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## **NEW ILLINOIS STATE LAW REQUIRES COMPREHENSIVE EYE EXAMS FOR CHILDREN STARTING SCHOOL**

*Doctors of optometry in Naperville, IL encourage parents to take children early for eye exams:  
Waiting could mean harm to children's eyes and longer wait times*

**Naperville, IL – 2008** – A new state law requiring eye exams for children enrolling for the first time in Illinois schools went into effect on January 1. Although parents have until October 15 to provide proof of an eye exam, doctors of optometry are asking parents to make appointments now for their children to avoid long wait times and to reduce the instances of eye and vision problems going undiagnosed and untreated in children.

According to the Illinois Optometric Association, the new state law requires comprehensive eye exams for children entering kindergarten or enrolling for the first time in public, private, or parochial elementary schools in Illinois. Since comprehensive eye exams are the best way to diagnose eye and vision problems in children early, before they interfere with a child's ability to learn, doctors of optometry agree that the new law is a crucial step in ensuring that Illinois students perform to the best of their ability in the classroom. Optometrists encourage parents to arrange for a comprehensive eye exam now, so that they beat the traditional summer rush to ensure that their child meets the necessary requirements in time for the beginning of the next school year.

"Clear and comfortable vision is essential for learning," said Charlotte Nielsen, O.D., president of the Illinois Optometric Association and a Grayslake optometrist. "This measure will help children read and see chalkboards and books more clearly. All Illinois children deserve the tools needed to fulfill their potential."

Illinois teachers were strong advocates for the law, recognizing the important role eye exams by qualified eye doctors plays in a child's academic success.

Only licensed optometrists or ophthalmologists are qualified to conduct the exams under the new law. Proof of the required eye examination must be submitted by Oct. 15 of each school year. Additional vision examinations at various grade levels may be required when deemed necessary by school authorities.

"Thanks to this new law, Illinois now leads the nation with the best eye health care requirements for children," said Michael Halkias, O.D., Naper Grove Vision Care, Naperville, IL. "With nearly 25 percent of school-age children suffering from vision problems, this law is necessary to help detect problems and treat and prevent diseases that can cause vision loss."



Illinois joins Kentucky and Missouri as the third state in the nation requiring eye exams for children entering public schools. Since the Kentucky law requiring eye exams was enacted eight years ago, 13 percent of Kentucky children have been identified as needing corrective lenses, 3.4 percent diagnosed with amblyopia (“lazy eye”), and 2.3 percent diagnosed with strabismus.

Ten million children suffer from vision disorders, according to the National Parent Teacher Association. Nationally, about 86 percent of children entering first grade do not receive an eye exam.

Comprehensive eye exams for children entering school are critical for the early intervention needed to treat diseases and disorders such as amblyopia, strabismus, retinoblastoma and other serious and potentially blinding problems that can lead to poor school performance and could ultimately affect quality of life.

To schedule an eye examination for your child or for more information and local resources, contact Michael Halkias, O.D., Naper Grove Vision Care, 29 S. Webster Street, Suite 200, Naperville, IL 60540 (phone 630-357-3511) or visit [www.napergrove.com](http://www.napergrove.com)

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