

KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON THE VISION OF YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

A RESOURCE FOR FOSTER PARENTS, PRACTITIONERS, EDUCATORS, CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS AND OTHERS THAT ENGAGE WITH YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Uncorrected vision problems can exacerbate learning difficulties, social isolation and emotional distress. Children in foster care already face disproportionate risk for these difficulties. Early identification and treatment of vision issues can significantly improve a child's ability to succeed academically and engage socially.

GETTING GLASSES OR CONTACTS CAN BE ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE.

Youth in foster care face challenges accessing consistent and effective health care due to frequent transitions, fragmented systems and systemic barriers.

Every change in placement can result in

- vision aids being lost or left behind
- a new caregiver not knowing about a child's vision needs
- overall disruption of the child's medical care and health record, impacting the priorities of child welfare professionals and medical providers.

Without preventive plans, health care focuses on immediate crises, leaving long-term needs unmet.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

Ask youth about their vision.

- Ask if they've worn glasses or contacts before.
- Ask when they last had a vision screening.

Ensure youth receive vision screenings when they attend visits with their pediatrician.

Any pediatrician visit is an opportunity for a vision screen.

Ensure vision is incorporated into children's medical history.

Vision needs should be documented and all relevant parties should have the child's vision information. When medical history is discussed, vision should be a part of it.

Once a vision care need is discovered, develop strategies to ensure a child's medical history and glasses or contacts transition with them during their foster care journey.

Be aware of Medicaid coverage for vision services. Reach out to the appropriate child welfare case manager for details.

What does Medicaid cover?*

Pennsylvania Medicaid plans cover standard in-network vision care services for members under age 21.

For the most part, Medicaid plans in Pennsylvania cover two vision exams, two standard eyeglass frames, four standard eyeglass lenses (two sets), and four standard contact lenses (two sets) per year—and more if needed with prior authorization. Almost all plans have additional regulations, such as allowing patients to choose from different tiers of eyeglass frames with different co-pay amounts.

Most plans will replace glasses if they're lost or broken, though policies vary. For instance, one plan provides a one-year breakage warranty.

If you are not sure whether a vision care provider is covered under a child's insurance, you can call the provider directly and ask.

*This information is derived from PA Medicaid plans' 2024 member handbooks. Please refer to the most up-to-date member handbook on your Medicaid plan's website or reach out to the appropriate child welfare case manager for further guidance.

CHECK OUT THESE RESOURCES

[Vision Screenings for Babies & Children](#) | American Academy of Pediatrics, [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

[Warning Signs of Vision Problems in Infants & Children](#) | American Academy of Pediatrics, [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

[20 Things to Know About Children's Eyes and Vision](#) | American Academy of Ophthalmology

[CHOP Fostering Health Program](#) | chop.edu



DID YOU KNOW?

For youth who have difficulty recognizing letters, alternative vision screening options are available, such as a chart with shapes. Ask a child's doctor which is best for them.



STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Consult your case manager or your Medicaid plan website.

(If you're not sure where to find this, look on the back of the child's insurance ID card or ask your case manager. In Philadelphia County, consult your [Community Umbrella Agency](#), or CUA.)



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