

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

to the

Proposed Rule for Public Act 95-0671

Janet Hughes

1.) Vision First does not want to defeat the State form. The Foundation members want the best for Illinois and for all of Illinois' children.

2.) The heading on the proposed *State of Illinois Eye Examination Report* reads:

“Illinois law requires...be submitted to the school no later than October 15 of the year the child is first enrolled or as required by the school for other children.”

Why is the phrase, “or as required by the school for other children” included? Public Act 95-0671 concerns children starting school for the first time. Public Act 95-0671 states: *All children enrolling in kindergarten in a public, private, or parochial school and any student enrolling for the first time shall have an eye examination.* “Or as required by the school for other children” does not conform to the State statute. Attached are further recommendations to the proposed State form for eye examinations.

3.) Public Act 95-0671 defines an eye examination: *“Shall at a minimum include history, visual acuity, subjective refraction to best visual acuity near and far, internal and external examination, and a glaucoma evaluation, as well as any other tests or observations that in the professional judgment of the doctor are necessary.”*

The State form also includes additional requirements such as: drug allergies, a cycloplegic agents question, and check boxes for oculomotor assessment, accommodation and vergence with a column “Unable to Assess.” If the Department is concerned about confusion between what’s mandated and what’s not, then why does the State form have additional items with “Unable to Assess?” This should be a report for a child’s school, not a doctor’s report for a child’s chart.

The Vision First form conforms to the State statute and emphasizes the four components of an eye exam important for successful learning in school.

4.) Regarding Sections 665.620-640, the Rule for the Vision Examination Law from 1987 should NOT be repealed.

According to the State of Illinois transcript debate in 1987, the intent of House Bill 0233 was for *“local school boards to require students have periodic vision exams” and that “in working with the Department of Public Health, to provide the same language and same concept presently done for the dental exams.”*

Chief Sponsor Representative Steczo stated: “It really would help if the school boards would decide to do this to end a problem, or help correct a problem that we have seen time and time again.”

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5.) Public Act 95-0671 replaces only the kindergarten level (or first grade) in the above Rule. The other grade levels should remain and be amended as follows:

Section 665.620: “It is also recommended, but not required, that an eye examination be performed on public, private/independent, and parochial school students by a physician who performs eye examinations or an optometrist.

- a) If an eye examination is performed, it shall be performed in place of a vision screening and conducted within one year:
 - 1) Prior to the date of entering the sixth grade; and
 - 2) Prior to the date of entering the ninth grade;
- b) For students attending school programs where grade levels are not assigned, examinations shall be completed prior to the date of entering and within one year prior to the ages of 11 and 15.”

PLEASE NOTE: The previous Rule in Section 665.620 stated a vision exam should NOT be performed in place of a vision screening. This needs to be amended. Public Act 93-0504, or “Amy’s Law” states an eye exam CAN be performed in place of a vision screening.

Also, the recent change from fifth grade health exams to sixth grade is shown here.

6.) I recommend the following language for Section 665.630: “The eye examination shall be recorded on the Department of Public Health Eye Examination Report, or any other form approved by the State of Illinois, as prescribed by the Department for statewide use.”

7.) Regarding Section 665.640: If a school board adopts a policy of required vision examinations with the health examinations at the local level, the Department established a Rule in 1987 that would ensure indigent students received the necessary eye care.

Illinois School Code states: “*Additional health exams of pupils, including eye examinations, may be required when deemed necessary by school authorities.*” Why does the Department want to deprive help to needy families by repealing this section now?

8.) The Department reported nurses and screeners “*who are charged with assuring that the eye exam has been completed are opposed to multiple forms.*” I believe these nurses and screeners are overworked and underpaid.

The Vision First “Kids Eyes Count Campaign” makes it easy for schools. According to Public Act 95-0671, “*Every school shall report to the State Board of Education by June 30 the number of children who received the required eye examination, those who have not received the eye examination, the number of children exempt, the number of children who received a waiver, and the number of children in noncompliance.*” As long as a form is completed and submitted, the State only needs to know HOW MANY and nothing more.

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9.) Regarding “confusion,” Why is the State’s vision screening report entitled, “Vision Examination Report?” The Department is keeping this report in addition to the “Eye Examination Report.”

10.) Sections 665.150 (Report forms) and 665.160c (Proof of examination): It is my understanding that the Rule determines the form(s) accepted.

Public Act 95-0671 states: *“The individuals conducting the eye examination shall record the fact of having conducted the examination on uniform forms which the Department of Public Health and the State Board of Education shall prescribe for statewide use.”*

I am requesting the following language in the Rule: “For eye examinations, the required form is the Illinois Department of Public Health Eye Examination Report or any other form approved by the State of Illinois, as prescribed by the Department for statewide use.”

The intent of the law was for children to have an eye examination; not for children to complete the State of Illinois Eye Examination Report.

Senate Bill 641 provides “all children enrolling in kindergarten or any student enrolling for the first time in a public, private, or parochial school shall have an eye examination.” Once more, a completed Vision First form fulfills the intent of the law.

For further information, please visit Janet’s Journal Blog at:

www.janetsjournalblog.com/2009/05/18/heres-the-deal

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