

SUMMARY OF AMENDMENTS

DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION RULES GOVERNING EYE AND VISION SCREENING REPORT IN ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The proposed rules incorporate Act 320 of 2021, which authorizes the Division, in conjunction with the Arkansas Commission on Eye and Vision Care of School Age Children, to establish the tests, procedures, equipment, and instruments to be used to perform eye and vision screenings. The amendments provide that a school district may use an “automated testing instrument” (auto refractor instrument) to test certain students, and set forth a protocol to be followed if the instrument is used. They also change the timeline for school district vision screening and reporting to the Division (annually instead of twice annually), but does not change the annual reporting requirement to the Governor, Legislative Council, and Joint Public Health, Welfare, and Labor.

Post Public Comment

Following public comment, the proposed rules were changed to clarify that the Division and Commission must jointly develop vision screening training standards for school nurses based upon the screening requirements contained in Sections 5.01 and 5.02 of the rules, which they already have done. Also, language was revised to allow for the use of an automated testing instrument (auto refractor) for *all* students in all grades, assuming the protocol set forth in the rules is followed. The Commission received several reports from school nurses that the auto refractor was more accurate at having caught vision complications than was traditional screening. Also, the auto refractor results in less contact time between the screener and student screened, which proves beneficial in times of high infectious rates for communicable diseases,

and the efficiency/time savings of the screening process when using the instrument provide districts an opportunity to screen students beyond those in the mandated grades.