

Options for Vision Services in the Southern Tier

Prepared by the

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June 2006

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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	1
2. Program Matrix.....	2-6
a. Eye Exams	2
b. Eyeglasses	3
c. Eye Surgery and Treatment.....	3
d. Education	4
e. Vision Disability and Blind Services.....	4-5
f. Other.....	6
g. 2006 HHS Poverty Guidelines	6
3. Vision Program Details (Listed Alphabetically).....	7-14

Executive Summary

Vision is one of the five senses that affect our perception of the world and our ability to interact within it. According to Healthy People 2010, there are an estimated 80 million people with potentially blinding eye diseases in the United States (National Institutes of Health, November 2000). Proper eye care and routine eye exams can lead to early detection and possibly prevent certain types of these debilitating diseases as well as identify the majority of visual impairments.

Over fifteen percent of the population of the United States has no health insurance (US Census Bureau, Sept. 2003) and 37 percent of non-elderly adults with health insurance have no vision coverage (Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, July 2002).

Understandably, there is rising concern in our communities because access to affordable healthcare is in peril.

The Rural Health Network of South Central New York recognizes the importance of programs that provide vision assistance and has prepared this compendium of resources to increase access to these programs. This booklet will inform readers of a broad range of options in our project region of rural Broome, Delaware, and Tioga Counties.

Primary funding for the Rural Health Network of South Central New York Inc. comes from the New York State Department of Health's Office of Rural Health. In recent years funding has also come from a Healthy Communities Access Program grant made available to the Rural Health Network through Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital and Ascension Health System.

The Rural Health Network of South Central New York, Inc. works toward optimal individual and community health and wellness in rural Broome, Tioga, and Delaware counties by:

- Strengthening collaboration among local health and human service professionals
- Ensuring affordable health insurance for individuals and families
- Improving access to the health care delivery system
- Reducing health disparities
- Increasing the health status of communities through promotion of physical and mental well-being.

This booklet is intended for use by health and human service agencies. The first section of this booklet is a matrix with program names, phone numbers, benefits, and requirements. The matrix is categorized by service for quick reference. Categories include: Eye Exams, Eyeglasses, Education, Vision Disability and Blind Services, and Other. The second section of this booklet has detailed information on each program, listed alphabetically.

Listed by category, then alphabetically							
Program	Phone Number	Benefits / Services	Requirements				
			Age	Income	Eye Conditions	Vision Insurance Restrictions	Other
Eye Exams							
American Optometric Association, Vision USA	800-766-4466	Free eye exams, frames and lenses	≥ 19	Family income at or below 200% FPG ⁱ should apply		No vision insurance	Must have a working member
Eye Care America - Diabetes EyeCare Program	800-272-3937	Annual dilated eye exams	≥ 65		Diabetes	No HMO or VA insurance	U.S. Citizen or legal resident
Eye Care America - Glaucoma EyeCare Program	800-391-3937	Glaucoma eye exams and initiation of treatment if needed	Any Age		At risk for Glaucoma	No HMO or VA insurance	U.S. Citizen or legal resident
Eye Care America - Seniors EyeCare Program National Eye Care Project	800-222-3937	Eye exams and up to one year of treatment for any condition diagnosed during exam.	≥ 65			No HMO or VA insurance	U.S. Citizen or legal resident
VSP, Sight for Students	888-290-4964	Free eye exams, frames and lenses	≤ 18	Family income at or below 200% FPG		No vision insurance	Must have S.S. #

Listed by category, then alphabetically							
Program	Phone Number	Benefits / Services	Age	Income	Eye Conditions	Vision Insurance Restrictions	Other
Eyeglasses							
Eye Care Program – Broome County Department of Social Services	607-778-2738	Provides glasses for patients who already have a prescription	Any Age	Must be Medicaid eligible	Call for eligibility requirements		
Gift of Sight - Lens Crafters	315-446-2884 or 315-474-8490	Provides recycled glasses	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
Lions Clubs International	Contact local Lions club or call 630-571-5466	Free eye care & eyeglasses	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
New Eyes for the Needy	973-376-4903	Provides vouchers for prescription eyeglasses	Any age	Under 200% FPG should apply		No vision insurance	
VSP, Sight for Students	888-290-4964	Free eye exams, frames and lenses	≤ 18	Family income at or below 200% FPG		No vision insurance	
Eye Surgery & Treatment							
Eye Care America - Glaucoma EyeCare Program	800-391-3937	Initial treatment if necessary	Any Age		At risk for Glaucoma	No vision insurance	U.S. Citizen or legal resident
Mission Cataract USA	800-343-7265	Free cataract surgery	Any age	Must be prohibitive ¹	Must have Cataracts		

