

*“Children who have special educational needs deserve extensive and comprehensive examination of the eye and the entire vision system.”*

— Gregory Hicks, OD, Sandusky

*“Children referred for special educational programs have a much higher incidence of vision problems than the general population. This hidden disability can be diagnosed and treated by an eye doctor. Yet sadly, half of the students have not had an eye exam by the time they graduate high school. It is critical to those students with IEPs that their vision is clear and comfortable. Ohio’s IEP eye exam requirement will prevent vision problems from interfering with school performance.”*

— Teresa Gossard, MS, OD, Cincinnati

### From Ohio Revised Code

#### **§ 3323.19. Eye examinations for students with disabilities.**

(A) Within three months after a student identified with disabilities begins receiving services for the first time under an individualized education program, the school district in which that student is enrolled shall require the student to undergo a comprehensive eye examination performed either by an optometrist licensed under Chapter 4725. of the Revised Code or by a physician authorized under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code to practice medicine and surgery or osteopathic medicine and surgery who is comprehensively trained and educated in the treatment of the human eye, eye disease, or comprehensive vision services, unless the student underwent such an examination within the nine-month period immediately prior to being identified with disabilities.

However, no student who has not undergone the eye examination required under this section shall be prohibited from initiating, receiving, or continuing to receive services prescribed in the student’s individualized education program.

(B) The superintendent of each school district or the superintendent’s designee may determine fulfillment of the requirement prescribed in division (A) of this section based on any special circumstances of the student, the student’s parent, guardian, or family that may prevent the student from undergoing the eye examination prior to beginning special education services.

(C) Except for a student who may be entitled to a comprehensive eye examination in the identification of the student’s disabilities, in the development of the student’s individualized education program, or as a related service under the student’s individualized education program, neither the state nor any school district shall be responsible for paying for the eye examination required by this section.

**HISTORY: 151 v H 66, § 101.01, eff. 6-30-05.**

Healthy vision is an important part of the learning process and should not be ignored. More resources and information about the eye exam requirement are available at [www.iepeyexam.org](http://www.iepeyexam.org)

**Ohio Ophthalmological Society**  
(614) 527-6799

**Ohio Optometric Association**  
(800) 874-9111

[www.iepeyexam.org](http://www.iepeyexam.org)

# Learning Through Vision

## Eye exam requirements for IEP





## Eye Exam Required for Student Referred to IEP

### (Individualized Education Program)

Ohio law requires that students referred for an IEP must receive an eye exam from an eye doctor. The Web site — [www.iepeyexam.org](http://www.iepeyexam.org) — has important information for the school, parent and doctor.

Imagine struggling to determine the numbers on a clock, distinguish the letters on a sign or see the arrival of the school bus. Imagine getting a headache when reading, doing homework, or viewing the board in the classroom.

For a student to be able to learn, he or she must be able to see. For students referred for an IEP, good vision is critical to improving performance in school.

Parents are required to schedule an appointment with an eye doctor within 90 days of being notified by a school nurse of a student's need for an eye exam. If a student had an eye exam during the previous nine months, there is no need to have another eye exam.

### What is an IEP?

*IEP means Individualized Education Program. Schools refer students to an IEP when additional support is needed to complete curriculum.*

### Why is it important for a student referred to an IEP to have an eye exam?

*The ability to see is important for learning. An eye exam can detect vision problems, and the eye doctor can offer suggestions regarding vision to help improve a student's performance in school.*

### Who pays for the exam?

*Most children already have insurance that covers eye exams. If there is no coverage and payment is an issue, call (800) 874-9111.*

### Who performs the eye exam?

*An eye doctor, either an ophthalmologist or an optometrist performs the exam. The eye doctor will check general eye health, focusing, eye movement, ability to see clearly far and near, how both eyes move together, and determine if there is a need for treatment.*

### Is a new exam needed for each year the student is referred to an IEP?

*No. An eye exam is only required when the student is referred for an IEP the first time.*

### If the eye exam is not done within the recommended time frame, will the student be able to attend school?

*Yes, the child can attend school. The goal is to help students be ready to learn, and no student will be kept out of school because they have not had an eye exam.*

### What is the parent's responsibility?

*When the student is referred for an IEP, the parent should schedule the appointment with an eye doctor. The parent can download the eye exam form from the Web site — [www.iepeyexam.org](http://www.iepeyexam.org) — and give to the eye doctor to complete.*

### What is the school's responsibility?

*Each school has its own process for IEPs. Generally, the school nurse will inform the parent that the student needs an eye exam. The nurse can provide a list of eye doctors. The school should also receive a copy of the completed eye exam form from the eye doctor.*

### Does a student need an eye exam if the school nurse performs a vision screening?

*Yes, eye exams by an eye doctor provide a more thorough assessment of the eyes and vision that allow treatments to be prescribed for problems that are detected.*