

National Indian Health Board



National Indian Health Board Resolution 14 – 02

Support for Comprehensive Vision Care for Indian Children and Youth

WHEREAS, the National Indian Health Board (NIHB), established in 1972, serves all Federally recognized American Indian/ Alaska Native (AI/AN) Tribal governments by advocating for the improvement of health care delivery to AI/ANs, as well as upholding the Federal government's trust responsibility to AI/AN governments; and

WHEREAS, states with large AI/AN populations do not screen school children adequately for vision problems, and most do not screen them at all in school.

WHEREAS, the Snellen Chart (the big "E") is estimated to miss 75% of vision issues, yet is still the only screening done by states such as Washington State for its school children.

WHEREAS, evidence from the AmeriCorps/ DCFS Child Vision Project on the Yakama Nation suggest that well over half of foster children have unmet vision needs; evidence from a survey of elementary students in Yakima, Washington, suggests a full third have "binocular" vision problems (problems with their eyes working together quickly and accurately as to allow comfortable reading); further, evidence from the Gemstone Foundation of California indicates that the incidence of urban children with "eyes in conflict" is over one-third.

WHEREAS, studies repeatedly show the stress placed on children and youth by undetected, untreated binocular vision problems contributes to poor grades, drop-outs and mental health issues contributing to substance abuse.

WHEREAS, binocular problems are seldom diagnosed and are not corrected by prescription lenses that may be given for co-existing vision problems, leaving the binocular issues untreated, only to grow worse with increased vision demands.

WHEREAS, the Affordable Care Act provides a separate vision component that should be implemented to provide for detection of binocular vision problems,

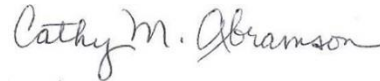


as recommended, by the National Commission on Vision and Health (such as, a "comprehensive eye examination...tests for proper near-point focusing and alignment which impacts a student's ability to efficiently read and write...assesses binocular fusion, which is the ability of the eyes to work together.")

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Directors of the National Indian Health Board calls upon the Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to ensure that this provision of the Affordable Care Act, requiring comprehensive vision care detection and treatment for binocular vision problems, is fully implemented in all programs under the jurisdiction of HHS. Including, but not limited to, convergence insufficiency, recommending that states include comprehensive vision coverage in their state Medicaid plans, and providing adequate funding for such studies as may satisfy the medical community that this is a crisis that can be effectively addressed.

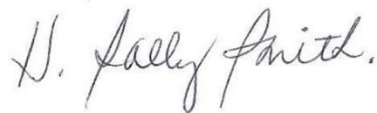
CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the Board, with quorum present, on the 12th day of May, 2014.



Chairperson, Cathy Abramson

ATTEST:



Secretary, H. Sally Smith