



Support Making Comprehensive Eye Exams Essential

Dear Colleague:

For years, the AOA has worked to make healthy vision for children a national health care priority.

Now, after working to ensure that the 2010 health care overhaul recognized pediatric vision care as "essential" and continuing to advocate for our youngest patients as the law is being implemented, we have what could be our last chance to be heard before the Federal government's proposed essential health benefits regulations are released, possibly before the end of the month.



Dori Carlson, O.D.

Please send an e-mail message to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in support of AOA's efforts to ensure that direct access to a comprehensive eye exam and follow-up care will be the foundation of the new pediatric vision care essential health benefit.

Of course, it would help our cause even more if you could encourage others who care about healthy vision to also contact the Secretary in this way. The extra effort will be especially important in helping the AOA counter groups representing insurers and organized medicine that have been calling on HHS to establish a limited children's vision benefit based on screenings.

Here's a sample message that can be e-mailed to Secretary Sebelius at externalaffairs@hhs.gov today:

Dear Secretary Sebelius:

Please ensure that new pediatric vision care essential health benefit is based on the solid foundation of direct access to and coverage for an annual comprehensive eye exam provided by an eye doctor and follow-up care. There should be no barriers created to restrict access to eye care, especially with 1 out of every four school-aged children suffering from a vision problem that could have been effectively treated if properly detected.

As you know from your recent meeting with Dr. Dori Carlson, President of the American Optometric Association (AOA), the 2011 School Readiness Summit, which included experts from the U.S. Department of Education and leading national children's health and education groups looked at the failing system of vision screenings that leaves millions of children and families to deal with learning difficulties and other serious developmental consequences of undiagnosed and untreated vision problems.

The School Readiness Summit issued a joint statement http://www.aoa.org/documents/Joint_Statement.pdf, signed by more than 30 leading organizations representing doctors, nurses, teachers and parents as well as large employers, supporting "comprehensive eye exams as a foundation for a coordinated and improved approach to addressing children's vision and eye health issues and as a key element of ensuring school readiness in American children."

Access to quality eye health care is essential to overall good health. I urge you to continue to work with the AOA to ensure that the pediatric vision care essential benefit provides for direct access to comprehensive eye exams and follow-up care children need. Thank you.

*Sincerely,
(Your Name and Address)*

Please take action today!

Also, you may be interested in reviewing additional information on AOA's advocacy efforts aimed at helping millions more children and adults gain access to the optometric care they need:

- [AOA Web site on Health Care Reform](#)

- [AOA News: Shaping the Pediatric Vision Care Essential Benefit](#)
- [Dr. Carlson's November 2011 message to AOA members following White House meeting](#)
- [AOA Advocacy on Capitol Hill, the White House, HHS and other agencies](#)
- [AOA-led School Readiness Summit video](#) and [joint statement](#)
- [HHS Secretary Sebelius's June 2010 message to the AOA House of Delegates](#)

It's expected that HHS will release its proposed essential benefit regulations very soon. Although our profession has done a great deal already to be heard, there's more work to be done and an urgent need for all of us to be involved. If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me or the Director of the AOA Washington office, Jon Hymes, at jfhymes@aoa.org/ 1-800-365-2219.

Sincerely,



Dori Carlson, OD
AOA President

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