City of Hamilton
Healthy and Safe Communities, Public Health Services

To: Elementary School Principals, Vice Principals, Kindergarten Year 2 Teachers, Educational Assistants, Early Childhood Educators, and School Staff

RE: Implementation of the Child Visual Health and Vision Screening Protocol, 2018

Background:

• Every year in Ontario, 15,000 children have trouble learning to read because they need glasses;
• In Hamilton, only 48% of children have had an eye exam between the ages of 2 and 5;
• The City of Hamilton Public Health Services will ensure the provision of in school vision screening services to ALL Kindergarten Year 2 students as per the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Child Visual Health and Vision Screening Protocol, 2018.

Key messages:

• The City of Hamilton has contracted with McMaster Paediatric Eye Research Group (Eye Mac) to perform in school vision screening;
• The vision screening identifies some risk factors for the following: i) Amblyopia; ii) Reduced stereopsis and/or strabismus; and iii) Refractive vision disorder
• The vision screening tools are as follows: a) HOTV visual acuity chart with crowding bars; b) Randot Preschool Stereotest; and c) Autorefractor
• Vision screening is NOT a replacement for a comprehensive eye exam and is NOT billable to OHIP. There is no cost to families or the school boards for vision screening;
• Comprehensive eye exams are performed by Optometrists, and are free with an Ontario health card for all children up to and including 19 years of age;
• Kindergarten – Year 1 students can obtain free glasses through the Eye See...Eye Learn® program;
• There are other programs available to help with the cost of glasses. Visit www.hamilton.ca to learn about these programs.
Vision Screening logistics:

- Your school will be contacted to schedule vision screening;
- Screening will require dedicated space – a half gymnasium set up is ideal (12m x 13m);
- All Hamilton schools will be scheduled by December 2019;
- Pre-screen notification letters and visual health promotion packages will be dropped off to the school in advance of the screening day – to be sent home with all Kindergarten Year 2 students at least 10 days prior to vision screening;
- Vision screening requires passive consent from parents. Parents can opt out of vision screening – directions to do so included in the package;
- Eye Mac staff will be available to speak with each class to introduce themselves, explain the vision screening process, and answer any questions students may have;
- Scripting/key messages will also be provided to teachers in advance of the screening day;
- Results of each student’s vision screening will be placed in a sealed envelope, addressed to the parent/guardian of the student; and marked confidential;
- Teachers will send the letters home to parents in the student’s “important bag” (or equivalent);
- Schools will be provided a reminder letter for parents following the vision screening. This will also go home with Kindergarten Year 2 students in their important bag.

Please call 905-546-2424 x5369 if you have any questions about the vision screening or visual health resources.