

# Providing eye care for kids in need

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The Florida Heiken Children’s Vision Program provides primary eye care to students at their schools. Founded in 1992, the goal of our program, a subsidiary of Miami Lighthouse for the Blind, is to assure that financially disadvantaged students who fail their vision screenings receive eye examinations and prescription glasses at no cost to their families.

We do this by taking our four mobile eyecare units — fully equipped optometric offices on wheels — to schools throughout Florida or by offering referrals to our statewide network of 2,000 optometrists.

During the last school year in Miami-Dade County, mobile units visited 359 schools where licensed consulting optometrists gave 6,934 comprehensive eye exams and prescribed 5,279 eyeglasses. Underlying medical problems, such as torn retinas or glaucoma that can potentially lead to blindness, were detected in 359 exams. Children also were referred to appropriate eyecare physicians for conditions such as amblyopia or strabismus.

In Miami-Dade and Broward counties, the program provides consent forms for a dilated eye examination to school districts to be distributed to parents with their beginning-of-the-year materials. It is imperative that parents sign the consent form for their children to receive free eye exams and glasses, if prescribed, through the Heiken Program.

By signing the consent form, parents can authorize our program to give children the gift of clear vision this school year.

Virginia A. Jacko, president, Florida Heiken

Children’s Vision Program, Miami