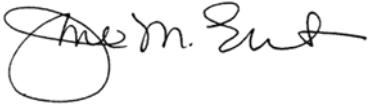






THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: P-12 Education Committee
Professional Practice Committee

FROM: Jhone M. Ebert 
Douglas Lentivech 

SUBJECT: Sepsis Prevention and Access to Vision Health Care

DATE: October 5, 2017

AUTHORIZATION(S): 

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The purpose of this item is to provide an update to the Board of Regents on the Department's efforts to raise awareness of sepsis prevention and the importance of providing access to vision health care. September is national Sepsis Awareness Month and the New York State Assembly and the New York State Senate have proclaimed October as School Vision Health Month.

The Department collaborated with Assemblymember Catherine Nolan, who introduced sepsis awareness legislation (A.6053-A) that passed both houses, as well as the Rory Staunton Foundation for Sepsis Awareness to provide sample curricula and resources on a dedicated webpage for schools to use to educate students on sepsis. In addition, the Department has worked with eye health professional associations to provide resources and emphasize the importance of eye health and safety during the month of October. The Department has also collaborated with professional associations to coordinate the provision of complete eye examinations and glasses in some schools during October.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before a joint meeting of the P-12 Education Committee and the Professional Practice Committee for discussion at the October 2017 meeting.

Background Information

September as Sepsis Awareness Month

The need for increasing awareness of sepsis was brought to the attention of the Department by Assemblymember Nolan and Ciaran and Orlaith Staunton. The Stauntons started the Rory Staunton Foundation for Sepsis Prevention after their son Rory died from sepsis on April 1, 2012. When Rory received a cut from a fall in the gym at his school, a deadly toxin entered his body and Rory developed sepsis as a result. The Foundation's mission is to reduce the number of sepsis-caused deaths, through a variety of efforts including, but not limited to, raising public awareness of sepsis through education to ensure all students, teachers, and parents are aware of the importance of infection prevention and treatment and the dangers and signs of sepsis.

Immediately upon hearing about Rory, the Department in collaboration with our New York State Center for School Health created a template [Notification of Student Injury](https://www.schoolhealthny.com/cms/lib/NY01832015/Centricity/Domain/88/LetterStudentInjurytoParent.docx) (<https://www.schoolhealthny.com/cms/lib/NY01832015/Centricity/Domain/88/LetterStudentInjurytoParent.docx>) for schools to use to inform parents/guardians of a student's injury and signs and symptoms to observe those that require follow-up with a health care provider. In October 2013, a memo entitled [Parent/Guardian Notifications Regarding Student Illness or Injury](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/ParentGuardianNotificationReStudentIllnessInjuryMemo.pdf) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/documents/ParentGuardianNotificationReStudentIllnessInjuryMemo.pdf>) was also sent to schools reminding them of their responsibility to inform parents/guardians of any illness or injury that may require follow-up by a healthcare provider.

The Department also recognized the need to increase students' knowledge of sepsis, how to prevent it, and how to advocate for their health needs. Although Assemblymember Nolan's (A.6053-A) bill has been passed by both houses and is currently awaiting the Governor's signature, which would also require that the detection of the signs and symptoms of sepsis be included as part of coursework or training in infection control practices for certain health professionals, the Department implemented the requirements in the bill, thereby, providing access on a [dedicated sepsis webpage](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/health/sepsis/home.html) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/health/sepsis/home.html>) to resources on sepsis, and age-appropriate P-12 sample curriculum on sepsis available from the Rory Staunton Foundation for Sepsis Awareness.

October as Vision Health Month

In early 2017, the Department began working with Dr. Pamela F. Gallin, pediatric ophthalmologist at New York Presbyterian-Columbia University Medical Center, to develop plans to increase awareness of eye health and safety as well as to discuss ways the

Department could help ensure students receive complete eye examinations in our schools when necessary. The Department recommended October as Vision Health Month and named the initiative “New York State Sees” to align with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness which proclaims World Sight Day in October each year; in 2017, World Sight Day is October 12th.

Based on compelling research, the Department made vision health a priority this year and, as stated earlier, had support from the New York State Senate and Assembly as they passed a resolution proclaiming October as School Vision Health Month. Research shows that 1 in 4 school-age children have a vision disorder, and that fewer than 13% of children aged 3-6 years with amblyopia (“lazy eye”) receive treatment. Children with amblyopia are at increased risk of vision loss. According to Prevent Blindness America's Position Statement: Children's Vision and Eye Health, "improved surveillance, education and outreach initiatives to support earlier identification of vision problems and appropriate referral to eye care in these vulnerable populations will result in improved potential for better vision, thereby contributing to a child's readiness to learn."