Listed by category, then alphabetically							
Program	Phone Number	Benefits / Services	Age	Income	Eye Conditions	Vision Insurance Restrictions	Other
Education							
AVRE - Children & Family Services	607-724-2428	Education and tools to adjust to vision disability	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
EyeCare America - Children's EyeCare Program	800-628-6733	Educate parents on recognizing symptoms of eye disease and eye disorders	Children and parents	Call for eligibility requirements			U.S. Citizen or legal resident
EyeCare America - Glaucoma EyeCare Program	800-391-3937	Free glaucoma education materials	Any Age		At risk for Glaucoma	No HMO or VA insurance	U.S. Citizen or legal resident
EyeCare America - Seniors EyeCare Program	800-222-3937	Free eye care education materials	≥ 65			No HMO or VA insurance	U.S. Citizen or legal resident
Vision Disability and Blind Services							
AVRE - Children & Family Services	607-724-2428	Education and tools to adjust to blindness	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
AVRE - Information and Referral	607-724-2428	Referrals to a wide range of low vision/blind programs	Any age	Depends upon program AVRE is referring individuals to			
AVRE - Vision Rehabilitation Services	607-724-2428	Education and training to adjust to blindness	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			

Listed by category, then alphabetically							
Program	Phone Number	Benefits / Services	Age	Income	Eye Conditions	Vision Insurance Restrictions	Other
Vision Disability and Blind Services (Continued)							
Guiding Eyes for the Blind	800-942-0149 Fax: 914-962-1403	Training for communication, handling and care of guide dogs	≥ 16	Call for eligibility requirements			
Lighthouse International	800-829-0500	Referrals to a wide range of low vision/blind programs and information	Any age	Depends upon program Lighthouse International is referring individuals to			
Lions Clubs International	630-571-5466	Services for blind including Braille-writers, large print texts, and white canes	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped - Children's Services	866-871-3000 607-721-8292 Gail Hartwell: 724-2428	Consultation, advocacy, and referral	≤ 18	Depends upon program NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped is referring individuals to			
NYS Commission for Blind and Visually Handicapped - Vocational Rehabilitation Services	866-871-3000 or 607-721-8292	Vocational training for legally-blind persons	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
Supplemental Security Income - Social Security Administration	800-772-1213 or 607-773-2884	Income for blind people	Any age	Low income and/or resources			
Other							
Catskill Center for Independence	607-432-8000	Advocacy and services for individuals with disabilities	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			
Child Health Plus	800-698-4543	Comprehensive health insurance including vision coverage.	≤ 18	250% FPG should apply		Must not have any health ins.	NYS resident

Listed by category, then alphabetically							
Program	Phone Number	Benefits / Services	Age	Income	Eye Conditions	Vision Insurance Restrictions	Other
Other (Continued)							
Family Health Plus	877-934-7587	Comprehensive health insurance including vision coverage.	≥ 19	150% FPG should apply		Must not have any health ins.	U.S. Citizen or legal alien
Southern Tier Independence Center	607-724-2111	Advocacy, assistive technology, and interpreter services for individuals with disabilities	Any age	Call for eligibility requirements			

ⁱ 2006 HHS Poverty Guidelines

Updated annually and available at: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml> or 1-877-696-6775

Size of Family Unit	48 Contiguous States and D.C.
1	\$9,800
2	13,200
3	16,600
4	20,000
5	23,400
6	26,800
7	30,200
8	33,600
For each additional person, add	3,400

ⁱⁱ Does not have published guidelines; however, household income is a part of eligibility criteria

Vision Program Details (Listed Alphabetically)

American Optometric Association - Vision USA

800-766-4466

Website: www.aoanet.org

Sponsored by the American Optometric Association (AOA), the program provides basic eye health and vision care services free of charge to uninsured, low-income individuals and their families who have no other means of obtaining care. If eligible, they will be matched with a volunteer doctor of optometry who will provide a comprehensive eye exam at no charge.

