

Implementation of Required Comprehensive Eye Examinations

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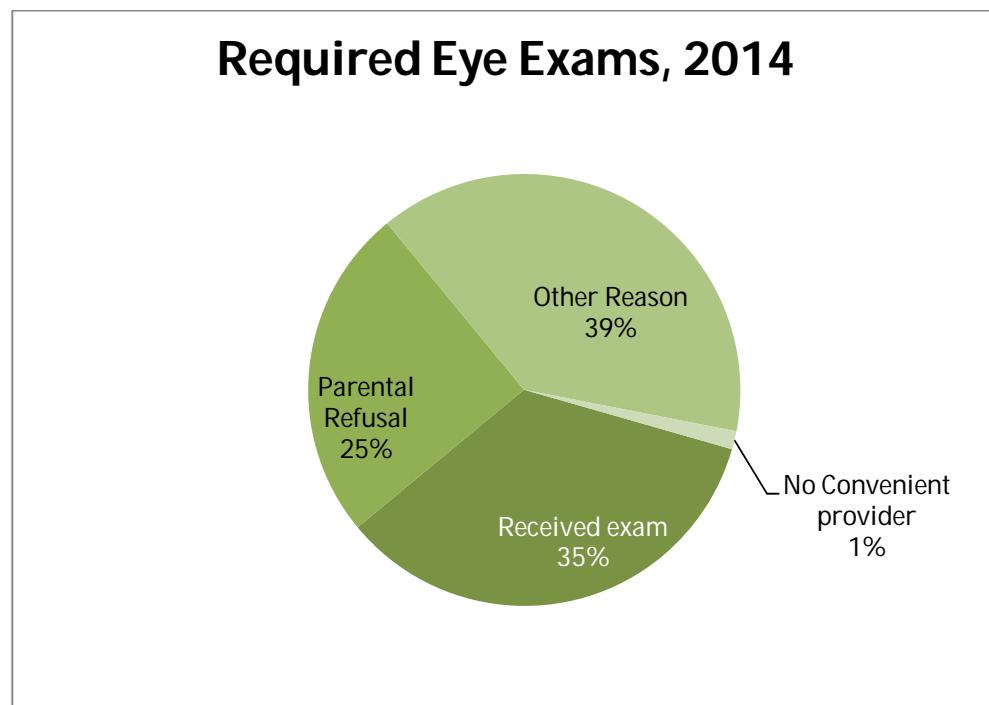
2013-2014 SCHOOL YEAR

Implementation of Required Comprehensive Eye Examinations

2013-2014 School Year

State law¹ requires a student to have a comprehensive eye examination either prior to or shortly after the start of an initial individualized education program (IEP). The same law requires the Ohio Department of Education to collect and report data about the implementation of this law. The department provided districts, including community schools, with a tool to record the exams in the 2013-2014 school year, and included information about the exams in EMIS reporting. The Office for Exceptional Children asked districts to record the notification of the requirement for the eye exam, the date of the exam and any special circumstances preventing an exam.

The percentage of parents reporting a follow-up exam increased this year. Among districts that responded to last year's survey, roughly 15 percent of the parents of children with initial IEPs reported their children had received follow-up comprehensive eye exams. This year, districts could confirm that timely eye exams took place for about 35 percent of students with initial IEPs.



In 2014, all districts and community schools with special education students enrolled responded to reporting requirements. This compares to the 45 percent response rate 2013. Data from 2014 represent information from about 27,000 students; data from 2013 were based on about 13,000 students.

Districts informed parents of the requirement. Although neither last year's survey nor EMIS asked how or if parents were informed of the requirement, during last year's

survey most responding districts and community schools (79.2 percent of those who provided additional comments) specifically reported informing parents. Several required parents to sign an acknowledgement of their notification; others commented about sending letters home; many indicated that they had attempted or completed follow-up phone calls. Some districts described efforts to obtain the follow-up statuses of eye exams. For example, in one district, 54 students did not have eye exam records. District staff called the phone numbers on record for each student and found that the phone numbers for 23 students were no longer working. For 31 households, the district staff left messages but received no return phone calls.

Parents provided few reasons for not following up. Respondents used multiple-choice responses to indicate the following possible reasons for lack of exams. From the 2014 EMIS data, districts did not know why 28.2 percent of students who had initial IEPS did not receive an eye exam. Those responses indicating reasons for no exam are displayed below:

	Student withdrew	Student hospitalization	Parent refusal	Received exam, but late	No convenient provider
From Survey, 2013	1.30%	0.17%	24.32%	1.47%	0.61%
From EMIS data, 2014	1.98%	0.10%	18.08%	2.61%	1.01%

Last year's survey respondents were given an opportunity to provide additional information about this process. One district staff member summarized a general refusal by parents to participate: "Although we provide the eye exam brochure and indicate that it is a requirement, parents simply do not get back with us regarding their follow-up. Several parents have been outright indignant toward our school psychologists and indicated a refusal to let the government dictate something like this to them."

Responses indicated that district personnel often conducted screenings that produced no indication of potential vision issues. Many parents and school staff believed that when the screening by school personnel showed little likelihood of a problem, additional examination was an expensive redundancy.

Respondents in 25 districts stated explicitly that parents had refused due to financial reasons.

Parents of preschoolers reported that they were told by ophthalmologists that their students were too young for results to be valid, so they chose not to schedule the exam.

Districts provided suggestions for improvement. Results from last year's survey suggest the need for changes to the comprehensive eye exam process. One district came up with a creative solution to ensure that vision screenings led to comprehensive eye exams, when appropriate. The response from that district stated, "Since we are in a small urban district struggling with poverty and transiency, it is difficult to make contact with all parents to get this kind of specific information. Most often, the intervention specialists report that parents or guardians tell them they "are working on it" and they often view more questions as being invasive. We have involved ophthalmologists in

required vision screenings and then we can target students who need comprehensive exams and find a way to assist parents in getting it done. This seems to be a better approach and will hopefully make a difference in the future.”

¹ Ohio Revised Code Section 3323.19

² Senate Bill 316