

Alaska Project to Eliminate Amblyopia

Recent research has documented that early detection and consistent therapy can cure amblyopia blindness in almost all affected children. Later (preschool) detection plus intense therapy can also reduce amblyopia. Unfortunately many Alaska children still suffer permanent vision impairment from amblyopia. Frustrating factors include late detection, delayed and interrupted treatment, and diminished compliance with therapy. We plan to partner to eliminate amblyopia blindness for Alaskans in the near future.

Amblyopia is deficient brain learning of vision. It is caused by three primary factors (risk factors): 1) obstructed images such as congenital cataract (deprivational amblyopia), 2) misaligned images (strabismic amblyopia) and/or defocused images (refractive amblyopia). The critical period for development, and treatment of amblyopia is the first decade of life, especially pre-school.

Compared to no screening but incidental detection, deliberate preschool vision screening results in more initial eye-related health expenditures, but it is still more affordable than mandating eye exams even in urban areas. Individuals with vision impairment from amblyopia are more likely to lose or damage vision in their better eye, and these citizens are less able to attain certain types of good jobs. As a result, there is a dramatic societal cost-saving to early amblyopia detection. Unfortunately these savings are not realized right away, but are gained several decades after a child grows up.

Proposals:

- 🚫 **Recommend, Encourage and Fund Objective screening age 1-2, age 3-4, K**
- 🚫 **Patched acuity screening K-3rd grade**
- 🚫 **Exit acuity: Patched acuity +/- pinhole 20/32 or better- otherwise ?reason**
- 🚫 **Sturdy, redundant spectacles**
- 🚫 **State-wide, volunteer Amblyopia Coordinating Center (Registry Like Ohio)**
- 🚫 **Rural / Regional screening plus follow-up objective plus acuity screen**
- 🚫 **Compliance Enhancement (AK Amblyopia Patch Camp)**
- 🚫 **Funding:**
 - 🚫 **Insurance coverage of 99174 and 99173**
 - 🚫 **Check-off on Driver's license / Alaska Permanent Fund**
 - 🚫 **Medicaid Travel authority**

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