

## **Goal**

The goal of the Vision Care Outreach (VCO) Program is to reduce the incidence of unnecessary vision loss and impairment by providing access to a donated system of comprehensive vision care for uninsured and underinsured individuals in Ohio.

## **Scope of Vision Problem and Challenges**

- Approximately 15% of Ohioans age 40 and older have some measure of difficulty recognizing a friend across the street.
- Approximately 19.6% have not had an eye exam in the last two years.
- Vision loss due to lazy eye, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, cataract and diabetic retinopathy often produce no symptoms and if left undetected and untreated can lead to blindness.
- 50% of all vision loss could be avoided through early detection and treatment.
- Vision disorders are the fourth most common disability in the United States and the most prevalent handicapping condition in childhood. Amblyopia is responsible for vision loss in more people under the age of 45 than all other eye diseases and trauma combined. Individuals afflicted by amblyopia are excluded from positions in the armed forces, fire, public services and the transportation industry.
- An estimated 3.6 million Ohioans have vision problems and as the population ages, this number will only increase. The estimated annual financial burden to the Ohio economy due to vision problems, refractive errors, visual impairment and blindness is \$5.4 billion.
- Nearly one in every four school-aged children have a vision problem. Abnormal visual acuity is the most common chronic medical condition in children of industrialized nations.
- Vision loss is the health condition Americans fear most because they worry it means loss of independence.
- There are nearly two million Ohioans at risk for visual impairment and blindness. With the aging baby boomer population, the numbers will continue to climb upward. The impact of vision loss on the individual, his or her family, the public health system and the State of Ohio is a significant public health concern.
- Vision can lead to falls. Falls are also the leading cause of eye injury.

## **Vision Care Outreach Background**

Through the generosity and collaboration of our friends in the vision industry, Prevent Blindness has assembled a system of donated eye care for all Ohioans without vision insurance. Prevent Blindness clients can receive a comprehensive dilated eye from one of our professional eye care providers (donated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist). Prevent Blindness clients can receive a basic pair of eyeglasses (donated by a variety of optical companies). Prevent Blindness clients can receive access low cost financial assistance resources for surgery/aftercare (within the local communities we serve).

The Vision Care Outreach Program began in Columbus in 1990, and has developed into a network of donated eye care throughout the state since that time. The VCO Program has over 50 doctors who donate comprehensive eye exams to adults and children across the state.

In 1997, the *Vision Service Plan* (“VSP”) *Sight for Students Program* was made available to Prevent Blindness to provide free eye exams and eyeglasses to qualifying children up to age 20. There are over 1,200 VSP Choice providers located throughout the state of Ohio that are accessible to our clients.

## **How Vision Care Outreach Works**

Clients that are in need of eye care, are referred to Prevent Blindness through a statewide network of referring (community outreach-based) partner agencies or served by Prevent Blindness directly. Prevent Blindness partners with many health departments, free clinics, re-entry programs, schools, and other social services organizations. All partner agencies refer clients who meet the criteria of the vision care outreach program. Clients that qualify for the vision care outreach program must meet the current 200% federal poverty guidelines and must not have any vision benefits through Medicaid, some Medicare or private insurance.

Referring partner agencies qualify clients for the vision care outreach program and submit applications online. Prevent Blindness arranges for donated eye exams and communicates with the referring partner agency through emails, phone calls, texts and regular mail. The partner agency provides the appropriate eye exam and/or eyeglasses dispensing site to their clients.

Prevent Blindness has several eyeglasses dispensary sites available where clients can fill their prescription for eyeglasses. Eyeglasses are donated by optical agencies such as OneSight<sup>SM</sup> – A Luxottica Group Foundation, America’s Best, Visionworks and VSP.

The Prevent Blindness VCO Program receives over 10,000 requests annually for help.

## **Key Players in Vision Care Outreach – Roles and Responsibilities**

### **The Role of the Referring Partner Agency:**

- Serves as a liaison between Prevent Blindness and the client.
- Qualifies client; confirms client meets the current 200% federal poverty guidelines; confirms client has no access to vision insurance of any kind.
- Asks client specific risk assessment questions that qualify them for the vision care outreach program.
- Assists client with transportation to eye exam and eyeglasses dispensary site.
- Makes sure client keeps their eye exam appointment.

## **Prevent Blindness:**

- Recruits referring partner agencies such social service organizations, homeless shelters, detention centers, drug/alcohol rehabilitation services, mental health services, schools and the like that serve individuals with multiple challenges in their lives.
- Trains referring partner agencies to conduct vision risk assessments and/or vision screenings.
- Provides referring partner agency with a comprehensive manual that details the process and requirements of the VCO Program.
- Provides on-demand training webinars.
- Schedules donated eye exam appointments for client.
- Provides vouchers to an eyeglasses dispensary site in order for client to select eyeglasses that are available in the vision care program.
- When necessary, navigates surgery/aftercare for clients with more severe eye problems.
- Monitors all clients through a database until each client case is successfully closed.