Eligibility:

- Must have a job or live in a household where there is one working member
- Must not have vision insurance
- Household must be under 200% FPGⁱ should apply (established by Vision USA on a case by case basis)
- Must not have an eye exam within the past two years.

Association for Vision Rehabilitation and Employment (AVRE)

607-724-2428

Previously known as the Blind Work Association

Address: 174 Court St, Binghamton NY 13901

Website: www.avreus.org

Eligibility: Call AVRE for eligibility requirements

AVRE is a private non-profit organization that serves people with vision disabilities. Our mission is to assist people who have a vision disability enhance life quality through attaining or maintaining personal and economic independence, and to help remove obstacles imposed by vision disabilities. People of all ages, from infants to elders can and do benefit from our services. We offer a range of learning, living, and working options for people who have a vision disability.

AVRE works with individuals who live in New York counties of Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Tioga, and Tompkins, as well as the Pennsylvania counties of Bradford, Susquehanna, and Tioga.

Senior Services

AVRE's Senior Vision Services are designed especially for people who are 55 or older who have severe vision loss of 20/10 and legal blindness of 20/200 or worse. Our staff of specialists understands the unique vision loss issues of older people and other significant life issues faced by all of us as we age. Program components include:

Travel training (Orientation and Mobility): Safely and efficiently navigating the environment; sighted guide technique; cane travel; and transferable skill.

Rehabilitation Teaching (Independent Living and Communications): Independent living skills; cooking, cleaning, dressing, clothing coordination; special tools and devices; communications-Braille, signatures, reading, computers, etc.

Low Vision Services: Special exam by a low vision certified Optometrist or Ophthalmologist; special magnification devices and tools; lighting and color contrast recommendations; follow up and training.

Adjustment Counseling: Understanding vision loss.

Peer Groups: Group meetings to share problems and solutions; socialization-out of the house; physical activity; telephone supports.

Other Services: Housing location; technical assistance to employers; speakers; information and referral; service coordination; public information.

Infant & Children Services:

Our Infant & Children Services are designed to meet the unique needs of visually impaired children (ages 0-14) as well as providing vital information, skills, and support to parents in the interest of maximizing each child's development.

- Sensory (vision) stimulation; pre-skills; parent training; school planning; core skills; school-to-work transition; summer employment; peer group activities.

Career and Employment Services:

Built on recognition that employment is more than a source of income- that it serves as a source of pride and a vital mechanism to support personal and economic independence, AVRE's Career and Employment Services are structured to guide visually impaired individuals in identifying an individually meaningful vocational track. Services also available for employer consultation. Program components include:

Prevocational Youth: Resume writing and interviewing; interviewing skills, computer skills and assessment; job search networking skills; social and communication skills; and summer internship placements.

Working Age Adults: Core skills (Independent Living and Communications and Travel Training); job development; AVRE employment (manufacturing and service).

Catskill Center for Independence**607-432-8000**Address: PO Box 1247 Oneonta, NY 13820Website: <http://www.ccfi.us>

The Catskill Center for Independence provides a wide range of services for individuals with disabilities including: advocacy, information and referrals, living skills training, assistive technology, and counseling and employment services. Catskill Center for Independence services are available to people with any type of disabilities in all age groups and their families.

Eligibility: Call Catskill Center for Independence**Child Health Plus****800-698-4543**Website: <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/chplus/>

New York State has a health insurance plan for kids, called Child Health Plus.

Depending on your family’s income, your child may be eligible to join. Child Health Plus is available through dozens of providers throughout New York State. Child Health Plus offers comprehensive health coverage, including vision coverage.

Eligibility:

- Must be under the age of 19
- Must not have any health insurance

Cost of Child Health Plus Coverage

Family Income	Cost Per Child
≤ 160 % FPG	Free
160% FPG– 222% FPG	\$9 per child per month
223% FPG – 249% FPG	\$15 per child per month
≥ 250% FPG	Full premium

EyeCare AmericaWebsite: www.eyecareamerica.org/eyecare/public**Children’s EyeCare Program****800-628-6733**

The Children’s EyeCare Program is designed to educate parents on how to recognize symptoms of eye diseases and eye disorders. Provides education only.

