



Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired Charleston

Plusoptix Vision Screener

Focus on Children is a school-based program serving 3-5-year-old, predominately Head Start and Child Development Children in 22 Charleston County schools, 21 of which are Title I. Through this program, ABVI provides free vision screenings in schools to over 1,500 students to ascertain the visual abilities of each child within the first 45 days of school. Children not passing the initial screening are offered a full eye exam by an optometrist or ophthalmologist on-site. Those needing prescription glasses are provided glasses delivered to the school at no cost to the child's family within 2-3 weeks. ABVI refers children requiring additional optical attention.

The *Focus on Children* program is crucial because South Carolina does not mandate vision screenings or exams prior to school enrollment, resulting in many children entering school without having an eye exam. Failure to detect and address visual impairments at an early age can cause a negative ripple effect in a child's educational career. 80% of a child's learning is visual, so children suffering with undiagnosed vision problems may be placed at an academic disadvantage to those children with proper vision. The American Optometric Association reports that 25% of school-age children in the U.S. have some form of vision impairment which negatively impacts their ability to learn.

For the 2016-2017 *Focus on Children* program, ABVI screened 1,567 children resulting in 400 of the children being referred for an eye exam. 295 children received an eye exam, which resulted in 140 of those examined, needing and receiving glasses. We referred 53 children for additional optical care. We anticipate similar results for the 2017-2018 *Focus on Children* program.

The vision screener we currently use in our *Focus on Children* program was a state-of-the-art piece of equipment when we first acquired it, but it has reached the end of its accurate functionality. We will not be able to use this screener for the upcoming school year as we cannot be certain that it will accurately refer children who are in need of an eye exam. We consulted with eye care professionals in the Charleston area, including doctors with the MUSC Storm Eye Institute, and they recommended the most recent Plusoptix Vision Screener for our children's program. The new screener is much smaller and more portable than our current one and would provide more flexibility of use. Also, unlike our current screener, the updated one is wireless and WIFI-enabled, allowing for the immediate sharing of results with school nurses and doctors when needed.

Another benefit of the vision screener that it uses soft sounds and lights to help children focus their eyes on the equipment to get accurate screening results, and it can capture readings in less than 3 seconds. We have learned over the years that children can be wary of the vision screening process because it is unfamiliar, so the ability to screen children quickly and effectively streamlines our process.

Funds needed to purchase: \$3,000