## **The Top 5 Regional Participating Referring Partner Agencies for Prevent Blindness**

### **Central:**

1. Holmes County Health District
2. Franklin County Community Based Correctional Facility
3. Vineyard Free Health Clinic
4. The Health Center at Faith Mission
5. Urban Mission Ministries

### **Miami Valley:**

1. MonDay Community Correctional
2. Goodwill Easter Seals Miami Valley
3. Five Rivers Health Center
4. East End Community Center
5. Wesley Community Center

### **Northeast:**

1. Geauga County Health Department
2. Lake County Free Medical Clinic
3. North Coast Health Ministry
4. Open M Free Clinic
5. Project H.O.P.E. of Cleveland, Inc.

### **Northwest:**

1. Wood County Health District
2. Neighborhood Health Association
3. Toledo-Lucas County Health Department
4. Equitas Health
5. The Area Office on Aging of Northwest Ohio, Inc.

### **Southwest:**

1. Su Casa Hispanic Center Catholic Charities SW Ohio
2. Santa Maria East Price Hill Center
3. The Healing Center
4. Mt. Healthy Healthcare Connection
5. Lincoln Heights Healthcare Connection

## **The Role of the Eye Doctor:**

- Donates at least two comprehensive exams per month.
- Provides the client with a copy of the prescription for glasses.
- Provides client eye exam follow up (if needed) information to Prevent Blindness.

## **Prevent Blindness:**

- Recruits optometrists and ophthalmologists to donate comprehensive dilated eye exams.
- Provides a comprehensive manual for the donating eye doctors.
- Maintains relationships with donating eye doctors and their support staff.
- Schedules eye exam appointments through support staff.

## The Role of Optical Companies:

The Vision Industry and Optical Companies donate dispensing, fabrication, frames, lenses and shipping for VCO clients that need glasses. The VCO program standards for eyewear include frames (no more than 5 years dated), uncoated, polycarbonate lenses (safety material), single and lined bifocal or trifocal lenses. No special tints, transitions, or other lens treatments are part of the program.

## Eyeglass/Dispensary Donors:

America's Best  
Geauga Vision  
OneSight<sup>SM</sup> – A Luxottica Group Foundation  
Select Optical  
Toledo Optical  
VSP – Sight for Students  
VSP – Mobile Eyes  
VSP Lab – Columbus

## Prevent Blindness:

- Recruits donations from the vision industry and optical companies.
- Provides evidence of charitable contributions for donor tax purposes.
- Tracks donation usage and facilitates flow of eyeglasses vouchers among donors.
- Keep in storage, eyeglasses frames donated separately and deliver to optical donors as needed.

## Partners in Prevention:



***The Paul E. Cass and Mary E. Cass Fund of The Columbus Foundation***

***The Harry C. Moores Foundation***

***The John A. Schroth Family Charitable Trust***

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## Success Stories

It is important to us to hear from our clients and how the VCO Program has changed their lives. We ask all of our clients to complete a success story and send them to Prevent Blindness. Read how we have made a difference to those throughout the state of Ohio:

Dave from Central Ohio wrote...

*"I was 37 years old when I arrived at the House of Hope. I never really took care of myself and just thought squinting was normal in order to focus. As I started to read and do paperwork, I would find myself constantly squinting and finally getting to the point of frustration and would quit whatever I was doing. My program manager talked to me about it and in no time I had an appointment with an eye doctor. I received prompt and courteous service and within 10 days I received my eyeglasses. Now I can see what I am reading and writing and I am more enthused about my work. No more frustration and squinting. Thank you!"*

Jill on behalf of her daughter, Abigail from Northeast Ohio wrote...

*"I wanted to say how pleased I was to receive the gift certificate for an eye exam and eyeglasses for my six year old daughter. The school nurse picked up on Abigail having difficulty with her vision. She was then able to assist us with the forms to get qualified for this program. The school nurse was knowledgeable and worked quickly to get Abigail the help she needed. The Sight for Students was definitely a benefit for us. Abigail has 20/40 vision in each eye. She was extremely farsighted for a six year old. She was so excited when the doctor put on what was going to be her prescription! She realized that she was having trouble seeing, but never knew that because she didn't know any better... that had been all she knew! She was smiling from ear to ear when she was able to see with that prescription! This is a wonderful program and the system worked for my daughter! Having good vision is so important to her education and everyone involved was there for Abigail when she needed it."*

Melanie on behalf of her daughter, Amber from Northwest Ohio wrote...

*"I want to thank you for this wonderful program! My daughter was wearing an old pair of eyeglasses that were horribly scratched and had been repaired several times. They were even taped together! We could not afford to buy her new ones [eyeglasses] due to a serious health problem in our immediate family and we have no vision insurance. She is so thrilled to have a pair of eyeglasses that not only look good, but she can see, that after we left the eye doctor's office she was pointing everything in detail on the way home! My daughter isn't having severe headaches anymore and isn't embarrassed about looking "silly" in her old pair of eyeglasses. Again, thank you so much!"*

Brenda from Southwest Ohio wrote...

*"I have received services of glasses, which I was very grateful for. I am a type 2 diabetic and along with other things that this disease affects, my eye sight is one of them. To be able to focus and see, to read, to do all the normal things that one does in everyday life is a blessing and I thank Prevent Blindness Ohio for the opportunity to be able to continue to see."*

Debra from Miami Valley, Ohio wrote...

*“This program was a wonderful help for me. I was in desperate need of glasses. My minimum wage job as a driver with no medical benefits made it impossible for me to purchase glasses for myself. This program was a blessing and truly appreciated. Thank you so much for your help and the help you give to others.”*