

Frequently Asked Questions III: Children's Vision Law (Missouri)

"As of July 1st, 2010, the Children's Vision Program changed locations from Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to Department of Social Services (DSS). The links for all the forms and reporting are still available on the DHSS web-site; you will be automatically routed to the new site when you go the DHSS site. You will notice that the name of the forms will have changed to DSS, but everything else should remain the same."

Are 1st grade students required to have an exam this year?

Yes, 1st grade students are required to have an exam this year if the child did not have a comprehensive eye exam the preceding year, or if the parents did not complete an "opt out" statement the preceding year.

The statute says: "Every Child enrolling in kindergarten or first grade (for those school districts without a kindergarten) in a public elementary school in Missouri is required to receive one comprehensive vision examination."

Is a student retained in kindergarten required to get an eye exam?

If the student received a comprehensive eye exam or the parent signed an "opt out" statement last year they would not be required to have an exam or complete an "opt out" statement this year. Parents would be encouraged to have an exam if they opted out last year.

Do I exclude a student if they do not have an exam or written request to be excused by January 1?

No student should be excluded or penalized for not receiving an exam or returning a statement requesting to be excused from the requirement (exam). The law does not require or encourage exclusion or penalty for this.

Where can I find a copy of the comprehensive eye exam form?

The form can be found on the Missouri Optometric Association website (www.moeyecares.org); the Missouri Association of School Nurses website (www.missourischoolnurses.org) and from Department of Social Services at the Department of Health and Senior Services School Health Web page (www.dhss.mo.gov).

Did the commission develop an "opt out" form?

No, there is no official "opt out" form. A parent or guardian may send a statement to the school requesting the student be excused from the eye exam. Schools may develop a form. If your district contracts with the Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) for policies, ask to review policies JEC and JHC for a sample letter of objection.

Who is responsible to report the eye exam information to the Department of Social Services (DSS)?

It is the responsibility of the eye physician, not the school nurse, to report the information to the DSS through the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) website.

What information does the school district/school nurse collect and report?

Online reporting forms are available from Department of Social Services through the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services website. Each school district is strongly recommended to complete the online reporting form. Guidelines for completing these forms are also located on the DHSS website. Only one report should be completed by the school district.

What should I do if the eye care provider returns an incomplete examination form?

You are not responsible. Please retain a copy of the examination in the student's record, as well as any data (with no identifying information) for reporting purposes.

What if a pediatrician, family practice physician, or nurse practitioner signs the examination form?

The determination of appropriateness should be based on whether the necessary components of the comprehensive eye exam were completed. If not, we encourage you to talk with the parents and let the parents know it did not meet the criteria for a comprehensive eye exam. It is not necessary to require the parent to take the child for another exam.

Has the Commission developed a screening form for 1st and 3rd grade vision screenings?

Yes, a screening form was developed and is available for use from DSS on the DHSS website.

The Lion's Club provides vision screening with a vision photoscreener. Does this qualify for the required vision exam?

The photoscreener is only a vision screening device and does not qualify as a comprehensive exam.

What screening procedures are required?

School districts are no longer required to provide vision screening for students in 1st and 3rd grade, however vision screenings according to the screening guidelines on the DSS and DHSS website are strongly recommended by the Children's Vision Commission. This screening includes distance vision, near vision, and Random Dot E testing. A powerpoint is available from DSS on the DHSS website with more information regarding what is required.