

Vision and Hearing Screening in Schools

Why are vision and hearing screenings held in schools?

- Healthy vision and hearing are critical parts of a child's growth.
- Seeing and hearing well are important to a child's success in school.
- Many vision and hearing problems can be treated best if caught early.
- Approximately 80% of what a child learns in school is presented visually.
- Even mild hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech and language.

What is the difference between a screening and a comprehensive medical exam?

A **screening** is a simple test that only checks to see if a child is having difficulty seeing or hearing.

A **comprehensive medical exam** is done by a medical professional such as an optometrist or ophthalmologist for vision, and/or an audiologist for hearing. The medical exam is a detailed evaluation of vision or hearing, as well as overall eye and ear health.

Howard County screens children new to the Maryland school system and those in Pre-K or Kindergarten, first and eighth grades.

What should I do if my child receives a hearing or vision referral from their school?

Take the referral letter to your provider (optometrist or ophthalmologist for vision; primary care or audiologist for hearing) for a comprehensive exam. The provider will fill out the information to be returned to the school nurse.

Signs your child may need an eye or ear exam:

- ✓ Squinting
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Turning of one eye
- ✓ Frequent rubbing eye or ear
- ✓ Excessive blinking
- ✓ Tilting the head
- ✓ Discharge from eye or ear
- ✓ Covering or closing an eye when looking at something
- ✓ Family history of eye or ear problems
- ✓ Diabetes and/or juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, or a history of traumatic brain injury
- ✓ Not responding to noises or speech

What resources are available to help me get my child a hearing or eye examination?

If you do not have health insurance, you can get assistance at the Health Department Bureau of Access to Healthcare at **410-313-6300** or **www.hchealth.org**, or see your school nurse.