



THE CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND & VISUALLY IMPAIRED NATIONAL VISION CENTRE

BLACKBURN BUILDING, HOLBERTON, ST. JOHN'S, ANTIGUA

Preventing Blindness and Visual Impairment; while restoring sight and creating opportunities for persons whose sight cannot be restored

THE PUBLIC SECTOR EYE SERVICE (UPDATE, JUNE 2017 TO DEC. 2017)

In March of this year, when the Cabinet authorised implementation of the Public Sector Eye Service as a partnership with the Caribbean Council for the Blind (CCB) The Government confirmed its determination to help everyone in Antigua & Barbuda protect and preserve their "Right to Sight".

1. By supporting the implementation of this service, The Gaston Browne Administration, embarked on the Eastern Caribbean's first Occupational Optometry programme for public sector employees; a gold-standard public sector eye health initiative.
2. Under this programme, up to 11,000 Government employees will receive a comprehensive eye exam provided free of cost by CCB-Eye Care Caribbean.
 - a). Government will pay CCB-Eye Care Caribbean to provide prescription eye glasses to public sector employees earning less than EC\$2,000 (two thousand dollars) per month, and without health insurance coverage.
 - b). CCB-Eye Care Caribbean has arranged for public sector employees: With health insurance or earning EC\$2,000 or more, to receive prescription eye glasses at prices starting at EC\$595.
 - c). All employees examined, get a written summary of their eye condition. Each Government employee also receives a sheet of family inclusion vouchers, which gives members of their families, access to the same service at the National Vision Centre or one of the network Community Vision Centres.
 - d). State Insurance Corporation, NAGICO and SAGICOR are partnering with CCB-Eye Care Caribbean, in our effort to make eye health services more: Accessible, available and affordable to the citizens and residents of Antigua and Barbuda. That means that Government employees (with health coverage from one of those companies) are now able to pay for eye glasses for themselves and (where applicable) their families, using their insurance coverage.
3. The Public Sector Eye Service was launched at the Ministry of Health and the Environment in June 2017, by Hon. Molwyn Joseph, Minister of Health and the Environment. Since then, more than 3,000 Government employees from the following ministries-departments have received an eye exam
 - a). Office of the Prime Minister.
 - b). Ministry of Health and the Environment;
 - c). Antigua & Barbuda Defence Force;
 - d). Ministry of: Information, Broadcasting & Telecommunications;
 - e). Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Immigration – To be completed;
 - f). Ministry of Public Utilities et al to include: Ministry Head Quarters. APUA, Transport Board and the Airport Authority;

Most importantly, more than 15,000 family members of Public Sector Employees now have access to the service, using the system of family Inclusion Vouchers which is made available to all public sector employees examined in the programme.

The Public Sector Eye Service aims to provide 11,000 Government employees (in Antigua and Barbuda) with: A comprehensive eye exam; Access to prescription eye glasses; and other eye health services.

4. Government and The Caribbean Council for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CCB) are concerned that as many as 7,262 individuals, in a population of 81,000 persons living in Antigua and Barbuda, reported to census takers that they are blind in one or both eyes. It is noted that Antigua and Barbuda experiences a quite high rate of motor vehicle accidents each year. We expect that as more people are able to afford prescription eye glasses, we will see a reduction in avoidable accidents: Not only on our roads, but at work and on the field of play.

5. The Public Sector Eye Service is a partnership between the Government of Antigua & Barbuda and CCB. Cabinet approved the Service in March 2017. This is a most important trend-setting and people-centred eye health initiative. The series of clinics are being led by: Khohane Blake, CCB's Optometrist, Diabetic Retinopathy Grader (Master Class) and Medical Epidemiologist.