Improving Access to Vision Care for Youth in Foster Care: Insights from Policy Interest-holders

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Vision care is easy to overlook but it has lasting impacts. Clear vision supports all aspects of a child's well-being, including learning, development, confidence and social interactions. When vision problems go untreated, they can create lifelong vision deficits, contributing to academic challenges and making it harder for children who have experienced trauma to navigate their environments. Early identification and treatment matter.

Children in foster care face unique challenges to maintaining vision care. Every placement change can interrupt care. Glasses may be lost, caregivers may not know a child's vision needs, and medical information doesn't always follow children as they move between homes. These system-level barriers often prevent children from getting the care they need.

To better understand these challenges and opportunities for improvement, PolicyLab and CHOP's Fostering Health Program, with support from the Warby Parker Impact Foundation, brought together perspectives from across the child welfare system—including child welfare system professionals, attorneys, social workers, youth with lived experience in foster care, foster parents and health care professionals.

Their insights informed practical recommendations that can help ensure children receive timely screenings, access glasses when they need them, and maintain continuity of care.

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