



Optometric Physicians of Washington

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Dear Colleague:

A new school year is approaching and as part of *Children's Vision and Learning Month*, the Optometric Physicians of Washington (OPW) would like to invite you to partner with us to protect and promote children's vision in our state. Children are the most underserved population for eye health and vision care. One in four school age children has a visual problem according to Prevent Blindness America and the American Optometric Association, yet only about 1 in 14 children have had an eye exam prior to starting school. Untreated vision problems hold back millions of children at a time when learning and healthy development are vitally important. Working together, we can change this.

Possible collaboration includes:

- Presentations/In-services to school nurses, parents, school administrators and teachers;
- Consultation on school vision screenings;
- Collaborative communication to parents on preventative eye health and vision care.

The Washington State legislature recognized the importance of sight and learning for our children by allowing optometric physicians to perform vision screenings in public schools. OPW has a network of volunteers throughout the state who will lend their expertise in designing a vision screening program and present valuable information to your community. There is no charge for our work, our goal is to help Washington's children, our most valuable resource.

Optometric physicians are experienced in primary eye health and vision care. The OPW has over 800 members with a strong history of volunteer public health programs, including VISION USA, InfantSEE®, Eye Care for the Homeless and VOSH International. For more information about optometry a document titled *Optometric Physicians and their Role in the Health Care Team* is available upon request or by visiting the OPW Web site. We have enclosed a copy of *Warning Signs and Symptoms of a Visual Problem*, a fact sheet to share with parents/guardians and teachers. Please contact Judy Balzer, OPW Executive Director, at opw@eyes.org if you would like an electronic copy. The OPW Web site: www.eyes.org, has a search feature (Find a Doctor) to locate a doctor in your area. Our Web site is a resource of information for you and the families you serve.

We look forward to working together for the benefit of Washington's children. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions, comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,

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