



# Prevent Blindness

## **Vision Care Outreach Partner Organization Handbook for Adult and Children Vision Programs**

*Prevent Blindness Ohio*  
**800-301-2020**

# Introduction

Prevent Blindness Ohio (PBO) is pleased to offer our free vision care services to all individuals you serve within your organization that qualify. The goal of the Vision Care Outreach (VCO) Program is to reduce the incidence of unnecessary vision loss and impairment for all Ohioans by providing access to our system of comprehensive vision care services for uninsured and underserved children and adults.

This Partner Organization (PO) handbook will provide the essential guidelines that PBO has established to ensure a smooth process, along with accountability to this very important community outreach program. We serve those that lack vision insurance or are underinsured and living at 200% poverty or worse. All clients that are referred to the VCO Program must meet all program criteria as detailed in this handbook.

In order for PBO to partner with your organization, we must have a signed partner organization agreement on file. Detailed instructions for becoming a partner organization with PBO start on page 5.

PBO highly regards our partner organizations and works on keeping strong and open communication with them. We offer quarterly informative and educational webinars, send quarterly emails with new and pertinent information, and update you on your clients' cases. We strive to keep lines of communication open and encourage our partners to do the same.

We look forward to working with you and your organization. Thank you for your partnership and cooperation to ensure that the VCO Program is a success. It is an honor to serve your clients in need of vision care to ensure good eye health for life.

Sincerely yours,

*Prevent Blindness Ohio*

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## About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading voluntary eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Prevent Blindness Ohio (PBO) serves all 88 Ohio counties, providing direct services to 1,000,000 Ohioans annually and educating millions of consumers about what they can do to protect and preserve their precious gift of sight. PBO's state office is located in Columbus and has chapters located in Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, and Toledo.

The mission of PBO is "to prevent blindness and preserve sight." PBO serves as a consumer advocate for eye health and safety and our main emphasis is to serve those at highest risk for vision loss – preschool age children, older adults, minorities, medically underserved populations and people at risk for eye injuries at home, work and play. PBO addresses equitable vision health care access issues and promotes early detection and prompt professional treatment that are important in finding vision problems early, when their treatment is most successful and further vision loss can be prevented.

For more information about our Advocacy and Educational work, visit the website  
<https://ohio.preventblindness.org/>

## The Vision Care Outreach Program

The Vision Care Outreach (VCO) Program provides equitable access to free comprehensive eye exams, follow-up care, education, medications, surgery, and eyeglasses to individuals living at 200% poverty or worse and who do not have the means to pay for eye care themselves through income and/or insurance. The VCO Program gives under-resourced populations a better chance at improving their quality of life, increased success in school, job readiness, productivity on the job, and independence in the skills of daily living.

Through the VCO Program, Prevent Blindness recruits partner organizations that have access to children and adults in need, such as preschools, schools, social service agencies, senior centers and health care facilities. Prevent Blindness teaches partner organizations to conduct vision screenings as a means of identifying children and adults in need of vision care. Individuals who do not pass the vision screening or risk assessment are referred by the partner organization to Prevent Blindness for access and navigation through our system of vision care.

## VCO Services and Products

All goods and services provided through the VCO Program are privately donated by eye care professionals and vision related companies. PBO has recruited and coordinated the efforts of these donated services for the VCO Program to serve our clients in need.

Participants and their families must meet the PBO income level and insurance guidelines to qualify for a gift certificate/voucher for free eye exams and eyeglasses. VSP (Vision Service Plan), America's Best and Acuity Eyecare Group (AEG) offer vouchers for free eye exams and eyeglasses for adults and children 5 and older. In addition, OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation offers Healthy Eyes vouchers that can be used at LensCrafters and Target Optical stores on eyeglasses only.

VCO staff will determine the best mode of service (e.g. VSP, America's Best, AEG or Healthy Eyes vouchers) for clients. We will send to you, or if you request to your client directly, a list of nearby participating optometrists and/or eyeglass providers through which the client will make an appointment to obtain their needed vision services.

## **Adult and Children's Vision Screening Trainings available**

Many partner organizations (POs) take advantage of the adult and children's vision screening trainings and certification offered by PBO. This allows certified volunteers to assess individuals at risk for eye disease and screen visual acuity. PBO offers these free trainings multiple times a year and in multiple formats (virtual self-paced, live virtual webinar and in-person). PBO encourages all POs to have advocates that become certified adult and/or children vision screeners. This certification allows for a PO to conduct their own vision screenings to determine those that are in need of a comprehensive eye exam.