As planning for Vision Health Month progressed, it became apparent that the needs for students in obtaining an eye examination and glasses were high, and the Department began exploring how it may assist in meeting those needs. The New York State Boards for Optometry and Ophthalmic Dispensers were consulted in July 2017 and offered to assist through their professional associations. The New York State Optometric Association found volunteer optometrists willing to provide eye examinations to schools in their areas, and was also able to obtain loaned vision examination equipment for a part of October along with free glasses for students who qualified.

The New York State Center for School Health, the Department's technical assistance center for school health services, developed a survey for schools that wanted to participate in Vision Health Month, and in late August, the [NYS Sees Flyer](http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/schoolhealth/schoolhealthservices/nystatesees.html) (<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/schoolhealth/schoolhealthservices/nystatesees.html>) was sent out to all schools informing them to sign up for the opportunity. As a result of the survey, 198 schools indicated interest. VSP Vision Care will visit seven schools and work with volunteer optometrists in those respective areas. Similar approaches are being sought at this time to reach more schools, communities, and children.

The Department has requested that participating schools collect data on their vision screening program, including follow-up eye examinations and eye glasses obtained by students.

Reason(s) for Consideration

Sepsis is an extreme response to infection. It is one of the leading causes of death in the United States, claiming more American lives than AIDS, breast and prostate cancers, and stroke combined: between 250,000 and 500,000 annually. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), sepsis is life-threatening, and without the right treatment, can cause tissue damage, organ failure, and death. Any kind of infection—in your skin, lungs, urinary tract or other place—can lead to sepsis.

Sepsis is preventable and treatable. Therefore, it is vital that students and schools learn about sepsis, how it can be prevented, and its symptoms so that immediate medical treatment can be sought. To accomplish this, the Department is encouraging the inclusion of sepsis education in a comprehensive K-12 health education program. Each September, coinciding with national Sepsis Awareness month, the Department will promote sepsis awareness education in schools.

As part of this effort, Chancellor Rosa, Regent Chin, Commissioner Elia, Assemblymember Nolan and the Stauntons held a news conference announcing the availability of the new curriculum at P.S. 150 in Queens. The Department also promoted the events and sepsis education on its social media channels.

In recognition of the critical role vision plays in children's physical, cognitive, and social development, both the New York State Senate and Assembly passed a resolution proclaiming October as School Vision Health Month. The Department is encouraging schools to promote vision health and safety throughout the month. A number of resources are available on the Department's New York Center for School Health's website to assist schools in this endeavor (visit www.schoolhealthny.com)

All public schools perform vision screening on students in certain grades. Students whose screening results indicate a vision impairment are referred to an eye health professional for a complete eye examination. Unfortunately, due to finances, not all students are able to have an eye examination or obtain corrective eyewear. In recognition of the difficulties some students face, the Department collaborated with the [New York State Optometric Association](https://www.nysoa.org/) (NYSOA) (<https://www.nysoa.org/>) to provide complete eye examinations for students in schools across the State. [VSP Vision Care](https://www.vsp.com/) (<https://www.vsp.com/>) was able to loan portable equipment for volunteer optometrists from NYSOA to use to perform complete eye examinations in the schools. VSP will also provide free eyeglasses to students who receive a prescription for such during the examination. VSP will make the glasses and mail them to the school, where volunteer ophthalmic dispensers from the [New York State Society for Opticians](http://www.nysso.org/) (<http://www.nysso.org/>) will fit the students with the glasses. Seven schools will have vision examinations completed for students at their school between October 4th and October 16th. The Department announced these no-cost eye exams and information on additional resources in a news release on October 2nd and will promote vision health on its social media channels throughout the month. Further, the Department, in collaboration with the New York State Ophthalmological Society (www.nysos.com), have coordinated relationships with a number of vision clinics throughout the State for the referral of children that need ophthalmological care.

Related Regents Items

[Amendments to Part 136 Relating to School Health Services December 2016 Memo](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/117p12d1.pdf)
(<http://www.regents.nysed.gov/common/regents/files/117p12d1.pdf>)

Next Steps

1. The Department will continue to work with the Rory Staunton Foundation for Sepsis Awareness to provide schools with appropriate materials that help students learn about ways to prevent and, when necessary, treat sepsis.
2. The Department will gather data from the 2017 Vision Health Month initiative and continue to promote vision health throughout the year. Planning will begin in early 2018 to seek an increase in participation by schools for the 2nd Annual Vision Health Month to be held in October 2018.