

Financial Aid for Vision Services

From the Experts at Lighthouse International



LIGHTHOUSE
INTERNATIONAL

As Lighthouse International does not provide financial aid for general eye care, prescription drugs, surgery or other medical procedures, we're glad to offer this guide to financial resources to meet a variety of your vision healthcare needs.

Because everyone's circumstances are unique, not all sources of financial aid are appropriate for everyone. With that in mind, resources are listed according to the following categories:

- ◆ Social Security Benefits
- ◆ Rehabilitation Service Agencies
- ◆ State Agencies for the Blind
- ◆ Eye Care Programs: Eye Exams, Eyeglasses and Surgery
- ◆ Children's Eye Care Programs
- ◆ Grants-in-Aid for Assistive Equipment

Lighthouse International is not affiliated with any of the other organizations listed below. We encourage you or interested applicants to contact them directly for more information.

Social Security Benefits

• Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Baltimore, MD 21235
Tel: (800) 772-1213
Web: www.socialsecurity.gov

Social Security Disability Insurance is a federal program that provides certain financial benefits to workers who have become disabled. To be eligible, you have to be “insured,” meaning that you have to have worked long enough and paid social security taxes. For eligibility requirements, visit the Social Security Administration’s website or call (800) 772-1213.

- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)**

Social Security Administration

6401 Security Boulevard

Baltimore, MD 21235

Tel: (800) 772-1213

Web: www.socialsecurity.gov

Supplemental Security Income is also a federal program, designed to help elderly and disabled individuals who have limited financial resources. It is intended to cover basic needs, such as food and shelter. For eligibility requirements, visit the Social Security Administration’s website or call (800) 772-1213.

Rehabilitation Service Agencies

A variety of payment options are available for vision rehabilitation services provided by organizations such as Lighthouse International (a non-profit, non-governmental organization). Many agencies offer a sliding scale and will develop a payment plan based on your individual circumstances. Agency staff may also help you identify funding sources, including state-sponsored service departments, local school districts, Medicaid and Medicare.

State Agencies for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Each state has a government agency that addresses the needs of residents who are blind or visually impaired. In some states, these are wholly dedicated commissions for the blind, and in others they are subsidiaries of the state's department of vocational rehabilitation. Services provided by these agencies may include: vocational training, job retention assistance, vision rehabilitation services, assistive technology training and funding for educational programs. Services are usually provided at no cost to eligible residents.

To learn more about what services are provided in your area, contact your state agency directly. We can help you locate a state agency in three ways:

- ◆ Use the **Find Help in Your Area** tool of Lighthouse International's website at **www.lighthouse.org**
- ◆ Contact Lighthouse International's **Information & Resource Service** at **(800) 829-0500** or
- ◆ Send an e-mail to **info@lighthouse.org** (be sure to include your location information)

Eye Care Programs

The following organizations assist people who cannot afford eye examinations, eyeglasses or surgery. To learn more about programs and eligibility requirements, contact the agencies directly.

Eye Examinations

- **EyeCare America**
P.O. Box 429098
San Francisco, CA 94142-9098
Tel: (877) 887-6327
Fax: (415) 561-8567

E-mail: pubserv@aao.org
Web: www.eyecareamerica.org

EyeCare America is a service of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology that refers people to volunteer eye care professionals who accept Medicare/Medicaid or who waive co-payments and other fees. People without health insurance are also covered.

EyeCare America has several programs, including those that focus on diabetes, glaucoma, macular degeneration and eye health for seniors. Generally, program recipients must be US citizens or legal residents and must not have had an eye exam within the past three years. Eyeglasses, medicines, hospital services and fees of other medical professionals are not included.

