OUR MISSION: To Prevent Blindness and Preserve Sight

OUR VISION: Helping Ohioans Enjoy Good Sight for Life!

Prevent Blindness Ohio, founded in 1957, is Ohio’s leading volunteer, nonprofit public health organization dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight.

Why our mission matters to you

An estimated 1.8 million Ohioans are at risk for vision loss, 147,878 are visually impaired and 43,307 are legally blind. Vision is critical to conducting activities of daily living, is a portal for language and affects developmental learning, communicating, working, health and quality of life. Vision impairment is one of the most feared disabilities.

And while half of all blindness can be prevented and 90% of all vision loss due to injury or accident is preventable, the number of Americans and Ohioans who suffer from vision loss continues to increase. Vision disorders and impairment are major public health problems. It is estimated that by 2030, the number of blind and visually impaired people will double if nothing is done to curb this growth through prevention, early detection and treatment.

Blindness and visual impairment have an enormous impact on individuals and society. Vision loss can rob people of their independence, mobility and quality of life. A study by Prevent Blindness America shows that the annual economic costs of visual disorders and disabilities in the U.S. and Ohio are estimated to be $51.4 billion & $1.98 billion respectively.

Leading causes of vision loss

In adults, the most common eye diseases are cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration. In children, serious eye disorders include amblyopia “lazy eye” and strabismus “crossed eyes”. Eye injuries in both adults and children at home, in the workplace, and in sports are also a leading cause of permanent visual impairment.

Eye opening facts

• Every 11 minutes someone in the United States loses their vision.

• Vision disorders are the fourth most common disability in the U.S. and the most prevalent handicapping condition in childhood.

• 105,899 people in Ohio have glaucoma and half do not know it. Glaucoma causes the loss of peripheral or side vision. Once vision is lost, it cannot be restored.

• Diabetic Retinopathy is a common complication of diabetes which can lead to blindness. More than 900,000 Ohioans have diabetes and 284,631 suffer from this disease which involves abnormal growth of blood vessels in the back of the eye which can leak. Management of diabetes and regular preventative eye exams are the best defense against developing diabetic retinopathy.

• Approximately 43,400 Ohio preschool children (1 in 20) have a vision disorder such as amblyopia “lazy eye” or strabismus “crossed eyes” that can lead to loss of vision or even blindness.

• Nearly 508,000 Ohio school-aged children (1 in 4) have a vision problem. Abnormal visual acuity is the most common chronic medical condition in children of industrialized nations.

• There are nearly 4,000 serious eye injuries suffered by Ohio children ages 0-14 each year.

• More than 991,628 Ohioans over 40 years of age suffer from cataracts which is a clouding of the eye’s naturally clear lens. This is usually treatable.

• 88,546 older Ohioans are afflicted with age-related macular degeneration which creates a loss of sharp, central vision. There is no cure and treatment is most successful when detected early.

• Vision problems have an impact of $1.98 billion to the Ohio economy.
Programs and Services

Prevent Blindness Ohio (PBO) is Ohio’s leading volunteer nonprofit public health advocate for sight conservation. We promote eye health and safety while working to find the cure for blinding eye diseases. Our mission is carried out through:

Public Information

Prevent Blindness Ohio supports public policies that advocate good eye health and safety for all Ohioans such as fireworks safety and access to comprehensive, professional vision care for Ohioans of all ages.

Prevent Blindness Ohio offers workplace wellness programming, educational exhibits for museums and libraries, grades K-12 classroom lesson plans and speakers that provide eye health and safety facts to all ages to help them take good care of their gift of sight.

Prevent Blindness Ohio offers a comprehensive selection of print and audio-visual materials dealing with all aspects of eye health and safety for use at home, work, school and leisure.

Research

Prevent Blindness Ohio funds research by contributing to the Prevent Blindness America Investigator Awards and the PBO Student Fellowship Award for Female Scholars in Vision Research. Both grant programs provide support for scientific research investigating public health issues related to the burden of illness of eye-related health and safety. All research grants promote the core mission of Prevent Blindness Ohio preventing blindness and preserving sight.

Early Detection

Early detection and prompt, professional treatment are essential in halting eye diseases such as amblyopia and glaucoma.

PBO’s vision training and screening programs enable thousands of volunteers and providers of primary health care to detect potentially blinding eye diseases and refer individuals for professional treatment early, when it is most effective.

PBO’s Vision Care Outreach program provides access to comprehensive donated eye care (eye exam, glasses and aftercare) for nearly 10,000 homeless and medically disadvantaged children and adults annually.

Governance and Leadership

Prevent Blindness Ohio’s overall program standards and policies are developed by a volunteer board of directors representing the entire state of Ohio. Prevent Blindness Ohio is one of only 35 nonprofits among Ohio’s 43,000 nonprofit organizations to be awarded a “Standards for Excellence Seal” by the Ohio Association of Nonprofit Organizations. Receipt of this award is based upon PBO’s ethical business standards and accountability in program operations, governance, human resources, financial management and fundraising practices.

Through the years...

1908 Volunteers create Prevent Blindness America when they learn that 30% of blindness in children can be prevented.
1917 Efforts lead to federal legislation that virtually eliminates the leading cause of blindness in newborns (ophthalmia neonatorum). Eye drops at birth are now standard procedure.
1926 Nationwide preschool vision screening program begins.
1930 First eye safety program for industry.
1948 The first Ohio Wise Owl Club charter at Herring-Hall-Marvin Safe Company in Hamilton promotes eye safety in the workplace.
1957 U.S. Senator John Bricker asks friends statewide to help create an Ohio affiliate of Prevent Blindness America.
1958 First annual meeting of the Ohio affiliate.
1959 First Ohio Glaucoma Screening is conducted with the Lions Club.
1963 Ohio becomes the first state to pass a School Eye Safety Program, now adopted by most states.
1977 Glaucoma Alert Program launched.
1989 Southwest Ohio Chapter formed in Cincinnati.
1993 Northeast Ohio Chapter formed in Cleveland.
1997 Ohio Eye Care Coalition defeats fireworks bill.
1999 Save Our Sight Initiative, led by PBO with 20 partners, provides for a $1 voluntary donation on Ohio motor vehicle registration to support children’s vision services.
2000 Dayton office opens as satellite division of Southwest Ohio Chapter. Wise About Eyes, an interactive children’s eye health and safety exhibit developed by PBO premiers at the Boonshoft Museum of Discovery in Dayton.
2002 Northwest Ohio Chapter Office opens in Toledo.
2003 Aging Eye Public Private Partnership formed by a proclamation from the Governor of Ohio.
2005 Ohio Legislative Task Force to Preserve Adult Vision formed with leadership from PBO, makes recommendations about curbing high risk vision loss among Ohio seniors.
2006 PBO creates the Young Investigator Student Fellowship Awards for Female Scholars in Vision Research.
2007 PBO celebrates its 50th Anniversary of “Helping Ohioans Enjoy Good Sight for Life!”
2008 Prevent Blindness America celebrates its 100th Anniversary.
2009 Prevent Blindness America is awarded a grant from the CDC to undertake key vision preservation & vision-loss initiatives.
2010 Prevent Blindness America named National Coordinating Center for universal screening for young children. PBO is selected as one of five pilot sites that will help to establish this program.
2011 Eye CAN advocacy program launched to widen access to eye care for all Americans.
2012 Children served by PBO with support from the SOS fund tops 5 million since the program began.