Eligibility: Call Children’s EyeCare Program**Diabetes EyeCare Program****800-272-3937**

The Diabetes EyeCare Program provides comprehensive medical eye exams at no out-of-pocket expense for uninsured individuals with diabetes. Individuals eligible for a referral through the program receive a comprehensive, medical eye exam and up to one year of treatment – at no out-of-pocket expense – for any condition diagnosed during the initial exam. Volunteer ophthalmologists accept Medicare and/or insurance reimbursement, other than HMO and Veterans Administration coverage, as payment in full.

Eligibility:

- Must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Must be 65 or older
- Must not have seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Must have diabetes
- Cannot have eye care insurance through an HMO or the Veterans Administration.

Glaucoma EyeCare Program

800-391-3937

The Glaucoma EyeCare Program promotes early detection and treatment of glaucoma. It raises awareness of glaucoma risk factors, provides free glaucoma educational materials and facilitates access to medical eye care. People eligible for a referral through the program receive a glaucoma eye exam and the initiation of treatment, if necessary. Patients with insurance, other than HMO and Veterans Administration coverage, will be billed and are responsible for any co-payments.

Eligibility:

- Must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Have not had an eye exam in 12 months or more
- Must be at an increased risk for glaucoma; e.g. family history, race, and age
- Cannot have eye care insurance through an HMO or the Veterans Administration.

Seniors EyeCare Program National Eye Care Program

800-222-3937

A public service foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) provides free educational materials and eye exams. Individuals eligible for referral through the program receive a comprehensive, medical eye exam and up to one year of treatment – at no out-of-pocket expense – for any condition diagnosed during the initial exam. Volunteer ophthalmologists accept Medicare and/or insurance reimbursement, other than HMO and Veterans Administration coverage, as payment in full. Uninsured patients will receive care at no cost.

Eligibility:

- Must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident
- Must be age 65 or older
- Must not have seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Cannot have eye care insurance through an HMO or the Veterans Administration.

Eye Care Program – Broome County Department of Social Services 607-778-2738

Website: www.gobroomecounty.com/dss

The Broome County Department of Social Services Eye Care Program provides appointments with an on-site optician at bi-weekly eyeglass clinic (every other Tuesday or Wednesday 10 a.m. – 3p.m.) to provide glasses for patients who already have an eyeglass prescription.

Eligibility:

- Must be Medicaid-eligible
- Must be a Broome County resident

Family Health Plus

877-934-7587

Website: www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/fhplus/index.htm

Family Health Plus is New York State’s health insurance program for adults with limited income who do not have health insurance. Family Health Plus is available through dozens of providers throughout New York State and offers comprehensive coverage, including vision. Benefits will cover the following once every two years: one eye exam; either one pair of prescription eyeglass lenses and a frame, or prescription contact lenses where medically necessary; and one pair of medical necessary occupational eyeglasses. Lost eyeglasses are no longer a covered benefit.

Eligibility:

- Must be between the ages of 19 and 64
- Must not have any health insurance
- For individuals with children the family income must be under 150% FPG
- For individuals without children the family income must be under 100% FPG

Gift of Sight – Lens Crafters

315-446-2884 or 315-474-8490

Website: www.GiveTheGiftOfSight.org or www.lenscrafters.com

Every year, associates and affiliated doctors visit schools, nursing homes, shelters, and other locations to offer free vision screening. They will also clean and adjust eyewear. Doctors and associates collect and recycle old glasses and provide new glasses to pre-selected needy people in Lens Crafters stores and their two mobile “Vision Vans”. Potential recipients should contact their local charitable agency, such as the American Red Cross, United Way, YMCA, and others to ask how you can receive the Gift of Sight. If an individual contacts Lens Crafters directly for free eyeglasses they will be referred to a partnering agency that will screen for need.

Eligibility: Call Lens Crafters

Guiding Eyes for the Blind

800-942-0149

Address: 611 Granite Springs Rd. Yorktown Heights, NY 10598

Website: www.guidingeyes.org

Fax: 914-962-1403

Residential course (26 days) trains blind individuals to communicate with, handle, and care for guide dogs. At-home training is available to qualified applicants. A special needs program is available for applicants with additional challenges.