For qualification criteria, call the 24-hour information line for the program you're inquiring about:

- ◆ Seniors EyeCare: (800) 222-3937
- ◆ Glaucoma EyeCare: (800) 391-3937
- ◆ Diabetes EyeCare: (800) 272-3937
- ◆ AMD EyeCare: (866) 324-3937

• **Medicare Glaucoma Benefit**

Tel: (800) 633-4227

Web: www.medicare.gov

People at high-risk for glaucoma and who are Medicare recipients may be eligible for an annual screening. High-risk people, as defined by the Benefits Improvement and Protection Act of 2000, include: individuals with a family history, diabetics and African Americans age 50 and older. You must pay 20% of the Medicare-approved amount after the yearly Part B deductible.

• **Vision USA**

243 N. Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63141
Tel: (800) 766-4466
E-mail: visionusa@aoa.org

Vision USA is a service of the American Optometric Association and provides assistance to uninsured, low-income individuals and households. Program participants are referred to a volunteer doctor of optometry for a comprehensive eye exam. In some cases, eyeglasses may also be provided at no or low cost. (Note: At least one person in your household must be employed to participate in the program.)

Eyeglasses

• **New Eyes for the Needy**

549 Millburn Avenue
P.O. Box 332
Short Hills, NJ 07078
Tel: (973) 376-4903
Fax: (973) 376-3807
E-mail: neweyesfortheneedy@verizon.net
Web: www.neweyesfortheneedy.org

New Eyes for the Needy accepts donations of used prescription eyeglasses and distributes them to people with limited incomes. To be a recipient, you must have a letter of referral from a social services agency.

• **Lions Club International**

300 22nd Street
Oak Brook, IL 60523-8842
Tel: (800) 747-4448
Tel: (630) 571-5466 for the name and phone number of local chapters

Many Lions Clubs have chosen vision care as their primary charitable focus. The availability of Lions services and eligibility requirements vary from community to community. Check with your local chapter.

Surgery

• **The Hill-Burton Program**

HRSA/HS-B/DFCR (Health Resources and Services Administration)
5600 Fishers Lane, Park Lawn Bldg.

Rockville, MD 20857

Tel: (800) 638-0742

Web: www.hrsa.gov/gethealthcare/affordable/hillburton/

Participating hospitals and other healthcare facilities in the Hill-Burton Program provide medical care for free, or at reduced cost, to people who meet eligibility requirements. Procedures covered vary from hospital to hospital. Contact the program for details.

• **The Knights Templar Eye Foundation, Inc.**

1000 East State Parkway Suite I

Schaumburg, IL 60173-4592

Tel: (847) 490-3838

Fax: (847) 490-3777

E-mail: Manager@ktef.us

Web: www.knightstemplar.org/ktef/

The Knights Templar Eye Foundation helps people who cannot afford eye surgery and who are not eligible for government-funded health care. Contact the administrative office to be connected with a local chapter or member to learn more.

• **Mission Cataract USA**

Tel: (800) 343-7265

Web: www.missioncataractusa.org

Mission Cataract is a program coordinated by the Volunteer Eye Surgeons' Association, providing free cataract surgery to people of all ages who have no other means to pay. Surgeries are scheduled annually on one day, usually in May. (Note: When calling the 800 number above, a recording announcing "Personalized InfoMedia" will ask you to leave a message, so they can call you back.)

Prescription Drugs

- **Free Medicine Foundation**

P.O. Box 125

Doniphan, MO 63935

Tel: (573) 996-3333

Web: www.freemedicine.com

Free Medicine Foundation helps people of all ages nationwide enroll in one or more of the many patient assistance programs that provide prescription medicine free-of-charge to those in need. You must meet the sponsor's criteria. People with certain incomes, on Medicare Part D, who do not have insurance or who are under-insured are eligible.

- **Partnership for Prescription Assistance**

Tel: (888) 477-2669

Web: www.helpingpatients.org

The Partnership for Prescription Assistance helps eligible people who do not have prescription drug coverage to access programs providing financial aid.

- **State Pharmaceutical Assistance Programs**

Website: www.ncsl.org/programs/health/drugaid.htm

Through this website, the National Conference of State Legislatures provides general information on state drug assistance programs for people with low incomes.

