

Meigs Health Matters: Vision Assistance Programs for Children and Adults

January 5, 2023

Do you know these facts? 1- Approximately 15% of Ohioans age 40 and older have some measure of difficulty recognizing a friend across the street. 2- Approximately 19.6% have not had an eye exam in the last two years. 3- Vision loss due to lazy eye, glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, cataract and diabetic retinopathy often produce no symptoms and if left undetected and untreated can lead to blindness. 4- 50% of all vision loss could be avoided through early detection and treatment. 5- Vision disorders are the fourth most common disability in the United States and the most prevalent handicapping condition in childhood. Amblyopia is responsible for vision loss in more people under the age of 45 than all other eye diseases and trauma combined. Individuals afflicted by amblyopia are excluded from positions in the armed forces, fire, public services and the transportation industry. 6- An estimated 3.6 million Ohioans have vision problems and as the population ages, this number will only increase. The estimated annual financial burden to the Ohio economy due to vision problems, refractive errors, visual impairment and blindness is \$5.4 billion. 7- Nearly one in every four school-aged children have a vision problem. Abnormal visual acuity is the most common chronic medical condition in children of industrialized nations. 8- Vision loss is the health condition Americans fear most because they worry it means loss of independence. 9- There are nearly two million Ohioans at risk for visual impairment and blindness. With the aging baby boomer population, the numbers will continue to climb upward. The impact of vision loss on the individual, his or her family, the public health system and the State of Ohio is a significant public health concern. 10- Vision can lead to falls. Falls are also the leading cause of eye injury. (<https://ohio.preventblindness.org/>)

These facts are absolutely cause for concern in Ohio. To help address this public health concern, your Meigs County Health Department is a partner agency of Prevent Blindness Ohio's (PBO) Vision Care Outreach Program. We help facilitate coverage for eye exams and eyeglasses for both children and adults who have no vision services coverage and meet income guidelines (200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL)). Current (2022) FPL per household size per income level is as follows: 1 = \$27,180; 2 = \$36,620; 3 = \$46,060; 4 = \$55,500; 5 = \$64,940; 6 = \$74,380; 7 = \$83,820; 8 = \$93,260; For each additional person, add \$4,720. *Please note that the FPL is updated annually during the third week each January. This program is possible through donations and the fact that local vision service providers contract with PBO to provide these exams at no cost to those who qualify.

The Meigs County Health Department also has a program for children through ODH that helps with transportation to/from vision appointments. Funding for this program is limited, so the service is first come, first serve. The final program we host is Children with Medical Handicaps (CMH). Also, income-based, this program will help diagnose and treat certain eye problems. For more information on CMH, call Angie Rosler, RN at 740-992-6626. For the other programs discussed, call me at 740-992-6626.

Leanne Cunningham

Director of Nursing



