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ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES ANNOUNCES EYE EXAMS & EYEGASSES FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE AT THE CHILDREN'S CENTER; NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL OPTOMETRISTS MEANS YOUTH AS YOUNG AS SIX MONTHS OLD HAVE EASIER ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY EYE CARE

Poor Vision in Children Could Impact Academic Success, Self-Esteem & More; ACS Sees Brighter Future for Youth with Easier Access to Comprehensive Eye Care

New York, NY – Today, Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Commissioner David A. Hansell announced a new program to provide eye exams and eyeglasses to children in foster care onsite at the Nicholas Scoppetta Children's Center. According to the American Optometric Association, if unchecked, childhood vision disorders could impact development, school performance, social interactions, and self-esteem well into adulthood. The new partnership between ACS and "Eye on Education" optometrists, Dr. Ezra E. Cohen and Dr. Haim V. Cohen, will make sure that all youth at the Children's Center, infants all the way up to the age of 21, will receive high-quality eye care.

"ACS sees a brighter future for our children and that's why we're announcing a new partnership that will provide eye exams and glasses at to youth in foster care at the Children's Center," **said ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell.** "The benefits of high-quality eye care are far-reaching because when a child's vision improves, their school performance, behavior and self-esteem may all improve along with it. Thank you to the optometrists at Eye on Education for this partnership in which we visualize much success!"

"Roughly 73% of children with eye problems will pass a routine vision screening by a school nurse or pediatrician but will fail an eye exam by an eye doctor. It is extremely important that children receive attention regarding their eyesight from a very early age to be sure that everything is developing correctly and to diagnose and treat any problems before they worsen or lead to more serious complications," **said Dr. Ezra E. Cohen.** "Eye on Education is committed through this program to begin the process of improving vision health for this most vulnerable group of children."

According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology, eye exams should be conducted on infants when they are as young as six months old and again between the ages of 3 and 3 ½ . Children's eyes should be screened again upon entering school.

The consequences of not addressing eyesight problems early can be dire. First, Inability to see inhibits students' academic progress and is a barrier to literacy. Second, some eye conditions that can cause difficulties later in life may be easily detected and treated if an eye exam is conducted during childhood. Studies show that amblyopia, commonly known as lazy eye, is the most common cause of vision problems in children and young adults. It's estimated to be the leading cause of vision loss in children, affecting almost 500,000 preschoolers annually.

As part of this new partnership, optometrists from “Eye on Education” will conduct weekly eye exams on all children at the Children’s Center. Every child has a dilated eye examination, which helps eye doctors rule out serious conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, or tumors. Children requiring additional treatment will be referred to a specialist, and any child that requires eyeglasses will receive a no cost pair within two weeks.

In addition to comprehensive vision screenings, all children in foster care receive medical and dental screenings when they first enter foster care as well as ongoing dental and medical care.

This partnership will build on the success of Mayor de Blasio’s ongoing effort to provide no cost eyeglasses to all kindergartners and first graders in need.

The Nicholas Scoppetta Children’s Center is a child-friendly facility that operates 24 hours a day, temporarily housing children and youth who are not placed immediately after removal from their homes. An interdisciplinary team of Child Protective Specialists, Social Workers, Nurses, Psychologists, Psychiatrists, Child Care and Administrative staff provide support and clinical services to children to reduce trauma associated with child maltreatment, as well as loss and separation from their parents and primary caregivers.



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