



The LIONS Early Childhood Vision Screening Project (ECVSP) is a vision screening program to identify treatable or preventable causes of blindness in preschool and young children located in Prince William, Stafford, Spotsylvania, King George and Westmoreland counties. The program also provides for professional eye exams and treatment of vision defects for eligible participants.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The first few years of a child's life are critical to the development of normal vision. A child with vision problems often does not realize that the way they see the world is not the way everyone else sees it.

Vision abnormalities in a child's eyes may occur even when the eye appears to look normal.

Most children under age 5 are not capable of communicating effectively to solve the problem. Between 70-80% of what a child learns is visually acquired; and 70% of school-age children with learning disabilities may have some form of visual impairment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2005 reported that two out of three children under age 5 are never given a thorough vision screening; yet 1 in 4 school-age children has a vision abnormality.

95% of early vision problems can be corrected when detected and treated in early childhood.

More than 60% of children in the United States have not been examined by an optometrist or ophthalmologist by age 6.

It is estimated that 3-4% of children may have vision loss from undetected amblyopia or what is commonly referred to as *lazy eye*. Amblyopia is decreased vision in a child that results when one or both eyes send a blurry image to the brain. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, visual impairment from amblyopia will become permanent and will result in lifelong visual loss if it is untreated or insufficiently treated in early childhood.

Most people think that when they take their children to the pediatrician that any of the problems that the child may have will be discovered and treated. Most pediatricians have only had a small amount of training related to the eyes, so vision problems are more likely detected and treated by an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

### WHAT

Lions Clubs of Northern Virginia, use **the PediaVision screening device** (referred to as SPOT) to identify children whose eyes may have some type of defect, which if left untreated, may lead to a lifetime of vision problems or blindness. The screening unit is similar in appearance to a digital camera.

### HOW

Readings are taken of the child's eyes while the child looks at the PediaVision "camera" used for the screening. It is as easy as having the child's picture taken. No physical contact is made with the child and no eye drops or medications are used.

The volunteer takes a digital measurement of the child's eyes from a comfortable distance of 3-4 feet. Invisible, infrared light is projected through the pupils onto the retina. The vision screening can detect near sightedness, far sightedness, astigmatism, amblyopia and eye misalignment.

## WHO

Children as young as 6 months may be screened. The American Academy of Ophthalmology recommends that during childhood, babies up to age 2 should have vision screenings during regular Pediatric visits and screenings every two years from ages 3 to 19. The child must be able to fixate (look at a specific object) and be able to focus on a flashing light on the camera. A small child can be screened while sitting on his/her parent's lap.

## RESULTS

Parents will receive notification of the results of their child's screening. Those children who "fail" or are "referred" are advised that the screening indicates that their child may have a vision disorder and the parent will be strongly advised to make an appointment with an optometrist or ophthalmologist.

## WHY

The eye, muscles that control the eye, optic nerve, and the area of the brain that gives us vision are completely developed, no matter how perfectly or imperfectly, by the age of six. Many vision problems detected by PediaVision, when caught early enough, can be easily corrected. The earlier vision problems are diagnosed, the better the chance of correction and the easier and less expensive the treatment.

## WHERE and WHEN

Vision screening is conducted at schools, childcare centers and health fairs/clinics. Before the screening is done, the child's parents must give their written approval, and the facility must approve the screening being conducted at their site.

## COST

The cost of the screening is paid in full by the Lions using funds raised by Lions in the community and from a grant provided by the Potomac Health Foundation.

## WHAT LIONS DO NOT DO

Lions do not recommend any particular eye doctor. Lions do not make diagnoses and do not examine a child's eyes beyond taking readings. Lions are trained only to take readings.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

If parents, schools, childcare centers or health fairs are interested in scheduling a screening, they should contact a local Lions Club, or contact Lion Tony F. Reyes, Program Coordinator at 703-309-2085 or send an email to the website <http://www.lions-ecvsp.org> and click on "to make a comment or ask a question".

**NOTE:** Screenings scheduled at schools and childcare centers generally are not open to the

public.

The logo for the Potomac Health Foundation features a blue stylized cross with a white wave-like shape in the center. To the right of the cross, the text "Potomac Health Foundation" is written in a blue serif font.