

# American Indian Sight Initiative

## Addressing Unmet Vision Needs in the U.S.



The American Indian Sight Initiative (AISI) stems from Seva's efforts to streamline our mission and tap into our global expertise in providing vision care, while still honoring our commitment to serving American Indians. We have found many parallels between the eye health needs of American Indians and the underserved communities we support around the world.

Seva Foundation is expanding eye care services and training to American Indian communities in California and New Mexico. Seva is also exploring how to make glasses more affordable and telemedicine opportunities in the provision of prescription eyeglasses and diabetic retinopathy screening.

### School Screening Program in New Mexico

Seva Foundation and Helen Keller International have partnered to support ChildSight,<sup>®</sup> a program in the Gallup, New Mexico area that provides students with vision screenings and prescription eyeglasses, all at no cost to their families. This program eliminates the transportation and affordability barriers to receiving eye care by bringing the vision screeners, optometrist, and glasses to schools.

***In the 2012-2013 academic year, this program screened 5,209 students and provided 1,501 students (29%) with a pair of prescription eyeglasses. In addition, 221 (4%) students were referred for follow-up care.***

Navajo children tend to have a higher rate of astigmatism, one of the three types of refractive error, the others being nearsightedness and farsightedness. Compounding this high prevalence is the critical level of rural poverty within the Navajo reservation. When a child receives a free pair of eyeglasses, we're not only providing them with the ability to see clearly – we're also giving them back their potential to learn, to earn a living, and to engage with the world.

### Vision Technician Training at a Tribal Community College

Seva Foundation and the Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), a tribal community college in Albuquerque, NM, have created a unique program designed to provide economic opportunities and prevent unnecessary blindness among American Indians. Seva provides much needed equipment and supplies for training and community outreach, as well as support for students to become certified. This essential exam allows graduates to secure employment as vision technicians in American Indian communities often lacking affordable, accessible eye care services.



### **The Problem:**

- Lack of access to eye care services
- Few American Indian eye care providers
- Unaffordable eyeglasses
- Increased risk for diabetic eye disease

### **The Solution:**

**Screen school children for eye conditions, provide free glasses, train American Indian vision technicians, and expand community outreach.**

**Seva's Goal:** Expand eye care services and training to American Indians living in California and New Mexico.

### **Seva provides:**

- Vision screening and free eyeglasses for low-income students
- Certification support for vision technicians
- Equipment for training and treatment
- Supplies for community outreach

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