



Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership

**A statewide collaboration preparing for the
growth of aging eye challenges in Ohio**

Stemming the Tide of Vision Loss in Ohio



**Report to the Governor,
the Ohio General Assembly,
and the Citizens of Ohio**

Governor DeWine, Members of the Ohio General Assembly and Citizens of Ohio:

It is imperative that we *Stem the Tide of Vision Loss* in Ohio!

Losing one's vision and vision-related disability causes very personal emotional, social and a significant economic toll for millions of people including suffering, disability, loss of productivity, and diminished quality of life. An estimated 3.8 million Ohioans have vision problems and, as the population ages, this number will continue to increase. The estimated financial burden to the Ohio economy due to vision problems, refractive errors, visual impairment, and blindness is \$6.1 billion annually.

(<https://ohio.preventblindness.org/vision-problems-in-ohio/>).

Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership (AEPPP) is implementing a plan to address issues related to:

- Vision care and preservation
- Rehabilitation services
- Vision-related public health and policy
- Education and awareness
- Research

**That plan is available as a part of this report. We hope you take a moment to review it.*

We encourage government leaders, public health professionals, health care providers, business and community leaders, and all Ohioans to work together to *Stem the Tide of Vision Loss*. We offer our resources and services to you and encourage you to take care of your vision as well as the vision of all Ohioans.

Highlights of the Work of the Aging Eye Partnership:

- Launched a dedicated webpage to help individuals better understand and navigate the complex systems of Medicare, Medicaid, and Medicare Advantage as it relates to vision care. This resource provides straightforward steps to empower people to figure out their vision care coverage (if any), find participating providers, and understand what to expect when scheduling services. To access, visit the Prevent Blindness Ohio website: [Insurance and Provider Information – Prevent Blindness Ohio](#).
- Offer evidence-based healthy aging programs that help participants learn strategies to preserve vision as well as manage vision loss, diabetes, depression, and the risk of falling.
- Conduct outreach about falls prevention and health promotion. Vision impairment increases the risk of falling by 50%. Many Partnership members serve on the Ohio Older Adult Falls Prevention Coalition.
- Provide training to assist people with visual impairments with daily living skills to improve their quality of life and to remain independent.
- Provide Adult Vision Screening and HealthyEyes advocate training. Participants are trained as vision health advocates and equipped to conduct adult vision screenings.
- Host an annual *Aging Eye Summit*. The 2025 Summit was hosted by The Ohio State University College of Optometry. Topics included: *The Relationship Between Vision and Falls, Novel Methods for Measuring Visual Function in Patients with Low Vision, Ocular Nutrition and Exercise, Current Practices and Future Prospects of Telemedicine in Diabetic Retinopathy Screening, Resources and Tips for Working with Older Patients, and Social Determinants of Age-Related Macular Degeneration Outcomes*
- Collaborate on vision related research projects including work with the National Kidney Foundation on the *Chronic Kidney Disease and Diabetic Retinopathy Quality Improvement Project*, communicating with multiple FQHCs about vision resources and integrating vision care into their practices. Also, partnering on a National Association of Chronic Disease Directors funded project to assess visual impairment (VI) and identified factors associated with VI in specific Ohio zip codes with high rates of VI and/or blindness.
- Provide Vision Research Fellowships. The Fellows present their innovative work at the Vision Research Scientific Forums annually.
- Hold Legislative Briefings and provide all Ohio legislators with a packet of eye health resources that are useful in assisting their constituents. Advocate locally and nationally for vision related eye health issues.



2025 Vision Research Fellowship Recipients

Electra Coffman (left) is a Ph.D. candidate in the Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology program at The Ohio State University. She is conducting her research with the College of Optometry. Her research has critical implications for understanding age-dependent cataract formation, a common and potentially blinding disorder with poorly understood etiology.