Children's Eye Care Programs

- **Sight for Students, Vision Service Plan (VSP)**

Tel: (888) 290-4964

E-mail: sfsinfo@vsp.com

Web: www.sightforstudents.org

Sight for Students provides free eye exams and glasses on an annual basis to children under the age of 18, whose families meet certain income requirements.

- **SCHIP – State Children's Health Insurance Program**

Tel: (877) KIDS-NOW (5437-669)

Web: www.insurekidsnow.gov

Reauthorized in 2009, the Children's Health Insurance Program covers regular checkups, doctor visits, immunizations, prescription drugs, eyeglasses and hospital care for eligible children. Programs are administered by state governments, and eligibility criteria vary from state to state.

Grants-in-Aid for Assistive Equipment

The following organizations provide grants-in-aid or low-interest loans for people with visual impairments who want to purchase assistive devices, such as personal reading machines or accessible computer equipment:

- **Association of Blind Citizens Assistive Technology Fund**

P.O. Box 246

Holbrook, MA 02343

Tel: (781) 961-1023
E-mail: ATF@blindcitizens.org
Web: www.blindcitizens.org

The Association of Blind Citizens Assistive Technology Fund provides grants to cover 50% of the retail price for assistive devices and software. You must be legally blind and a legal US resident. All applications must be submitted via e-mail according to the procedures outlined on the website. The grant periods are June 30 and December 31.

• **Foundation for the Advancement of the Blind**

4058 Moore Street
Los Angeles, CA 90066
Fax: (310) 301-0344

The Foundation for the Advancement of the Blind provides funds for people with visual impairments who want to purchase assistive devices. To qualify, you must be a US citizen, specify what equipment you're interested in, how much the device will cost and how you plan to use the device.

• **Lions Club International**

300 22nd Street Suite I
Oak Brook, IL 60523-8842
Tel: (800) 747-4448

Many Lions Clubs provide vocational assistance to people who are legally blind. The international office refers requests for equipment or other assistance to its appropriate district offices.

• **National Federation of the Blind**

1800 Johnson Street
Baltimore, MD 21230
Tel: (410) 659-9314

The National Federation of the Blind provides low-interest loans for purchasing assistive equipment.

- **Texas Center for the Visually Challenged**

Tel: (214) 340-6328

Web: www.computersfortheblind.net

The Texas Center for the Visually Challenged operates a national program that provides refurbished computers, equipped with assistive technology and instructional materials to qualifying people who are visually impaired.

Suggestions for Finding Resources in Your Community

- **National Association of Free Clinics**

Web: www.freeclinics.us

The National Association of Free Clinics has an online database of over 1,200 free clinics throughout the United States. Many free clinics provide general and specialized eye care in addition to other health services.

- **Find a Community Health Center Online**

Web: findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov

The US Department of Health and Human Services offers this searchable online database of community health centers. Health centers are federally-funded and provide medical care and specialty services, including to patients who do not have health insurance or who have limited financial resources. Many of these centers offer optometric or ophthalmological services.

- **State Ophthalmologic Society or State Optometric Association**

These membership associations usually maintain a public list of the eye care providers in their state. Often, they will also have information about which doctors accept Medicare/Medicaid, or if any doctors provide low or no-cost eye exams.

- **Community Referral Services**

Many communities have information & referral services to help residents connect to resources such as health services and economic support programs. In some areas, these services are set up as call centers with a 211 or 311 phone number. Information & referral services may also be housed in local hospitals or community outreach organizations. You can usually find this kind of resource by contacting your local chamber of commerce or elected official's office.

Lighthouse International is dedicated to fighting vision loss through prevention, treatment and empowerment.

For products that make life easier for people with vision loss, visit shop.lighthouse.org

Lighthouse International • The Sol and Lillian Goldman Building
111 East 59th Street • New York, NY 10022-1202
(212) 821-9200 • (800) 829-0500 • www.lighthouse.org