Vision screenings can detect a potential vision problem early, however, vision screenings do not replace the need for all Ohioans to have a professional eye exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Comprehensive eye exams should be obtained on a regular basis for good health, especially for those individuals with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and members of high-risk ethnic groups such as African-Americans and Hispanics. Early detection and treatment is the key to prevent the needless loss of sight.

For information on free Children's Vision Screening trainings go to:

<https://www.wiseabouteyes.org/copy-of-trainings-1>

For information on free Adult Vision Screening trainings go to: [Adult Vision Screening - Prevent Blindness Ohio](#)

## **Becoming a Partner Organization**

To become a partner organization in the VCO Program, the organization must agree to and comply with the following:

- The organization advocate completes a Prevent Blindness Ohio partner organization agreement and agrees to comply with the guidelines outlined within this handbook.
- PBO ensures that the PO staff receive training and all the information required to make online referrals for their clients' vision needs.

- The partner organization serves the target population of the VCO Program by ensuring that each individual client:
  - meets the current 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines.
  - has no access to insurance with vision coverage or whose vision coverage does not cover the cost of eyeglasses. Eyeglass vouchers may be used in this case.
- Clients with any type of insurance with a vision component must use those benefits first before utilizing PBO's VCO Program services. There are some services available once those benefits are used.
- The partner organization advocate is to serve as a liaison between the client and PBO and will assist with the client's eye care until all vision care services are met. This includes entering client application information into the portal and closing out the case on the portal when services are completed.
- Partner Organization Training Webinars, held quarterly, offer 1) education in the area of services and vision, 2) updates to the VCO Program, and 3) networking. While we encourage regular attendance, we ask that a partner organization attend at least one per year.

## How the VCO Program works

### Who qualifies?

In order to qualify for services provided through the VCO Program, clients must:

- Lack vision insurance or be underinsured.
- Meet the most current 200% Federal Poverty Guidelines.

**200% Federal Poverty Guidelines-2026**

<b>Family Size</b>	<b>Annual Income</b>
1	\$31,920
2	\$43,280
3	\$54,640
4	\$66,000
5	\$77,360
6	\$88,720
7	\$100,080
8	\$111,440
For each additional person, add	\$11,360

2026 HHS Federal Poverty Guidelines -- 200%

Source: *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Federal Register, January 14, 2026*

## How are applications submitted?

- The partner organization advocate will qualify the client for the VCO Program. Applications are then submitted through [PBO's online portal](#).
- In some cases, Ohioans apply directly to PBO through our website. Prevent Blindness then serves as that client's partner organization.

## What information is required on the application?

The information listed below is a requirement of all applications that are submitted (through the online portal) to the VCO Program:

1. Client's name, date of birth
2. Client's address and the telephone number where the client can be reached
3. The client's total family annual income and family size (no proof of income is required - honor system is followed)
4. The client's insurance benefits status
5. The exact date of the client's last eye exam when the application is for eyeglasses only
6. Race and ethnicity information when available

## Who does the eye examinations?

- The VCO Program utilizes gift certificates and/or vouchers from several large Eye Care Providers:
  - VSP (Vision Service Plan)
  - America's Best
  - AEG Vision, and
  - OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation
- Packets including letters of congratulations, instructions, addresses of local providers and the gift certificate/voucher are sent in the mail to the PO or client.
- Occasionally a client will be referred to one of the eye care professionals throughout the state of Ohio who has agreed to donate their eye care services. Optometrists and ophthalmologists have been recruited by Prevent Blindness to donate exams and eyeglasses.
- There are some clinics in the major cities who take referrals for free eye exams from PBO. (i.e. Cincinnati Eye Institute)
- The VCO staff makes the best choice for the client in partnership with the referring PO.

## What is the referral process?

When the partner organization advocate refers the client to the VCO Program, the following steps must be taken:

- The partner organization advocate will complete an application online for the appropriate eye care: a) Eye Exam that Includes Glasses for Adults/Children or b) Eyeglasses Only for Adults/Children.
- Once an application is submitted by a partner organization, it will be downloaded into the Prevent Blindness database within 2 to 3 business days from the date submitted.
- The VCO staff will process the application and apply the necessary resource services for the client to: a) schedule an eye exam, b) issue a gift certificate for an eye exam or c) issue a voucher for a pair of low cost or free eyeglasses.

## **How do I know if my client needs an eye exam?**

Vision screenings and/or risk assessment questions can be used to refer a client to the VCO Program. These questions are asked on the online applications. This information can be taken over the phone or via web conferences if the PO is not seeing clients in person.

See the sample risk assessment questions below to serve as a guide when qualifying a client for the VCO Program:

### ***SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS:***

Do you have a blood relative with glaucoma? (Blood relative means mother, father, sibling, child, or grandparent)	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>
Has an eye doctor treated you for or said you have glaucoma?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>
Have you ever had an eye injury or surgery?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>
Have you noticed a change in your vision in the last 12 months?	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>
Are you African American or Hispanic over age 40? (See online application for full set of Risk Assessment Questions)	Yes <input type="text"/> No <input type="text"/>

Any of these answered “Yes” qualifies a client for PBO services.

A client can fail a vision screening and be referred to PBO for services, as well.

## **Roles for the VCO Program**

### **PBO Vision Care Outreach Staff Responsibilities**

1. ***Maintain an adequate source of Professional Eye Care Providers.*** Each year, the VCO Program receives thousands of requests for eye care from throughout Ohio. The PBO staff is committed to using its time and resources to cultivate and find willing eye care providers to meet the needs of Ohioans.
2. ***Make the decision on the best mode of service for the client.*** (see \* below)

- a. Prevent Blindness does not always have a relationship established with a donating doctor in all 88 counties, however, these donating doctors will be used with clients when deemed as the best possible solution.
- b. Eyes of Hope VSP\* (*Vision Service Providers*) gift certificates. \* PBO is responsible for the VSP gift certificates (GC) and they will not be given out without the required information. The gift certificate is good for one year and the expiration date is printed on each gift certificate. The gift certificate is mailed directly to the partner organization advocate -- who will then facilitate getting the gift certificate to the client. PBO can mail the gift certificate directly to the client if the PO requests that we do so. The GC meets the needs of all ages of our clients.
- c. America's Best Vouchers for eye exam and eyeglasses. Good for 1 year. Most locations are in the metropolitan areas. Vouchers and instructions are sent to the partner organization.
- d. OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation Healthy Eye (HE) Vouchers for glasses only. No expiration. Lenscrafters and Target Opticals. Most available in the metropolitan areas. (VCO staff makes decision between voucher and VSP Materials only.)
- e. AEG Vision: There is a statewide network of privately owned AEG practices. Just as with VSP, PBO is responsible for AEG vouchers, ensuring they are only dispersed when qualifications are met. The voucher is good for one year from date of issuance. The voucher is mailed directly to the partner organization advocate -- who will then facilitate getting the voucher to the client. The AEG voucher meets the needs of clients from age 6 and above.
- f. Clinics and Health centers in certain areas. VCO makes appointments, sends PO the date and HE Voucher for eyeglasses.

3. ***Track the usage of the materials sent and/or appointments made.*** PBO's funding comes from the usage of the voucher and/or gift certificate. It is important to be able to close a case knowing that the client utilized a voucher and/or gift certificate for an eye exam and/or eyeglasses.
4. ***Maintain communication with POs.*** VCO staff will let you know when a client's application has been accepted and/or denied for any reason. We will also keep you updated and informed on any important developments within the VCO Program.
5. ***Provide email blasts for breaking news and information.***
6. ***Provide Quarterly Webinars.*** PBO will provide these webinars for all current, lapsed, and new POs keeping abreast of new policies, providers, and other PBO news/services.
7. ***Maintain and update PO portals.*** PBO will update you on any staff changes and location/name changes.
8. ***Provide training for new and existing POs at their request.*** If you have never been trained, have new staff needing to be trained or if you would like a

refresher on the VCO Program and using our online application portal, please contact our VCO staff.