Pooja Nambiar (right) is a Case Western Reserve medical student conducting her research with the Cole Eye Institute – Ocular Motility and Vision Neurosciences Lab. Her research is related to visuomotor dysfunction in Parkinson’s patients. Parkinson’s disease (PD) is a progressive, neurodegenerative disorder that affects over 10 million people worldwide. Up to 70% of individuals with PD experience visual symptoms such as double vision, trouble focusing, and reduced depth perception; these can make daily tasks such as reading and walking more difficult. Debilitating visual symptoms are common in Parkinson’s patients, yet this area remains underexplored, leaving this population underrepresented and underserved in current vision research and care efforts.



Ohio’s Aging Eye Public Private Partnership Strategic Plan

Vision-Related Public Health & Policy

- Integrate adult vision messaging and strategies into state and local health improvement planning.
- Advocate for coverage of comprehensive vision care and rehabilitation services for adults in Medicaid and Medicare programs.
- Advocate for the development and expansion of comprehensive vision care and rehabilitation services within community health centers, including federally qualified health centers.
- Advocate for affordable health insurance coverage of early disease detection, comprehensive vision care, and rehabilitation services.

Education & Awareness

- Educate others about how they can provide access to vision care and rehabilitation services for their clients.
- Increase awareness about the growth of vision problems amongst Ohio’s aging population.
- Support early detection and treatment efforts for chronic diseases that impact vision and eye health.

Research

- Support and advocate for inclusion of vision questions in Ohio and national data collection tools to provide outcome data on which to base statewide public health vision programming.
- Support vision-related activities that promote awareness, collaboration, and expansion of research.

Vision Care, Preservation & Rehabilitation Services

- Support efforts that increase evidence-based vision screening practices as well as access to vision care and rehabilitation services.
- Promote best practices for seniors in maintaining healthy vision.
- Support efforts that eliminate health disparities in vision and rehabilitation services.



Common Causes of Visual Impairment and Blindness in Ohio

Early detection and treatment are key to preserving sight. Many eye diseases have no symptoms and require a comprehensive eye exam to detect. In most cases, once vision is lost, it cannot be restored. However, treatment can stop or slow the progression of the disease.

Statistics from the "2020 Vision Problems in Ohio" report indicate increases in the four leading causes of vision loss in Ohio since the 2014 report was issued.

- 97,870 people age 50 and older have age-related **macular degeneration** - a 10.5% increase
- 1,025,422 people age 40 and older have **cataract** - a 3.4% increase
- 294,742 people age 40 and older have **diabetes-related retinopathy** - a 3.5% increase
- 109,556 people age 40 and older have **glaucoma** - a 3.5% increase



Vision Problems in Ohio Data: <https://ohio.preventblindness.org/vision-problems-in-ohio/>

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Ohio's Aging Eye Public Private Partnership Leadership

Co-Chairs

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Marcus J. Molea, AICP Chief
Past Board Chair, Prevent Blindness Ohio

Advocacy and Awareness Co-Chairs

Jackie Davis, OD, MPH
Professor Emeritus, The Ohio State University
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Marcus J. Molea, AICP
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Vision Research Chair

Andrew Hartwick, OD, PhD
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Member Organizations*

Ohio Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Ohio Association of Gerontology and Education
Ohio Association of Senior Centers
Ohio Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Impaired
Ohio Association of Community Health Centers
Ohio Department of Aging
Ohio Department of Health
Ohio Department of Insurance/OSHIIP
Ohio Ophthalmological Society
Ohio Osteopathic Association
Ohio Optometric Association
Ohio Public Health Association
Ohio Veterans Visual Impairment Services Team
Opticians Association of Ohio
Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities
Prevent Blindness Ohio
The Foundation Fighting Blindness

**AEPPO membership also includes additional representatives from higher education, federally qualified health centers, vision research, and allied health professionals.*

View Prevent Blindness Ohio's
Vision Resource Guide here:



View Prevent Blindness Ohio's
Website here:

