

September 1, 2005

COPY

Ms. Vicki Thomas, Executive Director
Joint Committee on Administrative Rules
700 Stratton Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Public Act 93-0504/September 13, 2005 Meeting

Dear Ms. Thomas:

I received the response from your office regarding the proposed changes to the Vision Screening Rules and Regulations by the Department of Public Health.

It is stated in Attachment A that the Department is getting responses back from parents saying "don't screen my child." The DPH also states that "parents are incorrectly interpreting the notice as permission to test, rather than a notification concerning mandatory screening."

Up to this time, children received vision screenings at school without parents being notified at all and independent of whether or not they already had a vision examination. Parents would only know their child participated in a vision screening if a "failed" notice was sent home. The notification now required is clear and direct and does not request permission from parents to screen. I would like to speak with the parents that are saying "don't screen my child." Perhaps those parents really mean they don't want a vision screening program.

The DPH also wants to add: "*Vision screening may not be waived other than on the grounds listed in subsections (b) and (c) of this Section.*" If the DPH wants to reemphasize the only exceptions to a vision screening, this notice should also be included in the State of Illinois Certificate of Child Health Examination form in the section documenting vision/hearing screening data as well as create a new category in the Vision Conservation Annual Report in order to account for those families opting for the examination directly.

The DPH also proposed the following: "*The written notification should also contain the following language: "This screening is mandatory at specific age and grade levels. It can be waived only on documented religious grounds or with written documentation from an eye doctor of a vision examination occurring in the 12 months previous to the vision screening date."* **I object to any additional verbiage proposed to the required statement since it does not reflect the intent of Public Act 93-0504.**

Although the Department believes that stating this provision is necessary, I do not agree that it should be included in the required notice with specific verbiage. The language of Public Act 93-0504 was unanimously approved by the 93rd Illinois General Assembly and should remain as written. *I urge the Department to delete subsections (f) and (g).*

Senate Bill 805 was not initiated because our civil rights were violated or because a religious exemption was not made known to us. Senate Bill 805 was initiated because our daughter's eye examination diagnosed a significant vision impairment that went undetected during a vision screening! Vision screenings are very limited and are administered by lay people with limited training. The latest study by the federal government (National Eye Institute) shows that trained screeners still missed over 30 percent of children's vision disorders that were diagnosed by eye examinations! Once more, Public Act 93-0504 is a simple disclaimer and should not be altered in any form.

Furthermore, this law gives parents *the choice* in their child's eye care. No parent should be mandated to have his/her child undergo a vision screening without first being given the opportunity to go directly to an eye doctor, in lieu of the vision screening.

I have attached a sample letter and vision report form which informs parents of the mandated vision screenings as well as complies with Public Act 93-0504.

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your prompt assistance in this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Janet V. Hughes

Enclosures: Vision Screening Letter and Student Vision Examination Report

cc: Senator J. Bradley Burzynski, JCAR
Senator James F. Clayborne, Jr., JCAR
Senator Maggie Crotty, JCAR
Senator Steve Rauschenberger, JCAR
Senator Dan Rutherford, JCAR
Senator Ira Silverstein, JCAR
Representative Brent Hassert, JCAR
Representative Tom Holbrook, JCAR
Representative David Leitch, JCAR
Representative Larry McKeon, JCAR
Representative David Miller, JCAR
Representative Rosemary Mulligan, JCAR

Senator Christine Radogno
Representative Eileen Lyons
Senator John M. Sullivan
Senator Terry Link
Senator Iris Y. Martinez
Senator Susan Garrett
Senator Jacqueline Y. Collins
Senator Mattie Hunter
Representative Kathleen A. Ryg
Representative Elizabeth Coulson
Governor Rod Blagojevich