

Better Access to Quality Eye Care

Nebraska's Doctors of Optometry

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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One in Five Children in Nebraska Enters Kindergarten with Undetected Vision Problems

Some Misdiagnosed with Learning Disabilities

LINCOLN, Neb. – Tuesday, July 10, 2012 – One in five children in Nebraska enters kindergarten with undetected vision problems that can lead to poor performance and lifelong challenges, according to the Nebraska Optometric Association. In some cases, children who struggle to read or remain on task are suspected of having learning disabilities, dyslexia, or attention deficits when the real culprit is their vision.

That's why Nebraska's doctors of optometry urge parents to schedule a comprehensive eye exam with an optometrist now, before their children head back to school.

"Healthy vision is an important part of the learning process and while school screenings are helpful, they are not a substitute for a comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist," said Dr. Corey Langford, optometrist and president of the NOA. "Reading, writing, and computer work are among the visual skills that students are required to perform daily, however, studies show that nearly 90 percent of children under 12 have never had an eye exam."

Studies indicate that 60 percent of children identified as "problem learners" actually suffer from undetected vision problems, said Dr. Langford. In fact, one study showed that more than 70 percent of juvenile offenders had undiagnosed vision problems.

Even if your child has passed a school vision screening, exams by an optometrist are critical for the early intervention needed to detect and treat vision correction impairments, as well as diseases and disorders such as amblyopia (lazy eye), strabismus (crossed eyes), retinoblastoma (cancerous retina tumor) and other serious and potentially blinding problems that can lead to poor school performance and other issues that affect quality of life, he said.

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Parents are urged to contact their doctor of optometry if their child frequently:

- ✓ Loses place while reading
- ✓ Avoids close work
- ✓ Tends to rub eyes
- ✓ Has headaches
- ✓ Turns or tilts head
- ✓ Makes frequent reversals when reading or writing
- ✓ Uses finger to maintain place when reading
- ✓ Omits or confuses small words when reading
- ✓ Consistently performs below potential
- ✓ Struggles to complete homework
- ✓ Squints while reading or watching television
- ✓ Has behavioral problems
- ✓ Holds reading material closer than normal

NOA recommends that children have their first eye assessment with a doctor of optometry at six months of age, then comprehensive eye exams beginning at age three, before a child enters school, and then every two years, unless otherwise advised by an optometrist. The earlier a vision problem is detected and treated, the more likely treatment will be successful.

Nebraska law requires that kindergartners and older children entering Nebraska schools for the first time receive a vision evaluation by a health care professional, but the NOA recommends comprehensive exams by a doctor of optometry.

To find an optometrist in your area, please visit www.BetterEyeCareNebraska.com.

About the Nebraska Optometric Association (NOA):

The NOA represents over 240 doctors of optometry throughout the state. Licensed optometrists provide more than two-thirds of all primary eye care in the United States, including diagnosis and treatment of eye disease and vision conditions. Association members in Nebraska are also leading providers of pediatric vision care and offer two statewide public service programs to serve children. Optometrists offer free vision evaluations for any infant through the InfantSEE program and free vision assessments for all three-year-olds through the See to Learn program. Information about both programs is available to consumers on the Nebraska Optometric Association website at <http://Nebraska.aoa.org>.