

# Summary of the Early Detection of Vision Impairments for Children Act of 2024



**Background:** A child's vision, which fully develops and changes throughout childhood, requires consistent evaluation, referral to eye care, diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up to care to ensure vision problems are caught and treated before progressing to unnecessary permanent vision loss. Early detection and intervention for vision disorders in children are part of [national goals](#) and [health care standards](#); yet, there is **no federal funding to support a coordinated, national-level children's vision and eye health initiative** that promotes best practice models for professional development and vision screening, referrals to eye care, and follow-up to eye care treatment. Accountability for children's vision and eye health are also absent from federally funded programs that address many other aspects of children's health and development, including children's hearing or oral health.

Currently, significant disparities exist in children's vision and eye health outcomes and access to eye care across the United States. State laws to address children's vision vary widely in approaches and often lack protocols for referrals to eye care providers and documentation to ensure eye care was received. States may also lack the necessary resources to adequately capture data on rates of received eye care, leading to challenges in addressing existing disparities among demographic sub-populations or in rural or under-resourced communities. Thus, without a strong public health system in place, a child's vision problem may go undetected, undiagnosed, and untreated, leaving them vulnerable to deficits in development, academics, and potential vision loss that follows them into adulthood.

The goal of the EDVI Act is to ensure that every child with a possible vision problem is identified and connected to appropriate eye care, to support early childhood professionals, health care providers, and families with updated and evidence-based vision screening methods and established referrals to care, and advance follow-up protocols to ensure that children who need eye care treatment receive it before a vision problem leads to potential vision loss.

**Summary of Legislation:** The Early Detection of Vision Impairments in Children Act (EDVI) will establish state and community based EDVI programs across the United States to address children's vision and eye health. The EDVI Act models the bipartisan success of the [Early Hearing Detection and Intervention \(EHDI\) program](#) that has [drastically increased](#) the rates of screening and referral to care for infants with hearing loss since 1999. The EDVI program would be the first national-level program established to specifically address children's vision and eye health in the United States.

Like the EHDI program, the EDVI Act will provide states and communities with grant funding to improve, update, and modernize state and community approaches to children's vision and eye health. This funding will allow states and communities to integrate children's vision and eye health into ongoing programs and systems of care that already address other aspects of children's physical, behavioral, and sensory health in places such as early learning or school- and community-based health settings.

The EDVI Act also allows for a technical assistance center for states and communities to access evidence-based guidelines to address children's vision and eye health while also making resources available to the public. The EDVI Act also fosters collaboration between the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education to ensure that children's vision and eye health is integrated into ongoing programs and interventions.



For more information, please contact:  
Sara Brown, Director of Government Affairs  
sbrown@preventblindness.org, 312.363.6031