## **Partner Organization's Responsibilities**

1. Make referrals on the online portal.
2. In most cases, the organization's referring staff receives the necessary paperwork for the client's vision care services. They must arrange for that client to get that paperwork, which includes voucher, instructions, and a list of providers in their area.
3. Notify VCO staff of organization's staff changes. Schedule a training for new staff with PBO.
4. Work with VCO staff to track their client's usage of materials sent.
5. Notify your client of any scheduled exam dates—in the case where the appointment is made for them.
6. Arrange and/or provide interpretive language services, if they are needed. Clients must bring someone (age 17 or older, i.e., through a pre-arranged interpretative service, or family member or a friend) to interpret with them to eye exam and eyeglasses dispensing sites.
7. Assist with transportation to eye appointments, if needed.
8. Keep VCO staff aware of any difficulties surrounding the usage of the service materials sent. We want this to be an efficient and rewarding experience for all.
9. Keep in contact with the client until the required vision services are received. If a client loses the gift certificate or it remains unused prior to the expiration date, VCO staff will decide on a case by case basis whether to replace it and/or whether to restrict the client from using the VCO Program for one year from the expiration date.
10. Encourage clients to send in success stories!
11. Attend PBO webinars and invite others!

## **Client's Responsibilities**

1. We expect each client to accurately report the information asked for on their application.
2. Respecting our eye care professionals is very important. It is important that the client is on time, courteous and respectful when referred to an eye care provider for services.
3. While very infrequent, if it has been determined that the client behaves in a manner deemed inappropriate, Prevent Blindness will handle the case and may disqualify the client for future VCO Program services.
4. If a client is treated in an unkind or demeaning manner by an eye care provider, PBO staff wants to know. We want this to be a positive experience for all involved.
5. It is the client's responsibility to keep any scheduled appointment. It is very important that the client keep the eye exam that is scheduled.
6. If the client does not keep their eye appointment and the partner organization advocate (or the client) has not contacted Prevent Blindness or the eye care provider in advance to cancel the eye exam, the client will be considered a "no show" and the

client will not receive an additional eye appointment for 12 months from the date of their missed eye exam.

7. FOR DONATED DOCTORS APPOINTMENTS ONLY: If a Prevent Blindness pre-determined eye exam appointment must be canceled, the partner organization advocate or the client must contact the VCO staff as soon as possible. The preferred notification time is at least 3-5 days' notice—so that slot can be given to another client.

## Further Ophthalmological Referrals

There are times when a PBO client will need further examination from an Ophthalmologist for concerns such as diabetes, amblyopia, or cataracts. In this case, the partner organization will need to have verification of a referral from the eye care provider. **The partner organization advocate will work with PBO staff to facilitate the referral. PBO staff take the lead in this procedure.**

1. In Cincinnati and the surrounding area, clients are referred to either University of Cincinnati Hospital or Cincinnati Eye Institute.
2. In Columbus and the surrounding area, clients are referred to the Ohio State University Hospital or Wexner Medical Center.
3. In the Dayton area, clients are referred to Schrimpf Eye Center.
4. In Northeast Ohio:
  - a. In Summit and surrounding counties, clients are referred to Summa Ophthalmology.
  - b. In Cuyahoga and surrounding counties, clients are referred to Cole Eye Institute.
5. In Toledo and the surrounding area, clients are referred to ProMedica Physicians Eye Care.

## Resources available

1. [Medicare Benefits for Vision](#)
2. [Medicaid Vision Care Services](#)
3. [Vision Care Financial Assistance](#)
4. There are a wealth of other resources available on our [website](#) including [FAQs](#).

## **Comments or suggestions about VCO Program**

PBO values your input. Any comments or suggestions you may have regarding the VCO Program can be sent to [info@pbohio.org](mailto:info@pbohio.org). All feedback received through this e-mail is reviewed by the PBO President and CEO as well as the Vice-President of Programs and Governmental Affairs and will be addressed accordingly. Thank you.



## THE PREVENT BLINDNESS OHIO VISION CARE OUTREACH PROGRAM PARTNER ORGANIZATION ADVOCATE AGREEMENT

On behalf of \_\_\_\_\_, I have been  
(The Name of Your Organization)

designated as the partner organization advocate for the Prevent Blindness Vision Care Outreach Program. I have read the VCO partner organization handbook and agree to act in the role of a partner organization advocate and adhere to the VCO programmatic guidelines as outlined throughout the handbook.

I understand that my clients (adults and/or children) are eligible for the Vision Care Outreach Program when:

- The current 200% Federal Poverty Level guidelines are met.
- The client's prescription is 2 years or newer for adults and/or 1 year or newer for children for eyeglasses only applications.
- The client does not have any type of insurance benefits (such as Medicaid, some Medicare or private insurance) that carry a vision component or is considered underinsured (for example, an eye exam is covered, but not eye glasses).

