

[REPUBLIC ACT NO. 11358, July 31, 2019]

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL VISION SCREENING PROGRAM FOR KINDERGARTEN PUPILS AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION I. *Short Title.*- This Act shall be known as the "National Vision Screening Act".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - Pursuant to Article II, Section 15 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution, it is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right to health of the people and instill health consciousness among them. In line with this policy, the State shall endeavor to promote every Filipino's full potential through good vision by creating ways and means to address vision problems, including blindness, among children.

Towards this end, the State shall institute a program that will help screen the school children for visual problems.

SEC. 3. *Establishment of a National Vision Screening Program.* - A National Vision Screening Program (NVSP) is hereby established under the Department of Education (DepEd) which is primarily intended to screen the eye vision of kindergarten pupils.

SEC. 4. *Program Objectives.* - The objectives of the NVSP are:

- (a) To conduct a simple vision screening test on kindergarten pupils through trained teachers and health personnel and identify pupils with possible visual problems;
- (b) To identify early childhood visual problems;
- (c) To provide immediate attention to visually impaired kindergarten pupils and create referral system so that they may be checked and treated by eye care practitioners;
- (d) To develop a vision screening results database for all kindergarten pupils;
- (e) To conduct continuing research on the state of visual impairment among kindergarten pupils.

SEC. 5. *Program Implementation.* - The DepEd shall lead the implementation of the NVSP, in coordination with the Department of Health (DOH) and the Philippine Eye Research Institute (PERI), which is under the National Institutes of Health of the University of the Philippines (UP).

In the implementation of the NVSP, the DepEd shall:

- (a) In coordination with the DOH and the PERI, administer the vision screening program to all public kindergarten pupils using a Vision Screening Kit which includes charts with symbols or numbers, occluders, and transparent response key: *Provided, That* the DOH and PERI may recommend to adopt new modes or methods of vision screening based on the latest trends and developments;
- (b) In coordination with the DOH and the PERI, train and certify teachers in conducting the vision screening program;
- (c) In coordination with the DOH and the PERI, develop a system of referral and corrective measures for kindergarten pupils who are suspected or diagnosed to have possible eye ailments;
- (d) Create a vision screening database containing the results of the screening per child and visual conditions diagnoses by the eye care practitioners; and
- (e) Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NVSP.

Private schools shall be encouraged to adopt their own system of vision screening for kindergarten pupils enrolled in their respective schools, subject to standards under the NVSP.

SEC. 6. *PhilHealth's Benefit Package.* - The Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth) shall develop a benefit package for the consultation and treatment of eye diseases of children.

SEC. 7. *Vision Screening Training* . - The PERI shall be mainly responsible for the training of Vision Screening Trainers for purposes of quality assurance. It shall likewise recommend the appropriate Vision Screening material to be used.

SEC. 8. *Research.*- The DOH and the PERI shall conduct research and provide evidence-based recommendations to the DepEd on matters pertaining to the NVSP. Furthermore, the PERI shall perform continuing research on childhood related eye vision ailments.

SEC. 9. *Vision Screening Results Database Sharing.* - The vision screening database containing the results of the screening per child and visual conditions diagnosed by the eye care practitioners and other data gathered shall be shared by and among the DepEd, the DOH, and the PERI and other concerned agencies of government.

SEC. 10. *The Vision Screening Continuing Research Fund.*- There is hereby created a Vision Screening Continuing Research (VSCR) Fund to be sourced from any donation or bequest made to the DepEd, the DOH or the PERI in favor o the NVSP which shall be subject to existing budgeting, accounting and auditing rules and regulations. The VSCR Fund shall be used to fund the PERI for its continuing research program in connection with childhood related eye vision ailments.

SEC. 11. *Tax Exemption.* - All grants, bequests, endowments, donations, and contributions made to the DepEd, the DOH, or the PERI for the NVSP and for the