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New Consensus Study Released to Evaluate Nation's Vision Health Needs, Provide Detailed Recommendations to Best Address Vision Impairment and Eye Disease

- National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Health and Medicine Division Issues First-ever Report Providing Strategies to Address Vision and Eye Health Issues -

CHICAGO (Sept. 15, 2016) – Today, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Health and Medicine Division (NASEM) released its consensus study, "[Making Eye Health a Population Health Imperative: Vision for Tomorrow.](#)" [Prevent Blindness](#), the nation's oldest volunteer eye health and safety organization, and the [National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness](#), joined other leading national vision health organizations in co-sponsoring the study.

The extensive report provides detail on the scope of vision problems, barriers to eye health, and system-wide issues that are prevalent in the United States. It presents recommended population health strategies which will reduce vision impairment and promote eye health, in an effort to slow a projected doubling of chronic vision impairment by 2050. A few highlights from the numerous issues discussed throughout the report:

- While a wealth of information on the state of the problem is provided, the report strongly points to a need for future epidemiological research that better characterizes disparities in terms of prevalence, incidence, and severity of disease.
- While calling out the significant role that governmental public health agencies must play in our nation's population health strategies, the report notes the absence of significant funding to support this sector, highlighting both the need for increased federal resources dedicated to eye health as well as the active involvement of external stakeholders.
- The committee identifies the important role of both a common message and a set of unified, evidence-based practice guidelines in establishing a solid foundation upon which to tackle this public health challenge.
- The committee acknowledges the potential for emerging technologies- such as telescreening and cell phone applications- to expand the availability of vision screening, diagnostic and monitoring services in remote and medically underserved communities, while recognizing the challenges that such technologies bring with them.

While the report broadly addresses vision and eye health concerns across the lifespan, as it relates specifically to children's vision, the recommendations in the NASEM report echo those already underway through the work of Prevent Blindness's National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health (NCCVEH). In 2009, the Maternal and Child Health Bureau at the [Health Resources and Services Administration](#) (HRSA), recognizing the importance of early vision health as a component of a child's overall development, funded the establishment of the NCCVEH. Through collaboration with nationally recognized clinicians, researchers, public health experts, and family partners, the NCCVEH published [peer-reviewed protocols](#) supporting a comprehensive system of care for children's vision. The NCCVEH has also engaged in collaborations with professional associations, state public health departments, and key stakeholder groups to establish programs addressing the public health infrastructure supporting the early detection of children's vision problems and increasing access to eye care.

"Prevent Blindness and our National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health commend NASEM and its study committee on the tremendous work they have done to fully capture the scope of the challenge before us," said Hugh R. Parry, president and CEO of Prevent Blindness. "Together with our network of affiliates and partner organizations, we are eager to expand our own best practices and join with our colleagues in government, community and professional organizations, industry, and across all sectors to work collaboratively in advancing the impressive agenda NASEM sets before us. Together, we truly can put an end to preventable vision loss in the United States."

As part of the new Prevent Blindness [The Focus Initiative](#), a webinar will be held on Sept. 20, during which members of the NASEM Study Committee will share highlights from the new report. The free webinar will be held from 3-4:15 p.m. (ET). Those interested in participating may register at www.preventblindness.org/webinar-registration.

For more information on the NASEM study, the National Center for Children's Vision and Eye Health at Prevent Blindness, or other general eye health information, please visit preventblindness.org or call (800) 331-2020.

About Prevent Blindness

Founded in 1908, Prevent Blindness is the nation's leading volunteer eye health and safety organization dedicated to fighting blindness and saving sight. Focused on promoting a continuum of vision care, Prevent Blindness touches the lives of millions of people each year through public and professional education, advocacy, certified vision screening and training, community and patient service programs and research. These services are made possible through the generous support of the American public. Together with a network of affiliates, Prevent Blindness is committed to eliminating preventable blindness in America. For more information, or to make a contribution to the sight-saving fund, call (800) 331-2020. Or, visit us on the Web at preventblindness.org or facebook.com/preventblindness.

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