I understand that my organization's clients can receive vision care services through the Prevent Blindness Vision Care Outreach Program as long as my responsibilities, as outlined throughout the partner organization handbook, are being met.

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My Organization Address

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My Organization City/State/Zip Code

---

County

---

My Direct Telephone Number at the Organization

Extension \_\_\_\_\_

---

Fax Number

---

My Email Address

---

Print My Name

---

My Signature

---

Date

**COMPLETE FORM AND SCAN IT AND EMAIL IT to [info@pbohio.org](mailto:info@pbohio.org) OR fax to 614-481-9670**



### **CLIENT RESPONSIBILITY SUMMARY TO BE GIVEN TO CLIENT**

The services you will receive through the Vision Care Outreach (VCO) Program are generously provided by eye care professionals who donate their time and skills so that you may receive vision care services at no cost to you. I understand that due to the charitable nature of the VCO Program that the services I receive are limited in an effort to serve as many people as possible who need vision care.

- It is your responsibility to **arrive on time** for eye appointments. Please arrive at least 15 minutes before your eye appointment.
- I must **display appropriate behavior at all times** when at the premises of the eye service locations.
- I must **be dressed in clothing that is considered appropriate** when I am at the eye service locations.
- I must remain courteous and respectful at all times when at the premises of the eye service locations.
- If I fail to show up (without the proper notification made to Prevent Blindness) to the eye doctor's appointment, I cannot apply for Prevent Blindness vision care services for a year from the missed eye exam date.
- Please ask your organization advocate for directions to the eye service locations. It is preferred that you do not call the doctor's office for directions or bus route information.
- Failure to comply with any of the responsibilities listed below could result in refusal of care by Prevent Blindness and the eye care provider that treat you and I could ultimately be dismissed from the VCO Program for one year or longer.
- **FOR DONATED DOCTORS ONLY:** It is my responsibility to contact my Organization Advocate (or Prevent Blindness) at least 48 to 72 business hours in advance of the appointment if I cannot keep the eye exam appointment. **DO NOT CALL THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE.** If you contact Prevent Blindness, call 800-301-2020; Prompt #8



## RESUMEN DE RESPONSABILIDAD DEL CLIENTE QUE SE ENTREGARÁ AL CLIENTE

Los servicios que recibirá a través del Programa de Alcance de Atención de la Visión (VCO) son generosamente proporcionados por profesionales de la vista que donan su tiempo y habilidades para que pueda recibir servicios de atención de la vista sin costo alguno para usted. Entiendo que debido a la naturaleza caritativa del Programa VCO, los servicios que recibo son limitados en un esfuerzo por servir a tantas personas como sea posible que necesitan atención de la vista.

- Es su responsabilidad llegar a **tiempo** para las citas oculares. Por favor, llegue al menos 15 minutos antes de su cita con los ojos.
- Debo **mostrar un comportamiento apropiado en todo momento** cuando esté en las instalaciones de las ubicaciones del servicio oftalmológico.
- Debo **estar vestido con ropa que se considere apropiada** cuando estoy en los lugares de servicio oftalmológico.
- Debo permanecer cortés y respetuoso en todo momento cuando esté en las instalaciones de los lugares de servicio oftalmológico.
- Si no me presento (sin la notificación adecuada hecha a Prevent Blindness) a la cita con el oftalmólogo, no puedo solicitar los servicios de atención de la vista de Prevent Blindness durante un año a partir de la fecha del examen ocular perdido.
- Por favor, pregunte a su defensor de la agencia para obtener instrucciones para llegar a las ubicaciones de servicio oftalmológico. Es preferible que no llame al consultorio del médico para obtener instrucciones o información sobre la ruta del autobús.
- El incumplimiento de cualquiera de las responsabilidades enumeradas a continuación podría resultar en el rechazo de la atención por parte de Prevent Blindness y el proveedor de atención ocular que lo trata a usted y a mí podría ser despedido del programa VCO por un año o más.
- **SOLO PARA MÉDICOS DONADOS:** Es mi responsabilidad comunicarme con mi Defensor de la Agencia (o Prevenir la Ceguera) al menos de 48 a 72 horas hábiles antes de la cita si no puedo asistir a la cita del examen de la vista. **NO LLAME AL CONSULTORIO DEL MÉDICO.** Si se comunica con Prevent Blindness, llame al 800-301-2020; Aviso #8