

Problem Statement: Missouri State University CASL Vision Screening Program

By Olivia Fowler

The frightening reality is that anyone can develop vision or hearing problems at any point in their life. Infants, children, and adults are missing out on an endless list of opportunities and experiences because of not having sufficient funds and support to have their vision or hearing corrected.

According to a current [estimate](#) made by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, approximately 6.6 million people in the United States are blind or visually impaired. [This problem is going to get continually worse](#), so it's crucial to contribute time and money to these innocent children, fearless veterans, impoverished homeless individuals, and underserved people who are in desperate need of help.

In 2020, it was noted that approximately [6.8% of children younger than 18 years in the United States have a diagnosed eye and vision condition](#). Nearly 3 percent of children younger than 18 years are blind or visually impaired, defined as having trouble seeing even when wearing glasses or contact lenses. If outreach organizations are able to intervene at a young age, this prevents visually impaired children from struggling to function within their community as they get older.

The biggest issue that can be caused by undiagnosed vision problems for children is a steady decrease in academic development. For adults, the larger issues result in an inability to drive and secure a steady job. In general, having a vision or hearing impairment is incredibly isolating no matter the circumstance.

It's been proven that [unaddressed vision problems hold children back](#). It's impossible for a child to advance academically if they struggle to simply see the whiteboard. One [study](#) from 2005 on a group of seventh graders found that non-proficient readers had significantly poorer academic performance and vision-screening scores than the proficient readers.

In 2021, approximately [27,517 people were recorded as being deaf or hard of hearing in the southwest Missouri region](#). As recorded on the [Fort Healthcare website](#), hearing screenings are an essential tool that identifies hearing loss in children and prevent problems with communication, learning, and development.

Delay in care and diagnosis can be detrimental, causing children to fall increasingly behind in school and robbing adults of a professional livelihood and transportation to provide essential food and shelter for their families.

The [Vision Screening Program's](#) mission is "to provide a cost-effective, direct response to the vision care problems of children and underserved adults." This applies to individuals from Missouri State University or anyone living in the local community of Springfield, Missouri.

The Vision Screening Program allows service-learning students to get hands-on experience using [high-tech equipment](#) to provide [free vision screenings](#) to children 6-months of age through adulthood. The program is also partnered with the Vision Rehabilitation Center of

the Ozarks, where community members who have been flagged for vision issues can receive vision care on a sliding scale.

With several [community partners](#) and committed students, the Vision Screening Program is focused on continuing to grow so that they can diagnose and treat more individuals each year. Screenings are conducted at many locations and events including local daycare facilities, school districts, the [Victory Mission](#), [Salvation Army](#), and the [annual HOPE Connection event](#).

To help combat the rise in vision impairment, the Vision Screening Program is raising funds to administer free exams with [cameras and specialized equipment](#) to the Springfield community. With these services and products available at a low-cost or for free, individuals can have their vision or hearing attended to directly and efficiently. This ensures that they can get back into the community and be engaged, no longer isolated because of the hindrance of their vision or hearing impairments.

Recently becoming an [AmeriCorps](#) program, the Vision Screening Program's record of success and engagement makes it ideal to implement as a model program. It will have the opportunity to be used as a model on a nationwide level in the near future. This program will be but a small step in the direction of lowering the percentage of individuals with undiagnosed vision and hearing impairments.

Problem Statement Rubric

1. The statement is focused on those who will be served by the program and not the organization itself: 18/20
2. The statement clearly outlines the mission, history, and success of the organization: 18/20
3. The statement addresses the problem in a meaningful way and highlights the organization's ability to help: 19/20
4. The problem statement includes solid and reputable quantitative and qualitative data: 20/20
5. The statement is persuasive and concise: 20/20