Eligibility:

- Legally blind
- 16+ years old
- Physically and psychologically capable of working with guide dog

Lighthouse International

800-829-0500

Website: www.lighthouse.org

Lighthouse International provides information about eye diseases, low vision, age-related vision impairment, adaptive technology, optical devices, large print and Braille publishers. Lighthouse International also helps locate low vision services, vision rehabilitation services, support groups across U.S., and offers a large selection of consumer products.

Eligibility: Call Lighthouse International

Lions Clubs International

630-571-5466

Website: www.lionsclubs.org

Lions Clubs sponsor local sight conservation programs such as free eye care screening, an eyeglass-recycling program, and access to cornea transplants and cataract surgeries. Other Lions Club programs provide accessibility support, such as white canes; and assistive technologies, such as large print texts, reading aids, voice activated and talking devices, and Braille equipment. Guide dogs are not a Lions Club program but some clubs to support many of the guide dog programs through financial support and volunteering. Check your telephone book for the address and telephone number of your local Lions Club.

Eligibility: Call your local Lions Club

Mission Cataract USA

800-343-7265

Website: www.missioncataractusa.org

Coordinated by the Volunteer Eye Surgeons' Association, Mission Cataract USA provides free cataract surgery to people of all ages who have no other means to pay. Surgeries are scheduled one day per year, usually in May.

Eligibility: Call Mission Cataract USA

New Eyes for the Needy**973-376-4903**Website: www.neweyesfortheneedy.org

New Eyes for the Needy distributes new prescription glasses for those in need. A voucher is provided to take to a participating optometrist. The program does not pay for eye exams, just glasses.

Eligibility:

- Financial need with no other resources, public or private, to pay for glasses.
- All ages
- Individuals under 200% FPG should apply (considered by New Eyes on a case-by-case basis)

NYS Commission for Blind and Visually Handicapped**607-721-8292**Website: www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/cbvh**Gail Hartwell 607-724-2428****Eligibility:** Call NYS Commission for Blind and Visually Handicapped**Children's Services**

Children's Services provides consultation, advocacy, and referral services in areas of education and community resources available to children and their families.

They assist children in deriving full benefits from resources and may arrange to provide low vision examinations; mobility instruction; daily living skills training; and aid in social adjustment.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation assists eligible legally blind persons in achieving vocational goals. Each client is assigned a counselor who assists in selecting vocational goals based on a thorough assessment of the client's skills/aptitudes/interests and projected job market. NYS Commission for Blind and Visually Handicapped offers: counseling and guidance, ophthalmologic, optometric, medical, and psychological exams; diagnostic vocational evaluations; low vision aids and other adaptive devices; prevocational training in communications, orientation and mobility, and activities of daily living; on-the-job training; placement; college/vocational/business school sponsorship

Southern Tier Independence Center (STIC)**607-724-2111**Website: www.stic-cil.org

STIC is an advocacy organization for individuals with disabilities. In addition to providing services, the Southern Tier Independence Center is a gathering place for people and information. STIC's services are available to people with all disabilities of all ages and their families. Services are offered in Broome, Chenango, and Tioga Counties. Assistive Technology Services are also offered in Delaware and Otsego Counties. Interpreter services are also offered in Chemung, Delaware, Otsego, Schuyler, Steuben, and Tompkins Counties.

Eligibility: Call STIC

Supplemental Security Income – Social Security Administration **800-772-1213**

Website: <http://www.ssa.gov>

Through monthly payments, program provides monetary assistance for blind people who have little or no income and/or resources. Spouse's income and assets are considered if the applicant is married and living with a spouse. Parents' income and assets are considered if the applicant is 18 or younger and living with parents.

Eligibility:

- Must have vision no better than 20/200 (with glasses), tunnel vision, or limited vision field of 20 degrees or less.

VSP - Sight for Students **888-290-4964**

Website: www.sightforstudents.org

A Vision Service Plan (VSP) program in partnership with The Entertainment Industry Foundation, provides eye exams and glasses to children 18 years and younger whose families cannot afford vision care. The program is operated nationally through a network of community partners.

Eligibility:

- 18 or under and attending school
- No vision coverage
- Child or parent has a valid social security number
- Family income is no more than 200% FPG
- Has not used the program in the last 12 months.
- Child or parent is US citizen or documented immigrant

¹ Refer to Federal Poverty Guidelines on page 6

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