requirement?**

SB16 requires a complete eye examination that must include "subjective refraction to best visual acuity". Most pediatricians or family practice physicians will not have the equipment in their office to complete this part of the examination.
- 2. What is the difference between a screening and an examination?**

An examination is much more extensive than a screening. Specialized equipment and the professional specialty training of the optometrist and or ophthalmologist enable him or her to make definitive diagnosis of problems and prescribe treatment.
- 3. What happens to children of families who do not meet the January 1 deadline? Are there penalties for non-compliance? Will these children be able to go to school?**

The intent of this legislation is to help identify vision problems early in children. It is not the intent to exclude children from school. The legislation does not require exclusion. Local district policy should determine how parents or guardians will be given the guidance and assistance needed to get the examination.
- 4. Can a parent opt out of the examination?**

A child's participation in the comprehensive eye exam or the eye screening program shall be excused upon receipt by the appropriate school administrator of a written request by the parent or legal guardian of the child.
- 5. Does the examination have to be reported on the Children's Eye Examination for Schools form?**

Because the legislation requires certain procedures and information about the eye exam it is important to use the form provided. This will also allow for more consistent reporting. The examinations will be submitted to the Department of Health and Senior Services without identifying information for statistical analysis. The form can be accessed on the Missouri Optometric Association's website <http://www.moeyecare.org/> and the Missouri Association of School Nurses' website. <http://www.missourischoolnurses.org/> (click on "links").
- 6. Will the Children's Vision Commission provide a standard letter for district to give parents or a standard opt out form?**

Each school district will need to develop a policy and procedure for this legislation for their school district. The Children's Vision Commission will provide the eye examination and screening forms, and determine screening procedures and training. These forms can be found on the following websites: <http://www.moeyecare.org/> and <http://www.missourischoolnurses.org/> (click on "links").
- 7. Are all first grade students required to have an eye exam?**

Due to the late nature of start, the Commission has determined that through January 2009, only children entering kindergarten or first grade for the very first time will be required to have a comprehensive eye examination. If the child was in kindergarten during the 2007-08 school year, that child will not be required to have a comprehensive eye examination for the 2008-09 school year when entering the first grade. However, if the child did not attend kindergarten in the 2007-08 year, but is entering the first grade in the 2008-09 year, that student is required to have a comprehensive eye examination.
- 8. Are students required to have the examination before school starts?**

SB16 requires the examination be completed by January 1 of the current school year.

Where can I obtain more information about this legislation?

The Missouri Optometry Association has a brochure about the Children's Vision Bill on their website. <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/c100-199/1670000194.htm>

If you wish to become familiar with the statutes associated with these issues, visit <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/c100-199/1670000194.htm> and <http://www.moga.mo.gov/statutes/c100-199/1670000194.htm> .

## Frequently Asked Questions II: Children's Vision Law (Missouri)

### **Are 1<sup>st</sup> grade students required to have an exam this year (2008-09)?**

Only 1<sup>st</sup> grade students newly enrolled to school are required to have an eye exam unless a parent or guardian requests in writing that their child be excused from the requirement. If the student attended kindergarten in any state last year they are not required to have an exam in first grade this year.

### **What about a student retained in kindergarten?**

All students attending kindergarten in the 2008-09 school years are required to have the comprehensive eye exam unless a parent or guardian requests in writing that their child be excused from the requirement.

### **Do I exclude a student if they do not have an exam or written request to be excused by January 1, 2009?**

No student should be excluded or penalized for not receiving an exam or returning a form requesting to be excused from the requirement (exam). The law does not require or encourage exclusion or penalty for this.

### **Where can I find a copy of the comprehensive eye exam form?**

The form can be found on the Missouri Optometric Association website ([www.moeyecares.org](http://www.moeyecares.org)); the Missouri Association of School Nurses website ([www.missourischoolnurses.org](http://www.missourischoolnurses.org)) and the Department of Health and Senior Services School Health Web page ([www.dhss.mo.gov](http://www.dhss.mo.gov)).

### **Has the commission developed an "opt out" form?**

There is no official "opt out" form. A parent or guardian sends a statement to the school requesting the student be excused from the eye exam. Schools may develop a form. If your district contracts with the Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) for policies, ask to review policies JEC and JHC for a sample letter of objection.

### **Who is responsible to send a copy of the eye exam form to the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS)?**

It is the responsibility of the eye physician, not the school nurse, to submit a copy to DHSS.

### **What information does the school district/school nurse collect and report?**

School districts will be asked for statistical information later in the school year. For example: the number of children in kindergarten; the number of children with a comprehensive eye exam; of those examined, the number with positive findings; the number of children with positive findings receiving glasses; the number of children receiving an exam not meeting the criteria of a comprehensive eye exam; and the number of children opting out. We anticipate the report will be web-based and sent to the Department of Health and Senior Services. The reporting form and format is under development.

### **What should I do if the eye care provider returns an incomplete examination form?**

You are not responsible. Please retain a copy of the examination in the student's record, as well as any data (with no identifying information) for reporting purposes.

**What if a pediatrician, family practice physician, or nurse practitioner signs the examination form?**

Review the form to determine if the exam meets the criteria noted in the statute for a comprehensive eye exam. We encourage you to talk with the parent and let the parent know the exam does not meet the criteria of a comprehensive eye exam required by the law. It is not necessary to require the parent to take the child for another exam.

**Why did the Commission include the word physician in the parent letter?**

The Missouri Statute 167.194 refers to a “comprehensive vision examination performed by a state licensed optometrist or physician”. The letter is consistent with the law. The term physician is intended to refer to a physician capable of performing a comprehensive eye examination as outlined in the statute. Your district has the option to change the wording of the parent letter.

**Has the Commission developed a screening form for 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade vision screenings?**

A screening form is under development. For the 2008-2009 school year, we suggest school districts continue with current vision screening procedures. We strongly encourage “distance and near screening” along with a screening for stereopsis. Districts will be asked to report screening results. The process for the reporting has not been determined, but it is anticipated the reporting will include the number of children in each grade (1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>), the number of children referred for an eye exam, the number of referral completions, and the number of children requiring treatment. The method of reporting is under development. More information will be provided as soon as the process has been finalized.

**The Lion’s Club provides vision screening with a vision photoscreener. Does this qualify for the required vision exam?**

The photoscreener is only a vision screening device and does not qualify as the comprehensive exam.

**What can we expect for next year (2009-10?)**

School districts will be required to provide vision screening for each student once before the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> grade and once before the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. This screening will include distance vision, near vision, and Random Dot E testing. We anticipate the Commission will suggest a selection of simple vision screening procedures.

**My district is considering purchasing vision screening equipment now. What type of equipment should we purchase?**

We would encourage districts to refrain from purchases until the commission has determined the standard vision screening procedures for the 2009-2010 school year. The commission will not require screening to be done by expensive equipment such as vision screeners (Titmus, Optec, Suresight, etc).